

F R O S T & S U L L I V A N

# 2024 CUSTOMER VALUE LEADER

*IN THE GLOBAL AV  
SERVICES AND  
MANAGEMENT  
INDUSTRY*



F R O S T & S U L L I V A N

BEST  
2024 PRACTICES  
AWARD

## Best Practices Criteria for World-Class Performance

Frost & Sullivan applies a rigorous analytical process to evaluate multiple nominees for each award category before determining the final award recipient. The process involves a detailed evaluation of best practices criteria across two dimensions for each nominated company. Useful excels in many of the criteria in the Aggregated AV Management space.

AWARD CRITERIA	
<i>Strategy Innovation</i>	<i>Customer Impact</i>
Strategy Effectiveness	Price/Performance Value
Strategy Execution	Customer Purchase Experience
Competitive Differentiation	Customer Ownership Experience
Executive Team Alignment	Customer Service Experience
Stakeholder Integration	Brand Equity

### *Strategy Effectiveness*

Enterprise and public sector organizations continue to implement and expand deployments of ever-more advanced information and communications technologies (ICT) in their environments. Prominent among these are investments in a myriad of audio-video (AV) solutions that address diverse use cases, including operations and control centers, video security and traffic monitoring, video walls and digital signage, data dashboards, mass notification systems, conference, and board room collaboration.

As the range of solutions continues to expand and as capabilities advance, the complexity of monitoring and managing a growing range of AV solutions is compounding exponentially. At the heart of this complexity is the tendency to purchase, deploy, and maintain AV solutions as discrete hardware-based point-to-point products. As a direct result of this approach, buyers continue to endure organizational inefficiencies and the burden on their IT support teams becomes untenable.

Owing to enhanced flexibility and extensibility capabilities that aim to overcome the limitations of legacy infrastructure, many of today's popular technology solutions have evolved into integrated software-based architectures. In recognition of persisting pain points in the enterprise AV industry, AV as a service provider Useful is delivering solutions that empower IT decision makers and support teams to think differently about their environments and to expect more from their investments.

The Useful Infinity Platform allows enterprises to deploy a wide range of AV solutions in an integrated fashion for monitoring and manageability from a single pane of glass. With Infinity, Useful employs a software-defined approach that leverages standardized IT infrastructure, protocols, and software

intelligence at a time when much of the industry continues to rely on self-limiting proprietary hardware. In its design, Infinity facilitates managed distribution of AV over existing enterprise network infrastructure, the ability to scale without the rigidity of proprietary hardware and wholly eliminates requirements to buy proprietary hardware for mission-critical AV systems.

### ***Strategy Execution and Competitive Differentiation***

Userful's strategy utilizes best practices to support consistent and efficient processes. Each prospective Userful customer has an understood use case or pain point to address. Often the lead use case or pain point is the distribution of AV to operations or control centers, which are high profile and mission critical in key operational processes. The Userful philosophy is to consult customer decision makers to think more holistically to consider the various AV solutions they have currently deployed or may deploy in the future, rather than limiting the conversation to a set of narrow pain points.

The Infinity architecture enables Userful to position the solution as a platform that can address immediate needs and sets the foundation to more seamlessly and cost effectively address future AV solution investments. The server-based Infinity design allows this through support for more than enough capacity available upon the initial deployment to satisfy today's needs as well as accommodate additional future AV applications —without the need to buy additional hardware.

Userful's approach of deploying AV applications over IP with aggregated control and management puts customers on a path to integrating previously disaggregated AV applications at their own pace. Whether supporting two AV applications or six, customers benefit from a single solution for monitoring and management across applications, and moving their AV stack to a modern all-in-one design that provides greater control and efficiencies across single or multi-site enterprise environments. It is a significant departure from yesterday's cumbersome monolithic, and siloed approach.

Userful also demonstrates substantially unique competitive advantages over alternative solutions. The Infinity platform includes a complete suite of integrated AV applications to support any type of AV service, such as future applications to stream immersive images to frontliners, clinicians or engineers. Today, Infinity already serves as a unified platform to deliver any content source onto any screen in any location globally. Perhaps more importantly, it delivers a single pane of glass to monitor performance and administer various image and data content displayed anywhere, such a digital signage and data dashboard schedules, customization of content for each location and display, and insights into collaboration meeting room utilization and metrics.

### ***Stakeholder Integration***

Userful's strategy reflects the needs or circumstances of all customer stakeholders that either have identified AV technology use cases or are involved in AV technology purchase decisions. Whereas point solutions have distinct users and buyers, Userful's capabilities compel customers to develop a comprehensive view of their AV needs across their organization, thereby achieving scale, cost, performance, and support advantages.

In contrast to point solutions, Userful's integrated portfolio can address all the following use cases and stakeholders:

- Security Operations Centers (SOC) for enterprise cyber and physical security, compliance, and facilities teams
- Network Operations Centers (NOC) for IT and compliance teams
- Digital signage for corporate communications, sales, marketing, and facilities teams
- Data dashboards for executives, sales, marketing, contact centers and lines of business (finance, engineering, production lines, logistics, etc.)
- Collaboration meeting, board and war rooms for business leaders, IT/AV support teams, and facilities staff
- Mass notifications for human resources, security, corporate communications, and facilities personnel

Because CIOs are instrumental in enterprise-wide technology roadmaps, Useful is particularly appealing to their responsibilities. Deploying Useful solutions rapidly delivers integrated manageability across AV applications that offer technology teams greater control over their global environments and a robust, reliable framework to leverage in future investments.

