

CASE STUDY

PROJECTION SCREENS - AUGUST 2011

A NEW CONCEPT IN PORTABLE SCREENS LEADS TO HIGH ROI



Product: StageScreen®, Location: Montgomery Performing Arts Center, Montgomery, AL

- Need something that lets you travel light, sets up in minutes, and makes a big presentation of its own? We've got just the portable screen solution you need.

Wayne Wagner was fed up with folding screens. So four years ago, the CEO of Wagner Media, one of the largest wholesale projection screen rental companies in the United States, picked up the phone. The man he called was John Pidgeon, the then president of projection screen manufacturer Draper, Inc. Pidgeon now serves as Draper's company president.

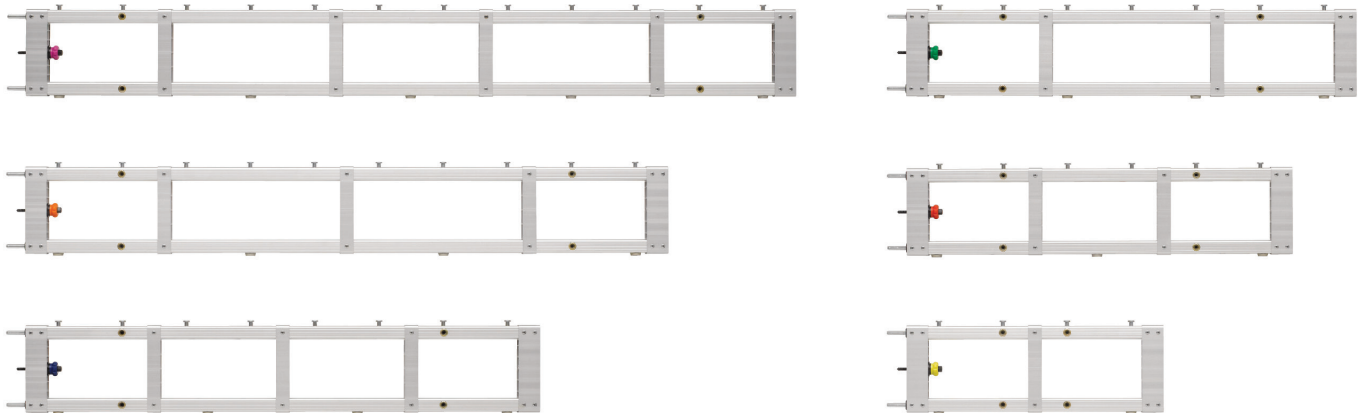
"Wayne called me and said, 'I don't like your folding screens,'" Pidgeon said. "Actually, he said 'I don't like anybody's folding screens.' We invited a group of key

staging dealers to come provide feedback to us. Wayne provided a great deal of feedback at the focus group and since."

Pidgeon and his team listened, and Wagner's initiative led to the development by Draper of a totally new concept in portable screens. Instead of hinged, folding frames, Draper came up with a modular design where screens are built from an inventory of pieces of various sizes.

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The truss system is completely modular. All available sizes of StageScreen® are built from combinations of the same 6 standard color-coded frame sections pictured in the images above.

“Talking with the rental dealers, I heard several common complaints,” said Kenneth Risher, Draper’s product design engineer, who was charged with bringing this new concept in screens to life.

Those complaints included:

- “A broken part equals a frame we can’t rent.”
- “The current frames just don’t last in the rental market.”
- “When you rent screens, you’re lucky if half of the cranks come back. If you lose cranks or don’t have them all when setting up a screen, you’re dead in the water.”
- “If we do a really big or custom screen for a show, that frame is only used once since we’ll probably never do that size again.”

Risher decided that a “modular” idea would eliminate those complaints—and more.

“I wanted something modular, something that required less labor to manufacture, something that could be field-repaired and, of course, something stronger than what was currently in the marketplace,” Risher said, “I wanted it to be completely intuitive to assemble around the globe, and I wanted to completely eliminate snaps and tension the surface in a way that had never been done before, providing variable tension if possible, and something that was field-repairable.”

In response, Draper developed the StageScreen®—a large venue truss screen—and its smaller cousin, the single-tube FocalPoint®. Both screens do away with such perennial folding screen issues as loose hinges, broken and bent frames, popped snaps, ripped viewing surfaces, and pinched fingers. What they add, according to Wagner, is profit.

“The return on investment is going to be on a factor of three to four times what a standard truss screen would provide,” Wagner said. “In the old days, we would buy four 16 x 9 screens with four front surfaces and four rear surfaces. With that product, you could rent four screens.” According to Wagner, the modular design of the StageScreen® and FocalPoint® changes that.

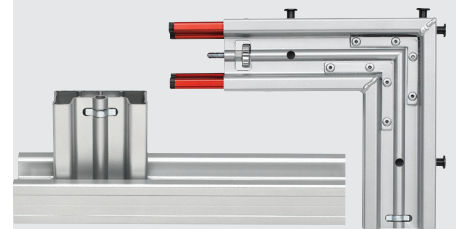
“You can rent all eight of those same surfaces because you are able to borrow pieces from other screens. So right there you can double your ROI because you can rent twice as many screens,” Wagner said.

