

## All-in-One Panel PCs Give Boost to Kaon

Units produced by Tek Panel offer vital power, ruggedness and mobility for delivering high-end interactive graphics packages.

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### The players

About four years ago, **Kaon Interactive** realized the future of digital signage rested in interactive technology. Sure, standard digital displays could lure consumers with video and stronger image clarity. But would it be enough over time to keep their interest for an extended period and, ultimately, entice them to answer a deployer's call to action?

Kaon had developed a package of high-speed graphic applications highlighted by 3-D capabilities. The problem was the company needed viable hardware it could market to clients around the globe that was strong enough physically and technologically.

**Tek Panel**, a Chicago-area design and manufacturing firm, had been showcasing its all-in-one panel PCs at a trade-show — oddly enough, much of the same market Kaon wanted to reach — when Kaon leaders happened by.

### The challenge

The challenge facing Kaon from the outset was multifaceted. It began with the software

*“Their overall business has improved because of the use of these appliances. They have seen lower costs, but also improved ability to get [their products and services] to the market in a more dynamic way.”*

— Gavin Finn, president and CEO, Kaon Interactive

application, an intricate platform requiring a high-powered solution to run it. The company also wanted a rugged screen and computer combination that catered to the needs of its clientele, many of which are in the trade-show industry, and could withstand constant wear in less-than-favorable environments.

To further help those customers, Kaon also looked to offer them a digital package they could easily transport and quickly set up at venues around the world.

But Kaon, unlike larger businesses wanting thousands of units at a time, needed a supplier willing to produce smaller numbers for deployment. Some manufacturers have minimum orders of no less than a thousand.

Most of all, Kaon was already looking to



*Kaon needed a digital package that clients could easily transport and set up at venues around the world.*

the future and anticipated further enhancements to its software products over time. So it wanted the flexibility in a solution to expand and the ability to retool units, thus avoiding shelling out extra money for new ones.

### The solution

Tek Panel proved to be the only company Kaon found that could meet all of its needs, said Gavin Finn, Kaon's president and chief executive officer. Designers were able to marry the software to its all-in-one panel PC and create a viable integrated solution,

thanks to the companies working together to customize the most viable product.

Each machine Tek Panel developed features a flat touchscreen and a computer sealed inside a steel casing. Various connections along an exterior panel enable users to upload new content, alter existing material and change the functionality of the unit.

The machines are designed to allow for the installation of various types of graphics cards and other internal hardware capabilities with enough punch to easily power Kaon's application.

Even with the steel exteriors, internal components have been built and placed with durability in mind. For instance, traditional hard drives have been replaced with solid state ones containing no moving parts that can be jolted during handling.

“With trade-shows, it seems everything is like a rock,” said John Bastian, chief executive officer of Tek Panel. “If you can’t push it around with a forklift, you drop it. We’ve made very specific ruggedization changes to our standard unit specifically for Kaon. That was a long process.”

The all-in-ones are single pieces of equipment, something similar to Apple’s iMac, and contain all brand-name components. They’re clutter-free, too. Putting a unit into use is as simple as plugging in a single power cord and turning it on.

However, one of the main attractions to Tek Panel beyond the all-in-one’s core capabilities was the ease with which it can be upgraded and maintained, Finn said.

### The results

Kaon has combined Tek Panel units and its own application into a single product it markets under the name V-OSK. Hundreds of the units, mostly in sizes of 24, 42 and 46 inches, are deployed in 26 countries and serve a variety of purposes.

The V-OSK is part of Kaon’s core business, thanks in part to the equipment’s ability to prove return on investment to customers. From a software standpoint, the combined solution can pinpoint everything from the number of people using the panels to the length of time they use them to the number of sales generated by the application.



*The Tek Panel line converges powerful computing, high-end graphics and a revolutionary TFT/LCD panel into a single wall mountable unit.*

“For us, it’s been a revenue-driver,” Finn said.

V-OSK has been a money-saver for Kaon’s customers in the trade-show industry in particular. Those companies have found it considerably easier physically and financially. They no longer have to lug heavier and multiple-piece equipment, thus cutting down on shipping costs. They also now have a display that lasts far longer than the typical trades-how equipment that usually has a life cycle of three events.

“Their overall business has improved because of the use of these appliances,” Finn

said. “They have seen lower costs, but also improved ability to get [their products and services] to the market in a more dynamic way.”

As Kaon improves its technology and finds new markets for its application, Tek Panel is saving Kaon money by taking aging units and outfitting them to meet new requirements. The ability to refurbish panels already in the field equates to opportunities to grow the relationship between the businesses.

“The intent is we will continue to not only work with them, but also innovate together in terms of bringing more products to market and solving problems,” Finn said. “We’re both looking for ways to improve our customers’ experience.”

The relationship has proven beneficial to Tek Panel not only financially, but also from the standpoint of research and development. The company learned, in building units to meet Kaon’s needs, to solidify its products technologically and enhance durability, Bastian said.

In fact, many of those concepts have been incorporated into some of Tek Panel’s standard offerings, he said.

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— John Bastian, CEO, Tek Panel

“All products are evolutionary in nature,” Bastian said. “You look at building reliable equipment for the worst-case. When you have equipment being shipped around the world, you can take lessons learned and put them into your general product offering, and that’s what we do.”

“It’s not about simply building a product for one specific requirement. You look at how that can improve your business overall and increase customer satisfaction.”

***About the sponsor:*** Tek Panel designs and manufactures flat panel technologies. The U.S.-based company has provided advanced displays to the government, commercial and education markets for more than a decade. Tek Panel continues to build its presence in the digital signage industry by combining PCs and high-powered displays into a single unit. The company builds and assembles its products in Sugar Grove, Ill.