

Surface Navy

Surface Navy Association Uses Avocent LongView® Wireless Extender in an “un” Conventional Approach

When the Surface Navy Association (SNA) began to plan their annual symposium last year they knew they had a challenge on their hands. A variety of exhibitions, lectures, panel discussions and presentations were to be held at different times on three floors at the Hyatt Regency in Washington, D.C. Thousands of attendees needed an easy way to find out what was going on at any given moment.

For a solution, retired Navy Capt. Bill Erickson, executive director of the Surface Navy Association, turned to Bob Rositzke, president of Empire Video, Inc., a full service multimedia company headquartered in Springfield, Va.

He came up with what is a decidedly “un”conventional” approach: a wireless digital signage system displayed on 42-inch plasma screens, in this case strategically placed at the top of escalator platforms so symposium attendees could easily check the agenda.

Rositzke, a longtime consultant to the Surface Navy Association, knew wireless video extension was the way to go. In addition to having an easy read, he said, attendees could step off the escalator and be on their way, without having to navigate the alternative – scattered cabling taped

to the floor.

“The 42-inch plasma screen is common at shows today,” Rositzke said. “It’s going to be the workhorse for digital signage since, typically, they are best viewed from about 12 feet away. If the screen is too big the pixels are larger and it doesn’t look as good.”

He included in his proposal the Avocent LongView® Wireless extender to provide the connectivity between computer-based audio/video sources and the display. “We were prepared to run a wired solution,” Erickson said. “I’ve worked with Bob for three or four years; he came up with the idea that his digital signage software could be used to promulgate the agenda and convey messages, which was important – we had to be able to tell people what was going on.”

Empire Video put it all together: plasma screens, LongView Wireless extender and the Scala InfoChannel® digital signage software. As a certified value-added reseller in Virginia for Scala Broadcasting Multimedia, based in Exton, Penn., Empire Video had the goods to create elaborate signs as well as design the running ads for the Surface Navy Association.

The digital signage market is exploding, said Richard Trask, director of marketing at Scala. “The good news is that deploying a digital signage network is no longer rocket science. Reaching your audience with a focused message at the right time and the right location is the goal of every advertiser in the marketplace.”

Founded in 1987, Scala pioneered the cable TV industry with software and services to allow users to create localized channels inexpensively.

Built on reliable and flexible network architecture, Scala’s InfoChannel® end-to-end digital software platform employs powerful and efficient store-and-forward design. It allows control of focused and compelling dynamic content easily and quickly on a single cable line, or thousands of displays or kiosks from a single desktop PC without the constraints of streaming video. The system enables frequent and timely content updates that result in faster response to audience focus or promotional requirements.

Strong Signals from Invisible Connections

The Surface Navy Association’s annual three-day symposium benefits their membership of Officers and Enlisted personnel, about 5,500 strong, for

Surface Navy

Surface Navy Association Uses Avocent LongView® Wireless Extender in an “un” Conventional Approach

professional education, as well as the social opportunity. The three-day event drew 3,000 people this year, in addition to the 60-plus corporate sponsors and 70 exhibitors.

“The digital signage product worked out very well for us and provided more exposure to our exhibitors,” Erickson said. “We particularly liked it running between briefings to help promote the entire symposium.”

The solution included the Avocent LongView Wireless extender, the world’s first wireless keyboard, video and mouse (KVM) extender. It wirelessly connects monitors (VGA, SVGA and XGA), keyboards, mice and audio devices to any computer. LongView Wireless extension, based on the 802.11a standard and Advanced Encryption Standard (AES), connects directly to the target device – in this case, a 42-inch plasma screen. It serves as the radio interface link so the computer can transmit secure audio and video data through walls, all without VGA cables.

“Basically, two drivers helped us arrive at this configuration,” Rositzke said. “One, we were within the lobby of a particularly modern hotel, so it was impractical to run cables from the bottom to the top of an escalator. And, two, we couldn’t

suffer from interference, which we do have with a lot of low-frequency, wireless systems.”

The LongView Wireless LV3500W extender transmits data 100 feet through walls and up to 300 feet without obstruction. The transmitter connects directly to the computer making it a visual extension source, perfect for digital signage, presentation or classroom applications.

