



Executive Summary

Industry

- Sports and Entertainment

Environment

- Multi-Use Sports and Entertainment Venue
- 100+ Events Hosted Annually
- 430,000 Square Foot
- 12,500 Capacity Arena

Technology Needs

- IT network solution to meet short-term critical in-venue needs and go-forward vision
- Robust, secure connectivity for venue guests and internal users, devices, and systems
- Intuitive, flexible captive portal solution and authentication engine
- Engaging and personalized mobile experience for in-venue guests
- Integration with strategic business platforms and tools
- Better understand in-venue guests and their preferences for targeted remarketing efforts

Solution Components

Extreme Networks

- ExtremeWireless™
- ExtremeSwitching™
- Extreme Management Center™

SocialSign.In

- Captive Portal and Authentication Engine

Results

- Purpose-built IT network solution to support critical business needs and enable future deliverables
- Seamless, secure, strong Wi-Fi for in-venue guests and their devices
- Centralized wired and wireless network management and visibility
- Comprehensive and adaptable captive portal solution and data validation engine
- Content delivery tool to send personalized mobile offerings and updates to connected guests
- Integration with backend systems to inform and enable strategic digital marketing campaigns



University of Pittsburgh Builds a Connected and Engaging Digital Experience

University of Pittsburgh is a state-related research university located in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. Also referred to as 'PITT,' University of Pittsburgh's athletics program is part of the Atlantic Coast Conference (ACC) in NCAA Division I, the highest level of competitive collegiate athletics in the US.

As part of a broader rebranding initiative, and to stay competitive with fellow ACC venues, PITT Athletics kicked-off a significant technology upgrade for their multi-purpose arena: The John M. and Gertrude E. Petersen Events Center. The Petersen Events Center is an essential fixture on PITT's campus: the 430,000 square foot venue hosts DI basketball games, concerts, commencements, and other sporting activities; it also includes an auxiliary basketball practice facility, athletic training amenities, office spaces for PITT staff, and media space for the ACC network and PITT Studios. Despite being an epicenter for several of PITT's vital cross-functional uses, the venue seriously lacked a strong IT network solution and a robust digital ecosystem to meet immediate needs and advance toward future goals. As such, the PITT Athletics team underwent an initiative to align their technology strategy with their innovative, forward-thinking vision for the in-venue experience.

A Robust Network Platform and Selecting the ‘Right’ Solution

PITT needed to deploy a purpose-built IT network solution as a first step, to meet their acute business needs and lay the foundation for their larger venue vision. The team acknowledged they were relatively behind from an IT perspective compared to other ACC athletics programs and the rest of the Power 5 Schools, many of who were already providing public Wi-Fi to fans, developing game day applications, and extending in-venue mobile services.

At that point, PITT encountered trouble earning organizational support to merely deploy guest Wi-Fi in Petersen Events Center and the in-venue arena; PITT athletics didn't want to simply play 'catch up' with fellow athletics programs and their venues - they wanted to be on the cutting edge. Recognizing the importance of building a strong IT network backbone to build off of, PITT Athletics kicked-off a formal RFP process to choose their technology partner to deploy the venue's much-needed network upgrade.

After a detailed RFP process that included four vendors submitting competitive bids, PITT teamed up with Extreme Networks to design and deploy the network solution - in conjunction with their integration partner, Ideal Integrations. Extreme was chosen for a cross-section of reasons: their technology and design, their customer base and references, and the quality of services they provided. As a baseline, PITT Athletics were impressed by Extreme's network solutions engineered for large public venues, but ultimately the determining factor was their customer references, whose references far exceeded the other vendors. Not only did PITT want a quality solution to meet their technology needs, they wanted an experienced provider with a proven track record who would establish a true partnership with their team before, during, and after implementation.

Supporting Cross-Functional Needs and Creating a Better Fan Experience

In conjunction with partner Ideal Integrations, Extreme Networks designed and deployed a customized network solution for PITT's Petersen Events Center, which included Extreme's wireless, switching, centralized network management, network access control, security and analytics software. A smaller and older pre-existing network was replaced to simplify the IT team's day-to-day network management and ensure a better-quality experience for all

users. In total, Extreme and Ideal Integrations installed over 350 ExtremeWireless access points in the venue and its' arena; mounted overhead APs were chosen to guarantee optimal Wi-Fi coverage throughout the arena.

The upgrade network solution supports a multitude of uses for Petersen Events Center. The current network not only provides Wi-Fi for guests attending games or events, it also provides connectivity for all PITT's staff located at the venue, a significant portion of PITT athletics. In addition, PITT Athletics migrated ticket scanners and the in-venue digital signage over to the new network, with point of sales devices and systems soon to follow. Finally, the team also leveraged the updated network to run fan engagement promos like 50/50 raffles at games and events. With the venue's enhanced IT network solution implemented, these one-off use cases would only be the start of the broader activation strategy PITT had in store for the Petersen Events Center.

Putting a Forward-Thinking Vision in Action

With the critical first step of implementing a custom Wi-Fi and network solution at the Petersen Events Center, PITT could now use the platform to pursue their unique vision for the venue. This mantra, of 'continuing to push the boundaries of what's possible' is a philosophy that's shared throughout PITT Athletics.

"We wanted a technology solution that provided us with the flexibility to be progressive and think differently about the game day experience habits of our fans. Whether purchasing food, beverages or merchandise or watching a highlight or video replay...we want to be able to deliver that with an augmented digital experience."

