

InfoComm09 and Digital Signage: *Hand in Glove.*

This summary of InfoComm09 as related to digital signage includes references digital signage profile at InfoComm09, its positioning in the “short-line visual economy,” the sources and directions of related emerging technologies and the importance of several key announcements at the 4-day event.

By Lyle Bunn
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As 28,000 gathered in Orlando for [InfoComm09](#), Digital Signage appeared as an integral element of event product displays, education, awards and networking.

High Value: The acceleration in the use and supply of Digital Signage in the InfoComm community was astounding. Show-of-hands surveys in well-attended training sessions illustrated extraordinary year-over-year growth. 25% of session participants at InfoComm 2008 said they were currently or planned to use or supply digital signage. This year, with twice as many session participants, over 75% said they are currently or plan to use or supply digital signage. Many exhibitors privately reflected gaining 500 business leads with 10-25% of these being near term business opportunities, while many end user delegates and integrators delved more deeply into product capabilities and relationship opportunities than I have typically seen in a trade show environment. InfoComm09 was time very well invested.

“InfoComm International has advanced visual media supply and application for 75 years and Digital Signage, as a current generation of visual and audio communications fits naturally with InfoComm”.

High praise goes to InfoComm International Directors Mike White (Multi-Media Solutions) and Chair Jay Rogina (Spinitar), as well as association executives Randy Lemke (Executive Director), Jason McGraw (Expositions), Melissa Taggart (certification, education, and standards), John Fuchs (InfoComm iQ), and their teams.

The current climate for digital signage and the AV Integration sectors served to make InfoComm09 a very information rich experience.

<i>Elements of the climate</i>	<i>Forward actions</i>
“The Economy”	“Visual is our new language” says retail Guru and Author Paco Underhill of Envirosell. Visual communications are proving to contribute to higher levels of communications effectiveness in terms of branding, merchandising, cost

	reductions and improved patron, staff and student experiences.
Digital Signage as a new and emerging application.	Business models are mature and a reliable supply of enabling technology elements are available, along with information on the “why” and “how to” of display systems.
Pressure on AV Integrator revenues	The growth in the number of, and high interest of AV Integrators adding digital signage (DS) to their offerings portfolio as demonstrated at InfoComm09 was simply astounding. The DS area of the trade show floor was very busy and DS education sessions were highly attended by attentive and engaged delegates. End users showed equal enthusiasms for DS.
Digital Signage project revenues	During the “Manufacturers Forum” which opened the event Jeff Porter, EVP of Scala’s response to the question “what is the outlook for digital signage?” was: “Very positive – a key indicator is the number of RFPs being issued – but also, that these reflect projects that have been more fully and thoughtfully planned. This is a strong indicator that the future of Digital signage will continue to strengthen.” Porter noted their milestone announcement of 100,000 software licenses driving over 300,000 in 75,000 networks in over 100 countries.
Electrograph business closure	While a pre-InfoComm announcement by Electrograph was the closing of the distributor, ALMO Corp. announced the launch of an AV distribution division led by Sam Taylor. The group is expected to include up many former Electrograph AV and Digital Signage specialists.
Many new products announced	See InfoComm iQ , company announcements and media coverage of InfoComm09 .
New Partnerships announced	It was common to see business partners included in each others InfoComm09 trade show booth. Examples include Noventri with Harris Corp. , and CognoVision with DynaSign, and several companies in the Spinitar “Digital Signage Application Showcase” including Harris Corp., Cisco and BrightSign. See InfoComm iQ , company announcements and media coverage of InfoComm09 .

June 5-11, 2010 Las Vegas: Firms tended to send fewer of their people to the event (attending and exhibiting), with the number of companies remaining high. Discussions were more highly intended, focused on gaining input to decisions and commerce-oriented. Planning for [InfoComm2010](#) in Las Vegas June 5-11, 2010 has already started. Put it on your must-participate list.

