A Winning AV Solution

A Winning Solution for Iowa State University Athletics
*Ames, Iowa*

Austin Minnihan's patience had run out. As Associate Director of Network Production & Engineering for Iowa State University Athletics, he was the "first line of defense" against audio visual (AV) technical problems. And almost every time Iowa State University welcomed special events into the Sukup Endzone Club at Jack Trice Stadium, something went wrong with AV delivery. Because the original system was intended for game day needs, it was never designed for the varied AV needs of the number of special events hosted in that space.

"The Sukup End Zone Club is one of our premium spaces, for fans and customers who financially support our department and student-athlete," he explains. "We

strive to provide them with the best experiences we can, and these audio visual systems are extremely critical in reaching that objective for this space. To ensure events occurred smoothly, onsite support was often needed to manage the system interface.

Objectives

- Reduce AV technical issues
- Reduce onsite support costs
- Improve control panel's user interface
- Find a long-term partner
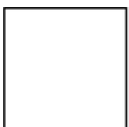
Having lost confidence in the original design interface, Minnihan was referred to Mechdyne, to design a completely new control interface.

Ending Event Interruptions

At the initial meeting, Minnihan explained the issues to Mechdyne solutions engineering, who asked for a clear understanding of how the athletics department would define success for this project.

The core of the problem owed to the original intent of the system. "When we designed the Sukup End Zone project, our chief focus was to design the space for gameday." explained Chris Jorgensen the Senior Associate Athletic Director at Iowa State. "We underestimated just how popular the space would become for special events." The athletics department had to deal with a complicated, non-intuitive (outside of game day actions) control interface, one that made every event and fix more complicated and time consuming than it should have been.

Mechdyne does not outsource critical functionality like user control system programming. Fully trained and certified programmers are on staff and dedicated to each project. The programmers are experienced with high-level software and user interface design that is required for an AV system with multiple use cases. "In a situation like this, two things are essential. First, you have to understand the system at the deepest level. But just as important, you need to understand the client's expectations for how they want to interact with the technology," says Mechdyne's control programmer. "Armed with that knowledge, we can program the system in a way that not only ensures reliable performance but also enables intuitive operation."

"This wasn't a set-it-and-forget program. The client needed an interface that enabled them to regularly adjust the system to meet the needs of the moment. So job one was to give them a control

interface that they were comfortable with."

Achieving these goals for the client depended, first, on listening carefully, and then on collaborating closely. Said Austin Minnihan: "We had good, detailed discussions on making the interface as intuitive as possible. It was a very collaborative process between myself and the Mechdyne programmer."

"The system just works."

"Prior to the upgrade," says Minnihan, "I would be called to come fix problems in the Sukup End Zone Club multiple times a week. Many times, I would not be able to resolve the problem and an event would have to go on without displays until we could get our previous integrator on-site. [Mechdyne's] upgrade has made a world of difference and I have not been called to fix an issue in that space for over a year now."

And how was Minnihan's experience with Mechdyne? "Very good. They were able to assess the programming of an already

existing system and redesign and reprogram it to meet our requests," he explains. "I enjoyed how collaborative their solution and software engineers were with me as the updates were made to ensure the end result was what we were looking for."

Adds Minnihan: "This was the Athletic Department's first experience with Mechdyne and we used it as a test to determine if they were the right fit for us. Based on many following projects – including our brand new $90 million Sports Performance Center ¬– they passed the test."

About Mechdyne

Mechdyne is one of the world's leading providers of innovative visual information technologies. Mechdyne bends technology to our will in ways that transform complex data into insights and ideas. To ensure our customers succeed, Mechdyne provides comprehensive, customized solutions that include consulting, software, technical services, and hardware integration.