Portland State University Integrates a Series of Mondopads to Create Cutting Edge "Decision Theater" Collaboration Space

InFocus

With the goal of creating a high-tech collaboration space for students, researchers, and community stakeholders to come together, Portland State University created a Decision Theater using a custom installation of seven Mondopads. This unique collaboration space now offers simultaneous opportunities for the large scale visualization of data and images, along with individual or group work and business-class video conferencing.

"Internal stakeholders originally wanted a multi-tile video wall but we determined that individual displays, specifically the InFocus Mondopad, which we have in other campus locations, held more value for the room and the university given their ability to tile a few together to make a single image or to break apart to be used as seven separate all-in-one displays."

- Vivek Shandas
Professor, College of Urban and Public Affairs
Research Director, Institute for Sustainable Solutions

Challenge

Four years ago, Portland State University—in the heart of downtown Portland, OR—embarked on a mission to create a meeting and collaboration space for university researchers and regional stakeholders. The university envisioned a place for local government and private companies to work alongside PSU researchers on a variety of projects that link data sets, visualization, and decisions. Their goal was to accelerate research and learning in areas such as forest fire prediction and prevention—where large-scale data visualization permits people to see patterns they otherwise could not predict or determine—and also to create a community resource available to host local

businesses, such as architecture firms, or other regional stakeholders, such as first-responders.

PSU sought to create a room with large visuals, powerful computing, robust video conferencing capabilities, and a collaborative, modular environment that enabled teams to examine data and reach decisions. The room, loosely titled a "Decision Theater" and modeled after similar rooms at Arizona State University and The University of Chicago, would be an immersive multimedia experience that encouraged independent work and group collaboration, both within and beyond the four walls of the university.

Solution

The original idea was to install a multi-panel video wall in PSU's "Market 123" building. The biggest concern was that while the video wall could display multiple smaller images or a single giant image, it was not conducive to individuals or smaller groups working separately on other challenges. A single video wall solution simply didn't provide the flexibility or modularity they needed.

Doug McCartney, Director of Instruction Technology Services at PSU and the current President of the Consortium of College and University Media Centers, had previously worked with InFocus to integrate touchscreen displays—including the InFocus Mondopad and InFocus JTouch—in various university buildings and classrooms over the past several years. After examining other options in the marketplace,

"A person with minimal training or experience can easily come in the environment and use it."

– Doug McCartney, Director of Instruction Technology Services at PSU

Doug and his team went back to InFocus to get some help in creating a modular collaborative environment.

The ideal solution would offer both a large-scale, 360-degree view of data and images, as well as the ability to work in pods or groups on a single unit and then pair all units together to view something larger. With this in mind, PSU chose to focus on the Mondopad product line because it offered a robust suite of features that contribute to an active learning environment, including a touchscreen interface, camera, speaker bar, compatibility with their existing Extron control, extensive connectivity, and the seamless ability to integrate Mondopod into their existing AV systems.

Ultimately, PSU tiled the front of the room with three 80-inch Mondopads, which are capable of displaying multiple smaller images or one giant image. They also installed four 70-inch Mondopads on the remaining three walls to create group huddle spaces. The result is a high performance, multi-purpose room that allows researchers and community members to easily visualize data and individual or group work and collaborate with others, both on and off campus.

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