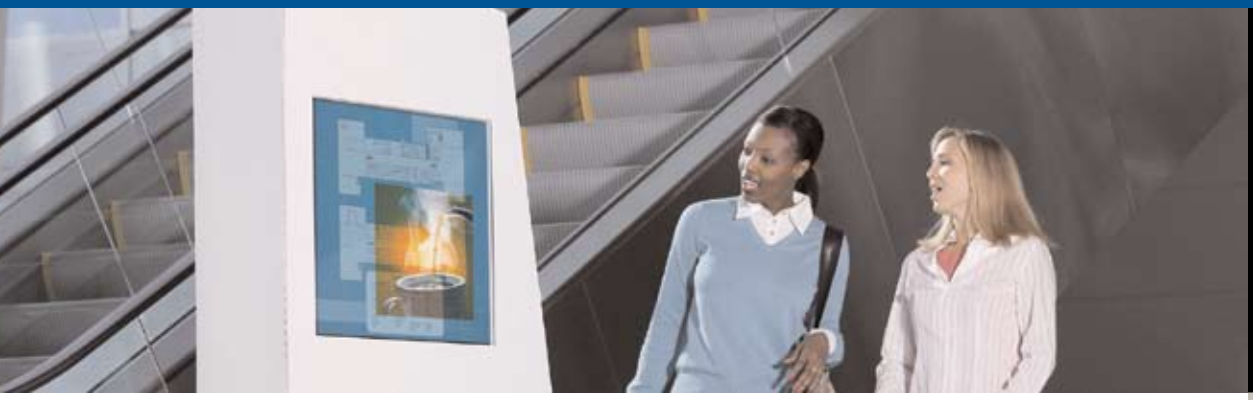
smartstories

Moving beyond the daily grind



The company may not have designed a better mousetrap, but iDeal Technology has certainly reinvented the corporate coffee machine.

The venture began when Bijan Chavoshan, director of digital signage at the Yorba Linda, Calif.-based solution provider, which specializes in IT implementation and digital signage, began chatting with business neighbor Vickie Sharples. Sharples, who heads Design Build Marketing — a newspaper and web-content publisher for building professionals — wanted to reach more customers and create a new revenue stream. In pursuit of this goal, she had concocted a mix of digital photo frames and coffee machines, looking to create an all-in-one unit that would deliver coffee and ads to about 1,500 roofing distributors around the United States.

"I'd actually purchased some hardware equipment and it wasn't coming together as well as I had hoped," she recalls. "The iDeal team helped me put together a really seamless kiosk. I don't think I could have done it without them. This whole area is totally foreign to me, which is why I made mistakes in the beginning."

Making it look this simple is part of iDeal's approach to business, says Chavoshan. But behind the scenes, the solution provider needed to do a lot of initial research to determine the most appropriate, cost-effective and rugged devices for the coffee-pot/digital signage kiosk of Sharples' dreams. "It took a lot of specific research and I spent a lot of time on the internet," says Chavoshan. "But we already knew who the experts were: Tom Jones and his technical support team at Ingram Micro. The fact that they had embraced digital signage and spun off a separate division dedicated to the technology meant a lot to us. We like to partner with the best and Ingram Micro is the best distributor partner we could choose."

Ingram Micro's Digital Signage Division was launched in December 2007. RoofersCoffeeShop.com — the name Sharples uses for the kiosks and online community — debuted in March 2008 and already has 50 kiosks in Southern California, she says. Within 12 months, at least 1,200 should be in place around the nation. Expecting rollout hiccups during the pilot, Sharples has been pleasantly surprised at the system's

iDeal Technology

Market Segment
Digital signage solutions for distributors, retailers and SMBs

Challenge or Opportunity
Trade web-operator and publisher wanted to expand ad base

Solution
Worked with Ingram Micro's Digital Signage Division to create, design and build kiosks that feature coffee pots and digital images on LCD screens

Results/Benefit
Ingram Micro's Digital Signage Division's product, technology and marketing knowledge made it easier and faster for iDeal to implement the client's business dream, resulting in a satisfied customer and end users

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simplicity and sophistication. “We can literally ship them across the country, plug them in and they work,” she says.

In this case, Sharples designed the content herself, but iDeal has content-creation specialists on staff who frequently provide this service to clients, says Chavoshan. Working together, iDeal and Ingram Micro’s digital signage experts designed and tested the ruggedized kiosks, and Sharples created the content and sold space to advertisers, he said.

While iDeal has many technology experts on staff, the company enjoys the access it gets to Ingram Micro professionals who specialize in technical, product and marketing support. The distributor also helps iDeal’s clients, often small or midsize companies like Design Build Marketing, with payment options, says Chavoshan.

“The financing and leasing are yet another reason to do business with Ingram Micro and work closely with its Digital Signage Division,” he says. “As Vickie’s getting more advertisers onboard, we’re talking to her about how to best finance this deal so it makes the most sense for her and her customers.”

The kiosks, which are delivered at no charge, gained instant approval from end customers who enjoyed the novelty of the systems and the information available on them. In fact, Sharples is considering expanding into complementary markets such as plumbing distribution or heating and air conditioning.

“I’ve been to about six or seven locations where they’re installed, and it really is a talking piece because who doesn’t love coffee?” says Chavoshan. “It’s a great concept and she’s not just limited to the roofing industry. Vickie can take this product to flooring guys or air conditioning guys, and that’s where the future is for her company. Vickie’s already a visionary and we are working smart to help her vision by leveraging partners like Ingram Micro to find the technologies best suited to making her business goals into business facts.”

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