In addition, the introduction of new projection formats has caused a dilemma in the marketplace. Wagner explained that for each screen size a dealer needs to have three formats: 4:3, 16:9 and 16:10. Once again, it’s StageScreen® and FocalPoint® to the rescue.

“You can reuse the same frame pieces and do all three formats with basically the same number of frame pieces. The only investment to add a 16:10 format to your inventory is the surface [and a few additional pieces].” And that, Wagner pointed out, is another doubling of ROI.

One of the early witnesses to the development of the StageScreen® was James LeBoeuf, operations manager for MassAV in Billerica, Massachusetts, who travelled to Draper’s headquarters in Spiceland, Indiana, for a preview of the StageScreen®.

“It was hard to contain my excitement,” LeBoeuf said. “When I came back I said ‘imagine a screen with no cranks and no snaps. Can you imagine that?’”



With no hinges, the FocalPoint® is strong, and still features quick and easy assembly. All available sizes of FocalPoint® are built from combinations of the same frame segments.

Just as Risher predicted, LeBoeuf said the modular approach of Draper's StageScreen® and FocalPoint® solves all the problems inherent to folding screens. "People catch their fingers in the latches. They're not that durable. They're prone to breakage. They have snaps that get crushed. They have cranks that get lost," he pointed out. "StageScreen® solves all of those problems."

Once he saw it, LeBoeuf was so impressed by the StageScreen® that he was keen to get one out on a job and into the hands of technicians. "The first event I had it on was a large meeting for a pharmaceutical company. We were erecting a large truss structure in the glass foyer they had. They wanted to fly a screen, and I immediately jumped on the fact that I had the StageScreen®." LeBoeuf added that his opinion of the StageScreen® was quickly reaffirmed by the technicians who were onsite.

"There's no trouble setting this up. I don't have to find cranks. It goes together. It's rigid. It's strong. And that was the exact feedback that I got." LeBoeuf said even small items—such as the move away from cranks, snaps, and hinges—affects the bottom line.

"Just the fact of not having cranks is a huge burden off of my shoulders," he said. "I'm sure there are a hundred techs out there somewhere with piles of cranks sitting on their dresser that they took out of their pockets after a show and they never made it back into my frame kit."

Wagner said he, too, has received a great deal of positive feedback from people in the field who assemble the screens, and those who rent them out. "The comment we get from people is 'Why are you still renting truss screens?'"

After they've had the StageScreen® and FocalPoint®, dealers and installers tell us they don't want to go back to the old technology."

In fact, according to Wagner, people who have used the StageScreen® and FocalPoint® would rather pay a premium to use them again. "The premium product sells better because it's so dramatically better than the other products."

"The impact to Draper has been fantastic in terms of re-introducing the Draper product offering to the AV rental industry," said Draper rental products manager, Jim Hoodlebrink. "People in the industry see we are listening to their concerns and they, in turn, are trying the new products and taking them on for complete inventory changes."

Just as Draper listened to Wagner when he approached the company with his concerns, he in turn is listening to those who are no longer interested in old-style truss and folding screens. Wagner Media is among those replacing old inventory with modular screens. While this might be a gamble in today's tight economy, Wagner said it is one that has paid off—in spades.

Wagner recently made a major purchase of FocalPoint® screens in 8', 10', 12' and 14' widths for his offices in Houston, Orlando, and Las Vegas. In each width, the screen frame can be converted from NTSC format to 16:9 or 16:10 by exchanging just two frame sections—a huge savings compared with buying complete screens for each format. All other frame and leg components are common to all three formats.

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Product: 18' x 60' StageScreen® (flown); Location: Quebec Convention Center, Quebec, CA, Dealer: Vision AV, Photography: Guy Rainville

“The thing that we’ve run into, and we’re kind of shocked at this, is that as we keep adding inventory there seem to be more orders. Everything we have in StageScreen® is out almost every day. The growth in that whole market for us is really tremendous.”

And Wagner isn’t the only one who feels that way. “It’s just really the way to go and I hope it’s the way of the future,” said LeBoeuf. “So much so that I hope I can abandon a lot of the other stuff and work with the more modular design that the StageScreen® offers.”

Comments like these are just what Draper’s Risher likes to hear. “I’m very happy with both designs. For the StageScreen® in particular I left room for and had a variety of possible iterations in mind, and it’s been fun seeing those iterations come about as the orders and custom requests come in. I’m always happy as a designer to force a paradigm shift,” added Risher. “Forward thinking is the only way forward.”

For more information on the StageScreen® or the FocalPoint®, please visit their respective web pages at:

draperinc.com/go/StageScreen.htm

draperinc.com/go/FocalPoint.htm

draperinc.com/whitepapers_casestudies.aspx