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on a collision course?**



All photos courtesy Daimler Financial Services.

Daimler Financial Services Americas dedicated its customer service and operations center near Fort Worth TX in October.

COMMUNICATIONS POWERHOUSE

AV keeps Daimler Financial Services employees in the info loop.

BY JIM STOKES

Daimler Financial Services Americas (DFS) opened a new three-story facility in Alliance (Fort Worth) TX in September. Within the 164,000-square-foot building is a new customer call center. AV plays a significant role in the new operation via source equipment, audio- and videoconferencing, display of statistics and otherwise keeping employees informed.

‘Powerhouse’ Center

According to Jack Ferry, Daimler media relations, “Our plan for expansion in Texas is to create a powerhouse customer care and operations center incorporating existing Mercedes-Benz Financial customer services and re-marketing operations. That included re-locating our Daimler Truck Financial operations from suburban Chicago to the Fort Worth area” (see sidebar, “Daimler Financial Services Americas”). “The new facility has a capacity for 800 employees. In September, we had a move-in of 550 employees, and inside of that are 157 new jobs.”

According to Insight Research, which specializes in economic impact reports and cost-benefit analyses for cities, municipalities and government

agencies, Daimler’s expansion to the North Texas area will result in a positive economic impact of \$115 million in the first 12 months and \$48.5 million annually going forward. Janet Marzett, vice president for customer service, collections and remarketing USA for Daimler Financial Services, announced the study results and further added, “Our plan is to create a powerhouse customer care and operations center at one location. This will create a large talent pool where people will have a wide range of career opportunities in both the luxury car market and the medium and heavy truck industry. Most

Sound & Communications *Contributing Editor Jim Stokes has been involved in the AV industry for more than 30 years as an AV technician and writer.*

importantly, they will not have to relocate all over the country during their careers.”

For this story, we spoke with five individuals. At Daimler: Jerry Eddy, facilities manager; Jack Ferry, media relations; and Paul Morack, telecommunications management; at integrator Nu-Star: Josh Evans, director of engineering; and Brian Vago, president.

According to Nu-Star’s Vago, “It wasn’t a tricky install, but it was ‘crunched’ as far as timing goes. From start to finish, it was about three months. We had to follow and keep up with the construction schedules. If there were changes, we had to meet them on the spot. But the good thing was that, because we were the AV part, we usually go in last anyway. We try to get our pre-wiring done and finish early.” He noted there were nine installers on this project.

Call Center Overview

Before we detail the AV, let’s give an overview of the call center. The Fort Worth facility was designed to be updated in all respects, from employee communication to business management. Nu-Star Technologies designed and installed the system (see sidebar, “Nu-Star Technologies, LLC”).

Part of the challenge was installing more than 80 displays around the facility, each handling HD content sources including videoconferencing, employee communications, business metrics and entertainment. All sources had to be available on any of the displays, with full audio, source and display control.

Subsequently, the chosen system was designed around the NetStreams IP-based DigiLinX system. Sources include Tandberg videoconferencing, Symon Technologies digital signage and DIRECTV’s satellite services. The system incorporates 32 sources to 85 displays with 26 touchscreen controls within the facility. According to Nu-Star’s Evans, the integration company had “great support through NetStreams. Any time you’re distributing digital video on a network, it has to be considered. NetStreams was exceptional in its support.”



The boardroom in Daimler Financial Services’ new facility in Fort Worth TX has full HD videoconferencing capabilities. The dual plasmas share space with an original painting, “Frenzy” by Carolyn Natishyn, a 2008 Masters in Fine Arts graduate of Texas Christian University, Fort Worth. The painting is part of the “Experiencing Perspectives” exhibit on display in the 164,000-square-foot facility.

Daimler’s Needs

According to facilities manager Jerry Eddy, DFS has a legacy of using plasma technology for at least eight years in its facilities. “Plasmas originally were used for viewing local news and weather. It wasn’t until recently that Paul Morack, telecommunications management, developed the concept of using the same plasma technology for our call center statistics.”

Morack explained that the methodology included two main uses: statistical information in the call center and office environments, and corporate communications.

