

CASE STUDY



NetPlanner Systems Helps Eaton Marketing Launch Culinary Showcase and Meeting Center with Leading-Edge Network and A/V Capabilities

The solution not only connects the company and its test kitchen with a national client base but also supports the broadcast of charity and other events across the country.

For Eaton Marketing President Kevin Eaton, restaurant industry marketing is very serious business. His family-owned firm serves as a manufacturer's representative to 55 brands in the commercial restaurant industry, helping to promote their equipment and solutions to restaurant equipment dealers. Those dealers, in turn, sell the equipment to entities ranging from restaurant chains to public schools.

When Eaton Marketing purchased a new building in 2020, he had a lofty vision of what his firm could accomplish in the new space. He wanted to create a multi-use facility where he could stage food events to promote his clients to potential customers and host seminars, presentations and more. The 22,000 square-foot building would be designed much like a high-end event venue, with a full bar, conference room and top-of-the-line, 8,500 square-foot commercial kitchen that featured his vendors' equipment.

It would act not only as a test kitchen, but also as a service kitchen for special events that promoted client product lines to schools, restaurants and other food-service firms — and even homeowners who wanted high-end commercial kitchens. In addition, the kitchen would be used for education, bringing in a few clients each week who would work with their chefs, test recipes and see if the equipment had the desired specs they were seeking for their styles of cooking.



The Partnership Begins

Making Eaton's dream a reality would require incorporating the latest communications technology to showcase his products most effectively. "When we bought the building, we had invested a lot of money into technologies such as cloud capabilities, and we were ready to take the next step," Eaton says. He had previously learned of NetPlanner Systems through a general contractor who worked with him on other projects. Liking what he heard, Eaton met with his local NetPlanner representative to discuss his vision for the building and to understand the A/V and networking capabilities and the connectivity framework — both wireless and wired — it would take to realize his goals.

COVID-19 Threatens to Spoil the Recipe

Shortly after Eaton's meeting with NetPlanner, while the project scope was being finalized, the 2020 COVID-19 lockdown was taking a seat at the table. Suddenly, Eaton and NetPlanner needed to devise a secondary strategy that would enable his firm to reach customers who could not physically enter the building.

For at least the immediate future, Eaton Marketing would need the ability to broadcast a live meeting via web conferencing such as Teams or Zoom. NetPlanner's AV engineers quickly shifted gears and expanded the scope of work to include equipment that would enable broadcasting of televised events, training sessions and other activities via multiple 86" displays and AV streaming services.

The Project in Action

After fine-tuning its scope to meet both Eaton's overall goals and facilitate a remote solution, NetPlanner developed a comprehensive proposal that would include advanced audiovisual equipment, network switches and wireless access points, as well as structured cabling where required. A secure, fully provisioned IT room would serve as the technology hub. Eaton Marketing signed off on the project, and NetPlanner got to work delivering a leading-edge, cloud-based solution.

NetPlanner placed cameras around the demo kitchen space and put them above the countertops that shoot down to the work surface. The recording and streaming equipment and displays that were installed ensure that wherever visitors are sitting, they can feel part of the action taking place.

In addition to helping surmount the "COVID-19 challenge," Eaton says, "The project has been a huge success." Eaton Marketing is very pleased with how easy it was to partner with NetPlanner. "We have this big commercial kitchen with high-top seating equipped with full audio-visual and networking support. It's perfect because our customers like to shoot menus in the kitchen, and even do demos in the kitchen," he says.

So effective was NetPlanner's effort to strategically place the equipment, Eaton says, that the outcome far exceeded his expectations. "Today, thanks to the NetPlanner team's efforts, we call this kitchen "The Closer."

A Commitment to Community Service

With the solution in place, Eaton says his firm is using it not only for promotional value but also for the good of the community. "Their efforts have also enabled us to conduct some truly worthwhile community service projects," he continues. "Eaton Marketing's motto is 'Educate, Communicate and Serve.' We have hosted many charity events using that kitchen, including an 80-person event for a pet rescue group, donating the building for the night. All server and bartender tips were donated, and there was a gift basket raffle, raising \$5,000. For a small upstart charity, that really makes a difference."



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*—Kevin Eaton
President*

Innovation Drives Great Outcomes

When speaking of the development process that resulted in such a successful outcome, Eaton notes, "NetPlanner was very interactive as the solution evolved. I knew nothing about this type of equipment – in my mind, everything is hardwired."

"NetPlanner's cloud-based model frees us from dealing with disruptions during the day," says Eaton. "If there is something they need to do — an upgrade, a system check — they log-in and make their changes on the fly. A lot of the technical work they do doesn't even require them to be on site, which is convenient and very efficient."

Equally important, Eaton says, the solution incorporated technology that helps heighten his firm's presence in the marketplace. "We like to stay on the forefront of the industry — to be viewed by our clients and peers as a trailblazer," Eaton says. "With the assistance of NetPlanner Systems, we achieved that goal and more."