“Sort-line visual economy”: InfoComm is focused on the “short-line visual economy” of the media economy in which the distance between presenter and audience are short or shortened through media presentation in locations where people work, learn, play, gather, move, wait and buy through devices such as LCD, LED, projection, videoconferencing, presentation audio and more recently digital signage. The “short-line visual economy” involves presenting a unique channel of content on one display or multiple displays acting as one, paid for by the content author/sponsor to influence and inform as integral to achieving their goals. Alternatively, “long-line,” broadcast or “dispersal media” describes content being offered from many sources for viewing/ingest by a wide number of end users on a device owned by the media consumer. Examples of “long-line” include TV, radio, Internet, handheld devices.

The ability to target messages based on the display location, time of day and even by the demographic profile of a viewer add to this value. The critical mass of installed displays at 900,000 currently in North America and growing by 44% annually according to NPD - DisplaySearch.

The focus of InfoComm is visual media presentation with particular attention given to profiling products in the supply and improving the way that these are delivered to the market.



Lyle Bunn presents on Technology Trends in Digital Signage at InfoComm09. One of several education sessions aimed at improving Digital Signage planning, network design, selling and “content” skills.

DS Education Sessions: Digital Signage was regularly referenced in education sessions and focused sessions on planning and selling Digital Signage as well as its technology trends, best practices in Content and overall industry directions were provided. Copies of presentations which included elements of the “SPEED” Digital Signage training program and were delivered to over 500 InfoComm delegates by Lyle Bunn are available at www.LyleBunn.com – [Resources](#) for a limited time following InfoComm09.

The annual day-long Technology Trends session this year included a focus on digital signage trends. In this presentation, Lyle Bunn said that “The character of Digital Signage is that it is a very “practical” area of the visual media economy. The primary

trends in the digital signage sector are in the advancement of business and supply models, systems and operational integration, functional capability and improving the ways in which digital signage is used as a communications tool and enterprise application. These business aspects are inter-twined with the first 4 of eleven significant technology trends outlined by Bunn, including;

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Lyle Bunn

1. SaaS & Business Systems Providers (BSP) (i.e. [DDC – The Full Picture](#))
2. All-in-One
3. Projection
4. Gestural and Interactive
5. Campaign placement and management (i.e. [Harris Corp](#))
6. Datacasting (i.e. [National Datacast Inc.](#))
7. Integration with other systems
8. Anonymous Audience Measurement (i.e. [CognoVision](#))
9. Digital display on “X” (i.e. vending)
10. “Holographic” and Lenticular (i.e. [Provision 3D](#))
11. Integration (i.e. [FeliCa](#), [iAccess](#))

Bunn also outlined the framework that he sees as driving technology trends and innovation in the ultra-high growth digital signage sector including “The Enabling Effect” and a range of areas in which technology advancements have impact on, interface to, applicability or integration with digital signage are accelerating as the digital sign become the point of attraction, display and interface. The following areas were described:



Two leading edge projects were the subject of public interviews on the trade show floor. Harris Corp., a \$5.4 billion giant in the communications infrastructure and media flow industry, profiled digital signage projects at the Orlando Events Center Stadium and the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center (TBPAC). Each of these very advanced, large scale projects had been announced at the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) conference in April as examples of targeted media applications in large media rich venues aimed at, and justified by, improving the patron experience.

Excerpts of the interviews by Lyle Bunn related to the *Orlando Events Center*, future home of the NBA Orlando Magic, are online as follows. The stadium, which integrates 1200 total displays driven by 800 unique media channels into its architecture, is designed to deliver a state-of-the-art media experience in a multi-use live entertainment facility. When it opens on 10-10-2010 the facility will be the home of the NBA Orlando Magic as well as 200 concerts, ceremonies and other public and private gathering events annually.

In describing the selection of Harris Corp products, Alex Martins, COO of the Orlando Magic had previously stated “The stadium will include 1200 displays presenting media individually and in groups based on Harris media management. As a result of this relationship, everyone who visits the new Orlando Events Center will enjoy a unique level of fan engagement and an unparalleled experience, and our arena will undoubtedly become a technological showcase and the new standard for sports and entertainment venues worldwide.”