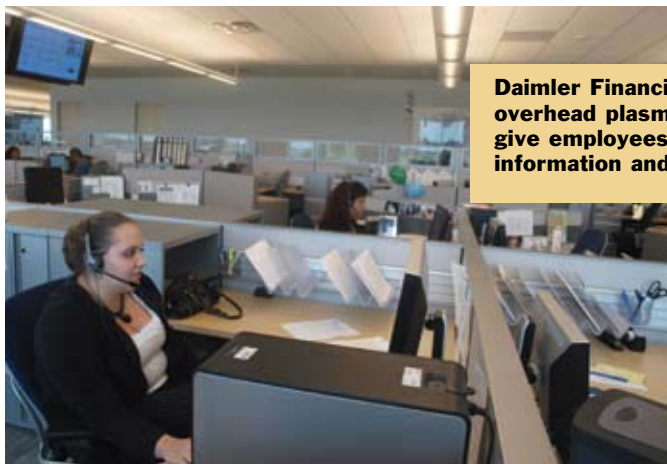
“Back in the DaimlerChrysler days, we had corporate communications provided. But we had to emulate that or do something on our own as Daimler. So we wanted to partner with a third party that could provide a conduit for corporate communications and call center statistics. We reached out to Brian Vago and Nu-Star Technologies, Jerry Eddy (and his group in-house), and another partner: Symon Technologies based in Dallas.”

Accordingly, Aspect Software has been Daimler’s partner for call center technologies for 15 years, provid-

ing the phone systems and source for some of the call center statistics that are displayed. All fiberoptic connectivity is terminated on Cisco switches in the computer room and throughout the IDF (intermediate distribution frame) in each of three floors of the new building. Then all the different inputs, including 15 different channels of DIRECTV, the call center statistics and the corporate communication statistics, are managed by NetStreams, which sends them out through the Cisco and fiberoptic infrastructure to the plasmas.

IP-Based Videoconferencing

Vago pointed out that IP-based videoconferencing plays a major role at Daimler. Just about every executive within Daimler North America is using a Tandberg videoconferencing machine. “They’re all trying to reduce their travel-related costs. It’s more productive and quicker. It’s also a more environmentally friendly solution.” At the Fort Worth office, Tandberg 1700s, T150s, Edge 95s, Mobile Maestros, and MXP8000s are used in conjunction with the 6000 MXP HD codec package.



Daimler Financial Services' overhead plasma screens give employees transactional information and corporate news.

Evans added that the Tandberg systems are in use all the way from the company's offices in North America from Canada through the United States and into Mexico. "So, travel costs are cut significantly." He estimated there were 16 or 17 videoconferences during the week that we interviewed for this story, all incorporating two or three sites.

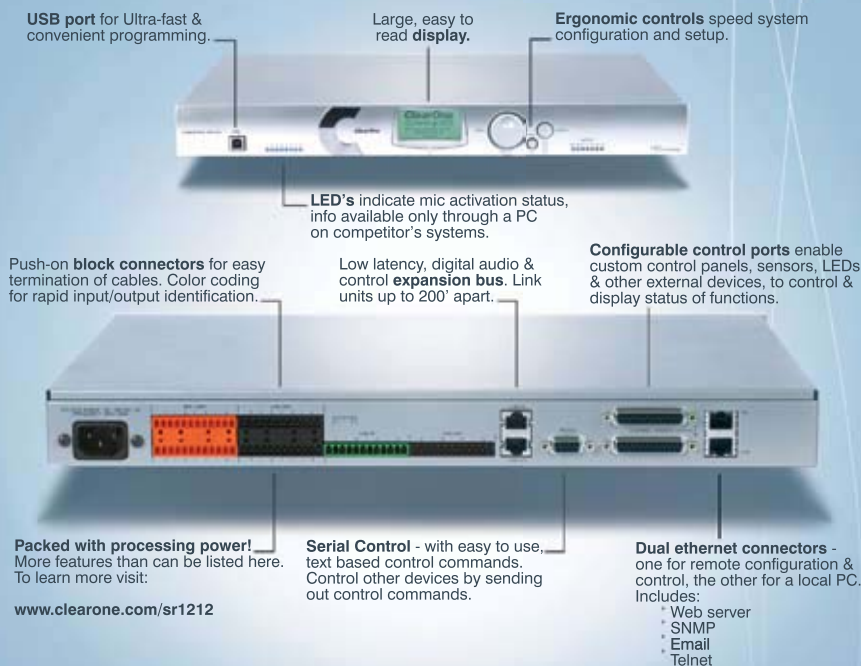
In round numbers, the 20'x35' boardroom seats 24, with additional seats along the walls. AV is accessed and controlled via a Crestron touchscreen. The room features video and audio conferencing, as well as presentation capability within the room itself. On the visual side, two-way videoconferencing is provided by a Tandberg codec. Company-wide global broadcasting is one way.

