

MISSION:POSSIBLE

The Mediatec Group illustrates a how-to guide to source the right LED screen or digital signage solution for your venue.



NatWest Series, England Australia at the Rose Bowl. June 2010.

LED screens and digital signage have become an essential part of today's modern stadia and arenas offering – where the fan experience is King. This article looks at the average lifespan of an LED screen (which is over eleven years) and highlights how Facility Managers should set about deciding on a provider, and which technology is right for their venue.

Mediatec's mission is to: "Deliver memorable live experiences to its customer's audiences, through leading expertise and technology".

Backed by Stenna AB, Mediatec employs 320 people in Sweden, Denmark, Norway, Switzerland and Australia, and has a UK base in Hampshire. The Group boasts over twenty years experience in supplying not only LED video screens and digital signage but also specialising in all areas of delivering communications at live events.

As a forward thinking organisation, The Mediatec Group (or Mediatec) are aware of the need to consider the long term relationship being entered into when choosing a technology partner. The big question of 'due diligence' prior to any agreement will inevitably raise its head, and so it should. Establishing if you have identified the right company and the right products to meet the specific requirements of your venue is crucial.

When it comes to LED video screens and digital signage, Mediatec works with all the major manufacturers, carrying a rental fleet that includes BARCO, Lighthouse, Mitsubishi, Toshiba, Panasonic, and Chromatek LED Screens. In addition, Mediatec manufacture their own 'TecViz' range of LED and digital technology. The TecViz LED screens offer 100,000 hours of lifespan if you run them constantly for twenty four hours a day, seven days a week.

How-to Guide: Investing in LED Screens & Digital Signage

To follow is Mediatec's definitive guide to the considerations that need to be covered when choosing to invest in LED and digital technologies, in the form of a checklist to enable Facility Managers to make purchasing decisions that will lead to successful and continual partnerships:

- When selecting which suppliers you want to talk to, even before entering into an agreement with a supplier, you need to undertake due diligence. (Check out the suppliers' financial standing to ensure they will survive the current economic climate and be around to support you.)
- The supplier should have a solid trading history and have operated continuously. (If they failed during previous hard times, they may fail again, particularly in the current economic climate. If this happens as you have taken delivery of a new LED screen, who will look after the maintenance and repair? It is important to know they are here for the long haul or at least the lifespan of the equipment you are buying.)
- Is the supplier profitable and as such sustainable as a business? If so, are they able and do they invest in the latest technology?
- Does the supplier have a research and development arm looking at new and emerging technologies? (From your position you want to invest in the latest technology available, not out of date equipment. All too often people purchase screens that are no longer current, making the access to spares difficult and leading to difficulties in maintaining the screens in the years to come.)
- Can the supplier offer a complete 'in house' service, with one point of contact for you right through from manufacture to installation and maintenance?
- Choose a supplier who is independent and able to offer you an open view of the current screen technology available and not just interested in promoting their own products? (From your perspective, you want the right product for your project because it's right for you, not because it's the only one available to the supplier.)
- Is the supplier ecological? Do they have an environmental policy? Will they supply equipment that supports the climate and do they operate in an ethical way?
- Does the supplier have trained technicians for installation and maintenance based in your country? (They should be easily contactable if you have any questions or requests for advice and support.) Is the supplier significant enough that if you experience problems they can resolve them promptly and efficiently?



T in the Park Festival, Scotland. July 2010.

- Can the supplier support you with the relevant method statements, health & safety information, training and support you need to ensure the installation is a success?
- What are their products and are they right for your project? Do they work within the environment you want to use them? (All environments are unique – one size doesn't necessarily fit all.)
- Always consider the sightlines of your environment, the size of screen, what the screen will show, and how it will work with your visitors.
- Check the colour balance of the LED screens, to ensure they are correct and meet your needs.
- Are there delays on the camera feeds back to the screens if one camera is next to the screen and the other at the far end of the stadium or arena?
- Can the screen automatically self regulate to control brightness depending on the weather conditions, so that it extends the life of the screen and reduces power consumption?
- Finally, try to use the screen at an event before you buy to make sure that it works for you, within your environment, to meet your specific requirements.

Mediatec: Role of Honour

Having traded continuously for over twenty years, Mediatec has grown into a company that specialises in all areas of recording and delivering communications at live events, including Outside Broadcast, Satellite links, Giant Indoor and Outdoor full-colour LED video screens, perimeter and digital signage. Clients include: Panasonic at the Winter Games in Vancouver 2010; the Summer Games in London 2012; FIFA for the nine fan zones in South Africa for the 2010 World Cup; the ECB (England and Wales Cricket Board) for domestic, international and 20/20 matches; Volvo in its global motor shows; Goodwood for the Festival of Speed and Revival; and numerous horseracing venues, to name but a few.

