



Fast-paced Action at Global Forex Trading Relies on Crestron DigitalMedia™ for Boardroom Control and High Definition Video Conferencing

“Time is of the essence in this business. You will make it or break it based on how quickly you can make decisions.”

That’s how Eric Johns, IT Facilities Coordinator at Global Forex Trading (GFT), describes the need for advanced AV systems at their new headquarters in Grand Rapids, MI.

GFT is a currency trading or “foreign exchange” (forex) provider. Unlike trading in stocks and bonds, there are no central exchanges for currency. GFT facilitates direct client-to-client trades through their DealBook® online trading platform. With the pressure and stress of operating in a business like this, GFT staff needs to know that their AV systems will work the first time and every time.

Viewing the DealBook platform is especially important at GFT. “With our software, space on the display is at a premium,” says Johns. “There’s a lot of information that has to be visible all the time to make effective trades.” For that reason, all the large screen monitors and projectors at GFT offer 1900 x 1200 resolution and all the switching and cabling support that bandwidth as well.

World news is also crucial to a company tracking global factors that affect currency prices. “We wanted to be able to handle any kind of media in high definition - satellite news, HD video conferencing, Blu-ray, and even entertainment media down in our cafe area,” Johns explains.

“We had three directives in creating these AV systems,” says Kirk Griffes, Systems Engineer and Programmer for Michigan-based integrator Bluewater Technologies. “They had to be high-definition, 100% bulletproof, and they had to be easy to use.”



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Eric Johns, IT Facilities Coordinator at Global Forex Trading, on the value of the intuitive touch screen designs

Griffes originally looked at building the new AV systems at GFT using component cables, but he quickly gave up the idea. “We talked to them (GFT) and suggested that if they wanted to be futureproof, they should use HDMI as the main mode of transport.”

Component-based systems will run into problems when the “Analog Sunset” goes into effect January 1, 2011. Because of changes in FCC regulations, on that date, TV and movie providers will be able to protect their high-definition content from unauthorized copying by automatically detecting analog (component-based) equipment and reducing the output resolution to standard definition.

A Crestron DigitalMedia™ backbone was installed as the single-platform digital solution.

As a result, Griffes designed all video and computer signal paths to be purely digital. In the smaller, less sophisticated rooms he designed systems using HDMI cables to feed the displays. In the more complex rooms, he used DigitalMedia™ components and cabling.

HDMI has its own complications for AV engineers and installers, and it can add many hours of installation and troubleshooting. “I’ve run into problems with every generic HDMI switcher I’ve ever used,” Griffes says.

DigitalMedia technology overcomes the most frustrating problems with HDMI, among them limited transmission distances, problems with HDCP copy protection, and issues with EDID resolution management (the way an HDMI source device communicates with the display to supply the proper signal).

“The fact is, DigitalMedia just works – and that in itself is fantastic,” Griffes explains. “There’s no other product out there that works so well and so simply for digital video and audio, especially in a matrix switching configuration.”

The finished GFT headquarters has 20 conference rooms and offices with AV systems, including an executive conference center, a training center, sales and marketing conference centers and employee break rooms. There’s also a four-screen video wall in the lobby, which GFT uses to display news, currency prices and trends from its DealBook platform.

Griffes set up the majority of the new AV systems using Crestron QM-RMC room controllers, plus a TPMC-4XG handheld remote or TPS-6X wireless touch screen. In addition, the IT department can control each of these systems remotely using Crestron XPanel software.

IT staff also manages and monitors the maintenance needs of all AV components using RoomView™ Express software. RoomView also enables tech support to power the video wall and other AV devices on and off, from any web browser or the central control room, when not in use.

As its name implies, Global Forex Trading has a worldwide customer base, and they are heavy users of video-conferencing systems. BlueWater integrated the latest high-definition Tandberg systems in four conference rooms and offices, and also supplied four cart-mounted HD systems

The system in the GFT boardroom is especially impressive. Here, BlueWater installed a 65" LCD monitor at each end of the conference table, each with a Tandberg PTZ camera mounted below it. Users can control the videoconferencing system with a TPS-6X touch screen, and can switch to any of seven additional sources – showing the same or different sources on each monitor– via a Crestron DM-MD8X8 DigitalMedia matrix switcher.

Video sources include two built-in PCs, a laptop, two Blu-ray players and two HD satellite TV receivers. BlueWater also



installed an 8-channel wireless microphone system, a sound system with digital signal processing, and ceiling speakers for audio conferencing and sound reinforcement.

Griffes spent a lot of time with Johns designing an intuitive control system for the boardroom videoconferencing system. “Controlling a videoconferencing system is often complicated, so we wanted to create a series of screens that would make the process simple for novice users,” Griffes explains.

“When you click ‘video conference’ on the touch screen, the first thing you see is an address book. If you select an address and press ‘dial’, the system connects the call and the touch screen automatically brings you to an in-call control page. That’s where you can move the camera and bring an image from your PC into the conference.”

With this customization, participants see only what they need to at the appropriate time, so there’s little chance for confusion.

In one marketing conference room, Griffes took advantage of DigitalMedia to sense and sync signals automatically. “All an end user has to do is plug in a laptop or any another source.

The projector turns on automatically and switches to the correct input,” he explains. “The system also senses when there is no longer a signal and turns the components off.” Griffes used a DM-TX200 transmitter and a DM-RMC100 receiver together with a QM-RMC room controller to make this happen.

Johns reports that the systems have met their directives for extreme stability and ease of use. He also appreciates the all-digital technology for another reason: the fact that DigitalMedia can carry multiple video and audio signals on a single high-bandwidth cable. “It was very helpful to be able to run only one set of wires in some places,” he explains. “That made it possible to use the space we had without having to make architectural changes.”

The intuitive touch screen designs have also proven valuable. Everyone at GFT might potentially use the AV systems, whether participating in a videoconference or making a presentation. “We’re not all IT people,” Johns adds. “We don’t want a meeting with a high value client to crash because the person leading it isn’t a computer genius.”

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