

The Barbican, Europe's largest multi-arts and conference venue, installs intelligent digital signage system from Sony



Background

Designed in the 1960's and constructed in the 1970's, the Barbican was opened in March 1982 by Her Majesty The Queen who described it as 'one of the wonders of the modern world.' Owned, funded and managed by the Corporation of London — the third largest sponsor of the arts in the UK — it was built as 'the City's gift to the nation' at an historical capital cost of £161million, equivalent to almost £400million today.

Open 363 days a year, the Barbican presents a uniquely diverse programme of world-class performing and visual arts, encompassing all forms of classical and contemporary music, international theatre and dance, visual arts and design and a cinema programme that blends first run films with special themed seasons.

Customer challenge/ business needs

In 2003 the Barbican initiated a redevelopment scheme to improve its foyers and entrances. The scheme was designed to create welcoming, attractive and stylish foyers that offer a proper sense of arrival at a major international arts and conferences venue. Architectural changes, including new entrances and facilities, were to be integrated with new lighting and signage to aid navigation through the centre while retaining the best qualities of the original building.

The foyers and hallways which have long served as a meeting point for visitors, had become cluttered with posters and confusing information boards, which were onerous for staff to manage and maintain.

As part of the redevelopment programme, Sony was selected to install an intelligent digital signage system to improve customer accessibility and increase the overall enjoyment of the Barbican experience.

Product(s):

- Plasma screens
- Sony Ziris™ content management software

‘The foyers are much more colourful now. The digital signage has replaced the clutter, modernised the spaces and given them new life.’

Chris Denton, Head of Marketing, Barbican.

The Sony solution

Sony designed and installed a system that delivers 20 independent channels of content to different areas within the Barbican. The solution includes Sony hardware, software and Sony Professional Services consultancy. An Electronic Information Display System (EIDS) comprises of 45 plasma and LCD screens throughout the Barbican, including a large 84" plasma screen in the main concourse.

Sony Ziris™ content management software supplies and controls the network of screens at the Barbican. The user-friendly technology enables staff to upload content and feed the individual channels.

The implementation

Sony’s one-stop-shop approach to digital signage provided a full, tailored solution to the Barbican. Sony Professional Services worked with the Barbican from the very start of the project, defining the initial requirements of the centre and then working to design, install and maintain a system that is impressive visually, yet simple to operate. The end result was much more than just a foyer full of plasma displays.

Customer benefits

Sony worked with the Barbican to showcase the latest venue technology and Sony Ziris™ software was tailored to offer a fast content approval system.

Sony Ziris software allows staff to create information displays on their own PCs and then upload playlists of the screens they have created to the LCD and plasma screens around the venue. The simplicity of the process ensures relevant content is displayed in the right places throughout the Barbican.

Screens around the venue are used to display navigational information, details of ‘What’s On,’ upcoming educational programmes and other marketing information, targeting specific audiences in different areas of the venue.

‘Sony provided us with a system that allows information to be updated easily and quickly by our own staff. This is so important for a venue like ours, where we have a lively and diverse programme of events, and little remains constant,’ commented Chris Denton of the Barbican.

Sony – the market leader

‘To maintain the Barbican’s position at the forefront of European arts and entertainment, we need infrastructure of a similarly high-calibre,’ continued Chris Denton of the Barbican. ‘For us, Sony provided the best deal in terms of product portfolio, knowledge and experience.’

‘Sony Professional Services has been working with the Barbican from the word go, defining the initial need of the centre and then working to design, install and maintain a system that is impressive visually, yet simple to operate,’ said Eric Siereveld, Director of Sony Retail, Transport & Venues.

Mark Taylor, Commercial Director at the Barbican, commented ‘the transformation has uncovered the Barbican’s original class and style and we’ve played to its strengths. With the help of our architects and partners, such as Sony, we’ve refocused the whole look and feel of the building. The lighting and the new front door will make a huge difference and we’re looking forward to showing off the new spaces to our clients – we think they’ll be amazed and pleased with the changes.’