Lowering TCO with the Right Media Player

Choosing the appropriate media player for a digital signage deployment can mean significant savings over the long term.

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DigitalSignageToday.com

A media player is a key component of a digital signage deployment, but the choice of media player can have a significant influence on the total cost of ownership for that deployment.

If the deployer buys a media player that is not powerful enough for the intended application, not only will he quickly become dissatisfied with its performance, he will likely have to replace it. As a result the original investment ends up being wasted dollars.

On the other hand, buying a media player that is more powerful than needed means the deployer has spent money on features that will probably never be used — money that could have been better spent elsewhere.

Therefore it's important that the deployer considers a number of key questions when choosing a media player.

Identifying the goal

Deployers need to understand the purpose of the application to determine the right system in terms of CPU, power and graphics performance, according to Arco de Vos, field application engineer manager at AOPEN Europe.

AOPEN is a global manufacturer of digital signage hardware solutions with the Digital Engine media player as the company's flagship product. Along with over ten years of experience in the digital signage industry, the company can give advice in providing the right media player solution for the right project.

Although a media player may seem relatively unimportant, people tend to forget that it is the heart of the entire solution, de Vos says. If the media player fails, the solution fails.

 "Ideally, we get involved in the beginning of a project, so we get the chance to ask questions about the goal of the installment, really looking at it from a different perspective where we also take into consideration the use of the system and the area where it will be installed. That way, we won't run into any surprises at a later stage."

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>
> — Christian Schulz,
>   IT director for Neo Solutions

AOPEN offers a variety of media players designed to fit a range of applications and environments in its AOPEN Digital Engine portfolio. The company can also manufacture a media player to a deployer's individual specifications, delivering the exact features needed.

Energy efficiency

Power consumption is another issue that influences the total cost of ownership. To improve energy efficiency, AOPEN players facilitate management of the systems from a central location, where they can be monitored or even powered on or off on demand. This power-management functionality ensures the digital signage network operates only when needed, lowering the total cost of ownership by reducing energy consumption and extending product life.

Ultimately, a media player should run in its comfort zone, reaching 100 percent of its potential only incidentally.

Researching playback hardware in combination with the target content and an efficient content-management suite can save several hundred dollars per unit, according to Christian Schulz, IT director for Hamburg, Germany-based digital signage integrator Neo Solutions.

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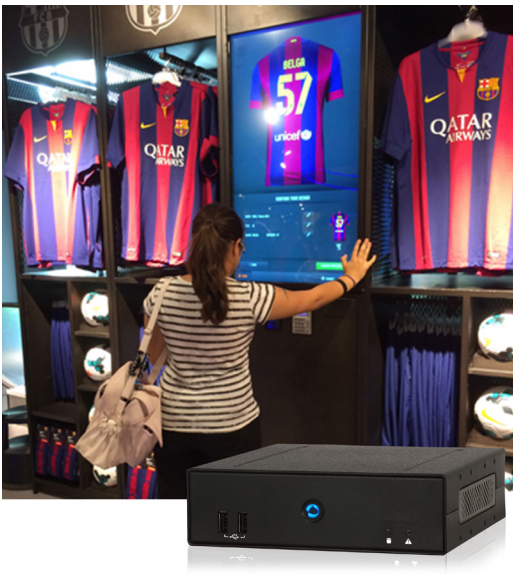
Price versus value

Along with planning for the immediate requirements of a digital signage network, deployers need to take a step back and consider what changes might occur as far as expanding that network and integrating emerging technology.

Graphic needs have changed dramatically in recent years. For example, 4K resolution is a relatively new standard, and more content providers are looking at 4K as a way to make their deployments stand out from the competition.

"AOPEN already has players in house to support 4K content," de Vos says. "Customers who are investing in large signage projects should consider such developments in order to make the right choice in terms of a media player at an early stage."

While a deployer might be able to save a few dollars on the initial setup by buying a lower-cost or lower-performance media player, investing in

a player that is designed to withstand the rigors of constant use will save more in the long run. Along with realizing the direct savings, the deployer can avoid the reputation damage that accompanies an out-of-order digital signage network.

"Our products are durable goods and have an extended product life, they are not typically worn out quickly when they are being used 24/7. Since they are made to last, the initial investment is more expensive but over the long term works out cheaper than nondurable solutions in the market that have to be purchased repeatedly over a short period of time," de Vos says.

About the sponsor:

AOPEN Inc., founded in 1996, is headquartered in Taiwan with offices in America, Europe, Asia and the Pacific. As a leading manufacturer of digital signage hardware solutions worldwide, AOPEN continues to expand its products and services for digital signage and other vertical application markets. AOPEN welcomes a wide range of different partners, from hardware to software and services, to enhance its full solution offerings. AOPEN's customers and partners range from governments and financial institutions to retailers, retail design firms, strategic consultants and branding agencies. With in-depth market knowledge, AOPEN can offer advice for complete digital signage platform solutions.

Top considerations when choosing a media player

What do I want to show on how many screens? Think of the resolution/quality of the content: movies, pictures, live content and so forth. This will help you decide what software is required. The combination of software and content will determine which player is needed.

Compatibility. Check the solution prior to installment or start with a pilot to determine the right combination of technology. You might find out that your initial plan needs some adjustment. Better to find out in the beginning then after a big roll out.

Durability. Technology keeps evolving, so be sure to pick technology that can withstand the rigors of use in commercial environments. Hardware should at least last three years, so be sure to pick a system that ensures longevity.

Service after the sale. What's the reach of your equipment provider? If your deployment is in Europe, for example, will you have to wait for parts to be shipped from the United States if there is a problem?

Source: AOPEN Europe