

For CCS, it's all about presentation

BY JANINE WEISMAN | Contributing Writer



BIG SCREEN: Bob Mathews, account manager for CCS Presentation Systems New England, stands in front of a large 24-cube video wall within the engineering emerging technologies lab inside the new School of Engineering at Roger Williams University.
PBN PHOTO/KATE WHITNEY LUCEY

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CHRIS GAMST,
CCS Presentation Systems
New England co-founder
and vice president

1



CEO (or equivalent):
Cheryl Gamst, president

2019 Revenue:
\$1.8 million

2017 Revenue:
\$200,000

Revenue growth:
778.9%

WHEN COVID-19-RELATED LOCKDOWNS slowed day-to-day business operations last spring, Bob Mathews ramped up.

The Rhode Island-based account manager for **CCS Presentation Systems New England** went online to beef up his knowledge and understanding of the technical side of top-of-the-line, audio-visual products. All told, he earned more than 30 different certifications that included a prestigious certification as a master technology architect in audio-visual system design and planning from electronics manufacturer Crestron.

Staying up to date with the latest trends is essential to survival in the competitive landscape of the commercial AV integration market. Mathews – who previously spent 20 years with a Massachusetts AV solutions firm – played a key role in CCS’ decision to open a Warwick office last fall.

The Nashua, N.H.-based, independently owned company has a license agreement with CCS Presentations in Scottsdale, Ariz. The firm also has an office in Woburn, Mass., and has exclusive rights to all six New England states.

“We’re a full-integration house, so we buy and install,” said Mathews, who was drawn to CCS for its national reputation and access to a vast network of suppliers. “There’s buying power and that does translate into better pricing for us as salespeople but also offers us a more-vast selection of equipment and hardware.”

CCS serves clients from the education, corporate and government markets. The company provides projectors, LED/LCD displays, audio systems, videoconferencing systems, interactive whiteboards and projectors, accessories, and training and

maintenance services. In addition to Crestron, CCS is also authorized and trained by SMART Technologies, Epson, AMX, Extron and many others.

“We had modest growth previously but it was steady, which is nice. We don’t see that with all industries,” said Vice President Chris Gamst, who co-founded the company with his wife, Cheryl, the company’s president and majority owner, in 1998.

CCS is providing all classrooms in the new East Providence High School with interactive, flat-panel monitors, as well as digital signage and technology for the gymnasium and common spaces.

In 2019, CCS provided upgrade services for a mosaic of giant video-monitor walls and digital signage applications in two buildings at CVS Health Corp.’s Woonsocket headquarters. CCS also installed a 24-cube video wall in the innovation lab at the new School of Engineering at Roger Williams University, as well as integration of AV system technology for classrooms and huddle rooms and digital signage.

Other clients included Amica Mutual Insurance Co., where CCS provided design-and-build services

for new systems at the company’s Lincoln headquarters when office spaces there were converted into training classrooms.

Before the pandemic, the industry was experiencing annual growth between 8% and 10%. It’s now forecast to drop to 6% and 7% for this year, Chris Gamst said. But he remained optimistic about the future, despite school closures and office workers now working from home for an extended time.

“The next several years right through 2024, they’re expecting about a 5%-6% growth each year,” Gamst said. “That’s fantastic.”

Gamst added that CCS avoided layoffs and furloughs during the pandemic. The company acted quickly to successfully apply for a loan from the U.S. Small Business Administration Paycheck Protection Program.

“We’re busy. We’re still busy right now, and hopefully the fall will continue to be busy,” Gamst said.

For the short term, the company’s work has focused on cameras and display systems to facilitate remote learning, especially with hybrid classroom arrangements, Gamst said.

Long term, CCS could potentially transition its leadership to the next generation. Gamst and his wife have two sons, who joined the company after graduating from Southern New Hampshire University with business degrees in the past few years. Christian Gamst, 25, is an account manager and his brother Ryan Gamst, 24, is a rack fabricator working on building and wiring AV systems.

“We’ve told them there’s no pressure on them,” Gamst said. “If they find they don’t like this industry, they can go off and seek out other opportunities. So far they seem to really like it, so that’s an option.” ■