



Airports go high-def in a big (and crystal clear) way

Using solutions developed by C-nario Inc., media giant JCDecaux deployed the Prestige Digital Network throughout U.S. airports.

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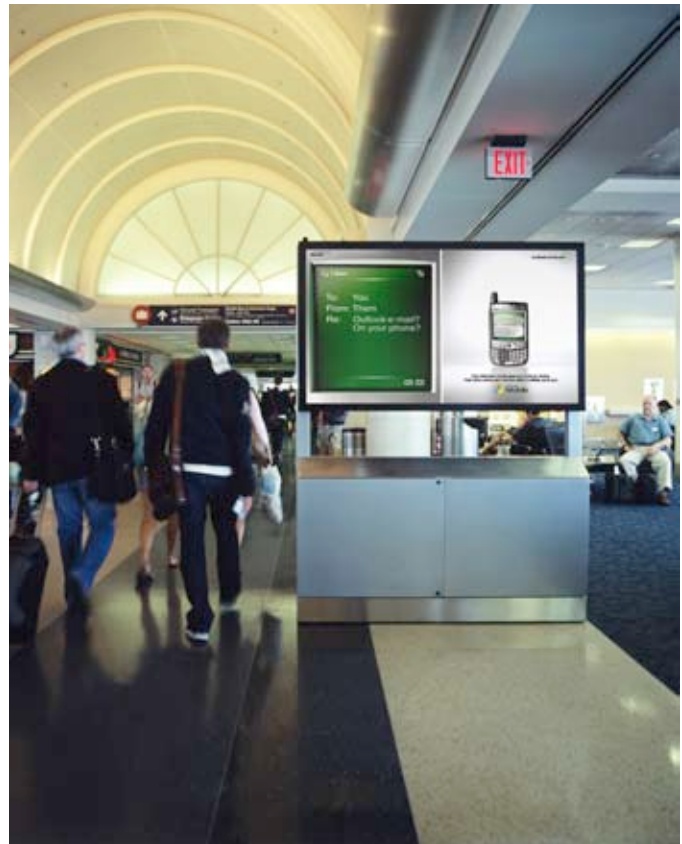


Founded in 1964, JCDecaux has become one of the world's largest advertising conglomerates. The company has its roots in Lyon, France, but it has rapidly expanded into an international giant with more than 657,000 advertising panels across 45 countries. JCDecaux has more billboards deployed in Europe than any competitor, and it remains the largest street furniture company in the world.

In recent years, JCDecaux has also proven to be a pioneer in the realm of digital advertising. Static panels have been replaced with digital screens, and emphasis is now placed on "wowing" consumers with visually dynamic, colorful content. This industry movement led to JCDecaux's decision to partner with C-nario, a global provider of end-to-end, digital-signage-software solutions.

The partnership paid off in 2006 when C-nario provided the software platform for the "art tunnel" in New York's JFK International Airport. That solution consisted of 40 synchronized, 70-inch digital displays deployed along the tunnel that connects the gates to the arrival hall at American Airline's largest hub. The deployment was a success, and JCDecaux quickly sold the ad space to

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Microsoft, which uses it for enhancing the company's branding and for launching new products.

Shortly thereafter, JCDecaux tapped C-nario for an even greater challenge.

The Challenge

JCDecaux wanted to deploy a fully digital, high-definition advertising network for airports, with 70-inch LCD screens that would be strategically placed throughout the buildings to reach all arriving and departing passengers. The new network was called the Prestige Digital Network, and the aim was to enable advertisers to display static, semi-static and full-motion images.

The Solution

Eric Penot, chief information officer for JCDecaux, said C-nario had so impressed the company with its work on the JFK art tunnel that they decided to turn to C-nario again for the Prestige Network's software platform.

What made C-nario stand out from competitors, according to Penot, was the company's ability to handle high-resolution content without sacrificing clarity.

"They were really the only ones who had the quality of playback that we needed for our Prestige Digital Network," Penot said. "It's difficult to find an equivalent software that is able to drive high-resolution images – 1080p – across several screens from one player, while synchronizing them to the frame when you have several screens that are next to each other, moving together. They were really the only ones who were able to do that."

The high-definition content would be displayed on several 70-inch Samsung LCD displays, double-sided so that the content could be viewed from either direction.

Eyal Rom, President of C-nario, Inc., C-nario's North American subsidiary, said that, for most signage deployers, this charge could indeed present a challenge. As a general rule, picture quality

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diminishes as the number of screens playing high-definition content from a single player increases. However, he says his company pioneered a way to run four high-definition screens on one computer by using advanced software architecture without compromising even one pixel while using each screen's native resolution to create a synchronized megapixel canvas.

Additionally, C-nario worked closely with JCDecaux to customize its C-nario Advertiser ad-distribution and management system to run online and to interface with JCDecaux's pre-existing inventory-management software, which is used to provide quotes and book reservations for digital signage ad space. C-nario was able to merge its software with JCDecaux's, creating a seamless transition from the point when a client would purchase ad space and upload its content to the digital signage network.

Penot said his company was more than satisfied with the smooth integration of the two systems – and because C-nario's software is Web-based, he says it is extremely easy to use.

“The module that C-nario developed for us allows us to schedule content into those slots that have been sold to clients,” he said. “So we can do it ourselves, or we can even let advertisers do it themselves through a portal. That's the innovation.”

Rom said that using the C-nario Advertiser online platform means that, unlike other signage management systems that are not Web-based, content can be up and running instantly.

The key difficulty, according to Rom, was creating an online interface that would incorporate the various review and approval processes necessary before the content could run.

“We sat down with JCDecaux to analyze the flow of the process, from getting the screen space availability per location and demographics (in order to reach the target audience effectively) to selling the spaces to the ad agencies,” Rom said. “In addition, there was a need to comply with the transit authority's requirement to review and approve the content online.

“Installation, operation, monitoring and control were other challenges in this large-scale network,” he added. “Diversified Media Group (also known as DMG) managed-services provider for the Prestige project,

uses our real-time monitoring, control and reporting tools to eliminate downtime and to provide proof-of-play for the agencies.”

In addition to JFK, the Prestige Network has already been deployed in airports in Los Angeles, Dallas, San Diego and Minneapolis, according to Rom, who said the company plans to have 300 screens deployed in 10 airports by the end of the year.

Penot said the Prestige Network comes at the perfect time, because it is difficult to keep up with airports’ growing demands for digital advertising.

“The airports want it,” he said. “It actually started as a requirement from the airports. They really wanted this type of advertising rather than standard, static advertising. It looks better. It gives our airports a better image. And the good thing about it is that our advertisers love it and we have been very successful selling it.”