

## EVOLUTION

# Any Game, Any Time in Big Sky

Transforming Billings into a sports desitination.



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Billings, Montana is one of the best places to start a business or raise a family in the Unites States, with a steadily growing economy, a breathtaking setting in Big Sky's Yellowstone Valley, and a relatively low cost of living. One thing it doesn't have, however, is a professional sports team.

Make no mistake: the sports fans of Billings have plenty to cheer about. The nearest NFL, NBA, NHL or MLB team may be 550 miles away in Denver, but Billingsites come out in force for local college sports, minor league baseball, rodeo, and high school football. When people talk about "the big game" in Billings, they're just as likely to be talking about Billings Senior High School versus Billings West High School as the Superbowl.

This local passion represents both an opportunity and a challenge for business owners hoping to cater to Billings sports fans. The community is hungry to come together and support their hometown heroes, but bar and restaurant operators can't stream some of the most important games of the year on NFL Sunday Ticket. In 2019, The DEN Sports Bar and Ale House rose to that challenge and started a trends of AV over IP retrofit that swept across the Yellowstone Valley.

“For The DEN, we were charged with creating an outstanding video system, but also with keeping the overall system design as streamlined as possible. Margins are razor-thin in the restaurant industry, and every bell and whistle you add to the system amplifies cost. For The DEN, we worked with the client to deliver a radically simple system design that still delivers an experience every other bar in town wants to copy.”

Robert Mason, Founder of InifiniTech

### Building a Local Sports Destination

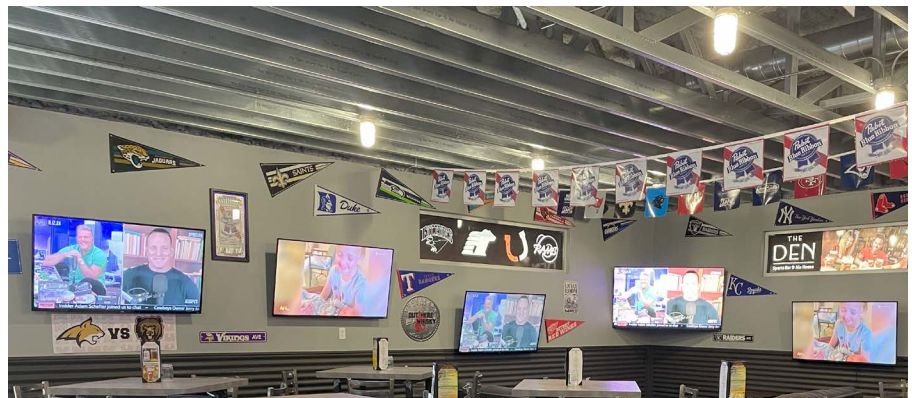
Terra Pierce, owner of The DEN, wanted to build the best sports bar in town – somewhere people could come together to watch any sport, any time, from any team. In Billings, that requires the ability to show anything from nationally broadcast professional games; to local cable coverage of the Montana State University Bobcats or the University of Montana Grizzlies; to a live stream of the latest wrestling match on the Skyview High School website.

The DEN wasn't Pierce's first rodeo – she knew from past experience owning multiple sports bars in Billings that offering all these options requires constant juggling of screens and sources. She turned to a trusted technology partner to accomplish her vision: local integration firm InifiniTech.

InifiniTech has provided commercial and residential AV integration services to clients across the Yellowstone Valley since 2016. Founder Robert Mason started his career in the casino industry, managing entertainment equipment before expanding into jukeboxes, sound systems, and ultimately holistic audiovisual communication, entertainment, and control solutions. Mason and Pierce had worked together on streaming jukebox integrations and audio system upgrades for Pierce's other properties, so Pierce knew InifiniTech would be up to the challenge.

