

digital display for retail

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Creating Content: Quietly Acquiring

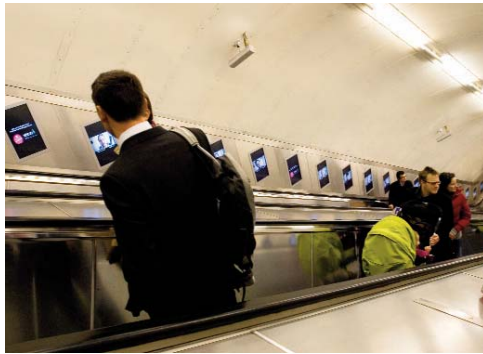
The Ten Commandments of Digital Signage

Revving Up the Retail Experience

Questioning the Future

Screening it Large!

Signboards That Get To Know You



Quietly Acquiring...

There's new Acquire digital signage and kiosk software.
John Taylor went to Acquire Digital to find out more.

Latest version of Acquire digital signage software features an all new interface, bringing the program up to date in look and feel, whilst adding to easy usability. Acquire v3.3 even looks good in Vista whilst also working well on XP!

Features include the latest video playback codecs to cope with new playback technologies including official MPEG2, DivX Codec and h.264, Quicktime, WMV and even FLV. There are new wipes and fades, and enhanced text scrolling performs more smoothly. There is Unicode support for multi-threaded control and smooth content operation. There are new optimised player routines that can swap pages within 20ms and optimisations for new Atom and dual core processors, with the Acquire Player which only uses as little as 22MB of RAM.

For those applications burdened with thousands of content pages, Acquire v3.3's new flagship editor now incorporates Category Manager, a simple drag and drop system enabling similar content to be organised together. And the created categories can include target settings and be used with attractors and repulsors in other Acquire solutions.

Acquire 3.0 saw the inclusion of Targets, allowing Acquire to automatically create playlists and flag content for sending to specific players. Acquire 3.3 moves this feature on by including over 2000 separate targets along with the ability to group targets together to make marketing preset combinations.

The integrated new Admanager, for those using Acquire as a digital advertising platform, includes 'MiniAd' Admanager, a forerunner for further developments to be announced by the company later this year. With MiniAd, you can choose pages from a project and it will automatically create playlists based on how much advertising and how much filler content are required.

Taking a 'back to grass roots' approach for Acquire 3.3, the software now incorporates Flowchart Designer providing a view of everything created in a system. When making a large self-service kiosk development, for example, or just any interactive system, the ability to see everything at the same time is an advantage.

Flowchart Designer displays every interactive link on every page in a project, with Acquire mapping out all the links between the pages. Links are then simply dragged and dropped as required, for the speedy creation of interactive applications.

It has always been possible in Acquire to lock changes to pages and scripts by using the built-in user rights facility. Now this capability is extended to specific items on pages too. You can also easily copy pages between projects and manage content by keeping it in different projects, and using this function, it is easy to re-use content as required, with Acquire automatically copying the respective content.

Instead of providing lists of content pages, v3.3 now provides updated thumbnails for any dialogue: and a simple wildcard search can quickly filter a list being searched.

Acquire v3.3 boasts more plug-in benefits than ever before. New plug-ins, or ACOs, have been created for the new system including digital TV, PowerPoint, Excel, database connections, Bluetooth, GPS tracking and even text animations and picture slideshows.

Kiosk designer

Hot on the heels of Acquire v3.3 is Acquire's new kiosk application designer software, a powerful editor software that enables users to build interactive touch-screen applications from scratch.

Aimed at kiosk manufacturers and kiosk software development companies, Kiosk Designer uses the same design engine as Acquire v3.3 but optimised for kiosk applications with a set of specially developed plug-ins.

Acquire typically builds a project using a collection of pages which are played sequentially according to a playlist and this, says the company, is ideal for kiosk applications. Kiosk Designer includes a new flowchart based viewer that enables users to build an application on screen in the same traditional way that they would have done using a block diagram flowchart.

Users now have visual representations of individual pages of their applications and can drag and drop pages to different places in the flowchart. Although it would be unusual for so many, each page can contain up to 1024 separate rich media elements, any of which can be made into interactive 'hot spots' which when touched can jump to other pages, navigate around the application, or set variables which can be used anywhere else in the Acquire project. You can even use external triggers such as scanners, sensors, switches, video cameras, external databases and more.

A typical kiosk, for example, might scan a barcode to display a product photo and its associated features, together with pricing from a retail store's EPOS database. Alternatively it could be a pay per use, secure web browsing kiosk with an on-screen virtual keyboard, displaying advertising based on keywords in the web pages, or even a digital ID photo booth. For all these, Acquire Digital says a customer feedback questionnaire with interactive buttons can be created in just minutes using Kiosk Designer.

Kiosk Designer's external scripting engine can create fully featured applications using VBScript and JavaScript. In fact, there are many standard controls such as text entry boxes, interactive buttons, on-screen keyboards, secure web browsers and connections to live databases. You can easily integrate card readers and cashmechs for payment, and when using an unattended payment service, you can even integrate Chip&PIN.

Luton airport

Luton Airport needed to improve its interactive kiosks in the departure terminal by installing large format Protouch kiosks 'air-side'. The intention was to provide useful passenger information whilst also gauging passenger feedback. Additionally, the kiosks were required to try to drive business to the retail outlets by offering high quality printed discount coupons.

Instead of providing a conventional printer with all the associated maintenance issues, Acquire developed an innovative Bluetooth plug-in for Acquire KD and installed it on three new, large format multimedia information kiosks. The 40in LCD kiosks were installed 'air-side' at the terminal, powered by Acquire Kiosk Designer and utilising the new Acquire Bluetooth application.

The kiosks provide multifunctional assistance for airport customers and amongst their functions, they provide customers with the opportunity to give their opinions on airport facilities via the touch-screen feedback form. Furthermore, customers can also download offers from the airport terminal's retail outlets such as Dixons, Boots, Monsoon and WH Smith, via Acquire's Bluetooth application.

3D airport and destinations maps, used at the airport, were repurposed for kiosk use. Written by Acquire's in-house programming team, the Bluetooth application works in conjunction with Acquire software. A Bluetooth transceiver is connected to the kiosk PC, with software installed to search for Bluetooth activated devices, usually mobile phones, within a predetermined area.

When the kiosk promotion is touched by the user, the transceiver 'Bluecasts' an image of the special offer. If the mobile phone user chooses to accept the offer, an image is downloaded, once only, to the mobile. Any user refusing the image will not be sent that image again, so users are not bombarded with Bluetooth offers that they do not want. And for those mobile phones that have a default security function that asks for a four digit pairing code, the kiosk provides this information as an on-screen instruction.

And back in Greece...

Acquire software is used widely across digital signage and

screen media networks. The i-Contact Carrefour, Greece, system in the last issue of DDR, is powered by Acquire. Furthermore, a network of kiosks is installed in TopTravel stores, also part of the Carrefour retail group, across Greece. The stores use Acquire to communicate special promotional offers and holiday information.

Installed and managed by Acquire's Greek reseller i-Contact, the system features a simple to learn and use web service that enables any of the Top Travel staff to update prices, images, holiday details and destination information quickly and easily. Live support and alerts are managed using Acquire's KioskMonitor service.

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