



SSE Arena Belfast

Since opening in 2000, the popular SSE Arena Belfast has attracted nine million visitors and counting; however, technology had become a hindrance to its plans for greater customer engagement. To rectify this, the venue underwent a revamp and installed a brand new digital media platform.

The SSE Arena in Belfast hosts everything from concerts and exhibitions to sporting events and in 2016 received more than £3m of investment to update its digital assets.

“We wanted to provide a stadium-wide platform for visual communications, to include IPTV, digital signage, integration to the EPOS system, and menu boards for the concession booths, with the ability on the IPTV system to take a live feed from the OB for live events,” says Clara Killen, digital marketing and development manager, SSE Arena.

She continued, “The brief was to have many digital screens around the venue, we tried to put them in every place that a customer might be passing by to give us maximum opportunities. And we turned everything around in about eight weeks, so quite an extensive project, as you can imagine.”

Complete solution

The complete solution features Tripleplay’s Digital Signage and IPTV platform which, along with Amino set-top boxes, manages and delivers content to around 200 LED displays – primarily from LG, with 25 70in LED displays from NEC in the concourse areas. The displays are mounted with a range of solutions from Vogel’s, with additional mounting in the foyer and box office handled by universal display mounts from Peerless.



Prior to the install, the venue had a number of shortcomings: “We just felt we needed a venue that was much more engaging with our customers. The digital screens, our app, and all of the digital assets that we have now allow us to interact with the customer and



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give them something visually pleasing to look at when in the venue. Quite often doors may open for an event at about half past six, and an artist might not take to the stage till nine o'clock so there's a lot of dwell time around the foyer and the concourse areas, so the screens have really enhanced what we can communicate to our customers." says Killen.

US Sports Fan Experience Inspires Venue

Customer engagement, particularly during large period of dwell time at the venue, was extremely important to the SSE Arena Belfast. Heavily influenced and inspired by the operation of a number of US stadiums, optimising fan interaction was paramount to driving and increasing revenue. In fact, due to the arena's success, they are now hosting other venues from across the UK and Europe on a monthly basis to demonstrate how the venue has developed.

A lot of consideration was given to the location of the screens. "We had a lot of planning in terms of how customers walk around our building," states Killen. "We wanted videowalls because we wanted something that looked really striking and you couldn't really miss, and there was a lot of consideration in terms of the shape and positioning of the screens."

In terms of the Tripleplay solution, David Lowry, technical advisor for the SSE Arena, explains, "Tripleplay is used in all of our public-facing areas. In our concessions, we've five screens in each hot and cold food and bar area, those are used both for promotion and pricing and our general commercial content as well as our sponsors. We have six videowalls, which are used in different configurations for different events. We have commercial content, health and safety content and merchandise as well, so depending on the event we can change things to suit the need and make best use of the screen space we have."

Simple and Flexible

Killen explains why Tripleplay was chosen: "We looked around for quite a length of time to find the provider we were going to use for our digital screens and the Tripleplay solution is a simple solution but it's a flexible solution. We've found we can have everything up to complete takeovers of screens and we can individually program all 200 screens if we wish to do so.

"Having that flexibility to have certain screens with commercial content or certain screens promoting upcoming events, the system allows us to do that. If we get a call that a certain product has run out, we can react to that instantly and update the screens remotely. Having that flexibility in this day and age is vitally important."

The fact the Tripleplay system is browser-based and can be accessed remotely also played a part; every computer or mobile device on the corporate network is able to access the system. Lowry adds, "Tripleplay helps us tie together different areas of the building and help us prioritise different content. On our external screens we have key health and safety messaging, we have welcome messaging, less in the way of upcoming events and commercial content, it's more about driving people in."

Killen adds, "We closed the venue in late June and traditionally we would very rarely have concerts over the summer – because everything moves outdoor for festivals. So that was always downtime for us to do just general maintenance, not to completely rebrand the building with a new naming rights partner, develop an app, install the WiFi, and then install 200 digital screens as well. A lot of long days and long nights, but the end product when we opened in early September was breath-taking and the feedback we've had from customers has been excellent."



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