Ben Green, Venue Support Manager, England and Wales Cricket Board, advised: "LED screens are an integral part of the cricketing experience for spectators up and down the country. Mediatec boast the expertise, cutting edge technology and reliability to ensure the project runs smoothly."

Moya Maxwell, Royal Opera House, added: "There is a great deal of work that goes into organising our summer events and the LED screen is the main focal point, so the quality of

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the screen has to be of the highest standard, which Mediatec UK achieve."

Richard Linn, Director of Media-7 UK Ltd speaking about the International Gaming Expo (IGE) that took place at Earls Court in London, commented: "The Mediatec team's approach to the event was highly professional. Mediatec delivers intelligent solutions and a high-level standard of technical support to ensure a seamless process and consistent LED screen performance. We look forward to working closely with them in the future."

In regards to choosing the right LED screen or digital signage, Mediatec's Garry Clulow advised: "Unplanned choices can prove extremely unwise and cause a great deal of problems. For example, I have spoken to people who purchased screens from companies who went into liquidation just weeks after installing a screen. Other organisations who's purchasing decisions were based purely on picking the lowest priced screen they were quoted on from overseas suppliers, only to find that within months of the installation the screen stopped working. Seven months later they were still trying to get the supplier to send over an engineer to diagnose the problems and repair the screen!

"Other stadiums in the UK have purchased a small screen, as recommended by the supplier, only to find it was too small for fans to see the action, they had to find more money and re-invest in a larger screen to resolve the issues, leaving them out of pocket."

To Rent or to Buy: That is the Question

Mediatec also rent out LED screens and digital signage. They have a fleet of indoor screens from 3mm to 10mm, outdoor from 10mm to 60mm, specialist screens that are lightweight &/or see through, along with twenty three Mobile LED screens from 10sqm to 88sqm.



Royal Opera House, Trafalgar Square. July 2010.

Garry continued: "Mediatec realised a long time ago that different environments and requirements needed different screens."

Whether an outright purchase or lease of LED screens and digital signage, Mediatec are aware that this is a major decision, choosing the right screen should add to the visitor experience. Thanks to their extensive rental fleet, Mediatec can offer interested parties the opportunity to experience the product before a relationship is entered into, enabling the client to ensure they choose the right company and product for use at their stadium or event.

As every environment is unique, Mediatec's goal is to ensure that the right technology solution is applied; the Group's research and development team are currently developing flexible full-colour LED video screens that can be curved – either convex or concave – and have an IP65 rating, making them suitable for both indoor and outdoor environments. In addition, Mediatec has considerable experience in the design and manufacture of LED screens, and supply to CE and RoHS (quality and environmental standards).

TecViz Range

Mediatec's own range of TecViz products are manufactured to an extremely high and exacting standard, and offer the following specifications:

- Only high quality cables and connectors are used, resulting in less interference
- High refresh rate cards 480-1000 MHz are used, to provide a more stable image during fast-moving pictures to remove on screen delays, particularly within sporting events
- Coated circuit boards are used in the LED modules, as they withstand moisture and condensation
- The power supplies used have a high specification from TDK (Japan). This provides lower power consumption and a longer lifetime of the product
- Only stainless steel screws are used for all of the modules, making servicing of the equipment easier and extending the life of the screen
- Deliver quiet and temperature controlled fans to provide effective cooling and extend the life expectancy of the LED modules

Software Solutions

Another key consideration is the software that controls delivery of content and images to the digital signage and LED video screens, as Garry Clulow advised: "The software should be easy to use and needs to be within the control of the stadium or arena. I have seen control software for LED screens that would baffle even NASA's experts!"

As Mediatec's screens are in use at major stadia and arenas throughout the summer, Facility Managers thinking of purchasing LED or digital signage can go along to see the screens working in a live environment. This will help garner a better understanding of the size, shape, sightlines, colour, brightness and connectivity of what can be shown on the screen.

"Mediatec can also demonstrate ways of developing interactivity with the full-colour LED video screens from simple solutions like filming the audience, texting or Bluetooth connectivity to the screen, to bespoke interactive packages – all designed to engage the audience and enhance the 'live experience'. Screens should add value to the day and engage visitors so they enjoy the event and will choose to come back again," confirmed Garry.

Permanent screens within stadia and arenas have a number of functions, so having made the right choice of partner, of screen, of position for the screen, and of what content will be shown on the screen, Facility Managers will know how it will support the 'live experience' at their venues.

But how does the proposition of buying and permanently installing an LED video screen or perimeter signage stack up commercially? Garry Clulow explained: "Mediatec can assist in a number of ways: firstly, we look at the relationship on a long term basis. Secondly, we are in a position to lease (subject to independent financial approval from a third party lender) the LED screens and digital signage by spreading the cost for up to five years and taking the payment out of the capital expenditure budget. Thirdly, we partner a number of media sales companies who have existing relationships and who look to sponsor and advertise if the environment is right."

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