

CASE STUDY
McCARRAN
INTERNATIONAL
AIRPORT (LAS)



McCarran International Debuts Ultra High-Definition Sign.

GOAL

Communicate easy to follow wayfinding to passengers entering the new Terminal D at Las Vegas McCarran International Airport.

SOLUTION

84" class (84.04" diagonal) Ultra High Definition Displays running Four Winds Interactive software.

RESULTS

The new display captures and holds travelers' attention while they ride down the escalator from the D gates.

INTRODUCTION

It's strange to see travelers stop and take pictures of an airport sign, but it's actually a common occurrence at McCarran International Airport (LAS) in Las Vegas. The Samuel Ingalls facility's new 84-inch ultra high-definition display is "stunning, not only in terms of clarity and rendering, but also in color," explains the airport's assistant director of aviation, Information Systems, Samuel Ingalls.

The top half of the airport's new sign displays wayfinding information, while the bottom half provides more commercial and entertainment-oriented content.

Dan Smith, director of digital signage for LG USA, refers to the airport's use of its cutting-edge product as "techorating." According to Smith, more and more airports are looking for ways to incorporate signage that blends into the terminal décor and has an artistic feel to it. "It beautifies, blends and informs," he explains. At LAS, however, the need to improve wayfinding Dan Smith in the airport's busiest area inspired the first commercial installation of LG's cutting-edge display.

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Samuel Ingalls
Assistant Director of
Aviation, Information Systems





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Dan Smith
Director of Digital Signage
LG USA

FILLING A NEED

Wayfinding became a tremendous challenge in the D Concourse rotunda shortly after LAS opened its new Terminal 3 in June 2012, explains Alison Rank, senior sales manager with Four Winds Interactive, the company that provides software for the new display and others throughout the airport.

Months after the opening, the airport rearranged operations to allow some D Concourse carriers to move their ticketing and baggage services to the new building. With this change, passengers arriving at the D gates now faced two terminal options, resulting in the need for more wayfinding assistance.

Frequent passengers were used to simply going down the escalator and veering left; so it was suddenly became imperative to capture their attention and make them aware of the new “fork in the road.” Without better wayfinding, the airport risked having passengers board the wrong tram to claim their baggage. Given the large size of the gathering area, large-scale directional wayfinding was a necessity, explains Smith. The airport’s previous smaller, static image just wasn’t visible enough — travelers were spinning their heels in the rotunda, trying to figure out their next move, he explains.

Local culture also influenced selection of the 84-inch Ultra HD display. Décor in Las Vegas is infamously extreme, with a lot of noise and other distractions competing to grab customers’ attention. LAS needed to refocus airport visitors and retain their attention long enough to make navigating less stressful and more seamless. According to the airport, its new screen does just that. The new display “really captivates its audience,” reports Smith.

LAS officials also had tech-savvy business travelers in mind when they decided to install the display, even though they’re not the stereotypical Vegas demographic. Volumes of business travelers fly into LAS each year for high-end technology tradeshow and conferences, explains Ingalls. So it was crucial to have the new display working as exhibitors and planners arrived for the International Consumer Electronics Show that began on January 8. Because the airport didn’t begin conversations with LG until late last October, the timeline was tight for the display to be ready. It took an overnight installation by R.O.E. Marketing, but the LG display went live on January 4. Although the construction, contracting, shipping and overall logistics of the project were a challenge, the airport and its vendors pulled out all the stops to make it a reality, recalls Ingalls.

Because the D Concourse is now a “decision point,” it was important for the large screen to capture and hold travelers’ attention while they ride down the escalator from the D gates into the rotunda, he

The 84”
Display Acts As
A Decision Point
And Captures Travelers
Attention In The
New D Concourse.

adds. With help from the new display, they're able to focus on wayfinding information and make their decisions before they step off the escalator. "The airport overall is better off, and our customers are too," relates Ingalls.

PIXEL POWER

Before LG approached the airport, Ingalls had never seen an ultra high-definition display. The difference between it and a regular consumer high-definition television astounded him.

While the airport staff was excited about implementing the LG product, they also wanted to keep messaging consistent throughout the airport, notes Rank, referring to Four Winds' contribution to the project. Alliance Airport Advertising, the agency that handles indoor advertising for the airport, was also important in developing the agreement with LG, adds Ingalls.

Cutting-edge display equipment requires the airport to maintain a high level of content, he notes: "You can't just go out and easily pick up or render something in ultra HD. There is very heavy computing power required."

While Ultra HD screens can display traditional high-definition content, the opposite is not true. According to Ingalls, the number of pixels is what makes the new screen dynamic in more ways than one. Consequently, it was vital to have a vendor like Four Winds with the capability to create and manage content for the new digital standard.

The Ultra HD 4K takes display technology to a whole new level, says Ingalls. While LAS' wayfinding messages won't be overly dynamic, the lower screen will demonstrate more of the display's visual capabilities. Rank foresees ads targeting specific trade show attendees, holiday greetings, event promotions and even emergency messaging all as good fits. Artwork is another option for the aesthetically pleasing and simple screen, adds Smith.



LG's Displays Make The Travelers Experience Overall Better.

The flexibility of Four Winds' software is an important element, notes Rank. "It can run multiple formats back-to-back," he explains. "It can be a video followed by a PowerPoint, followed by an image."

Ingalls describes the wayfinding portion of the display as fairly straightforward, with arrows pointing to baggage claims and airline logos directing passengers to their intended locations.

With designers continuing to tweak the wayfinding format, Ingalls says the real test is whether information is legible to travelers at the top of the escalator. "Ultra HD has really brought us the capability for this, which we wouldn't have otherwise," he says.

As LAS discusses a variety of future ultra HD options, Ingalls predicts that the format will become a new standard and that stunning signage will begin appearing at airports nationwide. But for now, visitors continue to stop and stare at the large, crystal-clear display in the D Concourse rotunda.

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