In this case, 250 feet separated transmitter from receiver. “Once we had the system installed we even placed both hands on the receiving antenna to reduce the level of the signal to see the effect,” Rositzke said. “It had no effect at all; it was a very solid link. That’s what I was most impressed with and that’s the thing most people worry about.

“I researched lots of devices that operate at that frequency, but the Avocent product is the only one I found that would transmit video at the proper bandwidth without a loss of signal quality. Many devices use that frequency but the big issue is transmitting video.”

Flexibility, for Designer and New User

The LongView extender simplifies A/V installations making them more

cost effective by eliminating the need for miles of cabling and expensive PCs at each remote location. Audio, video and PC content are transmitted wirelessly via a unique, proprietary compression engine.

“It’s a pretty amazing little product. Install it once and you know how to do it,” Rositzke said. “It works so well right out of the box, we set up for the wireless portion in less than an hour. At the facility the client saw it all set up in half an hour.” With plug-and-play installation, LongView extender requires no controls or additional software to download.

“And the beauty of the digital signage product is its versatility and its ease of programming,” Rositzke said. “It’s flexible, easy to deal with, versatile and has a lot of applications. The Navy Memorial is using it in their entrance lobby.”

Exhibitors and vendors at the Surface Navy Association symposium were delighted with the idea that they could share space on the 42-inch plasma screen and advertise their products.

“We contacted our corporate sponsors and developed a continuous loop of various ads,”

Surface Navy

Surface Navy Association Uses Avocent LongView® Wireless Extender in an “un” Conventional Approach

Erickson said. “It was especially popular with vendors who put their booth number on their ad.” The ads also helped defray the cost of the new equipment, he added.

Boeing, Lockheed Martin, Northrup Grumman and many military related government agencies such as the Naval Sea Systems Command were among those attending the symposium. They took note of the digital signage capabilities.

“Not long after the SNA symposium, Avocent LongView® wirelessly connects monitors, keyboards, mice and audio devices LongView extender simplifies A/V installations making them more cost effective we did a project for the Army that required three plasmas,” Rositzke said. “It was an added challenge, but now it’s part of the bag of tricks.

“Our innovative solutions are enabled by the technology,” he continued. “We’re innovative at solving problems for our clients and the LongView Wireless extender is a great product. If there’s any competition out there yet I haven’t seen it.”

About Scala Inc.

Scala Inc. pioneered the industry of digital signage in 1987, and is today headquartered near Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, with operations in California, the UK, The Netherlands and Japan. As flat panel and networking technologies catch up with Scala’s vision, Scala finds itself with over a 15-year head start, helping it to win some of the largest digital signage engagements and most respectable partners in the industry. Companies that are implementing their digital signage equipment on the Scala InfoChannel 3 platform include Tesco, Best Buy, T-Mobile, ShopRite, Virgin MegaStore, Bloomberg Kiwi, Azizia- Panda Supermarket, McKee Foods, Burger King, Muvico, Warner Brothers Movie World, RaboBank, Nedbank, Santiago Airport, Dubai Airport. A network of over 250 Value Added Resellers across the globe offer Scala InfoChannel® solutions, and constitute our sales and support force that extends to every continent but Antarctica.

About Empire Video

Empire Video, Inc. is a full service film and video company, with an increasing emphasis on

using technology to enhance communication. Empire specializes in interactive media, such as CDROM and DVD authoring, still and animated graphics and Web-based solutions. The company’s projects and productions include corporate promotional, direct marketing, training and public relations oriented media. The company was founded in 1989, incorporated in the state of Virginia in 1992, and has been in its current Springfield, VA, facility since early 1993. Empire’s clients come from private industry, associations, not-for-profit organizations, and the government. Empire owns all of its production and post-production equipment, and has maintained an excellent credit rating with Dun and Bradstreet since 1991.

About Avocent

Avocent Corporation is the leading supplier of connectivity solutions for enterprise data centers, service providers and financial institutions worldwide. Branded products include switching, extension, intelligent platform management interface (IPMI), remote access and video display solutions.