The Writing Is On the Wall

Video Displays Can Be a Simple Choice

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❯❯ Since it formed in 1937, South Plains Electric Co-op has placed a priority on offering excellent service to its members in the South Central Texas panhandle. That's why when they needed a new and improved way to communicate power outages to their staff, they turned to PC Connection—a company with the right technology to put their message on display.

Time for an Upgrade

Steven Latham, Manager of IT, needed a cost-effective and modern way to display real-time information that helps South Plains Electric Co-op monitor efficiency and respond quickly to power outages. Their projector-based system had been part of their communications infrastructure for about 10 years. "The projector had gotten pretty old. We had replaced it a couple of times, spent a lot of money repairing it, and realized we had outgrown its capabilities," said Latham. The co-op wanted something with better resolution that would enable them to display more data than they could on their current system. They decided it was time to start investigating a video wall solution.

Finding a High-Impact, Low-Cost Solution

"Our projector was on its last leg; we knew that it was having issues and was starting to get dimmer and dimmer—even with new bulbs. We knew we would have to spend money on a new projector or find a better solution," said Latham. South Plains Electric Co-op waded through a lot of options, talked to different vendors, and did a lot of research to find the best replacement. Latham recounts, "We called PC Connection to see what options they might have for us. We looked at some that were more software driven—they had some very nice features, but were more than what we needed." A video wall that could act like a single monitor was determined to be the ideal solution.

"PC Connection helped us find NEC monitors. They brought NEC into the project to help us find the right video card and walked us through the technology until we had a good understanding of how it worked.

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We worked with PC Connection and NEC for 3 or 4 months until we had a good grasp on exactly what we wanted and how we wanted to do it." When the video wall was chosen, Latham got a pleasant surprise. "After our initial six-unit installation was proven to be a success, we chose to implement a total of twelve 46″ monitors and to handle the mounting and installation ourselves. Once the decision was made and a price was given, we found that it was tremendously cheaper than the software-driven solutions. We looked at another option that was very similar to the video wall we chose; the starting price was $100,000—it was only for six screens, and we implemented twelve for far less than that," said Latham.

A Great Support System

Latham took charge of the project and worked with all stakeholders to make sure it was the right solution. He said, "I did all of the research and brought that data to our upper-level management and the person that is in charge of our dispatch area. Together we spent a lot of time making sure that when the video wall was put in place we were all going to be happy with it." South Plains Electric Co-op hired a local building contractor to prepare the room for the installation. "The brackets that PC Connection found for us were very easy to use," said Latham. We turned the accordion-style mounts' orientation so that all of the screens are in portrait-mode. It worked really well, and it looks amazing."

A Brilliant Review

Latham said, "I would give this project an 'A' because it turned out better than anyone thought it would. We had a lot of people involved in the project, and those that have used the system have told me it is better than they imagined.

"The video wall has a great picture, everything is very clear, and it's very easy to use. The software-driven solution would have been very challenging since we had many different data sources. This display wall works basically like a humongous monitor—everyone could just sit down and use it instantly. There was no training involved." Latham found that the true measure of success came when what began as a six-unit installation was expanded to twelve monitors after its first use. "We started small, with only six monitors. We had one storm since that trial installation and had such good feedback that we were afforded extra budget money to order six more. That told me right there that we did it right."

For future projects, Latham plans to turn to his trusted technology partner. "I lean on my Account Manager at PC Connection; he has always treated me right. If he doesn't believe something will work, he will tell me. PC Connection found a good, inexpensive solution that met our needs instead of trying to sell us more than what we needed. That ethic is hard to find these days; everyone wants you to take their solution and run with it rather than trying to find the solution that works best for you," said Latham.

☏ **If you would like to learn more about video wall technology and the services that are available to support your next IT project, contact your Account Manager today.**

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> —*Steven Latham, Manager of IT*
> *South Plains Electric Co-op*
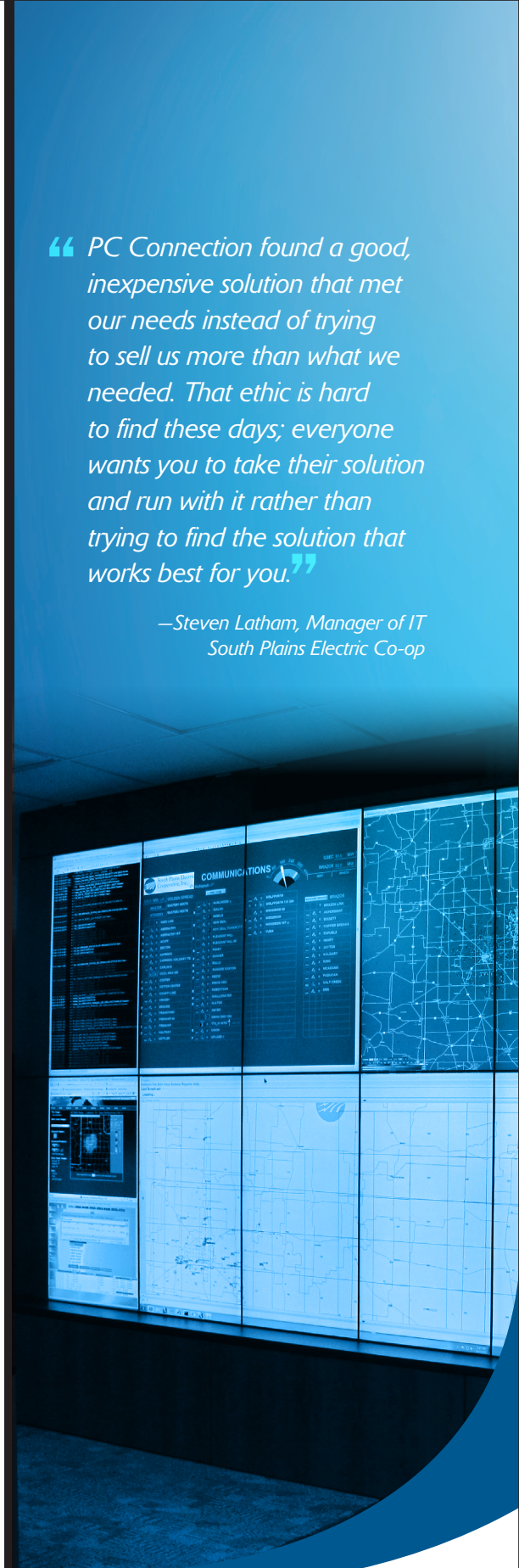
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