



Sedao Ltd

ContentPublisher

White paper on the uses of Sedao ContentPublisher



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Digital Signage for every sector | Software | Hardware | Training | Support

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Digital Signage Content Management

Digital signage attracts attention and communicates *more* information than other kinds of digital media **because** it is a 'multi-zoned' player. This means that instead of playing out just movies or photos or web pages or news feeds it can play them **all, on screen at the same time**

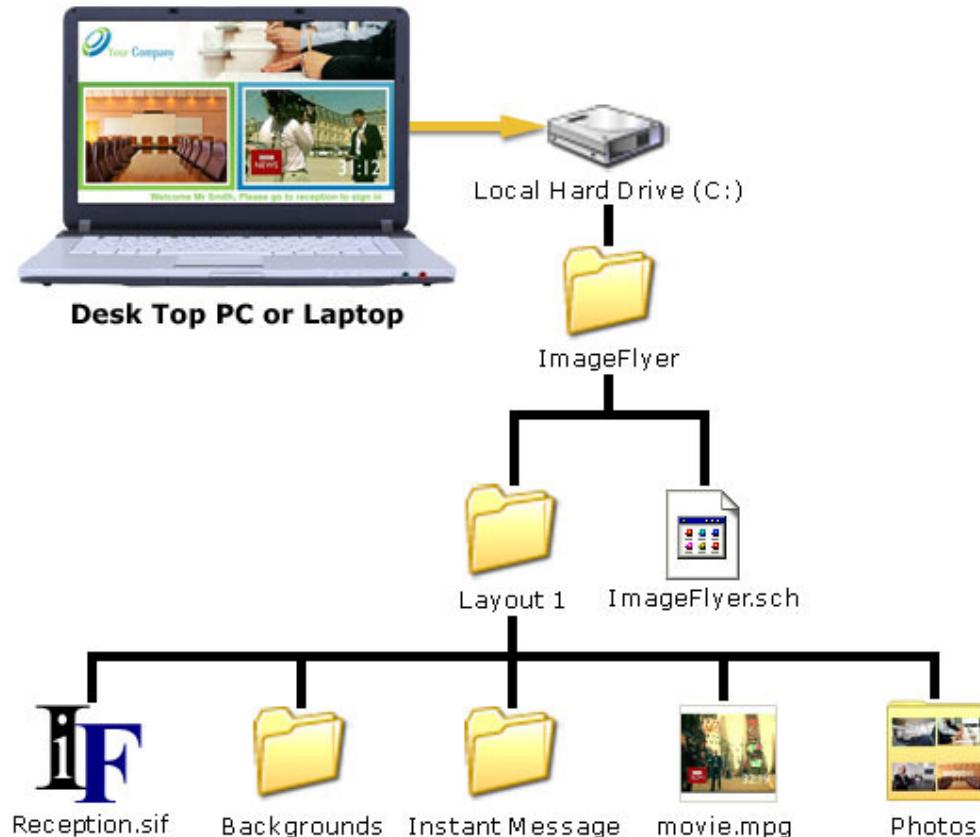


A very simple digital signage screen layout such as this is very effective as it combines a movie (or liveTV) with a photoslide show and instantly updated welcome message. It also gives a professional look because the zones are played over the top of a high quality background image, in this case also including a company/school logo and colour scheme.

Digital Signage plays content 'live'

