

# CASE STUDY: STARPLEX CINEMAS

## Samsung Digital Signage Helps Create the Cinema Lobby of the Future



### OVERVIEW

#### Customer Need

Starplex Cinemas, which operates 31 movie theaters with 326 screens across the United States, sought to transform its newest location in Ridgefield Park, NJ into a flagship luxury cinema destination. The \$5 million renovation would provide a state-of-the-art film-watching experience, including 100 percent digital projection and spacious luxury reclining chairs. However, Starplex also wanted to introduce new technology within the lobby to engage movie-goers from the moment they entered the theater to drive greater ticket and concession sales.

#### Samsung Solution

Starplex aligned itself with leading visualization solution provider Barco and Samsung to create the cinema lobby of the future. Barco's design utilized Samsung digital signage throughout the customer experience, from the entranceway to the box office and concession stands. The futuristic lobby has interactive posters, large video walls, dynamic menu boards and other cutting-edge digital touches that make the theater stand out from the competition.

#### Results

The innovative use of commercial display technology has helped make Starplex's Ridgefield Park location a true destination theater while also driving new revenue. The dynamic menu boards at the concession stands have resulted in one of the highest per-person sales averages in the theater chain's history. Eye-catching box office displays allow moviegoers to purchase tickets for future movies, letting Starplex "lock in" those customers. Finally, replacing cardboard movie displays with interactive posters has not only enhanced the moviegoers' experience, it has also reduced costs.



# THE CUSTOMER

## Starplex Cinemas

Starplex Cinemas operates 31 movie theaters with 326 screens across the United States. The Dallas-headquartered chain has theaters in Texas, California, Connecticut, Illinois, Kansas, Missouri, Nebraska, New Jersey, Ohio, Oklahoma, and Washington.

The 18-year-old private company has enjoyed success with its luxurious but affordable film-going experience, offering guests leather, automated recliner seats, café-style concessions, party packages and competitive pricing. Throughout its history, Starplex has been known for innovation in the use of technology, such as allowing patrons to print their tickets at home; “Sensory Friendly Screenings,” which offer adjusted lighting and sound; and flourishes like D-BOX seating, which uses motion effects synchronized with on-screen action to create a realistic experience for movie watchers.

“Movie theater operators have to continually improve the theater experience and offer guests something they can’t get at home or from other entertainment options,” says Tod Hanna, the chain’s chief operating officer.

“We knew we had to do something unique to stand out from the competition.”

- Robert Tuttle  
Starplex Cinemas



## THE CUSTOMER NEED

Create a “Flagship Luxury Location” to Draw Movie-Goers

As part of its expansion strategy, Starplex Cinemas acquired an 85,000-square-foot location in Ridgefield Park, NJ with the intention of transforming it into a flagship, luxury theater. Located in a corporate building zone near the New Jersey Turnpike, the new theater presented a unique challenge due to the lack of near-by retail attractions that might draw movie-goers and intense competition among theaters in the surrounding areas.

“Just 20 minutes from New York City, the area has outstanding demographics, with a lot of people who love to go to movies, but that also means there are a lot of competing theaters that are very close,” says Robert Tuttle, IT director for Starplex. “We knew we had to do something unique to stand out from the competition.”

As it planned the redesign, Starplex wanted to create an immersive viewing experience that elicited a “wow” reaction from viewers from the very moment they stepped into the lobby.

The \$5 million renovation sought to provide a state-of-the-art film-watching experience, including 100 percent digital projection, Real-D 3D and spacious luxury reclining seats. One of the auditoriums has the immersive sound of Barco’s Auro 11.1, giving patrons the most realistic cinema experience with three layers of sound.

Starplex uses digital signage in its other locations, such as employing Samsung commercial displays for digital menu boards at its concession stands. But it wanted to go far beyond this at the new location to provide movie-goers with a distinctive, one-of-a-kind experience even *before* they sat down to watch their picture. Starplex’s goal was to create a futuristic lobby with interactive posters, large video walls, and other touches that would help the theater stand out — and generate additional revenue.

# THE SAMSUNG SOLUTION

Lobby of the Future: Designed by Barco, Powered by Samsung Displays

Starplex partnered with Barco, a leading provider of visualization solutions, and Samsung to create the cinema “lobby of the future,” integrating digital displays to create a more dynamic and connected movie-going experience.

More than 50 Samsung large-format displays and a 16-foot movie screen were incorporated into the lobby at strategic locations, from video walls at the main entry points, to displays at the ticket booths, concession stands and digital movie posters. This cutting-edge design comes directly from Barco’s newly launched CinemaBarco, which represents a new paradigm in cinema entertainment.

The lobby is striking, with marble floors and walls designed in rich earth tones. Large video walls are located directly in front of the entry doors at both ends of the lobby, constructed from three 75” Samsung ME-C Series Edge-Lit LED commercial displays, that provide sharp, detail-rich images.

Barco had the vision to replace the traditional cardboard displays that promote upcoming movies with digital posters showing dynamic images or video. Eight Samsung displays – oriented in portrait format with custom black enclosures – line the walls of the lobby, acting as digital billboards promoting the latest movies.

