MealViewer and LG Team Up to Transform School Cafeterias Across the Country

LG | Business Solutions

Marshall County High — Monday, October 29, 2018

Entree	cal	carbs	fat	sod
WG Breaded Chicken Sandwich	370	44	10	656
Cheeseburger	302	34	10	534
Chicken Tenders	243	12	12	334

Fruit	cal	carbs	fat	sod
Chilled Applesauce	92	22	0	10
Mandarin Oranges	57	13	0	10

Vegetable	cal	carbs	fat	sod
Tater Tots	138	17	6	330
Baked Beans	179	37	1	702
Lettuce, Romaine	3	1	0	1
Vegetable, Sliced Tomatoes	9	2	0	7

Grain	cal	carbs	fat	sod
Grains, Roll Homestyle	130	24	2	100

Dairy	cal	carbs	fat	sod
Milk, 1% Low Fat	110	13	2	130
Milk, Strawberry Fat Free	110	19	0	125
Milk, Chocolate Fat Free	120	20	0	180

Dessert	cal	carbs	fat	sod
Cookie, Chocolate Chip	104	18	4	83

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GOAL

MealViewer, an innovative digital menu and mobile app provider for schools across the country, sought a digital signage solution that would allow cafeteria staff to make live updates to menu offerings, increase student engagement and help drive greater cafeteria sales. As the first company to deliver live data through digital signage displays in an institutional food service setting, MealViewer needed to find a technology partner with an innovative digital signage solution that offered captivating picture quality, seamless connectivity to MealViewer's proprietary software platform, and the potential to be easily replicated in cafeterias and school districts throughout the United States.

SOLUTION

MealViewer selected advanced digital signage monitors from LG Elecronics to deliver their transformative menu solution to tens of thousands of students across the country. Prior to partnering with LG, MealViewer had retrofitted pre-existing consumer-grade televisions or digital signage displays with external media players to run their content.

As the company continued to grow, they found that in certain locations, these players were not compatible with the pre-exisiting onsite televisions, seriously challenging scalability and growth. Instead, MealViewer found that LG displays developed for quick-serve restaurant (QSR) digital menu boards and wayfinding applications could be easily integrated into any school cafeteria installation environment. MealViewer now uses the state-of-the-art LG displays (models SM5KC and SM5KD) to replace existing units and players for a more efficient solution on the walls of the cafeterias, above serving lines and in entryways.

These displays enable cafeteria staff to communicate more clearly with students and staff and empower the school district to share crisp, eye-catching and inviting content that will help inform students as well as increace engagement and sales. Equally significant, the proprietary LG webOS for signage software allows school staff to effortlessly provide real-time updates and make quick changes to the content.

RESULTS

Today, LG is MealViewer's primary digital signage display supplier. MealViewer aleady has installed more than 1,300 SM5KC and SM5KD QSR displays in the hundreds of school cafeterias they service in 38 different states. The 43-, 49-, 55- and 65-inch class LG QSR displays combine crisp picture quality and easily editable software, which affords for dynamic content that minimizes inconveinces for students waiting in line."

School cafeteria and nutrition program staff can now easily manage the displays via LG webOS software platform for seamless communication between staff and students that, in turn, makes the job of switching and editing content for staff much easier. The software also enables staff to promote student participation in formal school nutrition programs, advocating for healthier eating habits among the students and staff.

CHALLENGE

Whiteboards and paper lunch menus no longer cut it in today's tech driven world. "The number one reason students don't eat lunch is the wait time in line," explained MealViewer CEO, Tommy Wafford. "They have a 30-minute break in the middle of their day to hang out with friends and reset their minds, so they don't want to spend 10 percent of that—even if it's just three minutes—waiting in line. So, if we can change the culture in their cafeteria by delivering rich content, such as Twitter feeds, photos and important anouncements, while they're waiting in line, then that time becomes a social experience in and of itself."

