



ExhibitOne Corporation

Project Profile

Project: West-MEC (Western Maricopa Education Center) Presentation Hall

Location: Glendale, AZ

Completed: October 2017

Project Description:

A Stunning Educational Facility.
A Videowall to Match.



It's called the "Lightbox" and serves as a showcase for both the Western Maricopa Education Center (West-MEC) and the city in which it's located, Surprise, Arizona.

As a centerpiece of West-MEC's new Northwest Campus, the Lightbox is an aptly named flex-use auditorium with its three walls of glass letting in all the light the outdoors has to offer.

The fourth wall? That's home to the school's stunning 15-monitor video wall – nearly 18 feet across and 6 feet high. The brilliant, thin-bezel monitors light up the wall with striking imagery whether the room is filled with sunlight or surrounded by night sky. And keeping with the room's flex-use mission, additional monitors are mounted throughout to ensure easy viewing, regardless of where a person stands or sits.

West-MEC (Western Maricopa Education Center) is a unique public-school district for high school students and adults. It focuses on hands-on learning, leadership development training and industry certification. Since 2003, West-MEC has grown to include six campuses across northern and western Maricopa County.

The route for getting to an audio and video solution that would match the stunning nature of the room wasn't immediately obvious to West-MEC IT Director George Gerardo. "Our original audiovisual budget for the Lightbox didn't address the magnitude of challenges for achieving our vision," he said. "And going in, based on prior experience, we were dead-set against using a major manufacturer's technology."



In vetting the Lightbox project with several audiovisual companies, West-MEC ultimately awarded the design-and-build project to ExhibitOne. This despite ExhibitOne's proposal featuring the very manufacturer West-MEC opposed.

"Prior to creating our proposal, we wanted to understand the big picture as well as granular details," said ExhibitOne Regional Sales Manager Kelli Serrano. "In doing that, we felt West-MEC's vision would be best achieved by using the excluded manufacturer's technology. By digging deeper, we could see their source of dissatisfaction had more to do with unfortunate circumstances than the technology itself."

"They had an uphill battle," George said. "But ExhibitOne brought in the manufacturer to meet with us. In turn, the manufacturer gave us a hands-on tour of a major university where their technology is driving the school's audiovisual experience. We saw for ourselves that the manufacturer and its technology would not be a concern."

Design, technology and ExhibitOne's state contract pricing all helped in bringing the Lightbox AV partnership together.

But, as it turned out, the video wall and related technology were the easy part. The real challenge was audio. The Lightbox' suspended ceiling is designed using omni-directional patterns of wood slats. Awesome on the eyes. But for the ears, it defied standard practices for recessed speaker installation. "It was challenging," Kelli said. "Speaker placement was a careful coordination between ExhibitOne, the building general contractor and the company that installed the wooden slats. The speakers were secured to the structure above, allowing them to sit flush with the suspended ceiling, yet not add any additional weight," she said. "Just like the visuals, the audio in the Lightbox is great, regardless of where a person is located."

Others agree. With the facility having already hosted a couple of major events, George says, it has become "the buzz of the district."