**Seth Graham, Assistant Athletic Director,
PITT Athletics**

While the overarching vision for the venue comprised of many cross-functional goals, first and foremost PITT sought to continue to provide the best possible experience for their fans and arena guests. An enhanced Wi-Fi network delivered a great channel to do so. With the broader rebranding initiative underway, the athletics team saw

Wi-Fi as an ideal opportunity to not only promote PITT's rebranded colors, marks, and logos to their fans, but to engage fans in other meaningful, value-added ways. This strategy would enable PITT to both enhance the in-venue experience for fans and drive compelling business use cases.

With this in mind, PITT decided to evaluate Wi-Fi captive portal solutions; these platforms meet the immediate branding and fan experience goals in front of them, but equally important the right solution would also empower PITT with a flexible, dynamic, integrated system to:

- Provide a tailored, personalized digital experience on an event-to-event basis
- Optimize viewership and adoption of external content and promotions
- Better identify the fans and guests in the venue, and their unique preferences
- Assimilate with the department's existing digital/mobile platforms for greater value
- Inform and enable in-venue programs and targeted remarketing campaigns
- Bolster and extend existing investments: ACC Network, PITT studios, etc.

Selecting a Platform (and a Partner) to Meet Immediate and Future Goals

After evaluating several providers and solutions in the industry PITT Athletics partnered with SocialSign.In, a guest Wi-Fi marketing provider who builds and delivers highly tailored mobile and digital experiences to sports venues and their fans. Specifically, SocialSign.In specializes in developing customized captive portals, providing network authentication services, collecting and validating user information, delivering personalized content experiences, and integrating with a plethora of internal business and marketing tools.

PITT ultimately selected SocialSign.In for several reasons; at first look, the team was impressed with the overall style and design of SSI's external interface, which presented a clean and intuitive user experience for fans. Digging deeper, PITT was compelled with the technology's flexibility and functionality: successfully partnering with several athletics programs and their arenas, SocialSign.In recognized the importance of easily configuring the platform on an event-to-event basis. Because of this, each component of SSI's solution is customized to the needs and goals of

the venue, compared to more static competitive offerings in the space. Petersen Events Center hosts hundreds of events per year between men's basketball games, concerts, commencement, and more. PITT saw significant value in being able to seamlessly adapt which content cards - or unique messages, offerings, and promotions - they delivered to in-venue users. This capability directly supported PITT's upfront goal of always delivering the best experience to their fans and guests, but SocialSign.In's platform equipped PITT with a powerful business asset too.

SocialSign.In's platform delivered enormous business value for PITT Athletics as well. As with their fan-facing goals, SocialSign.In established a true consultative partnership with PITT to fully understand their existing marketing tools, specific goals, and broader vision, collaborating with both the athletics organization and their sports marketing arm, JMI Sports. SocialSign.In's proprietary captive portal solution provides advanced data validation from authenticated users; this data dramatically increases the visibility of who attends events at the arena and how they engage while connected. Furthermore, by integrating with PITT's CRM platform and marketing automation engine (among other platforms), SocialSign.In helped bolster their customer distribution list with relevant analytics, improving user segmentation and setting up targeted remarketing efforts. This use case alone augmented PITT's asset inventory, which created new opportunities and partnerships the athletics department and JMI Sports could leverage with other relationships, including multimedia rights partner.

All in all, partnering with SocialSign.In presented PITT with an enormous opportunity to put the athletics department and the Petersen Events Center ahead of the game compared to the onset of PITT's technology upgrade and compared to other top tier collegiate venues, given only a few venues were leveraging the technology and services that SSI brought to the table.

One BIG Step Toward Bringing a Forward-Thinking Vision to Life

With PITT Athletics' flexible digital platform and robust network connectivity to advance their innovative in-venue goals for the Petersen Events Center, their team is already seeing significant benefits from SocialSign.In and Extreme's combined technologies. Extreme's Wi-Fi solution is directly integrated with SocialSign.In's front-end captive portal and back-end data collection engine, creating a seamless experience for both guests and PITT's supporting teams.

From the fan-facing perspective, PITT has developed different sites and branding approaches according to the event, so each event hosted at the Petersen Events Centers has a customized experience and set of offers. This alone has deepened the relationship with and developed more creative activations for important partners: ASM Global, PITT's venue management company who's responsible for concerts, entertainment events, etc., and their counterparts at the University itself, with graduation and other school events being hosted at the venue.

From a data analytics perspective, PITT Athletics have already collected a vast amount of validated contact information, which they're incorporating into their customer CRM, marketing automation engine, and other supporting functions. As an initial step, the data collection process has helped their team understand what type of insights they have access to generated by SocialSign.In's platform, and comparing this information with other datasets (like CRM, ticketing, social media, etc.) part of athletics, to further increase their understanding of who their users are, their behaviors, and how they like to engage with PITT athletics. This exercise alone has heightened PITT's emphasis on data analytics and how data can be used to deliver a more personalized experience to their fans and how the business can compose more impactful outreach programs, in conjunction with JMI Sports.

In addition to expanding their data warehouse, PITT Athletics has already utilized the data to successfully build and execute small, targeted marketing campaigns. Moving forward, their team is working with SocialSign.In and JMI Sports to explore creative ways to automate their data analysis workflows, and how they feed into overarching strategic campaigns for Athletics and the University. These activities, and the great value the platform has already demonstrated, PITT is also planning to invest in more personnel resources and marketing platforms to advance their forward-thinking venue goals. One thing is clear: now that PITT has the technology platforms to align with their advanced vision, PITT fans can certainly expect a high-quality, engaging experience when they enter the Petersen Events Center, and beyond.

"Our goal is to provide a mobile user, with high-quality, digital tools in the venue, especially given our new normal for fan expectations...a touchless, cashless and contactless experiences. We are going to deliver on that and the Pete, our fans and our basketball program will all see the benefits."

**Christian Spears, Deputy Athletic Director,
PITT Athletics**



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