

Austin Energy, Texas, USA

Seeing the big “digital” picture

The ad-hoc capability is very useful for facilitating collaboration among the operations staff which can ultimately lead to better decision-making.



William Hunter King,
SCADA Analyst for Austin Energy



Barco solutions:

- 17 x 4 array of 80” SXGA+ 4:3 LED video wall
- 2 primary display wall controllers with 2 additional secondary units
- CMS-200 control room management suite software

Key benefits:

- LED versus lamp reduces total cost of ownership
- Enhanced flexibility to adapt digital content over time
- Exceptional image clarity and data legibility

When it came time to renovate its operations control center, Austin Energy wanted to make a smart investment in visualization technology to ensure reliable power distribution for the long term. Its staff observed the Barco LED video wall in action at Distributech, the utility industry’s annual tradeshow, which led them to consider the 80” cubes. After a diligent investigation of several video wall solutions in collaboration with integration partner AVI-SPL, Austin Energy selected Barco’s LED video wall solution to completely digitize its control room visualization platform.

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As the eighth largest community-owned electric utility in the USA, Austin Energy serves the energy needs of more than one million people over 430 square miles, providing 3,000 megawatts of power to keep homes and business running around the clock.

Comprehensive view heightens situational awareness

“From the outset, our mission was to build a state-of-the-art control center, and being able to display our entire service network, including every substation, on one continuous wall display was a critical element. Another objective was to replace the antiquated steel magnetic mapboard that tracked the distribution network with a more flexible technology solution. Fortunately, we had the real estate to accommodate a very high resolution video wall, and with the tightly stitched screens, we can view a smooth, continuous image with no visible seams. It’s a very impressive feature to anyone who witnesses it - you can barely see the seams from ten feet back,” comments Craig Schaub, Manager, Control Engineering for Austin Energy.

The video wall is a seamless design featuring acrylic panels that butt up to each other with no mullions to interfere with the viewing of data. So it’s a seamless image. The 89’ wide x 16’ high video wall display is divided into two sections which operators can control independently to view transmission, system information and distribution displays.

“Operation staff benefit from the exceptional resolution of content on the wall. By bringing to their fingertips with panning and zooming what once required a ladder, operators are able to maintain visual awareness of all their systems without leaving their seats,” comments William Hunter King, SCADA Analyst for Austin Energy.

A window to customers

The video wall offers Austin Energy the ability to quickly adapt to changing needs. With the static wall, it was previously limited by the placement and design from day one. We configured the new wall to enable operation as an extension of the wing operator’s desktop. The display wall can run applications locally on the controller’s display or from multiple sourced systems through CMS-200 software. As we integrate new technologies such as the Advanced Distribution Management System into our inventory, we are confident that these new systems will meld seamlessly with Barco’s display technology.

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Long-term reliability

The OverView OVL-815 video wall modules have been designed for reliable and continuous operation over several years, without any need for consumables over their lifetime. Each of the three color blocks have six independently-powered LEDs, ensuring a high level of redundancy to give users the peace of mind the need in mission-critical environments.

The unique active liquid cooling system ensures lower LED temperature, resulting in longer LED lifetime (>80,000 hours in eco mode) than traditional fan-cooled or passive liquid-cooled LED engines. Also, Barco's unique user-replaceable LED chain design assures shorter MTTR with minimal down time to reliably maintain 24/7 mission-critical visualization support.

Enhanced viewing experience

Barco's OverView O-series video walls feature Sense6, a unique sensor technology, which provides automatic spectral, brightness and color stability over time and across the entire display, eliminating the need for manual adjustments. "The LED wall offers excellent color uniformity and the colors are always well balanced, while the high resolution enables clear viewing of the data even from a distance," comments Schaub.

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Craig Schaub, Manager,
Control Engineering for
Austin Energy

Flexibility improves collaboration

With Barco's CMS-200 software, Austin Energy Operations staff can create integrated perspectives from multiple input sources, including workstations, and push them to the main display. "The ad-hoc capability is very useful for facilitating collaboration among the operations staff which can ultimately lead to better decision-making," comments King.

Lowest total cost of ownership

Not only does the LED light source enhance image clarity on the video wall, it also provides the lowest total cost of ownership among alternative video wall sources. "The LED solution is a much less expensive option over the long haul, because there are no consumables and it is more energy efficient. The Barco wall simply offered a positive business case based on proven technology," comments Schaub.

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