

Game on for BT

Musion's Pepper's Ghost screen technology is giving conferences the 'wow factor'. **Geny Caloisi** joined the BT sales team to find out how and why

AT ITS ANNUAL UK sales conference, BT Global Services treated its sales team executives to an 'out-of-this-world' presentation. It wasn't held on a space ship or a UFO, but inside a 'virtual' computer game.

Held at the NEC in Birmingham, 1,800 BT sales executives gathered to celebrate their achievements and to be inspired about their role in building the future success of BTGS.

On arrival, the audience made their way into a vast black space. Cleverly positioned luminescent signs guided them to 'flight desks' – their destinations were the hotels where they were staying, arranged alphabetically – where they collected name badges and left their baggage.

The next three halls had the interactive quality of game play throughout, with the audience involved in different levels of a game.

Marketing agency, George P Johnson (GPI), created the concept and developed the theme of 'Game-On' for the event. BT's message was about change and being up for a challenge.

BEAMING IN PRESENTERS

The auditorium needed a big stage and the content had to be seen from all areas of the room. To achieve this, an 18m-wide Musion 'Pepper's Ghost' screen was used.



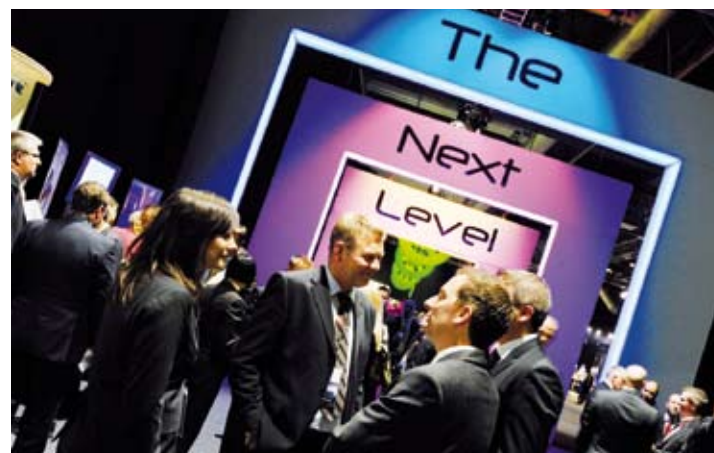
Some presenters were beamed in and out of stage and others just walked on to the stage and interacted with larger-than-life graphics that floated around them.

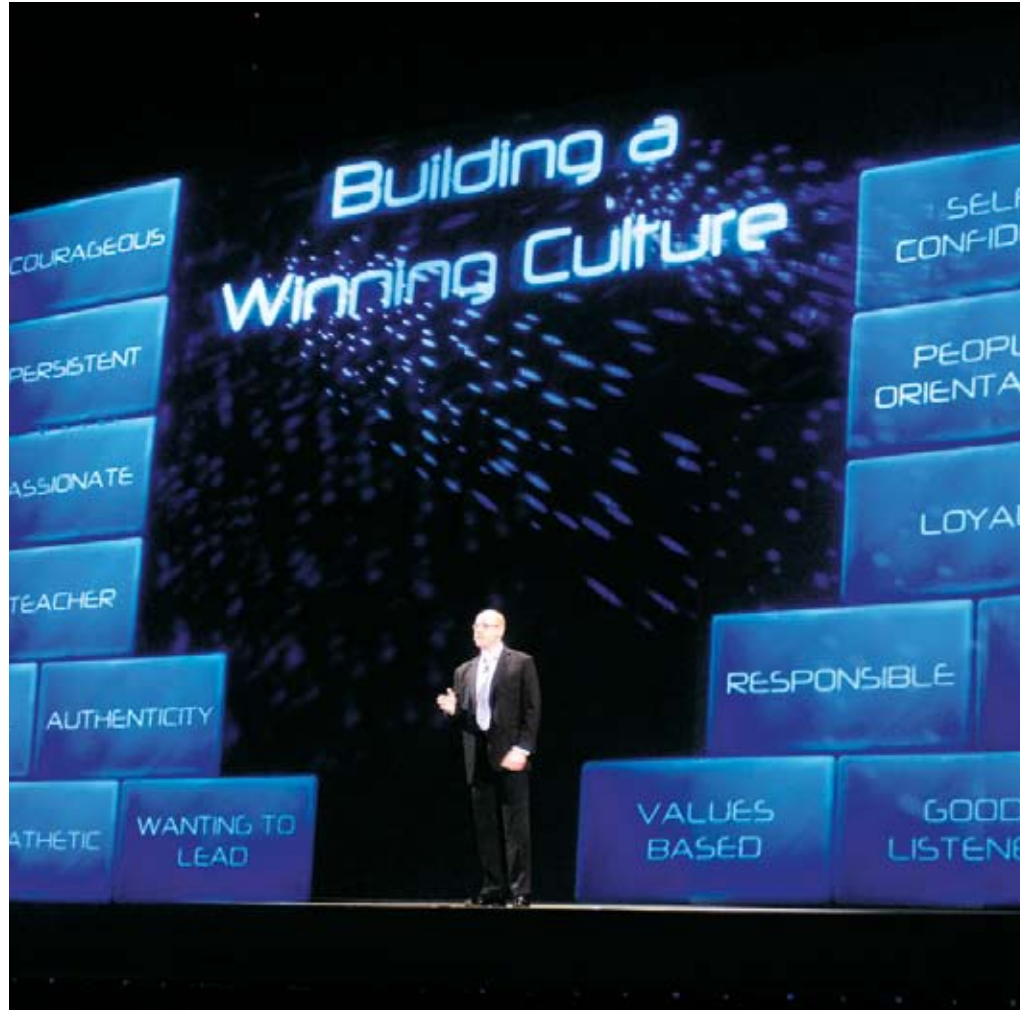
Everyone from BT was there, either physically or virtually. Ben Verwaayen, BT group ceo, was in London finishing the end-of-year results. But he was virtually present in Birmingham as well. Towards the end of the meeting, he was broadcast live from his offices at BT centre in London via satellite onto the Musion screen.