### *Customer Purchase Experience*

In today's macro-economic and social conditions, enterprises must prioritize flexibility and agility in their investments that minimize the impact of potentially abrupt and disruptive changes in the economy, supply chains, business models or end-customer preferences. Accordingly, Useful helps customers to break from the mindset of point-product purchases based on inflexible hardware.

Hardware-dependent legacy AV solutions brought with them a complex and often cumbersome purchasing and licensing structure that created points of friction and slowed customer innovation. Instead, Useful has appropriately implemented straightforward licensing that fosters easy adoption of software—customers receive the entire platform with a single license entitlement for the server with all applications included. In times of expansion or when adding more services, customers simply need to purchase more software licenses to manage and monitor the additionally activated CPU cores and cards, a model they are accustomed to from recent trends in the broader IT domain. The model is well designed for enterprises buyers with the foresight to purchase higher performance servers that can accommodate their future needs more efficiently and less expensively.

In its sales motion, Useful requires a one-time server hardware purchase, with customers free to source the hardware with appropriate specifications from their preferred providers, which lets customers seize opportunities to get the best price and leverage existing support agreements. The recurring Useful software licensing is typically standardized on three-year terms, which eliminates the complexities of managing licenses from multiple vendors, streamlines support and increases provider accountability. Customers can select from multiple tiers of support, including standard 48-hour SLAs, enhanced and premium support, to right-fit to their needs when augmenting their in-house resources. White glove and assisted installation services are also available should customers encounter unexpected issues in their initial deployments.

### ***Customer Ownership Experience***

As an all-in-one software-based platform, Infinity untethers support staff from the traditional AV limitations of performing on-site administration. All applications are accessible from a web-based interface for centralized management and moves, adds, and changes across sites and networked displays in the enterprise environment. Additionally, customers have greater control and flexibility in how applications are deployed and updated. Certain applications can be implemented on the premises-based Infinity server and integrated with third-party cloud services (e.g., data sources, AI, and other applications) and IoT devices using the Useful API tool to vastly expand the platform's capabilities.

Digital signage and mass notification applications are native to the Useful platform and come included with the server platform licensing. The net-effect is a lower overall cost and streamlined support for customers leveraging these capabilities rather than relying on third parties for these applications.

Userful develops four software releases per year, which are driven primarily by customer input and ideation. The updates are included in Infinity server licenses and customers can schedule their updates to be performed at times (such as nights or weekends) to further reduce any potential disruption.

Infinity sales are primarily through channel partners that take a consultative approach and can co-sell with Useful when circumstances warrant. The channel-led sales strategy enables customers to work with partners of their choice, such as those that know their industry and use cases, or have specific AV applications expertise, which helps customers to tailor solutions leveraging the flexibility and customization capabilities embedded in Useful technology. The use of partner-led channels also has the effect of broadening the support network available to customers to a global reach.

## **Conclusion**

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In certain respects, the AV industry has lagged behind other information and communications segments in terms of integration and flexibility. Useful is breaking that mold with its all-in-one Infinity architecture's software-centric design that untethers AV applications from the limitation of proprietary hardware. Useful earns Frost & Sullivan's 2024 Global Competitive Strategy Leadership Award for its strong overall performance in the aggregated AV management market.

## What You Need to Know about the Competitive Strategy Leadership Recognition

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Frost & Sullivan's Competitive Strategy Leadership Award recognizes the company with a stand-out approach to achieving top-line growth and a superior customer experience.

### Best Practices Award Analysis

For the Competitive Strategy Leadership Award, Frost & Sullivan analysts independently evaluated the criteria listed below.

#### *Strategy Innovation*

**Strategy Effectiveness:** Effective strategy balances short-term performance needs with long-term aspirations and overall company vision

**Strategy Execution:** Company strategy utilizes Best Practices to support consistent and efficient processes

**Competitive Differentiation:** Solutions or products articulate and display unique competitive advantages

**Executive Team Alignment:** Executive team focuses on staying ahead of key competitors via a unified execution of its organization's mission, vision, and strategy

**Stakeholder Integration:** Company strategy reflects the needs or circumstances of all industry stakeholders, including competitors, customers, investors, and employees

#### *Customer Impact*

**Price/Performance Value:** Products or services provide the best value for the price compared to similar market offerings

**Customer Purchase Experience:** Quality of the purchase experience assures customers that they are buying the optimal solution for addressing their unique needs and constraints

**Customer Ownership Experience:** Customers proudly own the company's product or service and have a positive experience throughout the life of the product or service

**Customer Service Experience:** Customer service is accessible, fast, stress-free, and high quality

**Brand Equity:** Customers perceive the brand positively and exhibit high brand loyalty

