

Ten Questions ■ ■ ■

Strong doses of information

How digital signage keeps the world's 10th-largest pharmaceutical company on message



Chris Bias is the manager of the LillyTV global digital signage network in the internal communications department at Eli Lilly and Company.

1. Describe the LillyTV network: number of screens, locations, etc.

LillyTV is a series of digital signage screens in various Lilly facilities around the world. This includes about 400 screens in the U.S. — at the headquarters and several campuses in Indianapolis; central Indiana; San Diego; Augusta, Ga.; Puerto Rico; and Washington, D.C. Internationally, we have screens at three sites in the United Kingdom, two sites in France and sites in Italy, Canada, Saudi Arabia, Japan, Australia and others. And we are working hard to get LillyTV installed at our facilities in Spain, Mexico, Thailand, New Zealand, Chile, Ireland, Argentina and maybe 10

others by year-end. We're calling it a global communication tool, and that's what we intend it to be.

2. What is the primary purpose for the LillyTV network?

LillyTV's primary purpose is to communicate to our 40,000-person workforce. Topics include corporate information such as breaking news, HR-related announcements, product news, health and safety messages, high-level employee recognition and business wins and losses, as well as stock and competitor information. And each site has an RSS news feed of its choice and local weather, and can feature local events such as blood drives, company-sponsored cultural events, etc.

3. What have been your biggest challenges with the network?

My biggest challenge with the network has been how quickly it got so huge. I rolled it out in the United States, and before I had time to develop user guides, best practices, templates, etc., I was deploying it internationally. My advice to others would be to start small — maybe at the company headquarters — and then run it for a year before expanding it to the full company. Of course, all the interest we've had in the system has been a nice problem to have.

4. How has the currently installed network differed from your original plan?

We had digital signage at Lilly long before anyone called it "digital signage." We rolled out the original system — what we called Video Bulletin Board, or VBB — in 1996. The system never caught on worldwide, mostly due to high installation costs, and after a decade of 24/7 usage, it was time to replace it. Our original plan called for putting screens in high-traffic locations, but this time around, we focused on targeting places where employees are waiting, and on finding a system that was less expensive to install.

5. How does Lilly develop content for the LillyTV network?

The corporate-wide content I develop is mostly pulled from our thrice-weekly internal e-news, boiled down to the most important details and text, telling employees to check LLYNEWS for more details. The system we use is MediaTile, which allows us to upload all kinds of content from the portal to the screens via a cellular signal. I use Photoshop, Flash and Final Cut Pro to create JPGs, Flash and videos for the screens. But mostly I use PowerPoint to create nice, subtle movement, and software that converts PowerPoint to Flash. MediaTile also has an online "Composer" tool that allows my editors around the world and me to use a Flash template to create quick content.



LillyTV screen in the lobby of the Faris building on a Eli Lilly and Company Indianapolis campus.



LillyTV screen outside the Lilly Center Auditorium at the Lilly Corporate Center.

waiting line for coffee shops and the credit union and in elevator lobbies. My favorite location is in our shuttle buses that transport employees between our four main Indianapolis campuses. Where else are people more stuck waiting than on a shuttle?

9. What are your best practices for communicating with employees in a corporate setting?

It's not rocket science, but our best practice for communicating with our employees is using an integrated mix of channels to get the messages across. One vehicle won't reach every employee, so we use a variety of channels — LillyTV, of course, plus our LLYNEWS e-news vehicle, CEO blog, video and e-mail.

6. What is the employee reaction to the network?

The reaction has been very positive. From what we're hearing, employees really like the short-and-sweet format. And our survey showed that, of those interviewed, 64 percent said they watched the screens at least once a day, 68 percent said they saw something on the screens that caused them to take action and 35 percent said they might not get the company news without it. For me, that's a definite success — plus our CEO likes it.

7. How has corporate culture changed as a result of installing the digital signage?

I don't know if we've changed the corporate culture with LillyTV. That's a pretty big task for the short time we've had it. However, I think internal communications is able to reach more employees using LillyTV than we were without it. In manufacturing, for example, employees don't sit at a desk with their own computer, so they likely don't see the company Web site, e-mails or newsletters. But now they can get the information, too, because LillyTV is in their break room.

8. How do you decide where to place screens within the Lilly facility?

We put LillyTV in locations where people are known to sit or stand with little else to do but watch the screen. That means in the cafeterias and break rooms, near the

10. What information do you wish the digital signage industry would provide for deployers?

Mostly, I wish there were more focus on using digital signage for corporate communications. I know a lot of companies are using digital signage like we do, but I've been to a number of conferences and read a lot of articles, and there isn't much out there for me. ■



LillyTV screen hanging above the main cafeteria at the Lilly Corporate Center.