

Multi-Site Setup Made Simple(r)

At one time, setting up audio/visual equipment across the remote campuses of Eastlake Community Church throughout suburban Seattle took volunteers hours each Sunday morning.

The volunteers would often arrive at the locations in the early dawn hours to unload 60-inch television monitors from a cargo trailer, carry them into the buildings, install them on stands, and hook them up so worshipers could watch Ryan Meeks, Eastlake's teaching pastor, deliver his weekly message.

Dan Kretz, the church's technical director, speculated it could take volunteers between 30 and 45 minutes to unload and set up each television system. Each location uses multiple televisions, which made setup a time consuming project each week.

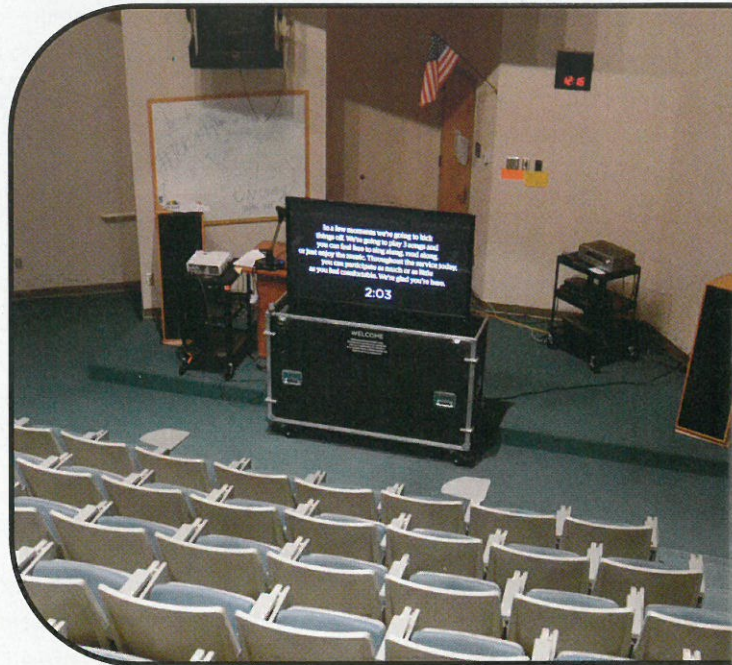
With a small paid staff of only 50 employees serving a congregation of more than 8,000, Kretz said volunteer retention is key. Church leaders began to explore options to increase efficiency and avoid volunteer burnout.

Kretz turned to Jonathan Harkless, president of Anthem AVL, to find ways to reduce the amount of time it took volunteers to set up the church sites each week. After assessing the church's needs, Harkless pointed Kretz and the Eastlake leadership to the EZ-LIFT® system created by Wheeling, IL-based JELCO, Inc.

The company is known for its industry leading audio/visual cases, including the EZ-LIFT, which can house video monitors of various sizes up to 90 inches. Introduced in 2002, the EZ-LIFT system is currently used by various faith, governmental and media organizations across the United States.

"If you're setting up and tearing down a church or setting up and tearing down TVs, you really need to look at this (EZ-LIFT) case," Harkless said. Eastlake originally began with a campus in Kirkland, Washington, but soon expanded to eight separate sites, five of which require setting up and breaking down each week. Each of those five sites relies on about 30 weekly volunteers.

Kretz and the church leadership agreed with Harkless, and in 2012, purchased 20 EL-60 EZ-LIFT hydraulic lift cases to house Sharp 60-inch displays. Since the cases were purchased, Kretz said setup is now a breeze for the volunteers. The televisions are used in various areas in the remote worship sites, including lobbies, children's classrooms and family viewing areas.



With the EZ-LIFT system, "now it only takes a minute or so per television. The volunteer just has to wheel it in place, open the latches and the television comes out ready to use. We pop the lids and we're set. It's much faster than what they were used to," Kretz said.

"The amount of time asked of volunteers has been dramatically reduced," according to Kretz. "At one point volunteers were at the worship locations as early as 6 a.m. to set up the audio/visual equipment before the worship team began its pre-service practice. Now the volunteers can sleep in some and show up about 90 minutes prior to service to set everything up," Kretz remarked.

"We haven't changed the number of volunteers who set up the services, but the EZ-LIFT has allowed us to reduce the amount of time we need. Our entire setup can be completed in about 30 minutes," Kretz stated.

Before employing the EZ-LIFT system, Kretz pointed out that the church's televisions were stored in the original cardboard boxes, and brought out of a storage trailer each week. As could be expected, accidents happened and some televisions were damaged, causing the church to have to pay to repair or replace the equipment. Since adopting the EZ-LIFT, a protective foam lined case, there have been no more incidents of broken monitors.

Harkless added it's essential for a church to bring in someone who understands the church's vision and direction before making a significant purchase like the EZ-LIFT system. While the cost is an investment upfront, according to Kretz, the expense is "well worth it" due to the payoff in reduced time and effort. RPN

Since 1991, JELCO has been designing and manufacturing innovative case solutions for protecting flat screen displays, projectors, whiteboards and other AV gear, www.jelcoinc.com/worship.