

USER FRIENDLY

Brigham And Women's Hospital Staff Creates Digital Signage Content With Ease

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BOSTON, MA—A digital signage system is a bit like real estate—three factors stand out: “Ease of use, ease of use, and ease of use.”

Or at least that's what Justin Edwards, account manager for Newton, MA-based Smithcurl Communications, said of a signage network installed last year at Brigham and Women's Hospital (BWH) in Boston: “Ease of use was the one factor they kept on stressing. They wanted something so easy that everybody could use it.”

No wonder. The new signage network is used at six locations affiliated with BWH. They currently have more than 100 staff members trained to post messages.

The network consists of 27 Carousel players from Tightrope Media Systems, each showing messages on a 52-inch or 65-inch Sharp Aquos LCD display. The players are connected to the hospital's wide-area IP network, with bulletins created on and served by Tightrope's Carousel Enterprise application. Users access the server-based system from any computer on the network via a web browser.

Message content is the responsibility of individual departments within the hospital network, with the overall system managed by BWH Public Affairs. “Brigham and Women's Hospital has hundreds of departments across multiple locations,” public affairs director Dinah Vaprin explained. “We needed a web-based system that could be decentralized, enabling users with very little technical experience to create their own bulletins.”

The Carousel software is password-protected, and once a message is created it must be approved by someone with administrative access before it can be scheduled. “In the beginning we did a lot of hand-holding and template creation for individual departments and users,” Vaprin said. “But once a template is created it's very easy for users to just fill in boxes to make a bulletin.”

“There are other browser-based signage systems, but this is the easiest one I've seen,” Edwards added. He said the installation was easy as well. The hospital's IT department provided



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network and power drops and blocking on walls where monitors would go. His crew installed the displays and Carousel players on Peerless wall mounts. “One display is in a two-story lobby about 25 feet in the air, but that was the most difficult part of the project.”

The new signage network is used at six locations affiliated with Brigham and Women's Hospital.

Smithcurl provided Brigham's IT department with the Carousel software, and they loaded it on their own server. “As long as the players are on the same network,” Edwards explained, “they're pretty easy to install. They handle their own IP ad-

dress assignments.”

Smithcurl also provided user training, but Tightrope sent a representative out to help. “We did two two-hour sessions,” Edwards said. “And then I've done a couple of one-hour sessions for the different groups within Brigham and Women's.” This initial training was enough to get the hospital's staff up and running. Now BWH Public Affairs handles all the training of new users.

Edwards said he had only one service issue in the first six months of operation, and then his technician was able to solve it on the spot. “Tightrope has been amazing,” he said. “They have an online forum. They have staff online. They have chat rooms devoted to helping people out. Their customer support and their installer support are at a level that I've never seen before.”

The signage system has proven very popular at the hospital as well. “On the main campus zone,” Vaprin reported, “we usually have more than 50 bulletins in queue and 20 to 30 running at any given time. Out of the 103 users who have been trained so far, about 40 have logged in and posted or edited bulletins in the past month.” ■

PETE TUFRANO