



PLANNER'S WORKSHOP

education

➔ Designing events in the age of synchronized multi-screens



Seeing the Big Picture

By Fred Cannizzaro - nVision

Today's meeting or event producer has a tough assignment: Create an eye-catching, high-impact experience, and do it within a tight budget. That challenge encourages a closer look at synchronized multi-screen presentations. This digital technology delivers high audience impact and greater flexibility while respecting most budget targets.

Synchronized multi-screen technology (SMS) is based upon the increased power and sophistication of computers and presentation software. It is now possible to control up to dozens of screens simultaneously. That power can be used to create a multi-screen ex-

travaganza, a modest two-screen design, and everything in between. It doesn't matter if you're using a large projection screen, multiple screens or flat surfaces, or even plasma screens. This new SMS technology offers a range of advantages to the pro seeking added impact and creative flexibility.

Presentation Design Power

The real power of synchronized screens is in the impact of the presentations. Now, no matter how many sources, screens, walls, or projectors you have, you can orchestrate all of your video, graphics, and live media. A single graphic

or video can wash across all screens, taking into account the screen orientation and distance between each screen.

Creativity is now your tool. A product or dramatic scene can expand to fill all the screens as one image, or seamlessly unite multiple projectors on one large screen. People can appear in one screen and have a synced conversation with those in another screen. Graphics can play out across all screens. And, if screens are at angles, a designer can compose a three-dimensional program flow. The only true limits are your imagination. In one recent national meeting, we programmed event videos, photos, live

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camera feeds, and graphic animations within a large central screen and two side screens. If needed, we also could have programmed any meeting kiosk or plasma screen array to be part of the synced presentation.

And the timing of all program elements is exact, programmed prior to arrival at the venue. In a programming facility, the designer can simulate the screen configuration of the event venue or meeting and then program the screens with graphics, animations, and HD video. PT can be used as well, with cues inserted to move the show along. Since the screens are in sync, audio for the event's presentations can be coordinated more easily. Screen programming can also be aligned with lighting cues.

So how important is presentation? From one computer station, an entire event presentation screen array can be controlled, allowing for precise scheduling and coordination of programming on all screens, be they large front screen surfaces, IMAG surfaces, plasma screens, or kiosk screens. Large presentations may also involve many image fields within a large screen, which are also easily controlled by SMS technology.

The New Art of Set Design

Event and meeting set design has always been an aesthetic challenge. But now, screens and walls and projected surfaces can be perfectly coordinated. The result? Opportunities arise to display HD video, graphics, and branding with a room-wide impact, or to orchestrate complex presentation elements among screens. SMS can offer perfectly sequenced experiences for visitors that are natural and automatic, and give the designer added tools to intrigue and wow the visitor. The shape and configuration of screens—or projected images—may create a wall or curved surface, reflect a theme, or as-

sume a dramatic shape. It may be clouds floating through screens, as if looking out multiple windows on a summer day; an underwater display, as in a submarine; complex animated typography; or a branding display that builds to a room-wide climax.

Digital Sets Become a Reality

The age of the finished hard set is coming to an end. Shaped or flat projection surfaces can now replace carefully constructed and painted set elements. Projected surfaces now give designers the ability create environments that are dramatic and can change as the program demands—an elegant architectural statement one minute, a breathtaking mountain scene another—and a branding climax scene in yet another. A flat, plain set can be constructed to reflect the variety of set design needs.

The content for these areas can come from a hard drive or tape source showing either HD video or high-res graphic animations with Flash or AfterEffects. A simpler variation of this approach is to use new digital lighting instruments, such as a DL2, on white booth elements. In both cases, the projected imagery will only hit the background area since an alpha channel will cut out any content screens being separately programmed.

As event and meeting sets become more dynamic, set and event designers will be offered more options to attract, engage, educate, and motivate viewers.

A designer can now truly paint on a single canvas. **SM**

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