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**Case Study 1:**                    **Richard Parkinson**  
   **Te Anau, New Zealand**

**What age groups you present to?**

From pre school onwards to all ages with the general public

**What are some of the topics you present?**

The traditional introductory astronomy topics of planets, solar systems, milky way, constellations, tides, moon phases, eclipses are always the bread and butter of most requests from schools and also with our nightly summer shows as most adults are surprised by the basics such as planet size comparisons.

There is demand in New Zealand for specific NZ content such as Matariki - Maori new year, Maori constellations and mythology. There is also a large interest in our 'Sky tonight' part of our nightly show about what is unique to see from this latitude (most of our visitors are from the northern hemisphere).

Basic navigation is always a real crowd pleaser too.

There is always interest for one-off shows such as light pollution and space junk to fit in with our conservation week themes that our town runs.

People are also fascinated in how the universe ties into daily life. Our 'Connect to the Cosmos' is always popular in breaking down the 'only Einstein can understand the universe' mentality. Focusing on even simple things like night and day, plants using the sun (a star) to photosynthesise - grow food, comets delivering water, nebula, supernova the list goes on and people love it! It demystifies the universe.

**How long do your lessons typically last?**

For preschoolers, around 45 minutes is enough. Most older primary and all high school students, an hour or so. These times allow 10 - 15 minutes to get in and out of the dome. For our summer shows around 75 - 90 minutes depending on the how interactive the audience is. We do have 'Star loungers' (padded sun loungers) for these so the seating is ultra comfy and we aim it as a higher end product with fewer people.

**Do you do live lessons, play prerecorded content, or a mixture of both?**

Overwhelmingly live - it is what customers want. Pre-recorded has its place but not in my experience with schools or our nightly show - live is what we advertise and the feed back we get is fantastic against other more famous and expensive planetariums around the world playing movie type content. Maybe in a museum type environment where admission is cheap or free and the show just plays on a loop whether it be to 1 person or 100 it would be fine.

**Do you have an inflatable or fixed dome?**

Inflatable. Love it. I have heard time and again how excited people are to see the dome from the outside and the mystery and suspense until they can get inside is a huge part of the overall experience.

At the odd tourism trade show people just HAVE to know what is happening in there. We operate out of rented premises and the dream one day is to get our own bit of dirt. I had always thought I would get a fixed dome setup when this happens - not any more - inflatable has way more impact. Down side is a bit of fan noise and material wear and dirt.

I also reckon the low spring line is very immersive and I am always happily (!) disappointed when I go to a multi million dollar planetarium and feel very 'un immersed'. My stardome is a millionth of the price but offers a heap better experience in the immersive department. Damn straight!

**With your inflatable dome, how far do you travel to present programs?**

Our nightly show is just down the road so no biggie. We travel regularly up to two hours to do daily shows. Up to four hours to do multi day shows, and we are considering the next step, which is a days full driving for five days. Lets see.

**How do your audiences respond to the Digitalium system?**

Our audiences love it. Mainly due to the immersive (see above answer) of the dome and its live presentation. It is just a brilliant experience all round.

**Where did you get the funding for a Digitalium system—for example, operating budget, grant, etc.? How did you explain the benefits of the Digitalium system?**

Self raised own funds and borrowed from the bank and sold one of the kids (joke....).

**Why did you choose a Digitalium system over other digital planetarium systems?**

I flew to the states especially to see the Digitalis and one other major brand. The big thing I noticed was how much brighter the Gamma (which I brought) was over its rival which had a slightly higher resolution. Brand 'X' was like stepping into a cave by comparison and the extra resolution, although slight, was not noticeable

The Gamma was supremely quick and easy to set up. 'X' was confusing, complex and time consuming with a larger footprint in the dome to boot. 'X' also had an airlock on their dome which sounds great but made little difference to the air pressure and just got in the way. It stops you being able to help people in while keeping an eye on whats happening in the dome at the same time - important with school children!

The hand held remote is obscenely easy to use and infinitely better than being tethered to the projector with a laptop, which is a bright distraction for those sitting behind you.

The community feel from Digitalis is genuine and heartfelt. The support from the Digitalis staff is fantastic and highly commendable. This cannot be overstated enough as [technical support] is for the life of the machine, and at no time am I made to feel like and 'old' customer who has outstayed his welcome. Fantastic! You always get an acknowledgement with emails, unlike my experience with the rival brand. Although I am a novice the scripting ability is a huge draw card and the support is there to help you master it.

**Has the Digitalium system met your expectations?**

Yes

**What else do you think potential customers should know about Digitalium systems?**

I think your promotional material says it all.

**Case Study 2:**                    **Steve Blight**  
   **Science Dome**  
   **Bournemouth, UK**

***NOTE: Science Dome became a distributor of Digitalis equipment in late 2008.***

**What age groups you present to?**

Mostly school classes, age 5 to 16, also some pre-school and adult/mixed age audiences.

**What are some of the topics you present?**

We present astronomy, geology, (rocks, fossils, history of the Earth).

**How long do your lessons typically last?**

Classes last for 30-45 minutes for children up to age around 7, and 40-60 minutes for older.

