Crestron DigitalMedia 8G Provides Entertainment at Virgin Airlines

First class lounges in airports are considered excellent places for business travellers to stay connected, informed, and entertained. The renovation of Virgin's 'Clubhouse' Upper Class Lounge at Heathrow Terminal 3 breaks keeps this in mind with its newly opened HD multiscreen area. The fifteen screen wall was installed by Copthorne-based systems integrator Avensys and features Crestron's DigitalMedia system.

The DigitalMedia system, complete with 8G technology, required each display device to have a dedicated cable to supply HD video, device control, and Ethernet. This presented some logistical challenges as within Clubhouse there are no access hatches in the ceiling - a feature designed to preserve the sleek, seamless look of the interior. Avensys ran all the cabling around the perimeter of the area where some ceiling grids were removable, while other cables ran under the floor.

Avensys also knew that the system had to be easy for Virgin staff to control. Avensys installed a Crestron TPMC-V15 touch panel and designed an intuitive interface. The new program features a map of the lounge and gives the user as much information about the current status of the system as possible. An iPad, powered by Crestron Mobile Pro G software,
complements the fixed panel to allow staff to control the lounge and make changes virtually to meet their customers' expectations.

Crestron DigitalMedia is distributed to each display in the lounge and reportedly allows Virgin staff to direct any of the Sky HD or Blu-ray players to any display device by the touch of a button. The full HD preview panel is located at the reception desk so staff can make changes to devices without being directly in front of the display screen. The system utilizes DigitalMedia quick switch technology to eliminate blank screens when changing to a different source.

The video wall is powered by Cestron DM-MD16X16 DigitalMedia Switcher. The switcher handles all switching of sources to allow guests to enjoy a range of screen formats. A Crestron AV2 processor provides control functions, with 6 Sky HD boxes and 5 Blu-ray players supplying content.

Audio for the lounge is distributed by two music servers which update with new music on a daily basis. When in the multiscreen zone, customers can use headphone stations and tune into any of the content that is being displayed on the 15-screen media wall.

The project has been a huge success for both Virgin staff and passengers. "Our Upper Class Lounge passengers expect first-class service on all levels," says Virgin IT Operations Manager, Darrel Etherington. "With the new media wall and other HD displays we have achieved that.

"Feedback internally is positive as the Crestron system is intuitive and allows us to respond to customer needs as they arise in a quick and efficient manner," adds Etherington.