

# A CREATIVE TOUCH

## INTERACTIVE TOUCH-SCREEN DISPLAYS JUST GOT BIGGER AND SMARTER, WITH AUSTRALIA'S FIRST THROUGH-GLASS SYSTEM INSTALLED IN A MELBOURNE OFFICE FRONT.

By Darryl Nelson



Touch screens are mostly limited to banks and train stations, and never bigger than about 10 inches. But a new 40-inch LCD display is now catching attention and, what's more, its through-glass technology means it doesn't actually have to be physically touched to work.

Last December, **Creative Display Solutions** installed the first application of through-glass touch screen technology in Australia, at the Melbourne office of Mornington Peninsula Real Estate. The company is using it to display property listings and information right in its front office window, allowing people to search and browse 24/7. "What we're helping organisations do is get the best out of their fixed cost, which is their office or shop," says **Phil Taylor**, founder of Creative Display Solutions.

The system works through optical-imaging sensors, so people can interact with the screen without actually touching it. Taylor explains the system is server driven and that the screens are Internet enabled, so content can be fed locally or remotely. A whole network of screens can potentially be installed in all of an organisation's office or shop windows and driven by a single central server. "If a business is running a TV advertising campaign, they can also run that on this system," he adds.

Taylor describes the potential applications for the technology as "unchartered waters", and the company is talking to banks, travel agents and real estate agents, among others. He believes it may soon replace point-of-sale poster advertising, since content is not only interactive but can also be changed quickly and without the usual costs associated with traditional signage: "That whole [artwork and printing] process is now gone."

What's more, because the medium is digital, customer interaction can be monitored and tracked, enabling organisations to gain valuable insight on customer interests and behaviours. Clients can also leave their personal details to be contacted immediately regarding a specific product or service via SMS or email 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

It can also provide businesses with a new revenue stream, enabling other businesses to use the medium to advertise. "What we're talking about here is a commercial quality, digital advertising medium," Taylor says.

Creative Display Solutions is also marketing 42-inch and 50-inch wall-mounted plasma versions of the technology, for applications such as assisting sales staff with complex products and services, showroom/reception/boardroom sales presentations, internal meetings and training, and public information points. He claims the system can even be made virtually vandal-proof, with the screens built using the same high-end polycarbonate substrate as used on the window screens of passenger aircraft.

The displays are manufactured using a number of components and software developed both in Australia and overseas. Such a system does not come cheaply. Although cost will vary from one application to another, depending on things like total number of screens and networking requirements, Taylor advises a one-off installation of a single screen will cost between \$15,000-20,000.

Nevertheless, the system does appear to have the potential to dramatically change the face of shopfront and office window displays. Last year, **Vodafone** in New Zealand installed 50-inch touch screen displays in the store windows of all 15 of its nationwide retail outlets.