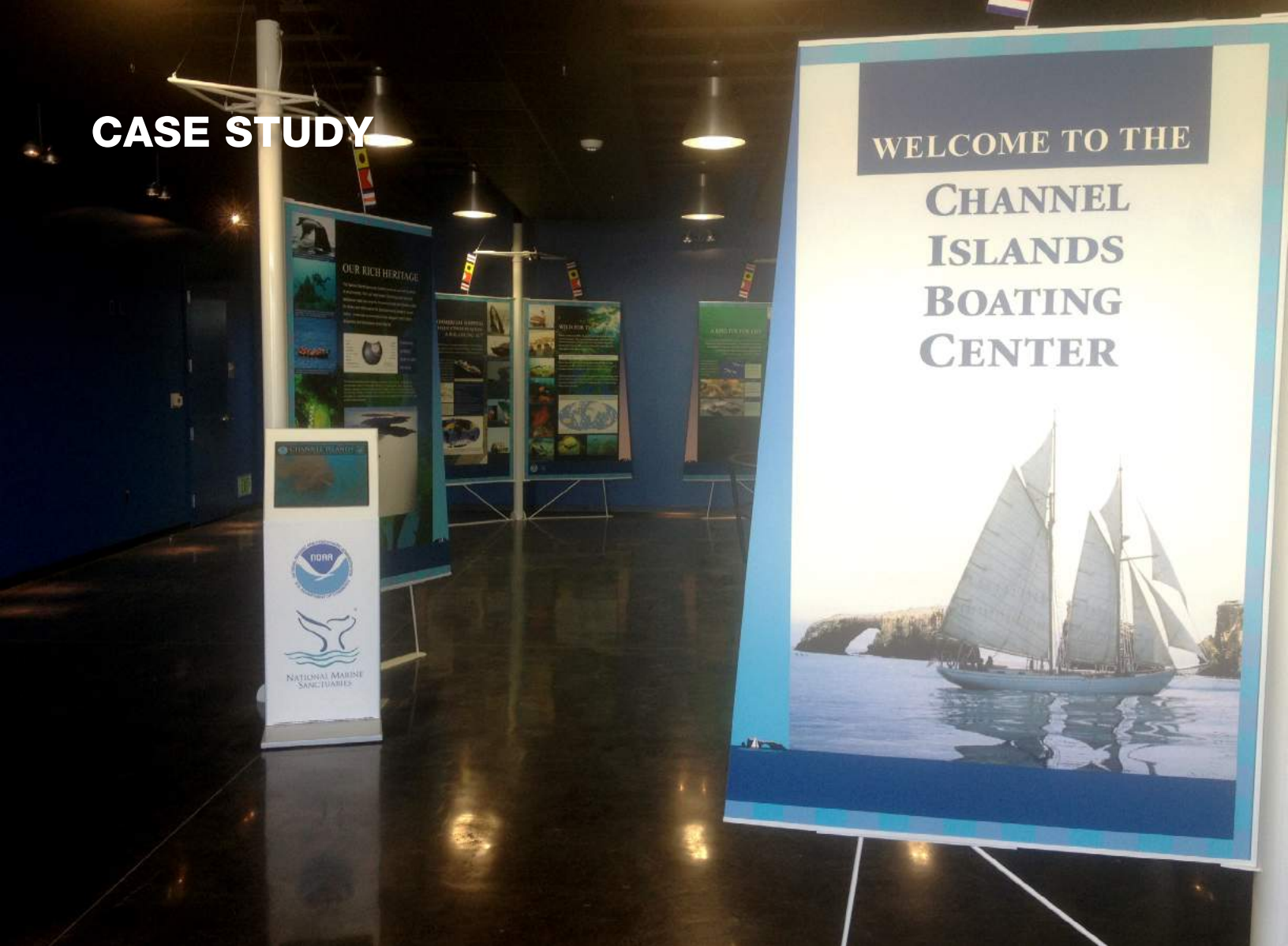


CASE STUDY



Meridian Helps Explore the Wonders of the Deep

Interactive kiosks at National Marine Sanctuary visitor centers are serving to educate and inform the public about these national treasures.

By Richard Slawsky | Contributing writer,
KioskMarketplace.com

DEVELOPED AND PUBLISHED BY:

Kiosk
Marketplace
.com

DIGITAL SIGNAGE
TODAY

SPONSORED BY:

MERIDIAN
CONCEPT TO COMPLETION

Meridian Helps Explore the Wonders of the Deep

Interactive kiosks at National Marine Sanctuary visitor centers are serving to educate and inform the public about these national treasures.

By Richard Slawsky | Contributing writer, KioskMarketplace.com

SPONSORED BY:



The players

As a complete end-to-end self-service innovator, **Meridian** develops products and services all under one roof, providing greater efficiency, and lean, high-quality results. For nearly two decades, they've helped their partners succeed by designing, engineering, manufacturing and integrating hardware and software solutions from their 13-acre headquarters in North Carolina.