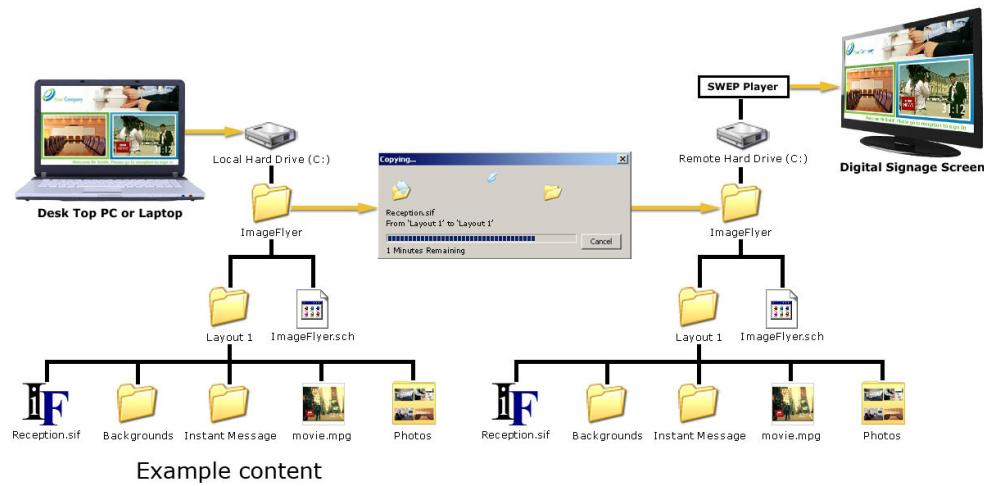
It's essential in digital signage that updates to zones appear on screen almost instantaneously; there's no point welcoming a VIP visitor to your reception if they've moved on to their first meeting. To accomplish this digital signage plays content 'live' from its location on the player. For example if you play a slide show you are playing all the photos in a folder of photos, if new photos are added or old ones deleted they will simply be played out since the digital signage is simply playing what's in the folder.

This means that a digital screen layout is really a control file telling the digital signage player where the content is on the player PC and how to show it on screen (position, animation effects etc). As most digital screen layouts are normally created on your own desktop PC or laptop before being copied to the dedicated player driving the screen it's easy to relate a screen layout to the files it's using:



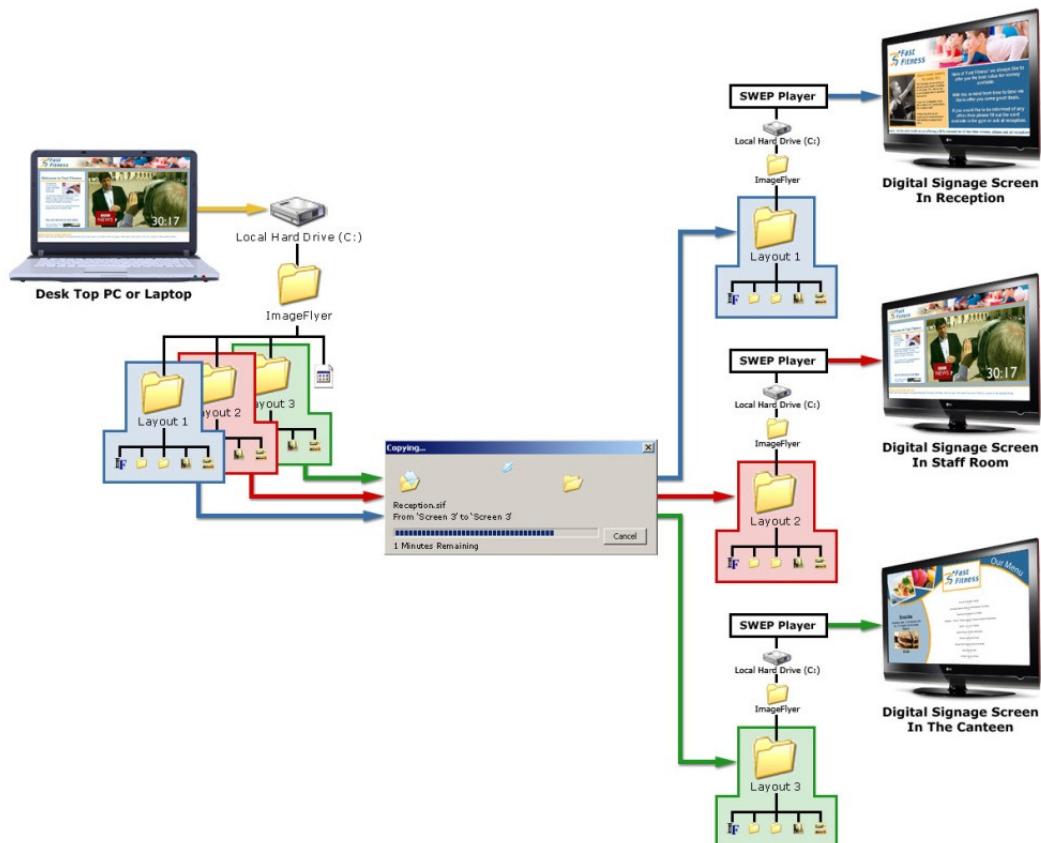
In this example the folder **Backgrounds** may contain an image background.jpg (possibly created with QuickChange background maker), the instant messages would probably be a local file text file such as message.txt or RSS file such as local-news.xml (created with RSSWriter) and the photos would simply be a folder of images you took on your digital camera. The file **Reception.sif** in this case would be the control file telling the ImageFlyer digital signage system where to play each zone and how. Optionally the extra control file imageflyer.sch is a schedule file in case you have a number of different screen layouts and want to play them at different time of day (or possibly have a different layout each day)

