

Building the ultimate sports club

CTI PUTS THE 'WOW' FACTOR INTO VIEWING SPORTS ON TELEVISION

The challenge. To provide an exceptional group viewing experience for patrons of a high-end sports restaurant and bar.

The client. The Letter Club is a premium sports entertainment venue in Omaha, owned in part by former Cornhuskers great Aaron Taylor. Taylor describes the club as a family environment where kids can have fun and parents can eat a good meal while watching sports on an absolutely outstanding AV system. Taylor says the partners "wanted customers to walk through the door and say 'wow.'"



One of three high-definition projection screens, plus a few of the 42 TV monitors the club boasts. Note the screen on the patio is visible through the glass on the lower left.

The solution. CTI designed a system that includes 42 TV monitors, plasmas and LCD displays plus three projectors, with eight zones of audio using 34 speakers.

"One of the biggest challenges to this project was keeping the sight lines clear," says Keith Sandy, sales consultant for CTI Omaha. "We're purchasing every single sports package that there is," Taylor explains, "so we wanted everyone in the house to have access not only to one but to several televisions." A major concern was keeping contractors from placing light fixtures, heating vents, sprinkler heads and other possible obstructions between patrons and the displays. "No matter how good your drawings are," says CTI project manager Mark Voutas, "there are always going to be challenges that you have to overcome in the field." Voutas and Sandy were able to deal with this issue using the strong relationships they had built with the general contractor and other tradesmen working on the club.

A nice feature of the AV system is its ability to show true high definition video on three projectors and four 50" plasma displays in the club. "I haven't seen bigger projection screens in Nebraska," Taylor says. "The fact that these screens are so big and so clear is exciting for our customers."

Another bright spot is the control system CTI designed and programmed for the club. A manager can walk through the facility with a handheld touch panel, choosing video sources, lighting presents and adjusting volume levels. Sources include six high definition satellite feeds, six cable TV feeds, a DVD player, VCR and CD jukebox. Individual displays can be tuned to any source, but the manager must pick one audio channel for each zone. On Nebraska game days, of course, that choice is pretty simple, but on most days there's some debate on which games to highlight.

Taylor says that CTI performed admirably throughout the design and construction process. "Keith and Mark are absolutely wonderful," says Taylor. "Knowledgeable, helpful, very timely. We're pretty excited about the audiovisual. I couldn't ask for more."

Equipment list. 42 15" - 50" monitors, two projectors indoors with 9' x 16' screens and split-screen capability, one projector outdoors with a 5' x 9' screen, an 8-channel amplifier, 34 loudspeakers, a 16 x 16 high definition matrix video switcher, and one wireless and one permanently mounted touch-sensitive control panel.

Preserving the sight lines

AN EXERCISE IN TEAMWORK AND RELATIONSHIP BUILDING

“The ability to view any display from anywhere in the Letter Club was the major challenge in its construction,” says Mark Voutas, project manager for CTI. “The main floor of the club is basically one large open area. If you are sitting in its center, you can watch games on 29 separate displays.”

To make sure all of these sight lines remained unobstructed, Voutas and sales consultant Keith Sandy had to work closely with others on the site, before and during the construction. It was very helpful that CTI served as a subcontractor during the design phase to consultant Alvine Engineering of Omaha.



Every seat in this house is a good seat, because there are no obstructed views. Below: a wireless touchpanel makes control of a complex AV system easy.

“The problem with any bid project,” says Sandy, “is there will always be change orders.” Major systems –structure, lighting, security, HVAC and audiovisual– are designed by separate specialists who don’t always understand each others’ concerns. “If I’m designing and building it,” Sandy says, “I hope that I’ll have personal contact with all the parties, and I’ll come to understand their wants, needs, and concerns. But if I come in halfway through the game as a bidder, what do I know of the situation other than what’s on paper?”

With CTI involved early, the process went smoothly. “It was very systematic,” says club co-owner Aaron Taylor. “The partners’ wishes and dreams came through all the way through the project. We had great communications within the team. It was a wonderful experience.”

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