

Z-Band

Provides Video Distribution Solution for Gulf Coast State College

Introduction

When James Baxley, Coordinator of Media Services at Gulf Coast State College in Panama City, FL, needed a reliable video distribution system for the school's brand-new Advanced Technology Center, the decision was easy: he chose Z-Band of Carlisle, PA. The ATC is a state-of-the-art, 93,500-square-foot facility designed to meet the educational needs of GCSC students, and promote economic opportunities and entrepreneurship by fostering relationships across business, government, industry, and education in the region.

Baxley first learned about Z-Band at InfoComm, the national trade show where audiovisual, systems integration, and information communications companies have the opportunity to showcase their latest product innovations to potential users. After later viewing a live demo of the Z-Band product, he felt it was an ideal solution for the ATC infrastructure. In fact, Baxley was so impressed that he didn't need to see demos from competing companies. He made the inclusion of the Z-Band product as a requirement when putting the project up for bid to third-party systems.

Baxley cited the flexibility provided by Z-Band's use of Category 6 cable as a key factor. "We wanted to limit the amount of coax cable we had to run and have the flexibility to be able to change the drop locations, and (the Z-Band) product allowed us to do that," he said.

Challenge

Gulf Coast State College eventually awarded the contract for the video systems integration component to GSC Systems, Inc. of Fort Walton Beach, FL. GSC Systems had no previous experience working with the Z-Band product, which led to some initial concerns.

"In our business, when you don't understand something, you're not afraid of it, but you tread lightly going in," said Patrick Hoderny, Project Superintendent at GSC Systems.

However, upon researching the Z-Band system and discovering its capabilities, Hoderny quickly realized the many benefits it would bring to the project. "The biggest advantage that we immediately recognized was that, through the methodology, we were was going to be able to distribute cable TV anywhere in the building without running RG-6 (coaxial) cabling out of the TRs which is unique," Hoderny said.

"We believe that they built a great product, but the thing we've come to understand is how well Z-Band stands behind its product and how well they support their customers. We will try to deploy the Z-Band System in all our buildings as we do renovations."

James Baxley Coordinator of Media Services Gulf Coast State College, FL

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Hoderny pointed out the advantage of using CAT 6 cable in the installation. “I think the coolest part about it is that you have one type of cabling that you can distribute not only data and voice on, but also cable TV,” he said.

“Once we understood how it worked and started to plug it in and see what it did, we had no worries.”

Solution

Current Setup Can Distribute Video to 140 TVs While Allowing Room for Growth The ATC setup consists of five 24-port and four 12-port “GigaBUDs,” Z-Band’s active RF video distribution hub that provides clear, consistent signal quality of up to 134 analog and 268 high definition channels, as well as hundreds of standard definition channels to multiple televisions. Additionally, 140 “GigaBOBs,” remotely powered intelligent baluns, were installed to ensure high picture quality at each TV. Current system capabilities include video distribution to 140 televisions, including units as large as 85 inches.

The Z-Band system’s user-friendly functionality will allow the school’s AV staff to easily expand distribution to more TVs as needed. Through a process known as “cascading,” where additional satellite “GigaBUDs” are connected back to the master hub via a simple plug-and-play

process, the system can provide a reliable signal to as many as 14,000 TVs. Z-Band provided superior support from beginning to end. Baxley and Hoderny both agree that the support Z-Band provided throughout the project played a crucial role in overcoming any obstacles along the way.

“This was the first time our integrator had put one of these systems in, and they were learning as they went,” Baxley said. “This is where Z-Band shined. They actually helped us through things. They sent us some equipment to test and told us what we needed to do. That was the thing we were most pleased with: the support in getting it in and trying to make sure it was right, and helping an integrator who had never put one in to get it in right.”

Results

Hoderny had high praise for the way in which the Z-Band staff was able to quickly troubleshoot issues involving signal balancing. “Probably the most impressive part of the project was the support we got from Z-Band in trying to make the signal as crystal-clear as possible,” Hoderny said.



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He added that the support he received was better than that of any manufacturer he had ever worked with. According to Baxley, the Z-Band product has performed flawlessly since the opening of the ATC. He also sees Z-Band's system as playing a prominent role in the video distribution needs of Gulf Coast State College moving forward.