Built by food service professionals for food service professionals in education, the MealViewer platform is unique, custom-created school nutrition software that is designed to revolutionize institutionalized food service and adapt to the world—and technological advancements—in real-time. The company uniquely understands the K-12 QSR market, as well as school districts' growing demand for technologically advanced solutions that benefit both students and faculty.

By replacing static signage with their dynamic software program on captivating LG digital signage displays, the MealViewer team is set to positively shake up the school cafeteria status quo, Wafford says.

Initially, MealViewer retrofitted media players onto previously installed TVs in the school districts where they worked, but they soon found that these players were not space- or time-efficient options, especially in school districts where the old displays were not running the content at the speed and quality necessary for their program to effectively do its job.

Before long, MealViewer realized that in order for school districts to reap the most benefits from their program, they would need to pinpoint a turnkey digital signage solution that would enable their clients to effectively promote school nutrition and provide an efficient, convenient school lunch program. To do so, MealViewer sought to join forces with a leading digital signage display partner.

As both the system integrator and end-user, the MealViewer team knew exactly what they were looking for: immersive displays that could double as statement-pieces in any school cafeteria with the brains to fully support their advanced digital menu software program.

## MANAGING A SCHOOL DISTRICT FROM ONE LOCATION

It is hard to deny that static non-digital signage is less effective among younger demographics. "For the most effective results, menus need to be delivered through a digital content system, and in order for our clients to effectively provide that, they also need a quality solution that does not complicate their current workflow," according to Wafford. In order to offer school districts across the country a highly operable, streamlined software solution that could be updated in real-time and accessed remotely, MealViewer needed a digital signage solution with a snappy software program in addition to premium picture quality.

The smart, web-centric open source platform, LG webOS, is endlessly customizable, easy to design and highly manageable. Running the MealViewer program as an app on LG's webOS smart digital signage software uncomplicates the use of digital signage for school cafeteria managers across the country, as they can now manage an entire school district's cafeteria programs from one location thanks to its Group Manager feature.

Prior to using LG's webOS-enabled QSR digital signage, it would take upwards of 25 to 30 hours for the staff to update content and menus. Now, MealViewer can offer their customers different levels of access whether it be by district or on a school-by-school basis. Once the LG displays are installed in the schools, they can also be controlled through MealViewer's company database so that MealViewer's IT technicians can log into the system remotely to provide troubleshooting support for clients, enhancing its customer service offerings. Staff members can use the displays' mirroring feature to share content across a Wi-Fi network and they can even control the digital signage from their house if they needed to work from home, allowing the ultimate in commercial flexibility and convenience.

As a result, webOS saves time and money in addition to ensuring accuracy across the network of connected displays. "LG has established itself as the leader in forward-thinking technology. It's the reason we are LG partners," said Wafford, whose company is dedicated to evolving and growing its own technology solution. "We're so grateful for LG's methodology of always thinking about the next best thing they can bake into their hardware and we're really excited—ecstatic, actually—about the ability to partner with LG and use webOS in the future for the K-12 market."
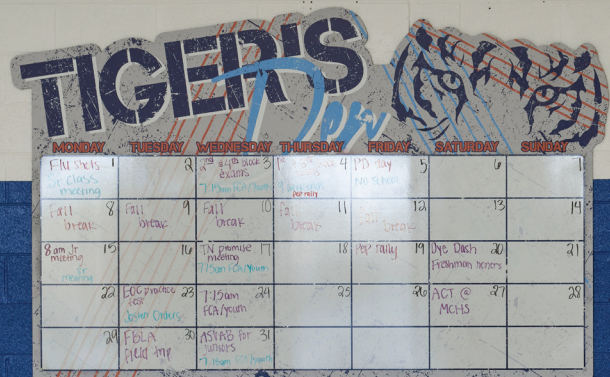
DIGITAL SIGNAGE SET TO ENGAGE

Another critical element in MealViewer's school QSR implementation is picture quality. "Students will engage with a format they're used to seeing – digital," Wafford said. With Full HD (1,920 x 1,080) resolution and LG's world-class panel technology, the LG SM5KC and SM5KD deliver content in a stunning, captivating way sure to grab the attention of busy students. When combined with LG's Picture-by-Picture and Picture-in-Picture technology in the SM5KC models, MealViewer can divide the rectangular screens into numerous parts, giving each school the option for truly customizable content that fits the needs of their students.

