

BrightSign Takes Historic Horse Auctioneers Into The Digital Age



BrightSign players are powering a new installation at Tattersalls auction houses that shows how a historic sales environment can retain its traditional and classic ambience whilst embracing digital AV technology to enhance the visitor experience.

A household name in the racing community, Tattersalls is the leading bloodstock auctioneer in Europe. Founded by Richard Tattersall in 1766, Tattersalls sells National Hunt and Flat Horses to bidders across the globe in sales events screened internationally. Last year, more than 7,000 horses were sold across Tattersalls' sites. The auctioneer is based in Newmarket in England and owns another site in Ratoath, County Meath, Ireland, as well as conducting sales at two non-permanent locations in Ascot and Cheltenham.

The requirement for a new AV system

During sales days, Tattersalls uses an audio-visual system to display lot numbers and prices in guineas, alongside a video feed of the horses being led around the ring. Additional currencies are also displayed, depending on the audience, including Hong Kong Dollars, Chinese Yen and Emirati Dirham.

The original display systems at the auction sites have functioned well for around 20 years but had finally come to the end of their working life. Consisting of individual LED segments in hardboard enclosures, the displays across all sites looked tired and were inflexible to use. Furthermore, they ran on an RF feed, which provided low picture quality. Seeking something more sophisticated, Tattersalls turned to Spectra Displays, who proposed a complete turn-key system based on BrightSign players, blending functional, high-tech displays into the auctioneer's historic buildings, which it is legally required to preserve under the UK's Listed Building regulations.

The Spectra solution

Using BrightSign XT1144 players, the Spectra digital signage takes a video feed from a camera on the main ring and displays it with text overlaid onto the live footage on LED screens from Spectra's indoor WM range and outdoor HV range. At all sites, the screens show the bid number, prices in the appropriate currencies plus horse traits and breezing videos, where bidders view the horse running at a moderate speed.

Different screens show the same core content, with the presentation adjusted to suit the size of the monitor. For instance, the smallest screens display just current lot number and horse price in guineas. There is a ticker of previous lots sold and the value they sold for in guineas on some displays. Content is streamed online for the benefit of remote bidders around the world.

“BrightSign players saved us a huge amount of work,” says Richard Handley, Manager at Spectra Displays, “We were faced with either writing a bespoke PC application or finding a player that allowed for more interactive features. Other players could trigger input but would not enable a user to write their own script without creating an HTML5 webpage.”

The installations

The final stunning LED installations at Newmarket and Ratoath use five 5x3m LED screens and a number of smaller monitors. The installations at both sites include a video screen in the main sales ring and repeat screens over the entry and exit doors. An outdoor rolling sign in the pre-parade ring at Newmarket has been complemented with additional outdoor monitors, including four screens placed around a post in the parade ring, which are an enormous advantage given the reduced indoor capacity at the venue due to COVID-19 restrictions. At Ratoath, a screen around the side of the building can be comfortably viewed from the restaurant areas, and a large screen in place at the stable block keeps everyone ‘behind the scenes’ up to date with progress of the sales.

Spectra was also able to provide display solutions for the temporary sites at Cheltenham and Ascot. At Cheltenham, they provided Tattersalls with screens in flight cases which are fitted to permanent brackets at the site before a sale and hoisted up to the back of the sales ring. Cabling to link to the players is left in place permanently. Ascot has been kitted out with permanent internal and external screens at a number of locations including staff hostels and catering facilities.





The Result

Jimmy George, marketing director from Tattersalls said, “We are delighted with the finished installation, which blends seamlessly into the traditional aesthetic of our buildings. We are particularly thrilled with the displays placed outside the parade ring, allowing live updates to be seen from any direction. The reliability and consistency of both the LED displays and BrightSign players has been a stand-out feature. We’re always looking to improve the flow of our sales, and we’d definitely consider further Spectra installations in future.”

BrightAuthor’s ‘drag and drop’ capabilities enable Tattersalls to easily make changes to the templates themselves, such as adjusting layout or changing text size, without any complex re-programming. This feature has already proved useful. At first, a ticker of previous lot numbers ran around the main screens behind the sales ring, but this proved distracting for audiences, so Tattersalls removed it themselves.

As well as driving the displays, the BrightSign players also provide bid information overlays for additional LCD screens within the auction houses, which normally display a simple live video of the sale. “Tattersalls is very reliant on a screen functioning smoothly during sale days,” says Richard Handley, “PC crashes or unexpected updates would be very damaging to the sales. Not only is the live feed used in broadcast, it is also kept as a legal record of each individual sale.

Conclusion

Undoubtedly, the installation at Tattersalls demonstrates that BrightSign powered digital signage technology can be successfully introduced into historic buildings, retaining their character whilst offering a 21st century customer experience.

For more information about BrightSign’s complete portfolio of digital signage products, visit <http://www.brightsign.biz>.

For more information about Spectra, visit www.spectra-displays.co.uk

Thanks to the flexibility of the players, Spectra has been able to combine BrightSign’s innovation with its own. They used BrightAuthor to create templates, and then combined this with its own PC application to control live content on all of the players. Spectra controls numerous BrightSign players across the site using this custom PC software, which enables the content on the screen to be updated in real time. For example, they used BrightAuthor to create a template of lot numbers and prices, so these can be updated in increments to keep up with the fast pace of sales. The players also allow auctioneers to switch between the live sale and breezing videos. A video feed from a XT1144 player is combined with a secondary BrightSign player running a BrightAuthor script to call up the breezing videos using the lot number and play them. With the ‘insert live window’ feature in BrightAuthor, breezing videos are shown in the corner of the screen with lot numbers and the feed from the sale displayed full screen.