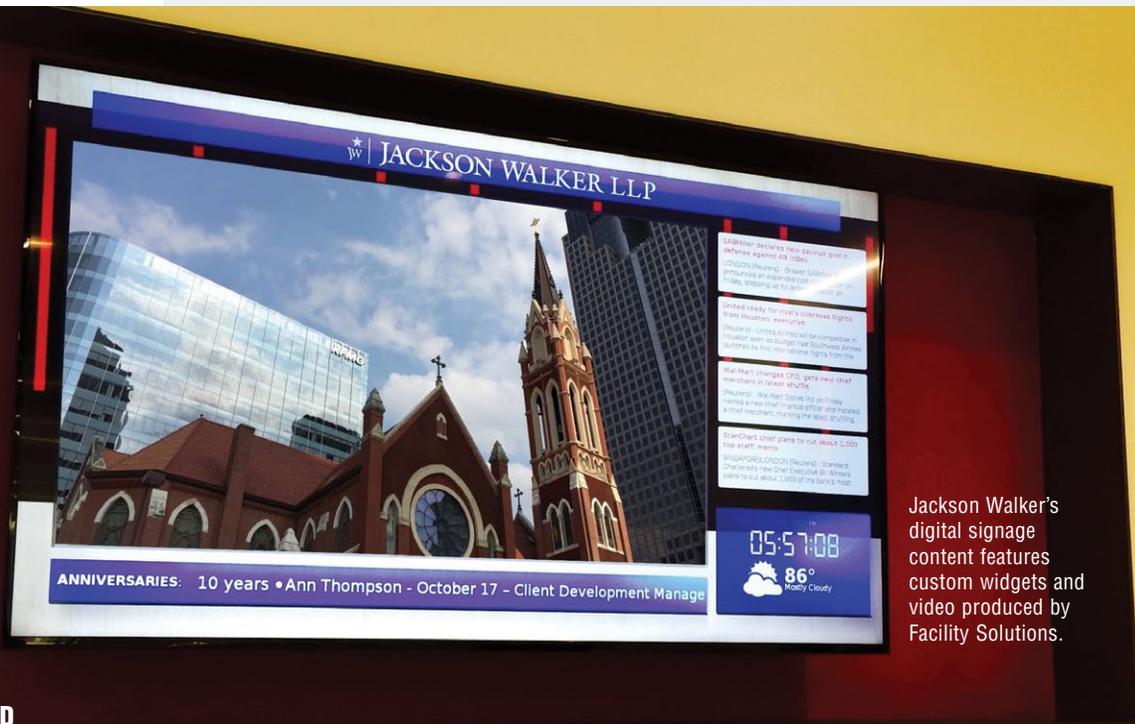


The Big Picture

What's your share?

By Shonan Noronha, EdD



Jackson Walker's digital signage content features custom widgets and video produced by Facility Solutions.

Digital signage is the most visible part of the digital AV landscape in public spaces, at institutions and in corporate offices. That's one reason signage is a rapidly growing part of the AV systems design and integration business. New installations, as well as those involving significant upgrades, now include both customer- and employee-facing displays. As technology and communication managers are aware, there's more to digital signage than just the physical displays and media players for content distribution. What additional services can you render to corporate clients to ensure that their digital signage project is a success?

From technology selection and content creation to managed services, systems integrators and other solutions providers have expanded their slate of signage-related offerings. More than a decade ago, several broadcast TV and commercial AV systems integrators

started offering remote management of their clients' digital signage systems, producing proof-of-play for advertiser-sponsored content and rights management of subscription-based content. In recent years, several low-voltage electrical contractors have recognized the benefits of partnering with AV systems integrators, while others have expanded their offerings to include digital signage system integration, as well as content creation.

The most useful direction for expansion or merger opportunity depends on the expertise and skills your company can bring to the equation. For example, Texas-based Facility Solutions Group Inc. (FSG, www.fsg.com), a low-voltage commercial electrical contractor, has added disciplines over the years to include lighting, audio/video and digital signage to meet the growing demands of its clients. The company started offering content creation services about five years ago, after thoughtfully hiring staff that could provide custom solutions. Recently, this strategic evolution led to the creation of a total AVL

and digital signage solution for Jackson Walker (JW), a leading law firm.

Customization can call for a variety of skills, depending on the unique features required by the client. "Our in-house coder and graphic designer created the custom time and weather widget used in Jackson Walker's digital signage," said Brannon Bourland, FSG's Director of Marketing Communications, who is also responsible for Content Creation. "Likewise, we custom-coded the widget for the Reuters newswire feed. The code is housed in BrightSign players that are attached to Samsung displays and connected to Jackson Walker's local area network. If it becomes necessary for us to recode some aspect of these widgets, we are able to host the test code on a website the client can access, and then house the completed code on their players and network," Bourland explained.

In another instance for the same client, FSGmedia, FSG's internal group that provides content services to clients for a fee, was able to quickly respond to the need for video to be displayed on the signage screens. "JW's new HQ offices

are in the Dallas Arts District, and our client expressed a desire to feature video about nearby points of interest. Video footage of the area did not exist, so our in-house video production team sprung into action, going out into the streets of the Art District to capture the area's unique features and venues," said Bourland. "The video was captured, edited and produced, and met with JW's immediate approval. Total time from initial request to the final product being displayed on the digital signage screens was six hours," he noted.

A more in-depth look at the challenges and triumphs of the AV installation at Jackson Walker's new headquarters will be featured in *IT/AV Report*, distributed with the September issue of *Sound & Communications*. A key takeaway from Bourland regarding content creation as a service offered by FSG: "This turnkey solution is offered with the ease and simplicity of our single point of contact and single invoicing point, complementing the solution with excellent customer service."

As more AV devices and solutions become IP-enabled, the demand for integrating them into a wider range of applications is increasing. For example, the demand for mobile integration is spreading to include interactivity with digital signage content, BYOD usage in collaborative conferencing and integration with point-of-sale devices.

With the growing demand for video across all distribution channels, mobile devices as a central point of user control and other convergent solutions, there is a growing demand for both broad technical expertise and efficient business practices that can add substantial value to AV and digital signage solutions.

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