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# Baseline

## Interactive Video Wall Stimulates Collaboration

By Eileen McCooley

**A market research firm utilizes giant digital displays to stimulate group discussions and collaboration, leading to deeper engagement and insights.**

Digital technology has made big data a driving force in today's enterprises, but quantitative data isn't the only information businesses want. Many use qualitative data to add the human factor into the equation, putting flesh and bones on the numbers. Here, too, technology is making an enormous difference.

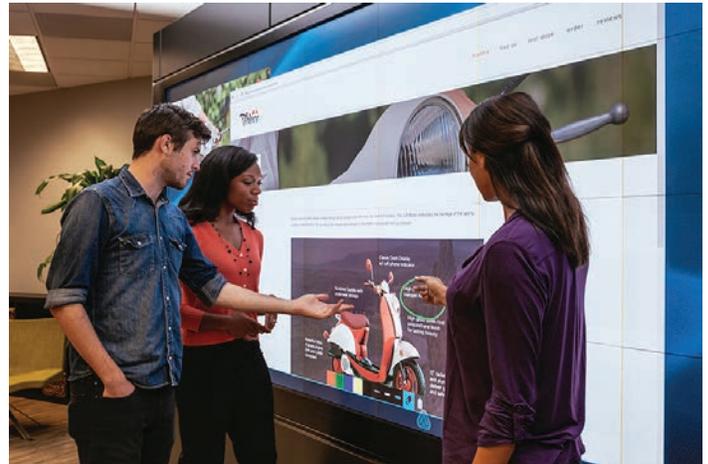
Schlesinger Group, a market research firm with 29 offices in the United States and Europe, is a major provider of data collection and focus group services. In addition to conducting quantitative research for clients, the firm will find specific types of panelists to provide qualitative data for projects such as a company's product launch or new ad campaign.

Rob Ramirez, executive vice president of strategic development for the company, admits that it can be "a pretty dry industry." For the most part, focus group sessions haven't changed much in 50 years. Typically, a moderator leads a group of panelists using paper and pencil to react to presentations, while observers sit behind a one-way mirror struggling to remain attentive.

### Deploying a Game-Changing Technology

Several years ago, Ramirez and company CEO Steve Schlesinger saw game-changing technology at a pharmaceutical company's research center: A Prysm interactive, touch-sensitive video wall that provided high-impact data visualization. Users touched the wall to participate in an exercise or call up information from various sources, and everyone in the room could immediately see what they did and respond.

"A lightbulb went off," Ramirez says. "The process was so engaging and collaborative. We realized that it could enable us to conduct better market research."



In September 2014, Schlesinger installed a Prysm 190 video wall in its New York City headquarters. Setup was done in a day, and training took only a few hours.

Though the wall can be connected to a company's IT network and computers, it was isolated to ensure confidentiality for clients. The display is connected to a secure cloud environment so people at different locations can participate in a project at the same time. The research firm sells its clients time on the Prysm wall and then programs their exercises and presentations, which clients can preview remotely.

Measuring 190 inches diagonally, the Prysm 190 provides about 75 square feet of display space and can mirror the screens from up to 12 in-room devices at one time. Besides being touch-sensitive, the wall tracks eye movement to see where users are looking, a useful feature when designing a web page, among other things.

A number of people can work on the wall simultaneously. "Each can react to the same concept individually,

without being biased by group think,” Ramirez explains. “Yet they can see each other’s work right away, which stimulates organic discussion and triggers other ideas. The group dynamic provides much richer, deeper insights and opportunities for collaboration.”

The wall can display data from multiple sources simultaneously—say, slides from several decks—so the audience can make linkages and draw conclusions, he adds.

Everything on the wall is instantly saved, so moderators no longer need to photograph a board or transcribe copious notes. “When the client leaves, the information is already in the cloud or on a stick in the file format they want,” Ramirez remarks. “They can pop the data into a presentation right away.”

The research firm used the Prysm 190 for about a year to test the concept and the market. “It was a large upfront capital investment, and we wanted to make sure the industry would adopt usage at a rate that would enable us to see an ROI,” Ramirez explains. Over the course of that year, it became clear that clients were receptive, and Prysm introduced smaller, lower-priced products.

Schlesinger installed Prysm 85 Dual video walls in its Chicago and Los Angeles offices. Two linked Prysm 85 walls, each measuring 85 inches diagonally, offer a combined display area of 42 square feet. Up to four sources can be displayed on each of the twinned screens simultaneously.

Next step: The firm plans to implement a new mobile

feature from Prysm that will support remote panels from any location. Participants will have access to the same stimuli across any device, and clients will be able to watch the participants’ interactions live.

## Getting Top Scores From Clients

About a dozen pharmaceutical companies and financial institutions have used Schlesinger walls so far. According to Ramirez, customer satisfaction scores have been 100 percent, and every client has come back to run additional projects.

“It’s all about engagement,” he says. “Panelists have told us they find the exercises so much more interesting. One actually said he felt bad taking money for participating. Moderators can quickly formulate different exercises and ideas on where to lead a discussion, and observers can see what’s happening, so they’re much less likely to drift off.”

The video wall has been a big win for Schlesinger. “This has given us an additional revenue stream and enabled us to create deeper relationships with our clients,” Ramirez declares. “It has also positioned us as a technology leader within our industry. We are leading the charge.”

*Eileen McCooey, a New York-based consultant and Baseline contributor, has extensive experience covering a wide range of business and consumer topics, including digital technologies and consumer electronics of all kinds.*