



Crestron DigitalMedia 8G™ Provides Ultimate Entertainment Experience at Virgin Airlines Lounge in Heathrow Airport.

Background

First class lounges in airports are considered calm havens amongst the hectic terminals that surround them. Excellent places for business travellers to stay connected, informed and entertained, the renovation of Virgin's 'Clubhouse' Upper Class Lounge at Heathrow Terminal 3 breaks new ground with its newly opened HD multiscreen area. The impressive fifteen screen wall was installed by Copthorne-based systems integrator Avensys features Crestron's ground-breaking DigitalMedia™ system.

The Clubhouse is Virgin's worldwide flagship lounge featuring six distinct areas for rest and relaxation. The lounge houses an observation deck, gallery, roof garden, cocktail bar and sofa lounge complete with power and data ports for personal

computers. The new state-of-the-art multiscreen area allows passengers to watch movies, sporting events, news and television programs comfortably.

Avensys was bought in to upgrade the existing projection system that had become outdated. Taking a creative approach to the client brief, Avensys proposed a new 15-screen media wall to replace the projection system and a full upgrade of all other displays in the lounge to HD models. Crestron DigitalMedia was installed to ensure seamless HD distribution to the multiple displays.

The Challenge

One of the first challenges Avensys faced was bringing in large amounts of equipment that required security checks at the airport. Working closely with Virgin's facilities and maintenance team, Avensys scheduled load in times and dates for equipment to be moved, as per the project schedule. The detailed pre-planning allowed for a smooth delivery of hardware.

After technical and building site surveys, Avensys determined that the wall supporting the multiscreen display would need strengthening to cope with the weight of the new equipment. The company used in-house staff to design and build a new support structure. To maintain customer service levels while work was being carried out on the new area, Avensys installed a floor to ceiling draped off area, complete with temporary displays.

The Solution

The DigitalMedia system, complete with the latest 8G technology, required each display device to have a dedicated cable to supply HD video, device control and Ethernet. This presented some logistical challenges as within Clubhouse there are no access hatches in the ceiling – a feature designed to preserve the sleek, seamless look of the interior. Avensys ran all the cabling around the perimeter of the area where some ceiling grids were removable, while other cables ran under the floor.

Systems At A Glance

Avensys also knew that the system had to be easy for Virgin staff to control. Avensys installed a Crestron TPMC-V15 touch panel and designed an intuitive interface. The new program features a map of the lounge and gives the user as much information about the current status of the system as possible. A wireless iPad®, powered by Crestron Mobile Pro® G software, complements the fixed panel to allow staff to control the lounge and make changes virtually to meet their customers' expectations.

“ 8G ensures we deliver seamless HD signals across the entire lounge, albeit in an area not designed with AV distribution in mind.”

Alex Williams, Project Manager for Avensys





Crestron DigitalMedia is distributed to each display in the lounge and allows Virgin staff to direct any of the Sky HD or Blu-ray players to any display device by the simple touch of a button. The full HD preview panel is located at the reception desk so staff can make changes to devices without being directly in front of the display screen. The system utilizes DigitalMedia quick switch technology to eliminate blank screens when changing to a different source.

“This was one of the draws of the Digital Media and 8G,” says Alex Williams, Project Manager for Avensys. “It is powerful enough to cope with the many challenges of HD distribution, and when we were drawing up the equipment list we realized it was the only system powerful enough to meet the demands of the project.”

The video wall is powered by Crestron DM-MD16X16 DigitalMedia Switcher. The switcher handles all switching of sources to allow guests to enjoy a range of screen formats. A Crestron AV2 processor provides the backbone for the control

functions, with 6 Sky HD boxes and 5 Blu-ray players supplying content.

Audio for the lounge is distributed by two music servers which update with new music on a daily basis. Scheduled mood changes complement the times of day to suit lounge ambience. When in the multiscreen zone, customers can use headphone stations and tune into any of the content that is being displayed on the 15-screen media wall.

Benefits

The project has been a huge success for both Virgin staff and passengers. “Our Upper Class Lounge passengers expect first-class service on all levels,” says Virgin IT Operations Manager, Darrel Etherington. “With the new media wall and other HD displays we have achieved that.

“Feedback internally is positive as the Crestron system is intuitive and allows us to respond to customer needs as they arise in a quick and efficient manner,” adds Etherington.