



Creating Compelling Content with XPression Graphics

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INTRODUCTION

When we use the term “graphics” in esports, we are not just talking about score bugs, talent fonts, and wipe transitions. From remote broadcasting, where overlays and infographics are on the screen 95% of the time, to studio sets packed and covered with LED screens, graphics create the entire visual aesthetic of the production. How this aesthetic is designed and executed will dictate the feel of the show and drive fan engagement.

Each production needs to tell the story of the game, the players, and the tournament. Staying true to the game and community is a must as fans are truly passionate about the games they play. Delivering accurate score graphics is crucial to the fan experience and key to keeping track of the competitive landscape, especially with games that are difficult to follow.



With the amount of care, thought, and creativity that goes into production design, the user needs a system that allows for maximum flexibility and innovation potential. XPression is a powerful graphics engine that provides end-to-end solutions for designing, building, and controlling the look of any esports production on stream and in-venue.

REAL TIME DATA DRIVEN GRAPHICS – DATALINQ

Sometimes games can be hard to follow, and fans can have difficulty keeping track of scores. Dynamic and data-driven graphics ensure the audience knows who is winning and who is challenging the leader. With XPression and DataLinq, graphics can be updated automatically in real time. This guarantees clarity and context to the viewer and provides the talent with powerful storytelling tools to keep the fans engaged.

Cameron Reed, a veteran esports producer who previously worked with ESL, is now Executive Producer of Esports and Broadcast at SURGE Esports Arena. He tells a great story about what got him hooked on the XPression real-time graphics platform from Ross: “I was directing the H1Z1 Pro League in early 2018. We had 75 players at once in our tournament and our rules dictated that each kill was worth one point – this was designed to ensure that survival was not the only goal (because that would make for boring TV, wouldn’t it?)”

“The game, however, had no way to track the score in this way, and there was no system in place where their developers could accommodate us in time for air,” Reed continues. We therefore asked them for access to their game’s API and used DataLinq. We had a real-time scoreboard on screen the whole game, automatically updated with every API call. I can’t imagine pulling off that show by trying to update those scores manually – it would have been a disaster and most likely would have needed us to tabulate the scores at the end of the game. It would have left me, the director, and more importantly our viewers, totally confused during the match, not knowing who was in the lead.”

This is just one example of how production teams can get deeper into games – by accessing data directly and parsing it to a point where meaningful statistics can make their way into venues on big screens, and on to the produced, streamed output.

DataLinq can connect to a myriad of data sources and present that data to XPression scenes in an easy way. This enables designers to create great-looking graphics that react in real-time to in-game events. Recent versions of XPression can now make dynamic URL queries to RSS/HTTP sources that streamline the access to restful APIs without the need to develop custom parsers. Also, the level of control with an XPression scene is such that actions

can trigger logical transitions and complimentary graphic events that ripple through, creating captivating on-screen effects that react to each other and don't conflict with other graphics or cover the in-game action.

LED CONTROL AND MAPPING - TESSERA

In addition to using on-screen graphics to explain what's happening in the game for viewers watching on a stream, there's often an in-venue experience to consider as well. In esports, there is no physical court or field for the competitors to play on. The game is played in a virtual space. To truly appeal to audiences, creative and innovative set designs are a must. The set design showcases the game and provides a compelling stage and environment for the event to take place.

How the players and gaming stations are brought into the world of the event is very important. LED's are heavily leveraged to create the competitive stage for the players to battle upon. The design and look of these stages determine how effective the event is at delivering an exciting and compelling story to the audience.

Many esports tournaments are played out in front of live crowds, and it's important to engage with them, get them pumped up, create anticipation and build atmosphere, as this is what keeps them coming back for more.

XPression Tessera provides complete control of the content placed on in-venue LED screens and monitors. With XPression controlling both the broadcast content and the in-venue content, the show will be completely cohesive and have seamless branding throughout. This provides opportunities for large scale animations and scene changes that can transform the venue, and guide fans to the focus point of the show. The venue becomes a canvas for creativity and connects the game to the physical world.

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UNIFIED VENUE CONTROL - DASHBOARD

Working on the production line, for an event, is a dynamic and exciting experience. As the shows' creative needs change and become more complex, so do the workflows that make the production possible. Efficiency, and flexibility are areas that production teams are constantly trying to perfect.

Synchronizing all of these operators and devices into a well-oiled machine is a challenge, especially in the live environment, where there are no re-do's, and stakes are high.

With RossTalk and Dashboard, the graphics workflow can be customized to the show's complexity, utilizing multiple products in the broadcast chain without needing multiple operators. You can synchronize combinations of effects and graphics, and control both broadcast graphics and in-venue LED's with one push of a button. This is a powerful tool that enables the user to customize the broadcast workflow to fit the needs of the production.

This customization is very important when covering complex games that require high levels of game knowledge to direct and produce. With Dashboard the in-game experts can take control of graphics that require specific game knowledge to get right. Custom panels can be created for people other than the CG operator to trigger graphics on the broadcast or in-venue without any former training or system knowledge. This flexibility allows for the right workflow to be used without the limitation of traditional broadcast positions.

Each esports show deserves a workflow that empowers the team to do the game justice and impact fans at their core through storytelling. The love for the games and desire to compete will always be the driving forces of the esports industry. The graphics workflow, look, and design, will connect viewers to the game and story of the tournament, and push towards the success of the production.



FOR MORE INFORMATION...



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