Mvix | Case Study: Western Michigan University

Summary

- Western Michigan University wanted to standardize communications and branding across campuses nationwide.
- The screens display event listings, and school updates.
- The project included more than 30 Xhibit signage systems, content management software (CMS) and Signature Care support.
- The university noted increased engagement from students and faculty, and IT saw decreased workloads as a result of implementing a cloud-based system.

Introduction

Western Michigan University, a public research university in Kalamazoo, Michigan, has implemented a digital signage network of 30 networked screens across 13 university facilities in Michigan and 2 satellite campus locations in Florida.

The digital signs provide consistent messaging at all locations and allow administrators to push out information and updates to students, faculty and visitors.

Members of the faculty and administration can contribute content on local displays, but all content is created and managed by the marketing staff and supported by the IT staff.

| Western Michigan University

Western Michigan is one of the most well-renowned research universities in the Midwest and offers a variety of programs ranging from aviation to medicine.

Western Michigan University was founded in 1903 and enrolls 23,000 students a year in their undergraduate and graduate programs. Additionally, the school offers an aviation program that is ranked in the top 5 programs offered in the country, as well as the Thomas M. Cooley Law School, the Homer Stryker M.D. School of Medicine, and the Haworth College of Business.

Western Michigan University has grown to become a major national research university with 147 undergraduate degree programs, 73 master's degree programs, 30 doctoral programs, and one specialist degree program across their seven degree-granting colleges.

In addition to the main campus in Kalamazoo, the university has eight regional sites throughout Michigan and Florida, including locations such as Grand Rapids, Lansing, Detroit, Traverse City, and Punta Gorda.

Notable alumni of Western Michigan University include actors Tim Allen, Terry Crews and Bruce Campbell, Homer Stryker of the Stryker Corporation, and legendary R&B singer Luther Vandross.

| The Challenge

Western Michigan University wanted a streamlined, integrated network that could simultaneously connect all of their regional sites to the same communications channel, while also providing flexibility for the local sites to provide their own relevant messaging.

Prior to their digital signage installation, each regional site had to provide their own messaging solution, whether that was paper bulletins on cork board signs, cardboard posters, or PowerPoint presentations on USB drives.

This hodgepodge approach to communication wildly varied in success and the university marketing team found it difficult to create any sense of consistent branding and messaging with their target audiences due to the lack of an organized, straightforward communications system.

After collaborating with the IT staff and doing some research of their own, the marketing team decided that a connected digital signage system across the different campuses would be the most efficient and effective channel for communications.

The IT staff specifically suggested that the easiest way to manage content across many locations would be to use a software that was cloud-based, so that a user could work remotely from one location and manage all of the displays across the network simultaneously. This would also be a simpler system to maintain, as IT support could access and fix issues over the Internet.

Although the marketing team wanted to be the primary drivers of content and messaging for the displays, they also wanted administrators at the regional sites to maintain a level of independence in creating and updating their own displays, so content would remain fresh and relevant for localized audiences.

Essentially, the display network would require a cloud-based content management system that allowed multiple users to edit and publish content simultaneously.

What needed to be done:

- Cloud-based digital signage network that could be managed at the national and local level
- Standardize communications across the university
- Reduced workload of university IT staff

| The Solution

Mvix implemented a network of more than 30 digital signage displays at 15 different campus facilities in Michigan and Florida.

The displays were installed in the entrance lobbies of each facility, including dorms, student centers, and administration buildings.

Students, faculty and visitors could now see new content as soon as they walked in the door. All of the displays are integrated with the internal calendar of the building they are located in, so event listings are unique and relevant for the specific local audience.
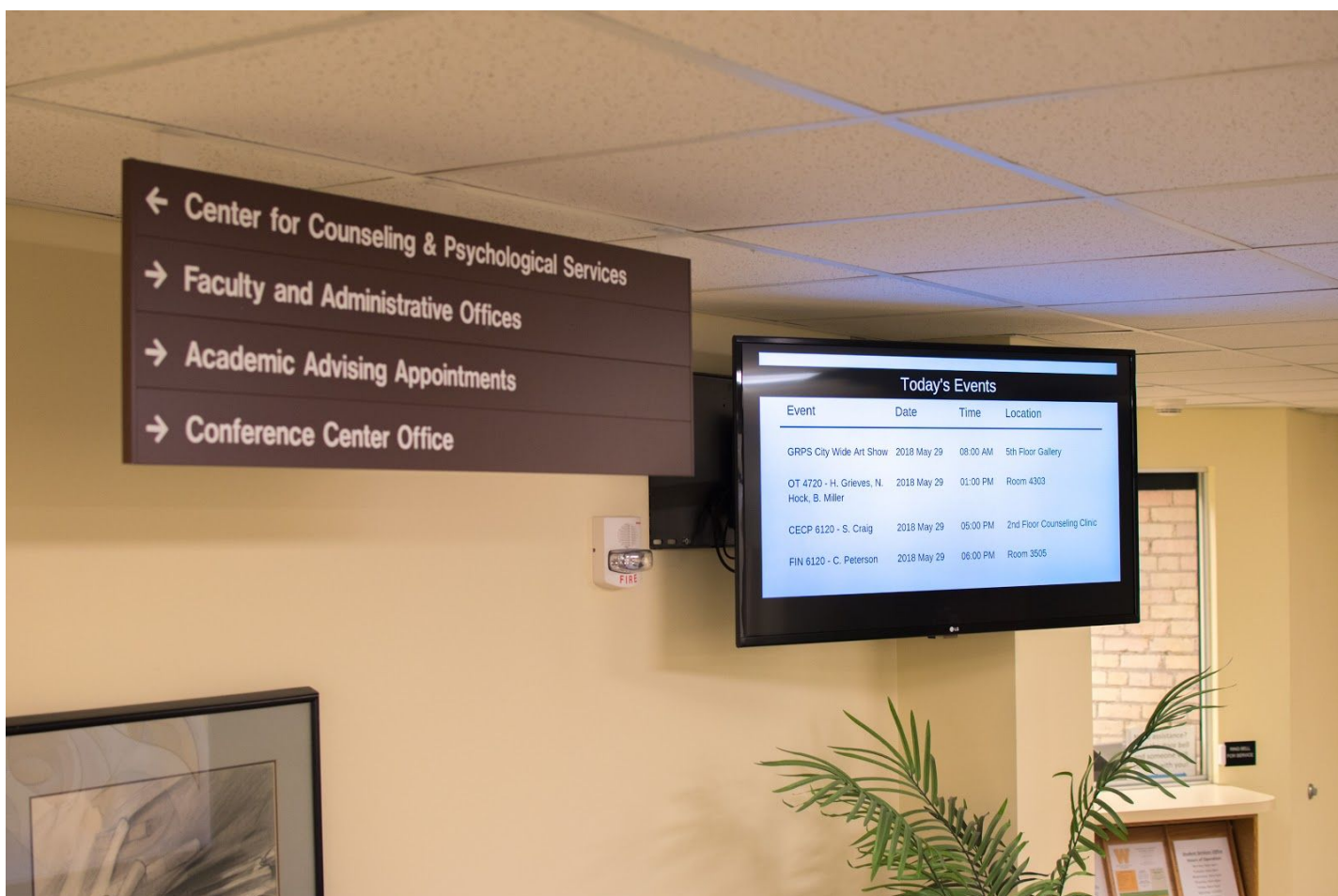
Administrators also use the screens to push out notices that would typically be sent out only via email, allowing more students and faculty to be informed and aware of various university developments and news.

