

NEWS

When the video wall speaks to each person individually

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An image in a public space can be interpreted in different ways. A hundred people see the same display board, and each takes from it what applies to them. Sound couldn't do that for a long time. Anyone who hears an announcement at the train station hears the same voice as everyone else, in the same language, at the same volume - whether it's meant for them or not. Sound in a space has always meant: one person speaks, everyone listens.

There's something crude about this something we don't notice simply because we're used to it. A hall where people speak is a hall where most words go to the wrong people. The one announcement that matters gets lost in the flood of many that are meant for no one. Volume was the only way to be heard, and volume affects everyone.

The video remains public, but the audio is private.

A new generation of wireless audio technology, Auracast, turns the old rule on its head. The sound from a single surface can be split into multiple tracks that run side by side without overlapping. Anyone who wants to can plug in headphones or a hearing aid and receive their own track: their language, their volume, and the commentary that goes with the image they're currently watching. The room remains silent. Yet people can still hear.

ScreenWay links these audio tracks to what's playing on the wall. The video wall shows everyone the same thing, yet speaks to each person individually. On the platform, one person hears the announcement in German, another in English, and a third through their hearing aid, turned up louder because that's what they need. Showing everyone the same thing while saying something different to each person is no longer a contradiction.

The changes that result are more subtle than one might think and yet more profound at the same time. A shared space no longer has to overlook anyone, and it doesn't have to get louder to do so. Sound ceases to be noise and begins to have a specific destination. A video wall that addresses each person individually is, in the end, more polite than any loudspeaker that meant well but treated everyone the same.