“When a coming attraction or other image is splashed across the screen it really makes an impact and can change the look of the theater,” says Jim Molony, Director of Business Operations, Digital Cinema at Barco. “Digital movie posters also have the potential to improve operational

efficiencies for both the film distributors and the theater operator, allowing more streamlined, targeted and compelling cinema advertising.”

The concession stands feature Samsung UD-C Series 55” Direct-Lit LED displays, which deliver sharp, effective messages and offer easy content presentation across multiple screens. The displays have narrow bezels, allowing five displays to be placed bezel-to-bezel to create a seamless menu board directly above the counter.

At the box office, a series of 55” Samsung displays are also used to grab patrons’ attention. The two displays at each end provide show- times, while the center display presents promotions for gift cards, concession items or tickets for upcoming movies.

As well as reducing perceived wait times, the displays also entice guests to use their smartphones to download coupons or purchase tickets online for future showings. Starplex plans to integrate QR codes into the promotions, so patrons will need to only point their smartphones at a code to be taken to the website and make a purchase. Patrons can be notified by text when tickets are available for a particular movie.

“In the past, the use of digital signage has really been limited at theaters,” Molony says. “Starplex is an example of the next wave of video displays in movie theaters, where the displays will be tied to the Point-of-Sale units, so the theater can change the concession items they are displaying depending on the time of day or the inventory on hand.”

## QUICK PROFILE

As used by Starplex Cinemas

## SAMSUNG ME-C SERIES COMMERCIAL DISPLAYS



### SIZES AVAILABLE (DIAGONAL):

32, 40, 46, 55, 75 & 95 inches

**PANEL TECHNOLOGY:** LED Edge-Lit LCD

**RESOLUTION:** Full HD 1920 x 1080

**BRIGHTNESS:** 450nits for 32-55

inch models; 550nits for 75 inch

model; 600nits for 90 inch model

**RESPONSE TIME:** 8ms

**SCREEN DEPTH:** 1.2 inches for all

models, except ME75C (1.9 inches)

and ME95C (1.8 inches)

**INTERNAL MEDIA PLAYER:**

Cortex-A9 1Ghz Dual Core, 1GB

DDR3, 4GB FDM

**FEATURES:** Smart Signage

Platform, MagicInfo Premium S

**ENVIRONMENTAL:** ENERGY

STAR@ compliant

**STANDARD WARRANTY:** 3 years

(parts and labor)

## SAMSUNG UD-C SERIES COMMERCIAL DISPLAYS



### SIZES AVAILABLE (DIAGONAL):

46 and 55 inches

**PANEL TECHNOLOGY:** LED

Direct-Lit LCD S-PVA 60Hz

**RESOLUTION:** Full HD 1920 x 1080

**BRIGHTNESS:** 700nits

**RESPONSE TIME:** 8ms

**SCREEN DEPTH:** 3.8 inches



# THE RESULTS

## Dynamic Cinema Lobby Experience Leads to Boost in Ticket, Concession Sales

The new lobby featuring Samsung commercial displays has created a richer experience for movie-goers, and has given Starplex more effective ways to sell the concessions and future tickets.

“A person may be standing in line and see he can buy a ticket to some other hot upcoming release,” Tuttle says. “With the ability to immediately and easily make a purchase online, that commits them right there to coming back to us. Apart from the additional revenue opportunities, this keeps the consumers entertained and informed while they are waiting in line.”

The interactive nature of the displays also makes them more effective sales vehicles. “Instead of simply seeing a static poster, the movie-goer can see a poster and a trailer running on the display,” Tuttle says. “There is a QR code that allows the person to send the trailer from Starplex’s social media site to a friend.”

The transition from traditional cardboard displays to dynamic digital movie posters also offers the opportunity for significant savings. Printed cardboard displays must be printed, constructed, transported and put together at the theater. “The cardboard displays can get damaged or stolen,” Hanna says. “Using digital displays eliminates those problems—and those costs.”

According to a recent movie theater analysis, ticket sales made up only 67 percent of total sales, while concessions amounted to a substantial 28 percent. At the concession stand, the digital menu boards feature different items or combinations. “When you see a dynamic picture of a hotdog or nachos, that’s more appealing than seeing the item listed in text on a menu,” says Kathi Gillman, director of food and beverage and purchasing for Starplex.

Concession sales per customer at the Ridgefield Park location are at the high end of all Starplex cinemas. That per cap is likely to increase as the location is set to offer a broader menu selection. While it’s too soon to draw firm conclusions, Starplex notes its 14 other locations with at least six Samsung digital menu boards have also enjoyed on average a 20- to 25-cent increase in sales per customer over locations that do not have the technology.

“That’s big money in our world,” Hanna says. “As we continue to roll out more display technology in our theaters, we envision this will make a big difference for our business, enabling us to capture more sales in the moment.” The chain is so excited about the Samsung displays that it is considering expanding their use to places like the aisles in malls where some of its theaters are located.

