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IDEAS, INSIGHTS AND INNOVATIONS FOR
GOVERNMENT AND EDUCATION TECH

CUSTOMER PROFILE

LISTENING TO PREVENT OTHERS FROM OVERHEARING

Leading Value Added Reseller (VAR) works with LG to develop connectivity-free large format display solution that meets security requirements

The complexity of large organizations, the pace of change and the inherent conflict between high-minded ambitions and near-term pragmatism typically make it challenging for public agencies to get the best technology solutions available to private-sector enterprises. That's unless the agencies have a Value Added Reseller (VAR) like Westwind, which has developed a strong 30-year business by bridging the gap between advanced innovation and practical solutions by listening to the needs of agencies and organizations, working with brands like LG and arriving at solutions that are win-win for all participants.

"Innovation moves in one direction — new features and benefits are added with each new generation of a technology because the expectation is that everyone wants more and expects more. Sometimes, those new features don't align with some organizations' expectation or policy, and it's hard for technology brands to find the reverse gear," explains Lupe Montoya, Vice President of Sales, Westwind. "That's where we can advocate for the agency and work with the brand to develop customized solutions that comprehensively addresses the organization's requirements."

Montoya is referring to a recent agency project that called for a large-format display with no Bluetooth or Wi-Fi capability. Every brand in the market had connectivity features built into their product offerings at the factory, so the must-eliminate security requirement meant that specialized engineers would need to come on-site to remove the Wi-Fi and Bluetooth at the module level. That process was time-consuming, expensive and logistically challenging given the security grade of a client.

Montoya and her team, which includes 10-year Westwind veteran, Joey Parker, Enterprise Account Manager, worked with LG to create a special SKU for its custom large-format display that has connectivity stripped out at the factory, saving the organization time, expense and complexity. Now the client can confidently order the special SKU and focus on its core task.

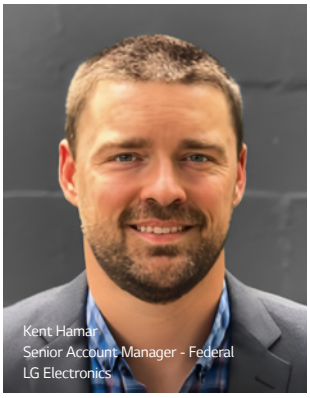
"That's my definition of a solution," Montoya explains. "Listening to the agency's needs, identifying the core issue, developing a plan in close collaboration with the agency, the brand and our own team, and then implementing a solution that is simple and effective but delivers comprehensive value."

Montoya adds that not every technology brand is willing to work with VARs and clients to develop this grade of solution, but that LG is uniquely interested in doing so.

"LG clearly recognizes that one size does not fit all and that a solution extends beyond the hardware and software to how a large, complex client operates," she says. "Security requirements are table stakes at many organizations of this kind, and if you're not going to meet the requirements, you simply won't get a seat at the table."

The irony of how Montoya, Parker and the LG team listened to the stakeholders to ensure no bad actor could listen in or view the communications running on the LG custom large-format display is not lost on Montoya.

"It's counterintuitive that we would work with LG to remove features, but that's the world our client lives in, and a technology plan without that security is not a solution," Montoya says.


Kent Hamar
Senior Account Manager - Federal
LG Electronics

Kent Hamar, Senior Account Manager — Federal, at LG Electronics agrees with this assessment: "Serving clients in today's complex technology environment is never a question of lowest common denominator. You must meet each requirement to advance to the next phase, and so if we can make it easier and less expensive by making the no-connectivity LG custom large-format display its own SKU, then that's what we'll do."

As technology inevitably gravitates toward commoditization, innovation is what differentiates brands like LG from commodity providers, but according to Hamar, innovation extends beyond features and benefits, hardware and software.

"Innovation is all about ideas," Hamar says. "That emphasis on ideas is central to the LG culture, and it applies to researchers and engineers, but also to Account Managers and sales leaders to come up with bright ideas that make sense for our VARs and customers alike."

Business and administration will always be complex, just as VARs like Westwind's Montoya and Parker will always be solutions-whisperers. In this case, it seems the key to their whispering is listening!

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