



StrandVision Helps Hyatt Regency McCormick Place through XP Transition – Upgrades other Vendor’s Outdated Digital Signage Networks

StrandVision recently came to the rescue of [Hyatt Regency McCormick Place](#) in Chicago when it was faced with a corporate-mandated transition away from Microsoft Windows XP resulting from the end of Microsoft security updates for that operating system. In addition to upgrading its own installed [digital signage network](#), StrandVision also converted three networks from another digital signage supplier. The entire project – four electronic signage networks, including a lobby video wall information center and a digital signage feed to the hotel’s in-room cable network – was completed by StrandVision within two business days of receiving the request.

Early in 2014 Hyatt Regency McCormick Place Manager of Information Technology Mohamed Mara faced a challenge: Microsoft had announced that it was ending its security update support for the XP operating system. Hyatt also warned him that corporate IT would automatically shed all XP systems from its corporate network at midnight on April 7, effectively isolating all of the at-risk systems. In addition to Mohamed’s challenges with the general IT systems he had four digital signage network channels that operated on XP sitting on the network.

Early in the year he spoke with Mike Strand about updating the StrandVision Digital Signage system. Mike was quite familiar with the system since it had been running without interruption in Chicago for two years and was similar to StrandVision Digital Signage employee communication and front-of-house networks at 83 Hyatt Hotels driving digital signage content to over 200 screens around the world.

Mohamed learned that the StrandVision upgrade would be no problem since Mike could supply StrandVision’s [R360 Linux digital media player](#). Mike also spent time with Mohamed explaining the process and how StrandVision’s cloud approach to digital signage would be reliable, easy for authorized users to change content from anywhere, and when installed the signage would run immediately minimizing down time.

Mohamed didn’t have the same luck with his other digital signage vendor that had three signage systems in the hotel – a video wall in the lobby, a couple of restaurant menu boards and a feed into the guest cable network. The systems were complicated to use forcing Mohamed to personally

make all content changes. He was also not able to come to an agreement with them on the upgrade design, cost and timing, further complicating the upgrade process. With no front-of-house digital signage solution in sight and the midnight April 7 deadline looming, Mohamed knew he had a problem.

Knowing that StrandVision consistently offers excellent support, he finally gave up on the other vendor and on March 25th talked with Mike about possibly replacing the other vendor’s networks. On Thursday, April 3, the contract was approved for StrandVision to take over the front-of-house electronic signage and install the Linux digital media solution.

One Day to Pre-stage

Mike’s team immediately began preparing the StrandVision Digital Signage accounts on the Linux players, knowing that the new units would be used to bypass embedded XP players on each of the other vendor’s displays. His team also prepared a few [PC-2-TV.net](#), high-definition (HD) video extenders so that the new units could be housed in secure areas. At the same time he arranged for the digital signage hardware to be installed at the Hyatt before the Monday night deadline.

In the meantime, a Hyatt marketing associate took the 30-minute content administrator training and began harvesting and recreating the digital signage pages from the non-StrandVision networks and updating them to make them current (something that was not easy to do with the old system). She uploaded them to the new StrandVision front-of-house electronic signage accounts using StrandVision’s Content Management System

(CMS) in the cloud at StrandVision.com. She also took advantage of StrandVision's PowerPoint conversion utility to create high-res images of the pages for easy uploading and distribution. She had all the content updated in about two hours.

One Day to Install

By 9:30 on Monday morning the 7th a StrandVision technician was on site at the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place ready to go.

He started with the StrandVision employee communication system with two screens in the employee cafeteria swapping out the embedded XP players with a Linux player. Once it was wired and turned on it automatically logged onto the StrandVision cloud server and began streaming the electronic signage content.

The technician then installed the player that feeds the cable head end for the in-room information channel. It broadcasts meeting schedules and hotel amenities and news. StrandVision is able to drive the meeting announcements directly from Hyatt's room scheduling software and can include other Web-based information, such as weather.

StrandVision also added a new feature that allows Hyatt to sell access to its cable channel by either uploading a video commercial to the StrandVision server in the cloud or simply inserting a DVD or USB thumb drive into StrandVision's Linux digital media player. The system is set for the DVD to override the normal digital signage pages and resume the normal programming when the DVD is removed or stops playing. This is an attractive feature for the Hyatt Regency McCormick Place since it's a convention hotel with many opportunities to rent time on the in-room cable network.

Next up was the lobby signage, a four-screen video wall (four 46" TVs) that shows Hyatt-generated welcome messages and hotel information. The previous vendor's XP player was replaced with StrandVision's Linux digital media player that was placed in a secure area using the same cabling. Since the page information was pre-loaded in the StrandVision cloud server the pages were playing immediately after registering.

As an added benefit StrandVision's cloud-based service adds the ability to display dynamic information for outside data sources, such as city and airport bus schedules, flight schedules, and traffic that can be updated every minute – virtually any Web information is now available.

The final installation was for the Forno Italian Trattoria restaurant with two vertical menu displays. The StrandVision approach enables them to add dynamic information, such as hotel meetings and events on a split screen with the top two-thirds dedicated to the menu and the bottom for current news – once again displaying weather and tied directly into Hyatt's meeting scheduling system.

All of these conversions were completed before any of the signage networks experienced outages due to the midnight deadline.

The New System

The result is four new StrandVision Digital Signage networks – three conversions and an update that bypass six XP computers using four Linux players and a few video extenders. StrandVision's cloud servers now remotely monitor, manage and update the systems automatically over the Internet.

The systems are also more flexible and expandable. Digital signage content that was previously difficult to add to the displays and required IT involvement can now be edited and updated by non-technical administrative staff simply by logging into StrandVision's portal in the cloud. Additionally, dynamic information, including traffic and schedules, can easily be harvested from outside Web sources for timely display.

"StrandVision really came through on a short deadline," said Mohamed. "Mike Strand understood my problem and had the solutions. He delivered on everything that he promised and we're beginning to take advantage of StrandVision's additional capabilities. Best of all, I don't think anyone was even aware that four employee- and customer-facing systems had been replaced – all in a day."