Stunning Quality

There are two large Draper Onyx screens fed by 3M Vikuiti Super Close projection systems. "We selected the Vikuiti for its near-field performance,"

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Nu-Star Technologies, LLC

Nu-Star Technologies, LLC, recently re-headquartered in Fort Worth TX, keeping its satellite office in Garden City MI. With five full-time employees, the company does projects in the US, Canada and Mexico. However, most of the installation labor is subcontracted.

"Nu-Star was born in 2003," said president Brian Vago. "Although we mostly do audio-video projects, we have also done some data/voice projects. AV examples include Detroit Lions Stadium, plus some nightclubs and sports bars in Detroit, one of which was Cheli's Chili Bar, owned by a Detroit Red Wings hockey player. Data/voice work was done for Selfridge Air Force Base in Southeast Michigan."

Other Nu-Star clients include automotive, educational and government facilities. The company has expertise in planning, integration and implementation of data, fiberoptic, video, voice and other low-voltage control transport systems, and their related infrastructure components.

For additional information, go to www.nu-star.com.

said Vago. "The quality is stunning and it's very futuristic-looking. It sticks out of the wall about three feet and shoots down on the screen." Paper documents can be displayed using a Vaddio Mega-View Visualizer camera. For further flexibility, there are several computer inputs.

On the audio side, there's a Biamp AudiaFLEX with echo canceling for audio conferencing. Boardroom speakers are driven by a Lab.gruppen power amplifier. Mounted in the ceiling are SoundTube speakers for program audio and Clockaudio microphones for audio conferencing. There's an LG DVD/Blu-ray HD player, as well.

According to Vago, the biggest boardroom install challenge was the acoustics. "We established a close working relationship with the architects, which enabled us to influence the design of the room to optimize the AV performance. Instead of the boardroom having a solid hard deck ceiling, we had them install a drop ceiling on the outer edges of the room, with a



Eighty plasma screens are placed strategically throughout Daimler Financial's new 164,000-square-foot facility to communicate constantly with employees.

mixture of a deck ceiling in the middle of the room. Adding to the room's acoustic treatment, there's carpeting on the floor with travertine tile."

Conference Rooms

There are 21 conference rooms seating from 12 to more than 14. These meeting rooms either feature 58-inch

or 50-inch plasmas, depending on how many seats are in the room and the function. "The environment is very open, and the rooms give people a chance to go in and have small meetings for coaching sessions or work on presentations," said Daimler's Ferry. "The facility is set up where anybody can reserve a certain area. The first

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Equipment

Boardroom AV

- 2 3M 800 Series Vikuiti close projection systems
- 2 Active Thermal Management Circle Vent cabinet cooling systems
- 7 Biamp AEC2w echo acoustic canceling cards
- 1 Biamp AudiaFLEX CM digital audio processor w/CobraNet
- 2 Biamp IP2 2-channel line input cards
- 2 Biamp OP2 2-channel output cards
- 1 Biamp Ti2 telephone interface card
- 5 Clockaudio C3100CP ceiling mics
- Covid plenum wire, cables, connectors
- 1 Crestron CEN-RGBHV12X8 12x8 wideband RGB matrix switcher
- 1 Crestron PRO2 control processor
- 1 Crestron TPMC-8x 8.4" wireless touchpanel w/docking station
- 2 Draper Onyx 7' projection screens
- 1 Lab.gruppen C 16:4 4-channel 400W high-performance amp
- 1 LG BH-200 dual-format HD DVD/Blu-ray player
- 1 Linksys WRT54GX4 wireless router
- 2 Middle Atlantic SRSR-2-12 12RU rotating sliding rail systems
- 6 SoundTube CM500i 5.25" coaxial in-ceiling speakers
- 1 Tandberg 6000 MXP systems integrator package
- 1 Vaddio MegaView visualizer document camera

Conference Rooms, Lunch Room

- BTX 5 BNC(f) to HD15(m) adapter cable
- 7 Chief Manufacturing PNIRW, PAC501 58" recessed plasma wall mounts
- Covid 12' VGA plenum MM
- Covid 6-conductor, plenum-rated cable
- Covid audio cable
- Covid BNC male compression connectors
- 7 Covid VGA, data/voice plates
- 7 Panasonic TH-58PH10UK 58" HD monitors w/speakers

Conference Rooms

- BTX 5 BNC(f) to HD15(m) adapter cable
- 17 Chief Manufacturing PNIRW, PAC501 50" plasma wall mounts
- Covid 12' VGA plenum MM
- Covid 6-conductor, plenum-rated cable
- Covid audio cable
- Covid BNC male compression connectors
- 14 Panasonic TH-50-PF9UK 50" HD plasmas w/speakers

