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“SMART Moves”

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ITS America 2005



There’s an old saying, “*When life hands you lemons, make lemonade.*” FDOT District Four became expert lemonade makers at the ITS America Conference in Phoenix in May.

It began upon arrival at the Civic Center on Saturday morning as we opened the crates to set up our exhibit. The major component of the exhibit was to be an interactive kiosk with a Dynamic Message Sign, a CCTV camera, a Microwave Vehicle Detector and plasma TV monitor all attached to a scaled down gray steel DMS structure. The kiosk was designed so that visitors could display messages on the DMS, manipulate the camera, and watch the vehicle detector count foot traffic. A contest was planned wherein visitors could create DMS messages that would be judged daily for prizes.

As we began emptying crates and assembling the kiosk we realized THREE CRATES WERE MISSING! The missing crates contained the CCTV camera, the plasma TV, the Vehicle Detector and the steel truss that holds all the equipment. First the exhibit hall was searched, no crates. The Civic Center’s receiving dock was next. Workers there said that the shipment was noted as arriving incomplete so the shipping company was contacted. The shipping company informed us that the shipment was unloaded in transit and three boxes were missed during reloading.

We assembled as much of the exhibit as we could, hopeful that the missing boxes would arrive. The show started on Monday and a decision had to be made to either crate everything up or try to somehow recreate the missing parts of the exhibit. One thing was in our favor; all of the vendors that contributed to creating the kiosk were at the conference. We decided to go on with the show.

Freeman Exhibit Company, the firm setting up the show for the Civic Center suspended the DMS from the ceiling on wires so that it would hang right where it would have been attached to the kiosk. Without the worry of the weight of the DMS, we were able to recreate the missing truss using 3 inch gray PVC pipe. Jim Labatt from Blackhawk Video provided a CCTV camera; an A/V company working the show provided us two plasma TVs on stands; Wavetronix supplied a microwave detector and everything was up and running.

But by late Sunday evening a new crisis was lurking. Hugh Stetter, Carl Smith and Oriol Nunez from TransCore had been working non-stop for two days getting all the equipment setup and operational. Since our arrival, there had been a problem with static electricity creating an electromagnetic discharge. Eventually, this electrical discharge wiped out a critical component of our kiosk and shut us down again. Through good luck and serendipity, we were able to obtain a replacement and by noon the day of the conference everything was in working order.

There’s another saying about determination and conviction overcoming adversity and that a crisis often brings out the best in people. Well that’s exactly what happened in Phoenix. The rest of the conference went without a hitch; the DMS message contest was a big hit; and lemonade was enjoyed by all.