Although there were two repeater screens from the middle to back of the conference room, everyone had their eyes fixed to the main stage. There was no excuse for nodding off at this event.

The content presented on stage was a mixture of live filming, recoded footage and 3D graphics.

The theme of BT Global Services' annual conference was that of stepping inside a virtual computer game, with different gaming levels





The sound was excellent and to mark the opening and closing of the different levels of the game it had a metallic quality that resembled the movie *The Matrix*.

TECHNOLOGY AND STAGING

The Musion technology works by using a projector at the top, with HD footage input, a reflective surface at the bottom and a transparent foil at 45 degrees in the middle, through which the images become almost holographic. Since the screen was so wide, GPJ and BT needed to have three, edge-blending projectors, which were tilted in to get the right angle for the image.

To fine tune the keystone and blending, it used a three-channel Dataton Watchout Version 3 system, with its built-in image shaping and warping functionality, allowing

for quick onsite fixes when dealing with less than optimal projector placements.

Finding an 18m space and screen to rehearse the presentation before the event was not an easy task. GPJ's technical director, Matt Brownfield, said that first it needed to get it right on paper. It then put the theory into practice with the actual projectors, films and images tested off site at Creative Technology's warehouse. CT was in charge of setting up the structure for the Musion screen.

The presenters stood behind the Musion screen, interacting with the graphics and video and all presentations ran smoothly. However, GPJ realised that it had to script in even the minutest detail, but that's what a good conference should be like, isn't it?

WHAT NEXT?

This was the largest Musion Pepper's Ghost screen used so far and it achieved the 'wow factor'. The question is, what next? According to Musion's James Rock, multiple layers are the next step for theatrical presentations.

The audience was impressed. As Tim Smart, president, BT Global Services UK, said: 'The feedback from delegates has been fantastic. There is a sense that we broke the mould of the typical sales conference with this event.'

'This conference, more than any other I have been involved in, remains the topic of many conversations in BT Centre', added Neil Blakesley, vice president UK Marketing, BT Global Services. 'I am still being asked how did you teleport those guys in and how did those floating graphics work? Sales people who have been with BT for years have said it's the best event they have ever been to.' □

Projection at the BT event was achieved using 3x Barco FLM R20+ machines, outputting 20,000 lumens a piece, on the main Musion screen, while images were relayed to the back of the audience using two 10,000 lumen Panasonic PT-D10000 DLP projectors. A Vista Spyder 10input, six output controller was used to do the screen mix and three Dataton Watchout display channels. Live images came from a PPU with a Grass Valley HD SDI 2 mixer



CONTACTS

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