Signage

- 4 Chief Manufacturing PCM-2051 single plasma ceiling mounts
- 8 Chief Manufacturing PDC-2051 dual plasma mounts
- 1 Chief Manufacturing PF12000B, PSB2051 pedestal mount
- 11 Chief Manufacturing PRO-2051 50" plasma wall mounts
- 35 Panasonic TH-50-PF9UK 50" HD plasmas w/speakers

Senior Manager Offices

- 3 Chief Manufacturing PROU flat-panel lockable tilt wall mounts
- 3 Panasonic TH-37PF9UK 37" HD plasmas w/speakers

Lunch Room

- 5 3M 800 Series Vikuiti close projection systems
- 4 Active Thermal Management Cool-Stack 1 rack cooling systems
- 2 American Power Conversion S20BLK battery back up/power conditioners
- 4 Biamp AEC2w echo acoustic canceling cards
- 1 Biamp AudiaFLEX NC digital audio processor
- 5 Biamp IP2 2-channel line input cards
- 2 Biamp OP2 2-channel output cards
- Commscope RG-6 quad shielded cable
- Covid 16 AWG plenum speaker wire
- Covid 25' VGA computer cable
- Covid 6-conductor, plenum-rated cable
- Covid BNC male compression connectors

- 1 Crestron PRO2 control processor
- 3 Crestron QM-AE audio extractors for mics
- 1 Crestron QM-MD16x16 QuickMedia matrix switch
- 10 Crestron QM-RX QuickMedia receivers
- 10 Crestron QM-TX QuickMedia transmitters
- 10 Crestron QM-WMC computer input wall plates
- 3 Crestron TPMC-8X 8.4" wireless touchpanels
- 2 Crestron TPS-6L, WMKT6L wall-mount touch panels
- 5 Draper Onyx 7' projection screens
- 2 Lab.gruppen C 16:4 4-channel 400W high-performance amps
- 1 LG BH-200 HD DVD/Blu-ray player
- 2 Middle Atlantic ERK-4425-AV 44RU enclosures
- 3 Shure ULXP124/58 dual UHF-style mic systems
- 5 SoundTube HP690i outdoor speakers w/brackets
- 22 SoundTube RS500i open-ceiling speakers
- 6 TV One 1T-V1280HD video to PC/HD signal converters

Satellite, HD Distribution

- Commscope OM3 fiber
- Commscope plenum RG-6 quad shielded coax
- 1 Crestron PRO2 control processor
- 16 Hughes H21 HD satellite receivers
- 14 INX CVR-X2-SFP twin gig converter modules
- 10 INX S3750EVT-12235SE IOS Universals w/o Crypto w/web-based device manager
- INX stacking cable
- 10 INX WS-C3750E-24TD-S Catalyst 3750E-24TD-S 24-port gigabit Ethernet switches
- 18 INX X2-10GB-LX4 10GBASE-LX4 modules
- 29 Kramer Electronics C-R3VM/R3VM component mini hi-res cables
- 1 LG BH-100 dual format HD DVD/Blu-ray player
- 1 Middle Atlantic UD3 3RU utility drawer
- 4 Mitsutech VP-MTS9150 rackmounted 15" LCD test TV, lobby signage TVs
- 2 Netstreams NS-MLA4000 MediaLinX audio encoders
- 36 Netstreams NS-MLAV300 MediaLinX AV IP-based encoders
- 6 Netstreams NS-SL9250 SpeakerLinX audio decoders
- 1 Netstreams NS-SW208 8-port 10/100Mbps Ethernet switch
- 36 Netstreams NS-TL430 4.3" in-wall LCD touchpanels
- 81 Netstreams NS-VL100 ViewLinX IP-based decoders
- Nu-Star Technologies connectors, shelves
- 1 Tradewind International TWI5x16 5-in/16-out multi-switch
- 1 Winegard KT1820BLX 5 LNB satellite dish

Videoconferencing

- 22 Tandberg 115358NPP Natural Presenter Packages
- 1 Tandberg 114861NPP Codec 6000 MXP Natural Presenter Package
- 2 Tandberg 115300 Edge 95 MXPs
- 2 Tandberg 1153601 content servers
- 10 Tandberg 1700 MXP executive control center
- 1 Tandberg Codec 6000 MXP HD integrator package
- 10 Tandberg T150MXP standard desktop units

Sound Masking

- Logison AIM 2A audio input module
- Logison AIM 2T audio input module
- Logison cable assembly 2-pin/6-pin conductors
- Logison cable couplers
- 1 Logison NCP-2 network control panel
- 8 Logison PNH 1P primary power hubs, speaker assemblies
- 104 Logison PNH-1 primary hubs, speaker assemblies
- 180 Logison SNH secondary hubs, speaker assemblies

List is edited from information supplied by Nu-Star Technologies, LLC.



