

Case Study

Industry: Hospitality

aja Restaurant/Dana Hotel

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The challenges of restaurant rebranding

The aja restaurant is located in the Dana Hotel and Spa, a high-end, boutique hotel in downtown Chicago. The owners of the hotel transformed the concept of the restaurant from a formal, high-end steakhouse into an urban greenmarket Asian café. The restaurant is now very trendy and much more casual.

During the rebranding of the restaurant, Terry McCloud from the Sure Light Sign Company had been working for the hotel doing identification signage in downtown Chicago. The owners of the hotel were looking for an artful, cutting-edge way to brand the restaurant and promote the customer experience to people on the street.

Mr. McCloud suggested digital signage. The owners liked the idea and asked him to propose a solution. But there were some caveats. The solution had to be very budget friendly. It had to work in the limited space of the restaurant lobby. And it had to be able to show live video.

While the owners were keen on a projection-based system, it presented a number of problems. First, the artwork would be seen from both inside and outside of the restaurant. The owners only wanted the images to be seen from the street side. The next problem was that a projection system is very large and would impede movement and traffic flow in the restaurant lobby.

So Mr. McCloud researched alternative solutions, including about a dozen different media players and signage systems. One of them was iCOMPEL™. After attending a Webinar presented by George Borden, Black Box National Sales Manager for Digital Signage, Mr. McCloud was convinced that iCOMPEL was the answer.

A compelling solution

"I chose iCOMPEL because of the important abilities to network it, to schedule it, to work in zones, to add components in the future,

and to show video," explained Mr. McCloud. "Plus the Internet interface is very appealing and the ability to make edits on-line is critical."

Mr. McCloud also chose iCOMPEL because the project was very "budget conscious with an aggressive timeline."

"For the money, and what you get, there are no other systems that are as comprehensive as iCOMPEL," said Mr. McCloud. "There are cheaper units, but they don't offer nearly as much."

Mr. McCloud was also sold on the fact that Black Box has a 35+ year history and free, live 24/7 support, saying it was "unmatched."

The end product

Mr. McCloud designed a one by four solution with one iCOMPEL unit and four NEC monitors. The installation also included a Black Box HDMI splitter to drive the signal to the four monitors. Because the lobby space was limited, Sure Light mounted the monitors on articulating arms so they can be swung out for cleaning or turned to face the restaurant. In addition, the Dana owners were very adamant about keeping the installation sleek, so Mr. McCloud created a custom raceway to hide the CAT5 cables.

The Dana owners and a New York video agency worked together to create the content promoting the restaurant's brand. The system is now set up to show one image across all four monitors.

"The application is very different, very edgy, and not a typical signage application," said Mr. McCloud.

Since the repositioning of the restaurant in October 2009 and the installation of the iCOMPEL digital signage system, the restaurant has seen a steady increase in dining traffic, customer satisfaction ratings, and positive restaurant reviews.

"For the money, there are no other solutions as comprehensive as iCOMPEL."

Terry McCloud, VP Sales & Marketing, Sure Light Sign Company