**Do you do live lessons, play prerecorded content, or a mixture of both?**

We mix live presentation, films, and pre-recorded Nightshade scripts in all of our shows. We also sometimes have activities outside the dome.

**Do you have an inflatable or fixed dome?**

With inflatable domes we frequently travel 100 miles or more (try to group shows geographically). We use two 6 metre and two 5 metre diameter domes.

**How do your audiences respond to the Digitalarium system?**

They love it! Feedback is generally extremely good ('best event we've had in our school' etc).

**Where did you get the funding for a Digitalarium system—i.e., grant, operating budget, etc.? How did you explain the benefits of the Digitalarium system?**

Self-funded, initially from windfall money, latterly through operating profits.

**Why did you choose a Digitalarium system over other digital planetarium systems?**

Decided the usability, price, and quality were the best on the market.

**Has the Digitalarium system met your expectations?**

Gamma yes. Alpha 2+ yes, as a budget low-resolution machine. Delta – a mixed experience...

**What else do you think potential customers should know about Digitalarium systems?**

I cannot praise enough the hand-held remote control, and the way it frees us up to 'perform' in front of the audience.

**Case Study 3:**

**Lisa Gonzales**  
**University of Texas, Pan-American**  
**Edinburg, TX USA**

**What age groups do you present to?**

While we offer presentations to all age groups, 60% of our average 48,000/year attendance is children in grades pre-kindergarten through 5<sup>th</sup>.

**What are some of the topics you present?**

Depending on teacher requests and the grade level, using the Digitalium system we discuss topics on the phases of the moon, the history of a telescope, the constellations including Greek mythology, the solar system, the life cycle of a star, and deep space objects. We also have non astronomy full dome videos called "The Body Code" and "Dinosaur Prophecy".

**How long do your lessons typically last?**

Normally our presentations are 1 hour but they can be as short as 5-15 minutes.

**Do you do live lessons, play prerecorded content, or a mixture of both?**

Our presentations are a mixture of both live night sky presentations by undergrad and graduate students and prerecorded full dome videos that support the topics discussed. We also have prerecorded Nightshade scripts that we use for teaching purposes in our Astronomy labs at UTPA.

**Do you have an inflatable or fixed dome?**

We have both an inflatable dome that we travel with and a fixed dome here on our campus at UTPA.

**If you have an inflatable, how far do you travel to present programs?**

The furthest we have traveled is 65 miles north to Falfurrias, TX, 20 miles south to Hidalgo, TX, 79 miles east to South Padre Island, TX, and 106 miles west to Zapata, TX.

**If you have a fixed dome, what is the diameter and how many people does it seat?**

On campus we have a 20 foot diameter dome that seats 40 adults.

**How do your audiences respond to the Digitalium system?**

The feedback we have received from visitors to the on-campus site has been very positive, as has the response from both students and teachers who have been introduced to the portable planetarium.

**Where did you get the funding for a Digitalium system—i.e., grant, operating budget, etc.? How did you explain the benefits of the Digitalium system?**

Initially we were able to purchase the Digitalium equipment and staff our Planetarium with financial help from the Department of Physics and Geology and The University of Texas-Pan American.

As our attendance and demand grew, we received our own budget from UTPA to continue running the physical and portable Planetarium, making ourselves available not only to school districts but the public as well. Since we do not charge admission, with

UTPA's investment they are effectively helping to address our national crisis in science, technology, engineering and mathematics (STEM) by keeping students interested and enthusiastic about STEM.

At the same time, as more students enter into STEM at the University level in our region, it is changing the socio-economic condition here in the South Texas Rio Grande Valley and Northeast Mexico Region because those STEM graduates will be attracting more technology companies to our region. Also, our department chair Dr. Steven Tidrow believes that the Planetarium is currently a big part of the reason for the significant growth in the number of students taking courses within the Department of Physics and Geology.

Since October 2008 we have traveled to 139 schools. Normally we have only been able to take the portable out once a week. However, this semester (Spring 2011) we have been able to travel twice a week due to some gift funding we received. Just this semester (January - May 2011) we visited 48 schools. Usually we travel to approximately 44 schools per academic year.

#### Our Attendance

Total: 127,978 through July, 2011 (digital enhancements were installed 27 March, 2008)

Largest 1-year period: 48,752 (1 June, 2010 to 31 May, 2011)

Single largest month: 11,053 (May 2011)

Single largest day (portable): 1639 October 3, 2009 (HESTEC)

Single largest school day (portable): 925 on April 17, 2009 (Reed Mock Elementary)

#### **Why did you choose a Digitalarium system over other digital planetarium systems?**

Ease of operation.

#### **Has the Digitalarium system met your expectations?**

Yes, it is a wonderful educational support tool that is also entertaining. We have a Digitalarium Epsilon portable system that we keep in a fixed location. We also have a 7 meter Digitalis Portable Planetarium that we take to schools with our portable Digitalarium Gamma system.

#### **What else do you think potential customers should know about Digitalarium systems?**

It is very easy to learn how to use the software. The system is so versatile you can educate and entertain people of all ages with live and prerecorded presentations. We have even held power point presentations using the adapter on the projector. Since there are a wide range of full dome videos available to purchase, you can broaden your topics outside of Astronomy to Geology and Biology and many more.