Simple organisation makes any system scalable



If you use sensible file structure, such as that shown, not only is it easy to understand it also makes the system *scalable*. This means that if you want to show it on another screen all you need do is copy it across to a different player. If you want to show it on 100 different players you simply need to copy it across to 100 different players.

You aren't limited to having only one screen layout. You can create different screen layouts for every day of the week and copy those across to the remote players, or create different screen layouts for every screen you have giving each one its one unique content.

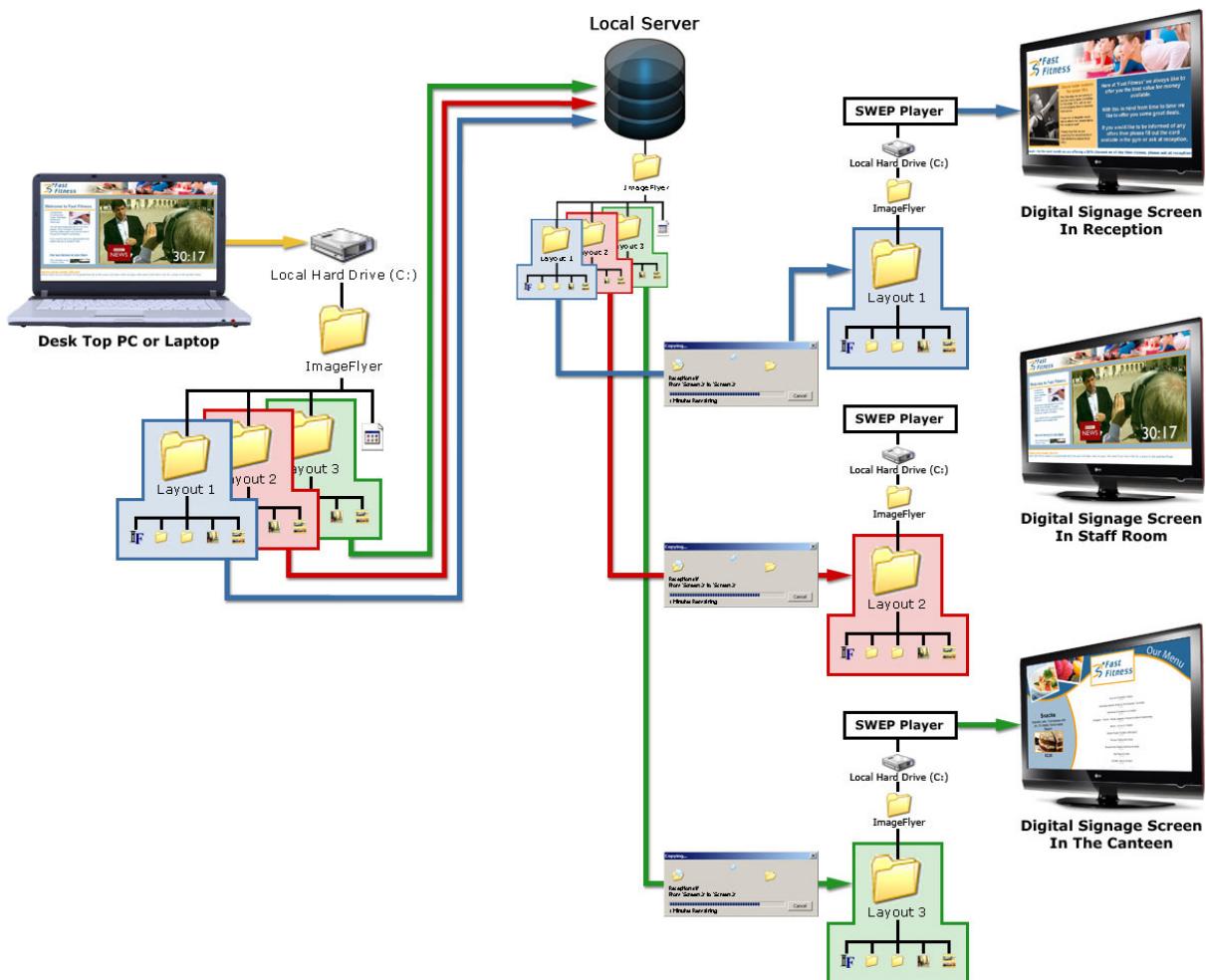


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Using a central folder to manage larger networks

Copying files to a number of screens on what's called a local area network (LAN) is easy, but when that number becomes large the computer sending the files becomes a bottleneck. To fix this you simply need to copy the media to centrally accessible area, such as a shared hard drive, and set up each machine to fetch the content from that central storage area itself

