



GTSI's Visual Management System Wins Votes in San Antonio

After exercising our right to vote, how many of us actually keep up with the work of our elected officials once we put them in office? In San Antonio, the seventh largest city in the US, a new state-of-the-art video management system now makes it easier for citizens to stay informed and keep track of their elected officials' voting records and government activities.

Because San Antonio's council manager form of government advocates open-meeting legislation, the Council provides live broadcasts of meetings over public access television. An aging, low-resolution presentation system and a communications network plagued by multiple problems were making it increasingly difficult and expensive to broadcast live meetings. In keeping with its commitment to deliver government transparency, the City Council approved a measure to replace its legacy visual communications equipment with a state-of-the-art system that electronically records votes, broadcasts results in real time, and is used to manage all chamber activities.

City Council Elects GTSI's Three-phased Solution

Aware that its IT staff did not have the bandwidth to design, build, and implement both the customized electronic voting system and the fiber-based network required for live video broadcasts, the Council contacted GTSI and asked the company to submit a proposal. GTSI, working with SDI, a long-time partner and trusted technology consulting firm, responded

immediately. After conducting an in-depth needs assessment and matching the results to the Council's specifications for a parallel control processor network that provided triple redundancy—an architecture that enabled the visual communications system, the Mayor, and the City Clerk to back up the others' control functions—GTSI presented a three-phased solution that addressed the Council's budget, timeline, and operational priorities.

For the first phase, GTSI recommended that the Council upgrade the existing network infrastructure, install 3-chip CCD cameras and projectors, connect touch screen monitors to the LAN/WAN, and develop a customized voting and

agenda management application. The proposal highlighted GTSI's in-depth knowledge of hardware and software, coax and fiber-based network design and implementation, and advanced integration processes. To ensure that the project stayed on time and on budget and met the City Council's need to have the first phase completed and fully functioning by the end of its nine-week recess, GTSI included project management and engineering services in the proposal. And because GTSI is the sole provider of IT products, services, and solutions under the U.S. Communities contract, the San Antonio City Council would be able to quickly and easily procure the hardware, software, and networking components along with all services at pre-negotiated pricing.



Once the Council accepted the proposal, GTSI assembled a team of network engineers; replaced the existing 10/100 base-T network with a CAT6e and fiber network; and installed a parallel network, over which live video of meetings would be broadcasted on public access TV. After integrating all the main switching and routing components into the network, the GTSI team installed cameras and projectors as well as touch screen monitors at the seats occupied by the Mayor and Council members. The monitors are used to cast and record votes; control all network switching, transport, and camera pan tilt zoom functions; and select sources for preview and program displays. With “request to speak” and speaker queue management functions, wireless communications, and WIFI control panels, support staff can move around the facility and still control all the systems.

GTSI also developed a custom application that enabled items in an SQL data base to be imported from an agenda builder application. The City Clerk uses the application

to assign action dates to items; pull up the items, either individually or in groups; and select the items that should be displayed on the touch screen monitors located at the Mayor’s and Council members’ seats. A voting application, also built from the ground up by GTSI, tabulates the votes after they are cast and imports the results into the SQL data base. One of the three master control panels installed by GTSI routes the results over the LAN/WAN, in real time or with a delay. These results can be published on the web or viewed on monitors located in the chamber or connected to the Municipal Access Channel.

Additionally, a master panel sends commands over the Internet, enabling equipment to be managed remotely. Each piece of equipment receives polls and error codes transmitted over the WAN from Houston, TX, and reports issues to the remote management application. The constant evaluation of its own state of operation enables the system to quickly detect errors and proactively resolve problems to prevent equipment and e-mail failure.

Services Support Future Growth and Performance

GTSI completely designed; built; and implemented the network, IT, and visual system infrastructure within six weeks, meeting the Council’s deadline. Along with training on how to use the system, GTSI provided a three-year maintenance agreement that enabled the City Council to keep the system and network performing to specification throughout its lifecycle.

The City Council not only has an agile infrastructure that flawlessly transmits video and data but also an infrastructure that will fully support the integration of the digital audio technology and applications during Phase II and the addition of TV production and broadcast equipment and applications during Phase III.

**For more information contact
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