

NEIMAN MARCUS

"Neiman Marcus' systems are complex," Dickensheets says. "They need audio for meetings, paging, background music, and runway fashion shows." Wireless microphones, music, and multi-zone paging all under one roof means there's an unseen audio-signal superhighway.
KEN DICKENSHEETS, INSTALLER
DICKENSHEETS DESIGN ASSOCIATES

Dickensheets Design Associates. A consulting firm based in Austin, Texas. Specializing in room acoustics, sound system, and audio visual design.

INTEGRATOR



CHALLENGE

With more than sixty stores nationwide and counting, Texas-based luxury retailer Neiman Marcus recognizes the need to standardize its in-store audio systems. They've got a top-notch brand to protect—and stellar, consistent audio plays an important role in the customer experience.

SOLUTION

Enter Dickensheets Design Associates, who work with Neiman Marcus to create and implement a standardized, secure, and user-friendly system with a single point of control.

It's fall 2007, and nationwide luxury retailer Neiman Marcus is planning construction for a new store in Austin, Texas. When changes to the new store's audio system are proposed, Neiman Marcus sees the opportunity to create a standardized audio system design for all new stores and major reconstruction projects.

They consult with Dickensheets Design Associates, an Austin-based firm specializing in room acoustics, sound system, and audio-visual design. Principal Consultant Ken Dickensheets and his team work with Neiman Marcus to come up with a design that will serve as the retailer's new benchmark. It meets several

important goals. The new design interfaces with the existing Neiman Marcus security system, creates a standardized list of equipment and specifications for layout, and designates a single point of control at the corporate level while in-store controls are made simpler and limit system adjustments. Dickensheets

chose Biamp® Systems' Audia® and Nexia products. Less than two years after this first installation in the new Austin store, Dickensheets has managed new system installations in Neiman Marcus' flagship and Last Call outlet stores in six states across the U.S.

There are many advantages of the new system design. One of the most important is the protection and centralization of system control. "Neiman Marcus' systems are complex," Dickensheets says. "They need audio for meetings, paging, background

or subcontracted technician would need to visit the store.

The new password-protected system offers an impressive level of ease and control: All signals are routed through Audia or Nexia, and volume adjustments for the flagship stores are now made from a central point in the corporate office. If the system requires adjustment—it can be handled quickly, securely, and remotely. "With maintenance calls, we have one person to go to now—Ken Dickensheets," says Lary Hunter, Senior Telecommunications Technologist for Neiman Marcus.

Whether he's in Virginia or the Virgin Islands, as long as Dickensheets has Internet access and a computer running the Biamp Audia or Nexia software, he can log in through Neiman Marcus' secure corporate servers and diagnose the problem. The software tells him

exactly where the problem is. If it's a system adjustment, he can make that instantaneously, and if it's a speaker or amplifier that needs to be repaired, he can place a call immediately to the appropriate vendor.

The list of system perks goes on. "In the flagship stores, the new system gives the restaurant better management of their music with easy-to-use controls," says Neiman Marcus Lead Telecommunications Analyst Elaine Curry. "And it's easier for them to use the microphone for meetings in that area." In the Last Call stores,

Hunter says, a department can now mute its speaker volume while not missing pages to that area.

The retailer continues to adjust the design and programming with each installation, and they appreciate the flexibility. That, Dickensheets says, is the result of a well-planned system. "If companies think through their design goals and how they want the system to work, the consultant/integrator can design the system for these capabilities and for versatility to accommodate the client's evolving goals."

As much as a company's goals may grow and change, one will remain of central importance—maintaining a consistent and pleasing experience for the customer. Audio plays no small role in that endeavor. A picture-perfect fashion show with seamless music and announcements, pleasing background music playing softly overhead from department to department, and a crystal-clear page resulting in top-notch customer service all work together to create an experience that will keep people coming back again and again. ●



music, and runway fashion shows." Wireless microphones, music, and multi-zone paging all under one roof means there's an unseen audio-signal superhighway. Previously, store employees would access the Communications Room located in each store to make audio adjustments guided only by where the dials and controls were marked. This was problematic: it created inconsistencies in sound, would frequently create complications in other areas, and if the employees were unable to reset the system properly, a corporate employee