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WebMD CASE STUDY

WebMD Transforms Environment into Technological Showspace Delivering Audio to Open Spaces with ClearOne

THE OPPORTUNITY

WebMD is a leading provider of health information services to consumers, physicians and other healthcare professionals. Through their mobile platforms, and public and private online portals, employers can access health-focused publications and health plans. When New York City facilities couldn't handle their demands, WebMD began to search for a space that could not only accommodate the physical needs of their

growing staff, but also their unique technology requirements. The new offices are located on two floors of an historic, 100-year-old building in downtown Manhattan. The centerpiece of this space is the Garden, a 2-story atrium lobby that is the visual focal point and central meeting space.

The client challenged the design team to come up with a space that could serve the needs of diverse business groups while offering employees a place to unwind, meet informally and collaborate. The result is a stunning space that embodies the technological leadership of this company within their industry.

THE CHALLENGE

A critical requirement of the Garden was the capability to hold large, town hall type meetings that could be attended by all employees and broadcast to remote participants by streaming over the internet. Additionally, the space was to function as a gathering place for employees and the many celebrities, and politicians who visit the company's headquarters. Versatility was a key requirement because of the changing technical needs that any meeting could have; voice reinforcement from nearly any location, presentation capability to small or large groups, remote participation from anywhere in the world and other challenging requirements are all accommodated.

In addition to the Garden space, there was a need for meeting spaces throughout the facility. A conference center was built around the Garden so that the meeting rooms could function as stand-alone rooms as well as breakout spaces when large events were held in the Garden. With so many potential visitors to the new facility, it became apparent to the design

team that helping visitors navigate was going to be a crucial element of the design.

All of the technological challenges presented to the team had to be balanced and integrated into an aggressive construction schedule in a historic building. The building had many infrastructure challenges that the construction team had to work around and within. By routing all audio and video signals over the data network using ClearOne's VIEW® Pro IP (internet protocol) AV distribution system, WebMD was able to send content anywhere in the facility, including digital signage and broadcast TV, without running any additional or proprietary cables.

The conference center is comprised of more than a dozen Huddle Rooms that each accommodate 4-6 users, 8 conference rooms equipped with large screen displays and audio conferencing capability and many with video conferencing as well. There is also a large meeting room equipped with a full contingent of AV technology, which can

accommodate over 20. ClearOne's **three-element Ceiling Microphone Arrays** and **CONVERGE® Pro DSP mixers** were used to provide clear, full duplex audio during electronic conferences.

The centerpiece of the Garden is the 20' long video display that serves as the central focal point of the space. This display is used by WebMD to share information about company events, news, local activities and to set the desired mood for the space, based on the day's activities.

There are multiple displays throughout the areas surrounding the Garden. These displays are used for overflow of the main display; and through the use of ClearOne's View Pro solution, they do double duty by providing information on events, locations and other pertinent information.

One of the unique design solutions that was implemented is a number of small LED displays set into the rock walls that make up the seating areas within the Garden. In addition to showcasing electronic art, these displays are used to reinforce the messages being shown on the other displays.

HB provided a whole-house audio solution for the entire space, giving WebMD the capability to make announcements to everyone in the facility. The audio system, again using ClearOne products, is also used for town hall type meetings that originate in the Garden. It can be broadcast anywhere in the facility as well as over the Internet.

A fitness center rounds out the amazing amenities of the space. HB provided an audio system for instructors and students along with displays throughout the space that are part of the ClearOne VIEW Pro system and can be used as a stand-alone display as well.

A centralized location for a majority of the AV equipment allows accessibility to all the technology in one vicinity. This makes it easier for the AV staff to support and make changes that inevitably arise due to the flexibility of the space.

THE RESULT

A trend that has become commonplace recently is for individual departments to have open seating in a 'war room' type configuration, this was used extensively at WebMD, but the challenge arose where small groups needed to get together to brainstorm about a particular issue at hand. It was devised that throughout the open, cubical space, there would be dozens of large video monitors. During normal usage, these would show broadcast TV or digital signage, but during an impromptu meeting, a local laptop or other devices could be shown. All the signal routing was handled by ClearOne's VIEW Pro H.264 Network Media Streaming solution. This gave all the users at WebMD incredible flexibility to share or send content anywhere throughout the facility. The IT team at WebMD was very pleased with how little bandwidth was needed for this approach. WebMD's new space is a hit by all measures.

The company's executives were all present on opening day using the technology, to welcome employees to the new space and show them around their new home. A feeling of excitement permeated the event as people explored their new surroundings and used the digital signage system to find their way around. As an additional bonus, The Garden hosted a star studded event which included Robin Roberts of ABC and Giada De Laurentiis of Food Network fame.

CONVERGE Pro DSP mixers provide the most advanced professional audio DSP platform for conferencing audio and sound reinforcement applications. ClearOne's VIEW Pro provides the highest-quality AV over IP streaming on existing IP networks with lossless compression.

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North America
Tel +1 801 975-7200 Toll Free 800.945.7730

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