The signage displays also have the ability to run multiple videos, change images and act as an interactive display rather than simply presenting one static image. In most of the school districts where it is implemented, the LG screens primarily display the cafeteria's daily menu, but with LG webOS, staff are now learning how they can easily showcase nutritional information, allergy information, weather and upcoming announcements to continually keep students aware and interested.

TAKING LG INSIDE THE CAFETERIA EVERY STEP OF THE WAY

Thanks to its LG partnership, MealViewer is the only company that is strategically using digital signage to transform school cafeterias throughout the country. Throughout the process, the MealViewer development team worked directly with LG during every phase of the installation. "We looked at every other brand out there, and really, the LG team's willingness to help us and get us the product in such a way that would better serve our customers was the deciding factor," said Wafford. "At the end of the day, their customer service philosophy really aligns with ours, which is 'customer first'. The hardware is world class; the support is even better."

He explained that LG's QSR digital signage displays not only provide an innovative solution for MealViewer and their customers, but LG's webOS for Signage also streamlined the installation process for MealViewer by eliminating the need for an external media player or software device. Moreover, LG iniatiated and continues to maintain constant communication with the MealViewer team before, during, and after each installation, enabling a seamless process that affords the schools an immediate, long-lasting impact. The displays' ease of installation and LG's step-by-step customer service, especially while MealViewer built their platform on the webOS program, contributed to the company's overall cost savings. "Cost as a startup is crucial. Every penny spent counts and with LG we couldn't have found a more efficient, cost-effective solution for our company," said Wafford.

A BUSINESS PARTNERSHIP THAT DELIVERS CLEAR RESULTS

Prior to implementation, students consistently skipped lunch because the wait time in their school's cafeteria line was tremendously long. MealViewer has changed the culture in the cafeteria by delivering rich content while students, parents or staff are waiting in lines. "The LG displays not only made a clear impact, but an immediate impact, in the schools where they were installed," said Wafford. Now, waiting in line has become a social experience for students and participation in school nutrition programs has skyrocketed thanks to the innovative

MealViewer platform in conjunction with LG's displays. Cafeteria staff continually receive compliments from students, parents, teachers and school staff on the sleek, attention-grabbing aesthetic of the displays, their ease of use and the convenience of the displays implemented. Many appreciate the dispalys' ability to obtain and retain the attention of students waiting in line through multiple pieces of content playing at one time, and the students love the engaging content, which has transformed waiting in line from a boring waste of time, into a new and enjoyable experience for students.

Today, MealViewer and LG are revolutionizing institutionalized QSR within the K-12 education sector. LG's QSR signage reduced the hardware MealViewer had to install by 50 percent, eliminating the need for a secondary device, and therefore enabling the company to dedicate precious resources on expansion instead of additional hardware. By running MealViewer software as a webOS app onboard the LG displays without exterior hardware, staff have also been able to update data in real time, saving school districts time and money.

To date, MealViewer and LG are now in hundreds of school districts, including eight of the top twenty largest districts in the country. Even more, while the use of LG displays alongside the MealViewer software has been instrumental in the culture of educational QSR, LG's technology has also helped increase MealViewer's bottom line. Since using LG as its primary display source, MealViewer has been able to win more bids because they can provide a less invasive solution at lower cost and with a better quality product.

"The team and the family at LG from the technicians to the development team to the logistical team and the sales support team have helped us get what we need when we needed it, sometimes even quicker than we would typically see things happen with other partners," Wafford concluded. "We look forward to many more years of working with LG."