



FAMOUS PLAYERS INC.

Famous Players, (a division of Viacom Canada Inc.) celebrating its 84th year in operation, is Canada's top grossing theatrical exhibitor. The company operates 822 screens across the country in 89 locations, this includes theatres in its joint venture with IMAX and its partnership with Alliance Atlantis, which employs approximately 7,400 people. Since 1997, the company has opened over 40 state-of-the-art movie theatres. These entertainment destinations rank among the top 25 grossing movie theatres in North America.

Famous Players is internationally recognized as being an industry leader when it comes to their use of technology. It was in the midst of updating their current technology that the team at Famous Players realized they needed to upgrade their energy systems.

Famous Players wished to enhance the environment and comfort of theatergoers as well as streamline environmental management for theatre administrators. They also wanted to increase efficiencies when it came to energy costs. Their team chose North America's leading non-utility energy supplier, Direct Energy, to assist with their energy and automation needs.

BACKGROUND

In response to Famous Players request, Direct Energy Business Services designed a controls system to meet the needs of theatergoers as well as theatre management and the corporate team at Famous Players. The controls had to be simple and easy to use by non-technical Theatre Managers, save time and money and most importantly, enhance the movie going experience for users.

THE SOLUTION

Direct Energy Business Service designed and implemented an advanced application for HVAC control by connecting the HVAC automation system directly to the ticket sales system. A complex set of algorithms calculates the ideal start time to precondition the theatre based upon current temperature a half-hour in advance of the scheduled show time. The control system monitors sales at the ticket office and adjusts the mechanical system based on the expected heat load determined by the number tickets sold for a movie. A pilot theatre was selected (the theatre in Moncton, New Brunswick) to test the systems and after seeing the results, Famous Players quickly had the system installed in over 42 locations. Eventually all Famous Players theatres will operate with the same system.

The energy savings generated have been impressive, but the system has also resulted in impressive time savings for theatre management and Head Office alike. Valuable information about theatres can be relayed quickly to Head Office, and when necessary, Head Office can lend Theatre Managers their technical expertise by viewing the same screens in real time. Training costs have been reduced and staff (and their expertise) can move easily between theatres because of common control systems.

In addition, automated, computer controlled lighting systems have been installed in many theatres across Canada. Prior to the installation, lights were being turned on in an ad hoc fashion. In some cases lighting was being left on twenty-four hours a day seven days a week in buildings where key occupancy was eight hours per day. With the new systems, each Theatre Manager can control lighting from a centralized computer and efficiencies such as lighting levels tied to use (i.e. cleaning) are employed.