Some customers play digital signage media directly off the central storage area, rather than copying it to the local computers, but this is less robust to network failure and takes up more network bandwidth.



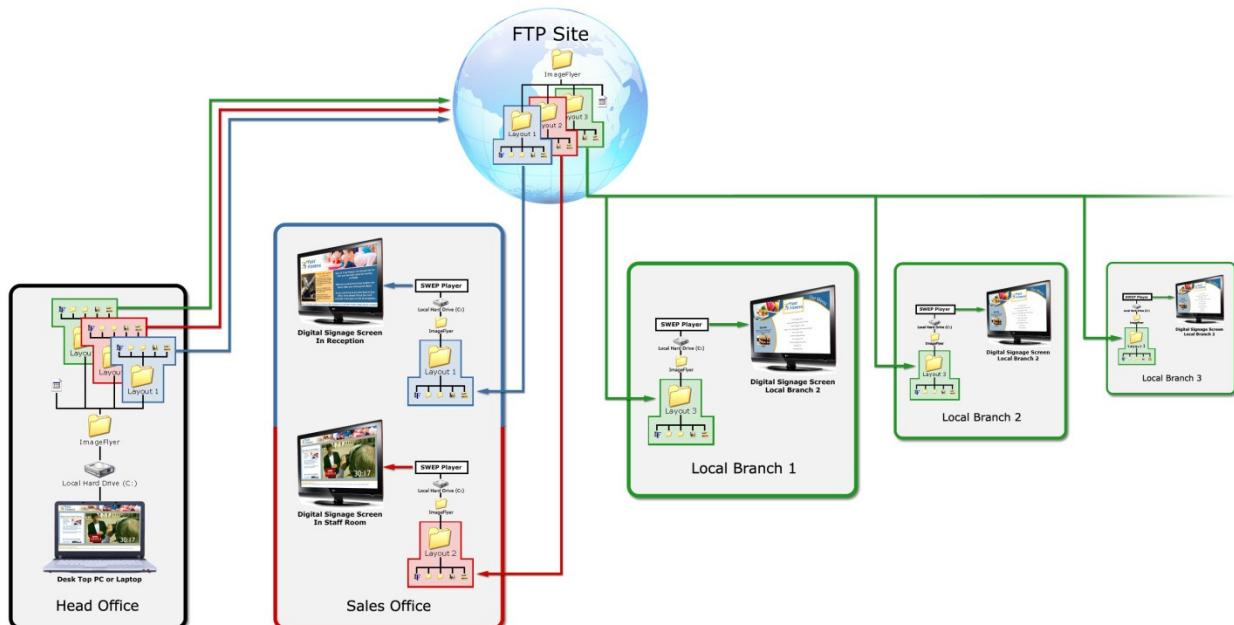
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Use an FTP storage site to manage remote networks

Large networks with screens in different physical locations (called a Wide Area Network, or WAN) can operate in the same way as a LAN system (using a local server) if they are set up using what's called a Virtual Private Network. Each player acts as though it's on a local area network, but in reality there is an internet connection between it and the source computer. This means there is a bottleneck, as the remote offices' attempt to fetch files from the central folder, caused by the speed of the internet connection to the office containing the central storage.

