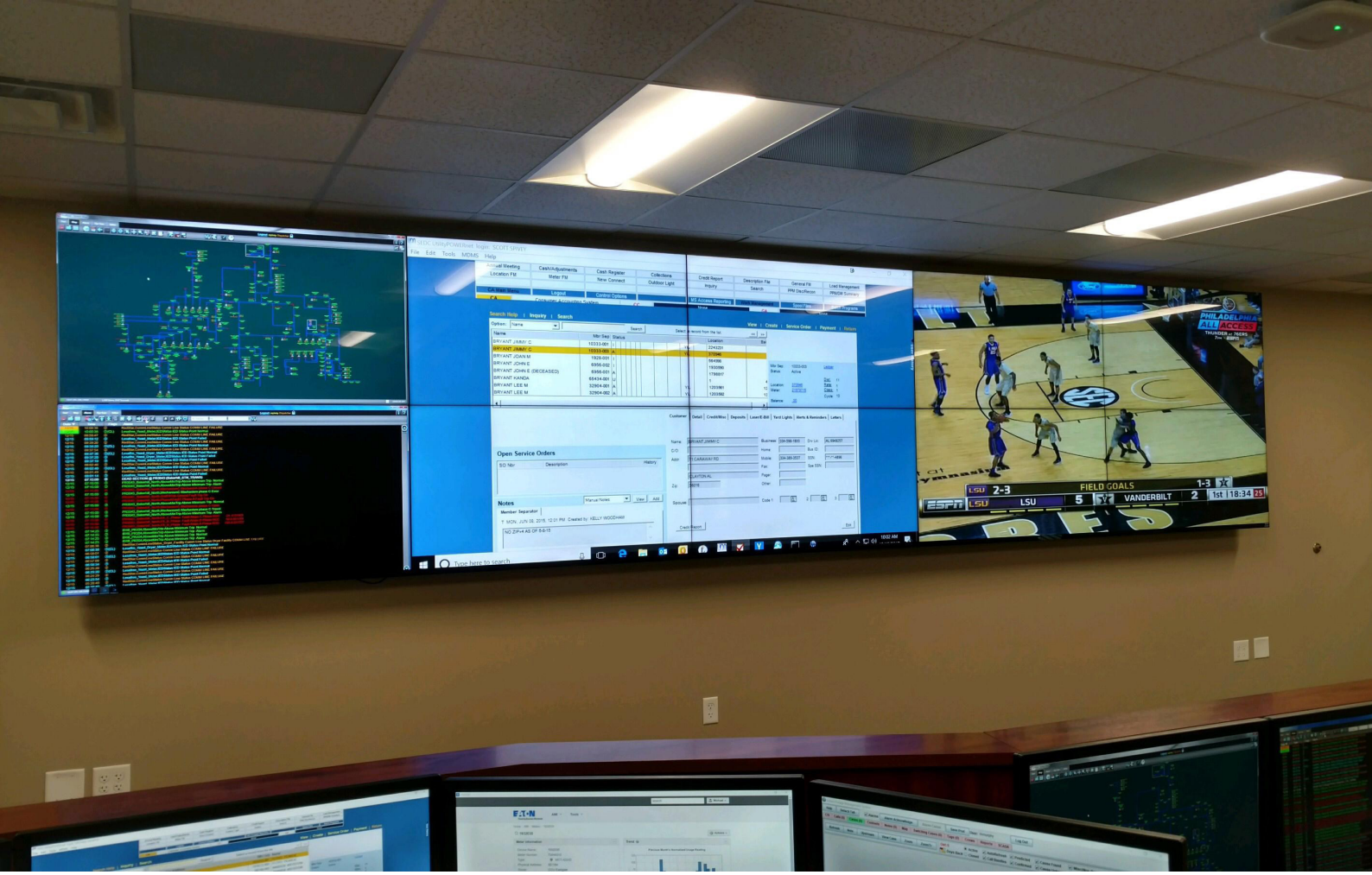

VSN SERIES

Flexible video wall solution puts the power in the hands of operators at Alabama's Pea River Electric Cooperative

Engineering the world's best visual solutions

DATAPATH
EXCELLENCE BY DESIGN

BACKGROUND

From sending an email to powering urgent medical equipment, energy keeps America connected. The energy industry is diversifying in exciting ways as consumers explore new buying and distribution options. The Alabama-based Pea River Electric Cooperative is at the heart of innovation in the energy channel. To deliver exceptional energy experiences for its 18,000 accounts, this member-owned, not-for-profit distribution cooperative is using advanced audiovisual tools for critical monitoring in its headquarters.

THE CHALLENGE

Pea River needed a new video wall and control system installed for their headquarters in Ozark, Alabma. The value-driven cooperative turned to Encore Technologies, a subsidiary of Harris Security Systems, also based in Ozark.

