

IT and AV Rock DC at FOSE

The Federal Office Systems Expo, better known as FOSE, was held at the Walter E. Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC, from July 19 – 21, 2011. This show, the largest government IT event in the country, draws over 10,000 senior-level technology decision makers from federal, state, local and international government annually. In addition to the show floor, FOSE provides executive-level educational tracks, hands-on theater demos and networking opportunities. While the show was, as usual, very IT-heavy and AV-light, there were a number of AV companies exhibiting there.



One company, SMART Technologies, actually skipped InfoComm this year and exhibited at FOSE for the first time. At the show, the company debuted a number of new products. The SMART Board 885ix is the world's first ultra-short-throw interactive whiteboard system, with a throw of 16". It is also one of a few models shown that include multiuser, multi-touch gesturing. In effect, the interactive whiteboards are becoming more intuitive as the population becomes familiar with smart phone touch control.

Another interactive whiteboard exhibiting at FOSE was Promethean. Now, many AV integrators may not be familiar with this brand... or they may have heard of it in passing but never actually sold one. This brand, until recently, was only available in the education market. They limited dealerships and fiercely protected them to assure exclusivity in the K-12 and higher ed channels, where they owned a significant market share. However, mere weeks before FOSE, the company opened its product to new markets and channels. Promethean's presence at FOSE was its first foray into the government arena, and the show staff was very interested in speaking to integrators and setting up new relationships. So, integrators, if you've ever wanted to carry Promethean, now is your chance!



Projector manufacturer BOXLIGHT was at the show, highlighting its ProjectoWrite3 interactive projector system. Accurate within three pixels and with a 60 frames/second response time, the ProjectoWrite3 ships with both a telescoping wand for annotation, as well as a pressure sensitive e-pen for interaction, allowing annotation over full motion video. It also gives full desktop control from the projector, compatible with any mouse application on your computer. Because it is portable, and can be retrofit into any existing projector installation, the ProjectoWrite3 interactive projector can turn any flat surface into an interactive board in minutes. Best of all, particularly in this tough economic time, the ProjectoWrite3 is one of many BOXLIGHT projectors covered under its Lamps 4 Life program. With Lamps 4 Life, customers pay a one-time registration fee (\$99 for education and government customers; \$299 for corporate customers) and then never have to buy a lamp again as long as they own that projector -- simply return failed lamps and a new one is sent.

Extron Electronics also had a presence at FOSE this year, featuring the VN-Matrix for real-time streaming over IP networks. Utilizing the Extron PURE3 Compression Codec, the VN-Matrix gives unparalleled performance with high image quality, low latency, efficient bit rates and a high level of immunity to network errors. The demo shown at FOSE was impressive, but more impressive were the existing installations. The VN-Matrix is used by large defense contractors to facilitate real-time collaborative experiments, training missions and operations requiring information and monitoring remotely. The VN-Matrix products give the contractor, the Department of Defense and the federal government the



ability to view identical operational imagery simultaneously at points around the globe... with almost no image loss or degradation.

A number of other AV companies were present at FOSE -- including a number of DC-area integrators specializing in the federal market space -- and there were some familiar "big names" showing products they don't normally show at Infocomm and AV-specific events. Fujitsu, for example, had a large presence at FOSE, primarily highlighting its notebooks and tablet PCs.

Other highlights of the show floor included the Mobile App Experience; cybersecurity, Data Center and Defense Innovation Theaters; the BlackBerry PlayBook Mobile Tour Truck; IBM's Watson; Operation Trident Breach -- the FBI Global Cyber Crime Arrests; and Agency Avenue -- kiosks highlighting real-world IT implementations from many government agencies. Educational opportunities and workshops abounded -- and they were mostly free. Education tracks included Enabling the Mobile Government Workplace; Cybersecurity, Network Defense and Information Assurance; Next-Generation Infrastructure Strategies; and Information Management & Collaboration. Additionally, product-specific training was available from Adobe and Microsoft, among others.

The Tuesday afternoon keynote presentation was Fostering Creativity and Innovation in Any Environment, given by Steve "The Woz" Wozniak, co-founder of Apple. It was a fabulously entertaining and educational session addressing the revolution underway in mobile computing, the "Internet of things," artificial intelligence and what is required to bring creativity, innovation and an entrepreneurial mindset in big enterprises. Frankly, The Woz shared too much great information to impart in a single paragraph, so tune in next time for a recap on this outstanding FOSE session!



In short, while the FOSE show is not a wholly AV experience, the show is one I would highly recommend for any integrator or manufacturer that works in the government channel on any level. The opportunities to network with government decision makers alone is invaluable, however the breadth of educational opportunities and new technologies to demo make FOSE an experience not to be missed.

To view photos and video highlights from the 2011 FOSE show, visit the site at <http://fose.com/Events/FOSE-2011/Home.aspx>. If you're interested in attending next year, FOSE 2012 is scheduled for April 3-5, 2012, again at the Washington Convention Center in Washington, DC.

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