For Wide area networks you ideally need to 'move' the shared location to a web site that works as a file storage area. Such a web site is called an FTP site (short for File Transfer Protocol).



With an FTP site the system works exactly as before only now the screen layouts are sent via the World Wide Web. Using this method means that updating screens can be slower but a system can still be configured to be almost instantaneous for simple messages using small files (such as welcome text and photos), with movies and other larger media files taking longer. In practise this has little noticeable effect as people rarely want to send new movies to 100's of locations instantly, this is often done overnight (with the movies scheduled to play the next day) to save using internet bandwidth during office hours, which may affect staff productivity.

FTP sites are as standard as normal web sites and your existing web site hosting package almost certainly includes setting one or more up that you can use for free. If not then FTP costs are roughly about £20 to £50 per YEAR (all inclusive) for a site that can easily deal with a very large digital signage system.

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Multiple users can control content

It is important to keep track of the fact that what we are doing is moving files and folders full of files. You can easily set up a system to only send 'part' of a screen layout as this simply means only moving some of the files.

This is requires simply defining some tasks that you want to use, for example:-

Task 1 → Send everything to all screens

Task 2 → Send just photos

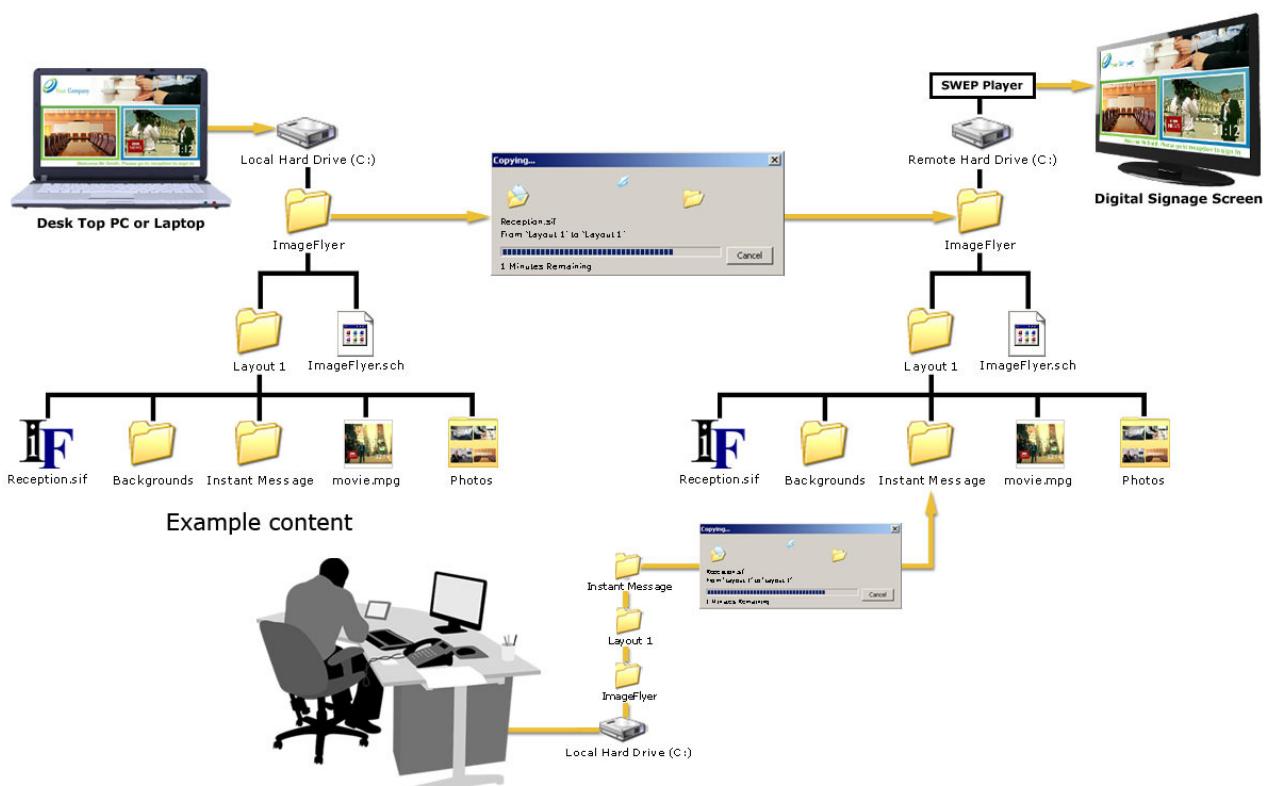
