Cinergy makes significant digital signage saving with Screenly Pro and Ubuntu Core

HIGHLIGHTS

- New solution's low management overhead and entry cost crucial to Cinergy's expansion plans

- Screenly's adoption of Ubuntu Core gave Cinergy complete confidence in the provision of robust security updates

- Cinergy's digital signage content now able to update in minutes rather than days changing the way marketing teams can push content and promotions

Company background

- Founded in 2009

- Based in Dallas, Texas

- One stop entertainment centres including cinemas, dining and other activities

Cinergy Entertainment Group, Inc. is a pioneer in the cinema entertainment center (CEC) industry, operating a chain of three CECs located across the state of Texas. All current 90,000 sq ft Cinergy centers feature 10-screen dine-in cinemas, 18 bowling alley lanes, bars, restaurants, party rooms and a unique selection of interactive games including Escape Rooms, Laser Tag and Sky Walker rope courses. The company also has ambitious expansion plans with more centres opening in Texas and Oklahoma.

Digital signage plays an integral role in the day-to-day operation of Cinergy CECs and significantly impacts the customer experience. The moment customers enter the doors, they are engaged with dynamic displays that assist, captivate and excite them. From boosting lobby sales to previewing upcoming films, digital signage is a smart and easy way to deliver messages to customers as they wait to buy tickets, make concession purchases, or linger in the lobby prior to the start of the show. Cinergy's set up includes prominent point-of-sales displays promoting show schedules, special events, movie trailers, concession menus and interactive content.

90,000

square feet with 29 cinema screens and 18 bowling alley lanes

40+

devices running Screenly Pro and Ubuntu Core

The challenge

The marketing-driven nature of the movie theatre industry means that Cinergy constantly needs to update and refresh its digital signage content with new movies released every week as well as regular flash sales, deals and promotions to advertise.

Nathan Hunstable, Chief Technology Officer at Cinergy explains the challenge: "When we set up our first couple of CECs we used Apple TVs for digital signage. This solution did the job but we quickly realised that the hardware cost and management overheads were going to be unsustainable as we work on executing our ambitious expansion plans. The Apple TV set up also required the IT department to be involved in every step of updating content which at busy times would cause delays and prevent us from pushing truly dynamic, fast-moving marketing promotions. What we needed was an alternative that was low cost, easy to manage and highly secure."

The solution

With these requirements front of mind, Cinergy went through an extensive evaluation of alternative digital signage solutions but found that nearly everything reviewed was either too expensive or too cumbersome to work with. That was until it found Screenly Pro, running Ubuntu Core.

Screenly commercialises an easy to install digital signage box or player and a cloud-based interface that powers thousands of screens around the world. Due to its small size and remote updating capabilities, Screenly adopted Ubuntu Core in May 2016, seeing at as a perfect lightweight solution for digital signage. Ubuntu Core's application isolation and transactional updates provide unrivalled security, stability and ease of use, something vital for constantly visible content.

Ubuntu Core effectively creates a production environment for Screenly's IoT digital signage boxes/players, with the ability to update and manage the OS and any applications independently. This means that Screenly players are kept up to date with the latest version of the Screenly software, but also benefit from continuous OS updates for enhanced security, stability and performance. And as all updates are transactional, it also means that any update can automatically be rolled back, ensuring reliable performance even in a failed update scenario.

Nathan Hunstable explains what made the Screenly Pro and Ubuntu Core solution stand out: "Because Screenly Pro is built on the Raspberry Pi it's not only very attractively priced, but also has the low power consumption and small form factor benefits, which make it very painless to install. Moreover, Screenly's ability to cache content locally was critical to us, since we are displaying a lot of Full HD video content. Not only does that save us a massive amount of bandwidth, but it also means that if there ever was a network outage, we are able to continue serving content on the screens. Given all these advantages, making the decision and getting it pushed through was a no brainer."

Screenly's move to Ubuntu Core was also an attractive feature. "Obviously we really care about security," says Nathan Hunstable. "While the previous version of Screenly was already hardened, the move to Ubuntu Core provides security updates even faster. This in turn gives us the peace of mind that our digital signage devices are secured and that we're as protected as we can be from the latest hacks or ransomware."

Cinergy's transition to Screenly Pro has been painless with no major challenges experienced. There are currently 40 Screenly Pro devices deployed with Cinergy looking to add another 70+ devices in 2018. At its current rate of expansion Cinergy estimates it could easily have several hundred Screenly devices online by 2019.

$50,000

digital signage savings following Screenly Pro and Ubuntu Core adoption

The results

Cinergy has been extremely pleased with the savings and results it has experienced following the move to Screenly Pro. As Nathan Hunstable concludes: "By moving from Apple TV to Screenly Pro we have saved in the region of $50k because of the lower cost of setting up new facilities and the reduction in ongoing management overheads needed to run the devices and update the content. Now, once our IT department has set up the devices, our marketing team can update and manage content freely, which provides us with very quick feedback and reiterations. The ability to quickly add or edit assets and re-upload has changed the way our marketing team can push content. We often find ourselves with on the fly specials and we can quickly get those in front of the guests almost within minutes. I would highly recommend the Screenly Pro and Ubuntu Core combination for unrivalled digital signage functionality, ease of use, robust security and stability."

For more information on Ubuntu in digital signage, please **click here**

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