Meeting User Needs

With the Pea River video wall project in mind, Findley approached Datapath at a trade show. After a quick software demonstration of the VSNMicro 600 at Datapath's booth, Findley was impressed by the product's intuitive operation and robust feature-set. The cost of the processor was also "very reasonable." The VSNMicro 600 platform includes a motherboard which is connected to Datapath's Express6 PCIe backplane containing six half-length PCIe slots for use with Datapath's range of cards.

Available with a range of options including an industrial grade motherboard, Intel processors, DDR4, memory and ATX or RSPU power supplies, the VSNMicro 600 is designed to offer the same richly feature set of larger VSN systems. It is also compatible with Datapath's diverse portfolio of Vision capture, Image graphics and ActiveSQX IP decoding cards. Customers can build systems with a myriad of video inputs and IP streams that can feed to a large, multi-screen video wall.

THE SOLUTION

Encore's deep expertise in all aspects of integrated audiovisual solutions was exactly what Pea River needed.

LaDon Findley, Encore Technologies Division manager and senior AV designer/estimator, has been specializing in AV systems for nearly 35 years. From state capitols to houses of worship, Findley and the Encore team bring passion to projects across the country. "We travel extensively and we do systems everywhere," Findley enthused. But delivering a state-of-the-art solution for a neighbor in the Yellowhammer State was a win-win for all parties involved.

Keeping Communities Connected

Pea River's supervisory control and data acquisition system (SCADA) monitors the power lines and transformers throughout their area, and more specifically, their area of responsibility. When they have a power outage, lose a transformer, or a line goes down, a critical alert appears on the video wall as an alarm. A map instantly indicates the exact location of the issue.

Maintaining the serviceability of the power structure is a complex task with many moving parts. There's no room for ambiguity and no time for guesswork. Multiple computers at the Pea River HQ Call Desk run different software packages, and operators display information feeds on the video wall. Findley comments, "Everybody sitting at the Call Desk—typically three to four people—can just glance up at the wall and see the status of a particular call. The operators are able to glance up and see where they have a problem, how to get to the problem, and where the issue is originating," he said. "They can dispatch somebody immediately to get it fixed."

Findley is confident that the versatile VSNMicro 600 is the best driver for the Pea River HQ video wall. He also used Datapath's ActiveConnect cables in the project. ActiveConnect are long-range fiber optic DisplayPort 1.2 and HDMI 2.0 cable, with lengths up to 100m. They require no additional power.

"I will continue to use the same product, [VSNMicro600]... it works, it's simple, the software is intuitive, and it is easy to set up. I think that it is something that surpasses most of the other manufacturers. Other manufacturers that I looked at seem to be overly complicated."

LaDon Findley, Encore Technologies
Division manager

REFERENCE
Datapath
www.datapath.co.uk

Ultimate Flexibility

Greg Babbs, Datapath's sales and accounts manager, said that a key element for this Alabama control room was the "flexibility to visualise and position any of their critical operations information in different places, at different times."

Datapath delivers enhanced flexibility, such as the ability to take cable TV, output VCs, which are looking at networks, operations software, and real-time status information. "This is where the video wall processor offers benefits over other technologies," Babbs said. "The user can position any of that information anywhere on video wall, any time they like."

LED: A Bright Idea

The display solution in this control room is LG's 55-inch super-narrow bezel LED modules with 700 nits. These LEDs offer remarkable brightness, fluid performance, 24/7 operation, and, according to Findley, are "very easy to watch…easy on the eyes." The resolution, while it's running at 1080p, is incredible. "It's easy to read, no pixilation," he said. "When you're looking at the wall, it doesn't give you the concept of lines between the monitors because they're so tight already." LG's modules can also be configured via LAN daisy-chain if desired.

Findley believes this LED-based project echoes broader display trends in the industry. He sees the demand increasing for LED. In fact, another electric cooperative reached out to Encore inquiring about a similar set-up. "Command and control spaces seem to desire LED because [it allows for] the quick showing of information." Responding to the information is also instantaneous. In a mission-critical space, every second counts.

Flexible, Intuitive, and Streamlined

Start to finish, the Pea River Cooperative installation was a smooth project, in part due to the support by Datapath. "Once we learned the Datapath process and got everything rolling, it really turned out to be great," said Findley. "Really easy."

Impressed with the flexibility and intuitive nature of the system, Findley has quoted the VSNMicro 600 multiple times. "I will continue to use that same product," he added. "It works, it's simple, the software is intuitive, and it is easy to set up. I think that it is something that surpasses most of the other manufacturers. Other manufacturers that I looked at seem to be overly complicated."

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