Task 3 → Send just movies

Task 4 → Just update text messages

Task 5 → Send everything but only to the first twenty screens

Task 6 → Send everything to all screens except the local welcome messages

This is common place because it is usually different people's jobs to look after different areas of the screen. The IT department would want to 'send everything' in order to set the system up, marketing would be responsible for the 'brand' and maintain the background images, whilst a receptionist or local branch manager may be responsible for updating local welcome text messages.



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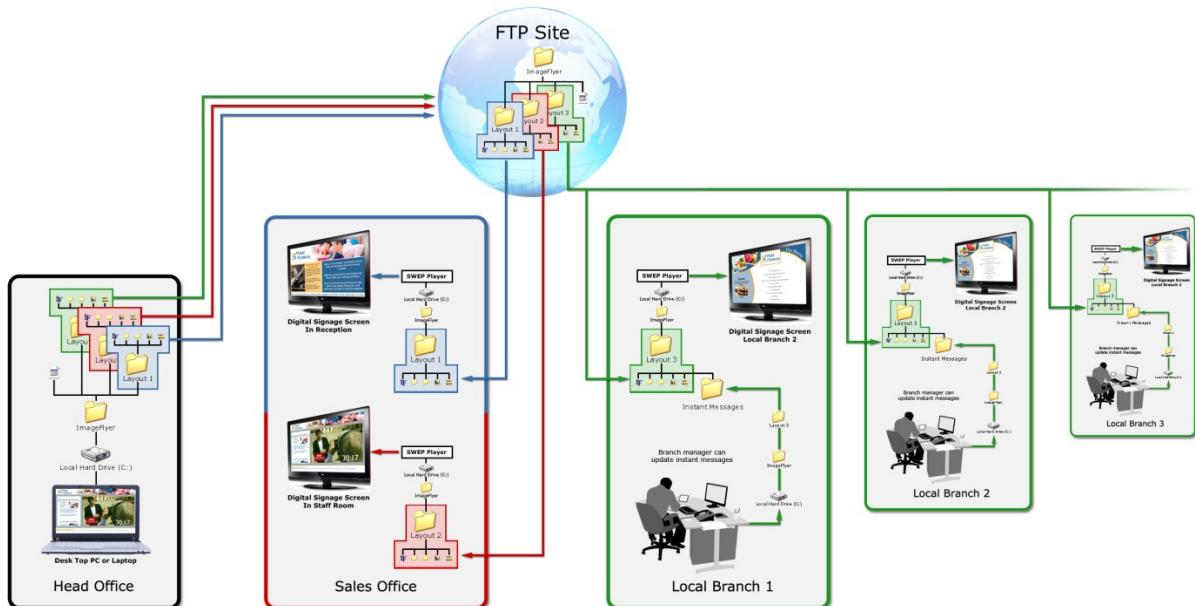
Good design can accommodate any scenario

By keeping in mind that digital signage content management is 'file copying and editing' using whatever IT infrastructure you have available, such as shared folders, LAN, WAN, VPN and FTP sites, a system can be created to suite every user.

The simplest digital signage is nothing more than a large screen connected to the laptop (or desktop PC) used to create the screen layout.



The introduction of shared folders (local or ftp) and some copying tasks means you can create digital signage for local screens, remote screens, 100's of remote screens and let other member of staff change their own areas of the screens. Whether they can change an area on 1 screen or 1 million screens is your choice.



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Setting up a digital signage content system

Sedao Content Manager

Sedao Content Manager achieves all the scenarios described in this document by allowing:-

Unlimited numbers of file **copying tasks**.

