

# 5 THINGS TO CONSIDER WHEN CHOOSING A VIDEO DISPLAY

Should you go for the LCD or plasma video display? It depends. Here are a few tips to help you choose.

## **Picture quality**

Plasma displays reproduce color more accurately with deeper blacks and display moving images with remarkable clarity. They provide excellent performance with their high-contrast levels and color saturation, and have the edge when it comes to viewing angles. In fact, plasma screens have as much as 160° viewing angle, whereas LCDs display at 130-140° angles. However, they also carry the risk of image burn-in (the permanent disfiguring of a screen image caused by the continuous display of a high-contrast object).

LCD displays, on the other hand, don't have quite the color accuracy of plasmas, but they're brighter and have a sharpness advantage with a higher number of pixels per square inch. These additional pixels make LCD technology better at displaying static images from computers or VGA sources in full-color detail. Applications with large amounts of data and written material display particular well on LCDs. What's more, there's no risk of image burn-in.

## **Durability**

With LCD screens, there are essentially no parts to wear out. They last as long as their backlights do, with displays lasting, on average, 50,000-75,000 hours. That's why LCD screens are especially good for applications such as digital signage or displays that require around-the-clock use.

Plasma screens, however, use a combination of electric currents and noble gases (argon, neon, and xenon) to

produce a glow, which in turn yields brilliant color. The half-life of these gases, however, is only around 25,000 hours. The glow they produce grows dimmer over time. They're also prone to burn-in or ghosting of images, although this is less of a problem with newer models.

### **Power consumption**

Early plasmas had a very high power consumption; some as high as 5W per square inch. These values are now down in the 0.3-1.0-watt range, depending on screen size. LCDs typically run in the 0.1-0.3-watt per square inch range, and LEDs are even lower. Manufacturers are now required to provide power consumption information, but keep in mind that there are two values for consumption, default and calibrated, so be sure you're comparing like values.

### **Cost: Professional v. consumer**

When selecting a video display, you may find that "professional grade" or "commercial grade" models cost significantly more than televisions you can buy at the local "mega mart." The primary difference is that professional-grade displays are built to stay on 24/7 for weeks and months at a time without breaking down. They may also offer features such as video-wall processors, scheduling options, and lockable control panels not normally found in consumer-grade televisions.

### **Making the choice**

In general, plasma produces a clearer picture with a wider viewing angle and a better response time for fast motion playback, making it a good choice whenever you need a large screen to show a very visually active display, for instance, in applications displaying sports footage or active advertisements.

LCDs are better at displaying detailed, static information. Because LCDs are brighter, they're ideal for venues with lots of ambient light. They're also the best choice for 24/7 applications because of their lower power consumption. For these reasons, LCDs are preferred for professional AV display installations.

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