As the managers of the system, the marketing team is able to add branded content like YouTube videos and advertisements into the scheduled mix of localized content at each location. The team had created a particular campaign around the school's tagline, "Welcome to Someday," and the digital signage network gave them a platform to reinforce the new branding.

"The digital signs provided consistent messaging at all locations," said Bryon Glock, the Assistant Director of IT at Western Michigan University. "The cloud-based software model gave us flexibility to serve many locations and it's really lightened the workload for everyone involved."

The Western Michigan University implementation also included the Mvix Signature Care support package which provides an entire library of premium content widgets, free device upgrades every 3 years and a lifetime warranty on all signage devices, among other exclusive benefits.

"It's not common for us to have support issues," said Bryon, "But when we do, we get a same-day response from the Mvix team. It's very rare that my people even have to touch the devices, as it's all done remotely by the Mvix support agent."

Components used:

- 30 Xhibit HD signage players
- Content management software - XhibitSignage
- Content integrations - calendar and event listings, weather, scrolling news feeds, YouTube videos
- Professional services - education & training, Signature Care Support

| The Results

The digital signage network helped facilitate the university's visual identity program and promoted standardized branding across locations.

As the signage content is all funneled through the marketing department, all displays now feature standardized branding across locations and look attractive and professional for passersby.

The enthusiasm for digital signs by students and faculty was a pleasant surprise to the marketing team. Faculty see the potential to post announcements and other messages through a public channel, while students prefer reading about university news and upcoming events on the screens rather than their email.

"We really got a positive reaction when we put up the displays," said Bryon. "It was easy to get everyone on board, and because of the general excitement around this technology, we found that several other places on campus wanted to adopt the Mvix solution."

Although one could imagine that maintaining a network of 30 digital signs would require significant upkeep, the Signature Care support package from Mvix has actually lightened the load of the university IT team.

"We've seen a really good return on investment, specifically from the support side," said Bryon. "We didn't have resources to dedicate to support, so with Signature Care, any one of our local administrative staff can call Mvix and

get support immediately."

"Mvix support is great and we like using it," added Carol Lanctot, a Network Administrator at Western Michigan. "I don't always have time to figure out an issue on my own, so I can email support and reliably get a response or fix within an hour."

The Mvix cloud-based digital signage network has provided Western Michigan University complete flexibility in scheduling and publishing branded messaging, while remaining an efficient and easy to support solution for the IT staff.

"We picked the software and it does everything we need it to do," said Bryon, "but with the scheduling features, it's not something we need to touch very often… and we appreciate that."

"The digital signs provid consistent messaging at all locations. The cloud-based software model gave us flexibility to serve many locations and it's really lightened the workload for everyone involved."

Bryon Glock, Assistant Director of Information Technology

About the Companies

About Mvix

At Mvix, our love for technology drives who we are and what we do. For over a decade, we have been a leading provider of content-rich digital signage software solutions that connect brands with people.

To date, our platform, XhibitSignage, powers over 50,000 active screens for clients including Virginia Tech, NASA, Sodexo, Discovery Channel, Nike and the University of Washington in a variety of applications that include employee communication, wayfinding, emergency messaging and customer communications.

About Western Michigan University

Western Michigan University is a learner-centered, discovery-driven and globally engaged public university that stands out among America's more than 4,600 higher education institutions.

Founded in 1903, WMU has grown to become a major national research university enrolling more than 23,000 students from across the United States and 100 other countries. It is based in Kalamazoo, Michigan, a friendly, top-rated college town situated close to large urban centers, great jobs and abundant recreational areas.

For more information, visit www.wmich.edu