Equipment in this room has the capacity to send 32 different video feeds to 85 outputs in the building.

Daimler Financial Services Americas

Daimler Financial Services Americas (DFS) provides brand-specific financing for Mercedes-Benz automotive dealers' inventories and their retail customers, and conducts business in the United States luxury care market as Mercedes-Benz Financial. In the US trucking industry, Daimler Financial Services Americas conducts business as Daimler Truck Financial and finances Daimler commercial vehicles branded Freightliner, Sterling and Western Star for dealers and their customers in the fleet, vocational, municipal and owner/operator segments.

DFS serves as the headquarters for operations in the United States, Canada, Mexico, Argentina and Brazil, and has about 1600 employees. It is a company of the Daimler Financial Services Group, headquartered in Berlin, Germany, which operates in 40 countries with an employee base of close to 6800. Daimler Financial Services is one of the leading financial services organizations worldwide.

For more information, go to www.daimlerfinancialservices.com.

floor is a common floor that's shared by everyone. So, if someone in Daimler Truck needs a larger room for the other employees, he can reserve that conference room. If they need one where they only have six members in the meeting, they can get on-line and find that particular room and reserve it. We have that flexibility to share quite a bit of space."

Each conference room has a computer input, which allows the users to display PowerPoint presentations,

Excel spreadsheets, PDFs, call center statistics or other visuals. Covid VGA, data/voice plates and other connectors provide convenient access. NetStreams' ViewLinX IP-based decoder can be accessed, offering uncompressed AV streaming. "That gives access to the centrally distributed digital signage," said Nu-Star's Evans. "They can then choose to show some corporate content in the room, as well."

Furthermore, any source that's inside the computer room can be displayed on

any plasma or projector throughout the building. For example, any of 15 satellite receivers or the LG DVD/Blu-ray units centrally located in the computer room can be accessed, distributed and viewed in other rooms.

Monitor Usage

Although any monitor can have selected feeds, Daimler's Morack explained that signage plasmas throughout the facility are geared toward corporate communications and call center statistical information. Throughout the day, screen information rotates through different relevant subject matter, such as corporate communications, possibly a training module and stats. In addition to business-oriented information and data, Morack noted, "There was a PowerPoint presentation of our recent Habitat for Humanity initiative. And then we're continuously rotating through call center statistics in specific areas where call center data is pertinent."

(continued on page 55)

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COMMUNICATIONS POWERHOUSE

(Continued from 37)

Thus, signage is a way to keep employees in the information loop. "We'll advertise any event that we have going in our Fort Worth facility," said Eddy, "whether there's a town hall (large meeting—no pun intended) scheduled or [for instance] right now we're having The Biggest Loser contest where 200 employees have signed up to see who could lose the most weight by January. Those things are all part of the signage package. We can customize on those strategically located plasmas throughout the facility. That same technology can be broadcast anywhere throughout the entire [company] population."

Moving on to the senior manager offices, each is equipped with a plasma for viewing whatever their group is doing regarding call statistics. "The manager doesn't have to go out to a floor and ask a group leader," said Vago. "He can actually look up on the monitor to see how many dropped calls there are."

Lunchroom

The spacious 30'x200' lunchroom is functionally designed with divider walls in between several areas for training rooms, conference rooms or a large town hall area that will seat about 400 people. There's a patio outside the lunchroom, as well, to accommodate additional audience. The area is controlled by three Crestron wireless touchpanels.

According to Vago, combinations of three Shure handheld and three clip-on lavalier microphones can accommodate a bevy of presenters. Regarding the rest of the audio chain, there's an LG DVD/Blu-ray player. There's an AudiaFLEX processor with echo canceling cards and a pair of 400-watt Lab.gruppen power amplifiers. Twenty-two SoundTube speakers provide program audio.

Viewing-wise, the entire area, or portions thereof, can be covered via five, seven-foot Onyx screens fired upon by five Vikuiti projector systems. In addition, there are five 58-

inch plasmas for audience viewing. And, a presenter at the front of the room can view his own presentation, without turning around, by looking at a large monitor on the back wall.

Sound Masking

According to Vago, Nu-Star installs the Logison Acoustic Network as a white noise solution in all Daimler

facilities. "We place the system above the ceiling. You'd never know it was there. It improves work productivity and provides some privacy for office conversations. Although you can't block out noise from someone talking two cubes over, you won't be able to understand anything being said from five or six cubes away because of the white noise generated." ■

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