

## Air Canada Centre Adds \$3 million Digital Signage Network for Advertising and Information

by Gail Chiasson  
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Toronto's **Air Canada Centre** is launching a \$3 million digital screen network using a concept and project plan orchestrated by digital signage consultancy **Digital Display & Communications** of Waterloo, Ont., and involving several suppliers including software from **Omnivex**.

The project was built around a media communications plan that sees the fan experience dramatically enhanced, sponsor messaging opportunities boosted, and a media sales plan developed that should see the building owner, **Maple Leaf Sports and Entertainment**, recover its investment in roughly two years.

The screen network is part of a massive \$50 million facelift to the landmark facility. It now has more than 320 HD-quality video display monitors installed in a wide variety of configurations in the public areas. The screens serve several purposes, but many are replacing traditional backlit poster advertising boards, enabling MLSE to change messaging by event and on very short notice. Network digital screens give MLSE's media department the ability to tailor advertisers and schedules by event and target audience.

"MLSE managers brought us in to help them take what was a concept, and really get it grounded ... so that there was some sort of process," says **Stuart Kirkpatrick**, DDC president and CEO. "They had quite a number of issues they needed to address, and we helped out with all of them."

Central to the process was DDC's Full Picture Workshop process, which the company uses with all of its clients, taking them through a process that starts with strategy and objectives and steps through the elements of a plan, all the way through to deployment and operations. That initial strategy engagement at Air Canada Centre turned into much more, with various members of the DDC team helping develop everything from realistic media revenue forecasts and content programming concepts to guiding the vendor selection process and managing the installations. DDC is also doing some of the creative content work for the screen network.

**Dwayne Brown**, MLSE's manager of venue services says, "Digital Signage is so much more than just placing a display on the wall and sending a graphic to it. Location, audience, time of day or event, type of content – it all needs to be taken into account. DDC's guidance has helped us design a unique system that is sure to catch the attention of the thousands of people that come through our gates every event."

Screens are set in a variety of configurations and clusters to provide more presence and visual interest. At one newly renovated entry, 42 LCD flat panels are stitched together and other areas feature screen clusters. One area that was using still images for a history wall is now a cluster of different-sized and oriented screens, with rotating images and narratives on the images that can be heard if fans call designated numbers and listen using their mobile devices.

The digital signage deployment includes the use of Omnivex's newest software product, **Moxie**, to manage the full network of LCD screens. Content will include a live video stream from inside the arena to ensure fans don't miss a moment of the action when in the concourse areas. In addition, information will be shown to help people navigate the facility and to promote upcoming events being held at various MLSE facilities.

Advertising space on the screens will provide a new revenue stream, and augment traditional print advertising. The screens have been strategically placed for maximum impact and configured in unique ways to add to the aesthetic appeal of the facility.

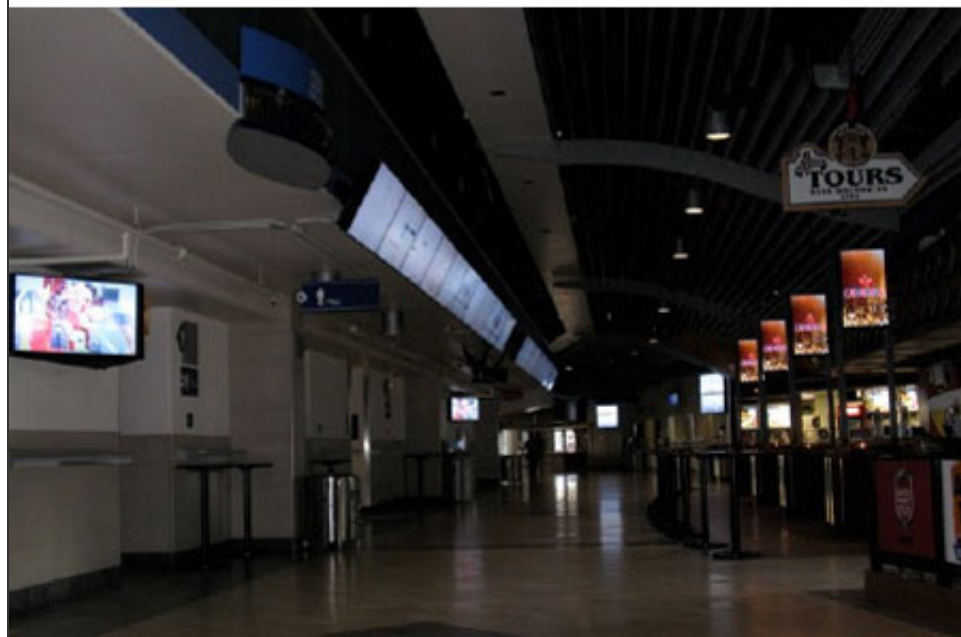
Other key business partners active in the project include **IBM** for network services, **TTUFF Technologies** for media players, consultant **Lyle Bunn**, **Envision** for retail design configuration, and the **Taylor Group** for installation.

Among the five busiest sports and events centers in the world, the facility, home to the **NHL's Toronto Maple Leafs**, **NBA's Toronto Raptors**, **Toronto Rock Lacrosse** team and host to entertainment, concerts and live events, has received more than 27 million fans and over 2,000 events since its doors opened in 1999.

Air Canada Centre's digital signage system will be unveiled for fans and guests during the Maple Leafs' preseason game against the **Boston Bruins** on September 16. Subsequent phases of MLSE's deployment will continue in 2010, both at the Air Canada Centre and at other facilities managed or owned by MLSE. These include **Ricoh Coliseum** and **BMO Field**.



Photo Courtesy of Omnivex





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