Each task is able to

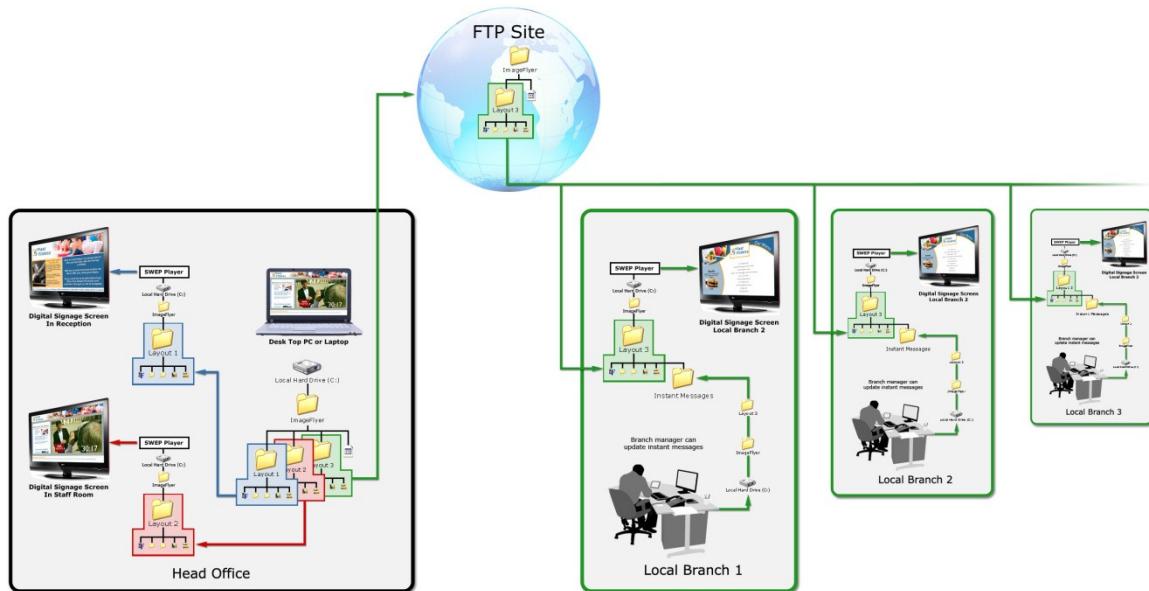
- Specify a windows folder or ftp site for a source directory
- Specify an unlimited number of windows folders or ftp sites for target folders
- Ability to run
 - When needed
 - At specific time of day
 - As soon as changes are detected in the source folders
 - Every 'X' minutes where you can decide the value of X

SWEP Players

Sedao also provide dedicated hardware players called 'SWEP' players (Sedao web enabled players). These have many advantages, in addition to being robust 'designed for task' digital signage players, the key one being that they run local web servers. This means that every player PC in your network can also become a *local digital signage INTRANET site*. SWEP players are best considered as USER content control.

You may understand a phrase like '*to update photos on the reception screen simply put your photos in the shared folder of the S: drive*' but would your receptionist understand it, or be able to do it? If not you can set them up with a login to a SWEP intranet site so that all they need do is log in to a web site (with a user name and password you set) and upload a new photo then log out. They can equally well log in change the 'welcome' or 'emergency' information and log out.

SWEPs become essential if you want non-technical staff to be able to schedule screen layouts or force a screen layout to play immediately. For example you may want your receptionist to be able to schedule the fire alarm test for some time next week.



Simple to Configure - National Retail Example

This example is very powerful yet easy to set up.

An administrator at the company's head office is responsible for delivering content to two screens at the company's head offices. They are also responsible for managing all the content at 1000 high street retail branches.

The administrator sets up three screen layouts on their own PC.

They then set up three Content Manager Tasks

Task 1 → Send local information to two local screens.

Task 2 → Send branch screen layout information to FTP sites

Task 3 (running on all players in all branches) → Fetch branch screen layout information from FTP site to local screen folder

Local branch managers are optionally set up to add images or text in to a local folder or to 'login' to the local screen and change information using SWEP web servers.

The result of this is the company has instantly updated staff messaging at its HQ plus its entire retail branch system has dynamic digital signage with locally entered 'welcome or managers special offers'. All of this meets the company's stringent branding rules, with NO on-going costs for software and removing all costs associated with printing, distributed and hanging posters in branches.

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