The National Oceanic and Atmospheric Administration's **Office of National Marine Sanctuaries** serves as the trustee for a network of underwater parks encompassing more than 600,000 square miles of marine and Great Lakes waters. The network includes a system of 13 national marine sanctuaries and two marine national monuments. The system works with diverse partners and stakeholders to promote responsible, sustainable ocean uses that ensure the health of our most valued underwater places. The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries also leads the National Marine Protected Areas Center, the nation's hub for building innovative partnerships and tools to protect the oceans.

The challenge

A National Marine Sanctuary is a federally designated area in U.S. oceans or Great Lakes waters that spotlights special places in the marine environment, from the site of a Civil War shipwreck to remote coral reefs. For nearly 50 years, national marine sanctuaries have worked to protect those places.

Backed by the National Marine Sanctuaries Act, passed by Congress in 1972, the sanctuaries seek to preserve the extraordinary beauty, biodiversity, historical connections and economic productivity of some of the country's most precious underwater treasures. Each individual sanctuary conducts programs tailored to its specific needs, monitoring issues including natural processes, human influences on water, living resources and maritime archaeological resources within that sanctuary.

But for a sanctuary to be successful, though, it must have the support and involvement of the communities that border and rely on it as well as the support of the nation as a whole. One of the main ways the NOAA Office of National Marine Sanctuaries fosters that support and educates the public on the importance of a National Marine Sanctuary is through visitor centers associated with each location.

In consideration of that tremendous responsibility, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries wanted to use those centers to bring the sanctuaries to life for its visitors. So in 2006, as part of an effort to increase its education and outreach offerings, the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries embarked on a project to deploy interactive touchscreen kiosks in its visitor centers.

The first step in that process was to find a technology partner to help make the project a success.



The solution

After an extensive search of potential vendors, the agency chose Aberdeen, North Carolina-based Meridian to design and supply the kiosks.

“Meridian stood out overall above their competitors’ hardware offerings,” said Amy Cale-Huebner, a contractor who oversees kiosk and exhibit design for the Office of National Marine Sanctuaries. “In addition, their software support is above standard.”

For the project, Meridian supplied its Presenza and RTS kiosks. The ADA-compliant kiosks include content specific to the sanctuary near its location as well information about the sanctuary system. The kiosks also offer real-time weather information from NOAA’s National Weather Service.

The user interface featured on the kiosks is one of the most in-depth and content-rich anywhere.

“The kiosks offer a high-impact visual and auditory showcase of all the treasures the sanctuary has to offer,” said Cale-Huebner. “With the click of a button, users learn about the various activities of the sanctuary; educational and outreach programs, research projects and resource protection programs as well as extensive information about species and habitats.”



The results

The reaction from visitors has been overwhelmingly positive, with statistics showing visitors spend an average 7 minutes each at the kiosk learning about the sanctuaries.

The Office of National Marine Sanctuaries currently has more than 50 interactive kiosks deployed at visitor centers and aquariums around the country reaching more than 300 thousand people a year. In addition, there are more than a dozen kiosks at National Marine Fisheries Service aquariums, museums and science centers that offer ONMS content.

“Maintaining the program’s commitment to outreach and education, the kiosk serves as an interactive collection of knowledge and information,” Cale-Huebner said. “Information is available about all the sanctuaries sites.”

For example, with nearly 200 documented shipwrecks in the waters of the Channel Islands National Marine Sanctuary (CINMS), the kiosks serving that sanctuary include a section where users can read about and watch video from underwater expeditions to those wrecks. The kiosks also include in-depth information about each sanctuary’s unique marine life and environment. Visitors can view interactive maps of the sanctuary as well as 3D animations of the ocean floor.

Local sailors and fishermen can use the kiosks to access up-to-the-minute reports on weather and ocean conditions. Forecasts, wind models, satellite and radar images along with information and even data streamed from weather buoys are all available via links to various Web services.

One of the most popular sections of the kiosk is a content area just for children called “Kids Corner” where children can see and learn about aquatic life in a fun and entertaining way.

The kiosks are remotely monitored 24 hours a day, and Meridian’s software offers the ability to lock down the Web interface, ensuring the kiosk cannot be accidentally or intentionally compromised.



With thousands of visitors to National Marine Sanctuary sites each year, the ONMS kiosk project has proven to be an important part of the agency's education and outreach efforts. Agency staff attribute part of the project's success to its partnership with Meridian.

"Working with Meridian has been terrific," Cale-Huebner said. "They've provided outstanding sales and customer support as well as excellent software and hardware solutions."

About the sponsor:

Meridian is an interactive kiosk manufacturer and software developer supporting the self-service industry. From concept to completion, Meridian specializes in the design, engineering, fabrication, assembly, integration, staging, deployments and support of self-service kiosks. Meridian designs turn-key solutions and specialized custom solutions for clients globally.