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10 February 2011

The AOpen Forum, held just before ISE in a hotel in central Amsterdam, enters its second annual edition with a bigger and better event.

Bringing together major suppliers of digital signage (Broadsign, friendlyway, C-nario, Prestop, Net Display, MMD (Philips brand), Intel and Microsoft) with its distributor customers, AOpen has created a showcase of digital signage solutions.

Verybox of Spain and Mermaid in Scandinavia added case studies to talks from the suppliers.

It would be easy to dismiss this Forum as just another distributor meeting: but it’s not. The high level of executives in attendance (CEOs and European level executives) is one sign of its significance. The quality of content by itself is another. The fact is that attendees doubled this year and AOpen expects next year to increase to 300 attendees.

Two key themes, both which should resonate to all in this industry, highlight the event's significance.

First, the fractured nature of digital signage (the lack of standards, the lack of end-to-end solutions, and the large number of different vertical applications) demand **collaboration and cooperation** from any aspiring supplier.

AOpen, through this Forum and its Digital Engine platform, is hoping to be at the centre of growing cooperation in digital signage—not only in Europe, but globally.

IT industry veteran Bernie Tsai, the Steve Jobs of AOpen, opened the forum with a clever analogy to the movie Avatar. In this Hollywood blockbuster, the native humanoid population, the "Na'vi," live in a symbiotic relationship with their planet. Tsai showed several movie clips to illustrate how life on the Avatar planet was impossible with collaboration. The image that sticks in mind is the Na'vi horse: in order to ride the horse, the Nav'i must first physically bond with the animal.

And "bonding" in digital signage takes place with suppliers as well as customers. Both Intel and

Microsoft were quite clear about this point: they are rooting for AOpen's success because **both want to see "scale" in the digital signage industry**
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"Scale" emerges as the Forum's second significant theme because the AV industry fails to recognize the IT's industry "need to speed." A company like Intel wants suppliers in digital signage that can quickly ramp up the volume to the level that attracts the direct attention of a multi-billion euro chip builder. It's all about how many units you can move...

Intel sees companies like AOpen as someone who can bring their experience in scaling massive commercial markets into digital signage. And Intel, as well as others in components and software, is willing to "bond" by investing time and money to aid AOpen in achieving mega-status in digital signage.

CEO Bernie Tsai talks about how AOpen has moved from making "hardware" to making "heartware." That might seem more Japanese in spirit than Taiwanese, if you didn't understand that PC component suppliers see something that the AV industry doesn't.

They recognize that the digital signage business (appliances, embedded devices, displays, software) is where the PC business itself is headed. Digital signage, for them, is the new PC business...not an extra market segment. After all, home is where your "heartware" is.

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