The project reflects the integration of digital signage into the architecture, patron experience, use of facility, sponsorship/advertising programs and business operations. It further illustrates the requirement for large-scale digital signage system planning and operations on which successful applications are based. See the following short video clips:

[Overview of the Orlando Events Center](#)

[Project architecture \(1200 displays, 800 channels\)](#)

[Orlando Events Center as leading example of future public space deployments](#)

The Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center (TBPAC) has been called “The Building that Sings” by patrons whose experience includes visual and audio that is fully integrated into the five-theatre environment. The technology configuration includes 23 displays, 49 internal and external speakers in 9 video and 8 music zones.

Michael Kilgore, VP Marketing and Customer Experience of the Tampa Bay Performing Arts Center said “This is simply the most advanced application in the world of media being used to improve the patron experience at a performing arts center. The TBPAC is proud of this distinction and will be active in refining areas of “best practice” for this type of deployment.”

“This digital signage network is justified by the contribution that it makes to improving the patron experience” said Kilgore, adding “Media is presented in walkways as visitors approach and leave the facility and in all common are theatre access areas. The network also allows us to provide higher value to sponsors.”

Tony Stephens, President of Professional Communications Systems (PCS) which led in the supply of the system said, “The high level of product functionality and engineering along with the strength of Harris Corp has allowed PCS to deliver very advanced audio/visual experiences in public and corporate environments in which media is integral to the way that goals are achieved”

Kilgore advised organizations moving forward with projects to select and draw from services providers with a strong base of applications experience and solid project management structures.

The NEC “Best of InfoComm” recognized Da-Lite Screen Company for their JKP Affinity Screens which have been developed in cooperation with Joe Kane Productions. In presenting the award, Pierre Richer, NEC Display Solutions President and COO said “We are impressed with the quality and wide range of entries for the NEC Best of InfoComm09 award. Over 5,000 online votes for the nominees were received, reflecting the ongoing desire on the part of the AV Integrator community to keep abreast of technology advances. NEC Display Solutions will continue to be a key part of the visual communications ecosystem that depends on cost-effective, high quality, reliable commercial applicability”.

The NEC Best of InfoComm09 award included a contribution of \$25,000 to the beneficiary of the winner’s choice. Da-Lite directed their \$25,000 prize to InfoComm Education, and in doing so, and to great applause, announced that they would match the prize with their additional contribution of \$25,000.

Industry Review: The final day of InfoComm again included a review of progress on 3 “blueprint” items of digital signage development in the AV Integrator community were reported. In opening remarks, Tim Chluda, Sales Manager, Americas, BrightSign profiled a media player that would allow presentation of a digital TV signal as a playout frame with any display or media management system.

Harris Morris, General Manger of Media and Workflow at Harris Corp., which also co-hosted the luncheon said in welcome remarks that “digital signage is a significant business development opportunity for AV system integrators, and Harris Corp is bringing its decade of experience in digital signage along with its rich legacy in enabling broadcast media to help build AV Integrators’ business”. He invited all firms to review the applications being served by Harris Corp capabilities.

In a luncheon address, Lyle Bunn reported ongoing progress in 3 key areas of required development including a) reducing the length of the digital signage sales cycle, b)

reducing the complexity of the integration process and c)improving ways of defining and communicating the value inherent in digital signage application.

“The sector must reach beyond the level of ambiguity and vagueness that characterizes current marketing communications materials, in order to reflect a deeper capability, confidence and service to deployment processes” said Bunn. Who added “The response to uncertainty or confusion is always “no” and so the advancement and acceleration of digital signage sector growth is directly dependent on clear, informative information. He applauded the efforts of end users, suppliers and editors who were awareness of “best practices”.

Summer reading: During InfoComm09, [the Wall Street Journal included a review of *The Visual Revolution* by Mark Changizi](#), in which the psychology professor at Union College in Schenectady, NY describes why our visual senses have developed and behave as they do to actively select color, motion and shapes. He describes how depth perception plays a critical role in our seeing “behind” or following the item of primary visual interest. *The Visual Revolution* looks like excellent summer reading for everyone involved in visual media.

In summary, while taking place over just several days, InfoComm09 offered education, information as well as networking, partnership and fellowship opportunities that advanced digital signage supply capabilities and market development. InfoComm10 to be held June 5-10, 2010 in Las Vegas is a “must attend” event.

Lyle Bunn is a highly regarded independent consultant, commentator, advisor and educator in North America’s digital signage/digital out-of-home sector.

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