

NEC Digital Display Technologies Power an Immersive Experience for Gamers

Facility:

- Dave & Buster's restaurants

Vertical:

- Restaurant/Hospitality

Location:

- 98 locations in U.S. and Canada

Challenges:

- Create an innovative, unique look for restaurant interiors in keeping with company philosophy

Solution:

- For Mix Master video walls, 3x3 of the 46" NEC X464UN; for Power Up kiosks and WIN prize areas, two 65" NEC V652 each; and one 46" NEC P463 for each location's back-of-house area

Result:

- An immersive experience for guests utilizing multiple display solutions, enhancing restaurant branding and engaging employees

A popular national restaurant/entertainment chain became famous for its arcade-style games, family-friendly environment, and extensive menu, but recently the company decided to enhance its branding and amplify guest experience using immersive digital technologies. Enter NEC Display Solutions.

The Challenge

Dave & Buster's has been a household name in hospitality since 1982, when founders Dave Corriveau and James "Buster" Corley came up with a brilliant idea: Combine a restaurant and an arcade to create the ultimate party destination with something for everyone—innovative food, the latest games, and exciting drinks.

But a few years ago, a Dave & Buster's executive was standing in the front lobby of one of the company's 98 locations when he realized something: He could be in any restaurant in the country. For a company built around breaking the mold, this would not do.

"The idea was to create an immediate sense of where you are," said Jeff Weiss, director of store systems for Dave & Buster's IT department, which was tasked with creating the immersive environment leadership was looking for. "Before, we didn't really have anything in the front lobby—maybe some digital signs handled by an AV company. We needed to get more creative with our branding."

Armed with the directive to inject excitement and new life into the Mix Master—what Dave and Buster's calls its front lobby—Weiss began by meeting with different technology resellers to see what they could offer.

"We knew we needed something different that would really set us apart," Weiss said. "It needed to have pizzazz and make a statement, while being functional and easy for our stores to maintain."

Besides delivering that "wow" factor to guests, Weiss was also sensitive to technical requirements to ensure the solution could deliver the company's content and messaging while protecting its investment.

"We were very conscious about going with commercial-grade products—something that could be left on 24 x 7 without burning out," Weiss said. "We also wanted pass-through functionality with as many inputs as possible to ensure we could run all kinds of content."



The Solution

After meeting with different audio/visual technology integrators, Weiss turned to Connection, a National Solutions Provider who has worked with Dave & Buster's since 2000. Connection recommended NEC for the new video wall, which they started installing in 2012.

"We knew that with NEC Display we could rely on a professional team and a technically stable product that can meet our scale of growth," said Patrick McCusker, Senior Digital Signage Business Development Manager at Connection.

Representatives from NEC Display Solutions sat down with Weiss and the Connection team to discuss digital display technologies that could achieve the branding experience Dave & Buster's required.

"We were blown away by the idea of a large video wall in the front lobby," Weiss said. "It was definitely something cooler than we'd ever had, and we realized nothing else would be as exciting."

In particular, Weiss was drawn to NEC's displays with ultra-narrow bezels. With this in mind, the company purchased nine 46" NEC X464UN displays for a 3x3 video wall to be placed in the Mix Master area in each of Dave & Buster's 98 locations.

"We wanted to get more creative with the Mix Master area, and this really did it," Weiss said. "Individual stores like it because they get to post their own events on the video wall, along with corporate branded content."

In addition to its crisp HD resolution, the video wall's color calibration feature proved to be a game changer, McCusker said.

"NEC Display's 3x3 video wall won us over with its long life and color calibration feature," McCusker said. "If you don't have a way to color-calibrate a unit, then it won't work. We needed to make sure we would be able to ensure color uniformity across all locations."

After tackling the Mix Master video wall, Weiss didn't stop there. Tasked with creating an immersive environment throughout the stores—not just in the front lobby—Weiss looked for other areas that could use upgraded digital display technologies.

"Besides the front lobby, the other area all guests interact with is the Power Up kiosks," he said, referring to the eight kiosks at each location where guests add money to stored value cards so they can play games. "Everyone needs to go to this area, so we wanted to communicate promotional information and the prices of the Power Cards."

To meet this need, Dave & Buster's purchased two 65" NEC V652 displays for each location. While almost all locations have the Power Up area against a wall, a few locations have them arranged around a column. For these locations—including Carlsbad, CA; Overland Park, KS; and New Orleans—three V652 displays are arranged in a triangle configuration around the column.

"We ended up using the V652 in the Power Up area as a sort of menu board," Weiss said. "This way, guests know what they want to buy before they get to the kiosk, so it has the dual effect of saving time while drawing attention. That's really what we wanted."

Dave and Buster's also added two more V652s—this time in vertical portrait mode—for the WIN prize area in each location. Here, the V652s display the points needed for each prize item and prize descriptions, as well as flash promotional content and branded messaging.

Finally, Dave & Buster's wanted to take its employee engagement to the next level, so the company also purchased one 46" P463 for each location's back-of-house area to broadcast the company's internal communications channel, D&BTV.

"We have games among employees, so we use 46" screens in the back-of-house area to track contests and create competition," Weiss said. "General managers say it creates buzz and motivates employees to go above and beyond."



The Impact

So far, Dave & Buster's has given 70 of its 98 stores the NEC Display video wall treatment. Each new store gets the video wall, and the company plans to remodel 10 percent of the remaining stores per year. About three quarters of all stores have the new NEC displays in the Power Up kiosks and WIN areas, with more scheduled to come online by the end of the year. Finally, D&BTV featuring the P463 can now be seen at all 98 locations, delighting employees and inspiring better performance.

The company is prioritizing the project because guests and employees alike have marveled at the energy the NEC displays inject into each location, Weiss said.

"After we installed the first video wall in 2012, our executive leadership liked it so much they wanted to implement them into all our locations," he said. "It really creates the immersive environment we wanted for our guests and employees."

Both Weiss and the Connection team also pointed to the ease of working with NEC Display Solutions as a key driver of the program's success.

"NEC has been incredibly responsive and supportive," Weiss said. "If we ever need anything, NEC is able to quickly deliver, which is key, because in our business, it's always a time-sensitive situation. NEC has always taken care of us well, and we've never been happier."

On the Connection side, the team lauded NEC Display for its professional staff and high quality product.

"It's rare to run into such high-level, technologically-savvy people who are as accessible as they are," said Jason Blake, Account Manager at Connection. "I have their direct phone numbers; they pick up my call, and they're always there for us."



NEC Display Solutions of America

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