

Lucidity chooses Absen for South African Elections Results Centre

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With all eyes on South Africa, the elections were held on 29 May 2024. Lucidity was appointed by the Electoral Commission of South Africa (IEC) as the principal technical supplier for the National Results Operations Centre (ROC) for this significant event. The ROC, located at the Gallagher Convention Centre in Midrand, served as the primary management hub for electoral operations and a central hub for political parties, independent candidates, observers, business leaders and the media to access real-time election results.



South Africa's narrative is often regarded as miraculous. Once ostracized for its apartheid regime, the country made a dramatic shift with the election of Nelson Mandela as president in 1994, who envisioned a Rainbow Nation. The nation persisted in its journey towards transformation. The 2024 elections signalled a significant turning point in this ongoing evolution. The people rose, demanding change. When no single party could secure a majority, a remarkable coalition of various political parties joined forces to implement necessary changes. This is truly history in the making.

The National Results Operations Centre was a testament to the country's progress, with a large format screen displaying voting results and serving as a backdrop for the various news and broadcast channels including SABC, eNews and Newzroom Afrika. Paul Newman of Lucidity, used Absen for this critical component.



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Paul Newman of Lucidity

Lucidity is well-acquainted with Absen. Their initial investment in 2023 included Absen PL2.9 panels purchased from a batch brought into the country by local distributor DWR. However, Lucidity realized they needed a larger quantity of panels to meet their clients' needs so they sold what they had and instead invested in new NT2.9 panels. Newman, comments, " We now have over 100 sq/m of LED, which pretty much caters for most of our events. We did however have to hire in a few additional panels to build the screen at the ROC.

Before LED, the company primarily specialized in wide screen projection, blending and mapping. "However, it became clear we needed to invest in LED," Paul explains. "After researching various brands, we chose Absen for its offerings, the service from DWR Distribution, and the price point. It also helped that other players had the same panels, allowing for cross-renting. Newman believes that having initially held off purchasing LED actually paid off, positioning us well in the market. Post-COVID, purchasing LED was a game changer, meeting increased client demand. LED screens, like an open canvas, offers versatile visual possibilities, enabling us to advise clients on innovative content and screen dimensions. This approach often inspires clients to fund new, exciting ideas. The elections were a prime example."



Having been involved in previous elections Lucidity had in the past used a combination of LED and projection for the side screens and main leaderboard however this time around Paul proposed combining all three screens into one large LED display. This allowed the necessary data from the nine provinces as well as the national results to be displayed on one single screen. The large format screen looked amazing, providing an enhanced visual experience.

"The screen size was 30m wide with the middle leaderboard section at 7.5m high and the side screens at 5.5m high," Paul explains, "Held at the Gallaher Estate, Hall 5, the ceiling height was only 9m, compared to 11m at the previous venue. Without enough height to fly the screens on motors, we had to ground-stack to achieve the necessary height of the leaderboard. We built a

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scaffolding structure with a stacking track system from DWR. We spent a significant amount of time on the initial row of panels to ensure that we didn't run into trouble later on in the build. The build took close on 24 hours, with the middle screen almost hitting the ceiling at 9m high. The resolution was close on 10000 pixels wide." Two Magnimage EC90 switchers and 4 x NovaStar MCTRL 4K's controlled the screen.



Lucidity taking ownership of their new Absen panels supplied by DWR.

The new setup garnered widespread praise and significantly elevated the overall viewers experience. It not only improved the display of data, maps, results and audiovisual content developed by Lucidity but also created a blueprint for what can be expected for the results centre in years to come.



Lucidity was also tasked with designing and building the SABC live broadcast studio within the venue for the elections. Wanting to elevate their studio setup, Paul suggested a curved LED screen for the news desk, which was approved. The Absen KL2.5 screen was 3400mm wide by 720mm high and displayed content including specific programme names and election-based information. SABC was so impressed with the overall design that they plan to rebuild it in one of their main studios in Auckland Park for future broadcasts!

The election outcome saw The African National Congress (ANC), one of Africa's oldest liberation movements, forming an alliance with the Democratic Alliance (DA) and other political parties to form a Government of National Unity. In South Africa, the resilience of its people shines through, with humour and kindness prevailing. There is hope that the new coalition will collaborate effectively for the country's benefit.