### A Simple Solution with Room to Grow

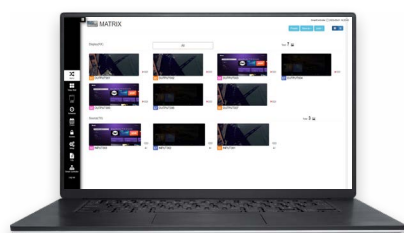
The DEN's main bar area has 19 displays, each with independent control. Every display needs to be able to instantly switch to any source, including one of 11 DirectTV set top boxes, local cable, a live video feed from The DEN's outdoor music performances, and a laptop for streaming coverage of high school games.



InifiniTech determined early on that an AVoIP approach was the best way to manage this diverse mix of displays and sources. “In my career, I've seen casinos manage 25 TVs with a literal shoe rack of remote controls,” says Mason. “We weren't going to let that happen at The DEN. I knew we needed a



[EVO-IP](#) AV Over IP Solution



[EVO-IP's built-in user interface](#) allows Pierce and her team to switch sources on any display easily, from any network-connected device.

video matrix, but no standard matrix switch could handle a system of this size: An IP matrix was clearly the way to go.”

Mason selected the Evolution by Vanco EVO-IP HDMI over IP solution as the backbone of the new video distribution system. EVO-IP can manage, transmit and receive AV sources from hundreds of devices using standard network infrastructure. It delivers 4K@60Hz video with 4:4:4 sampling, HDR, audio, and control.

The DEN's system includes 12 EVO-IP transmitters and 25 receivers, connected via a Luxul 48 port switch. A Ubiquiti UniFi Dream Machine (UDN) serves as an all-in-one networking device for The DEN; InfiniTech configured a dedicated VLAN for the EVO-IP system. They also used an array of Vanco HDMI cables, patch panels, rack shelves, and HDBaseT extenders. “I admit, it's nice to be able to go to my Vanco distributor for just about anything,” says Mason. “They have all the little hardware pieces we need for a hospitality project like this.”

The DEN's staff can use the EVO-IP's built-in scheduling tool to automatically switch displays to the right feed in time for kick-off. EVO-IP also has built-in digital signage content management support, allowing users to overlay text, images, and logos over any display, or automatically cycle through multiple sources or an album of images or logos. InfiniTech can remotely monitor The DEN's systems via the web, iOS or Android control apps, receiving automated notifications of any issue and rebooting the system remotely if needed.

“I invested the project resources into one system that I could manage natively and directly,” says Mason. “There's no control system layer in this project: all the employees run the video system using an Android tablet with the EVO-IP control app.”

### **An AVoIP Boom Town**

The flexibility and scalability of EVO-IP made it an ideal choice to futureproof The DEN. An EVO-IP system can expand easily, incorporating over 1,000 transmitters and receivers. That capability came in handy as the system expanded to encompass four TVs in The DEN's casino area, as well as the displays in a café space that was converted into an event venue. If The DEN ever adds a videowall, InfiniTech will be ready: EVO-IP supports up to a 5X5 configuration.

“EVO-IP's scalability is a killer feature,” says Mason. “I was able to give the client what they wanted very simply – and when they wanted to expand, it was easy to say ‘yes.’”

The DEN was the start of a series of Infinitech AVoIP projects for venues across Billings. Mason and his team now manage six EVO-IP systems, ranging from streamlined systems like the one at The DEN to sophisticated integrated systems with third-party control. “People saw what we accomplished for The Den and came to me asking how they could do the same. Every bar in Billings wants to be able to offer their patrons the games that matter most to them,” says Mason.



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As the Billings economy grows, InifiniTech is eager to bring their AVoIP expertise to more vertical markets. “So many offices, hotels, and other venues would benefit tremendously from modernizing their visual communications they way the Billings restaurant industry has,” says Mason. “Many businesses are still relying on the sneakernet to update their displays and signage – which is exhausting to manage, update, and troubleshoot. With a modern AVoIP system, we can help them create better guest experiences that are far easier to manage.”

Like Billings itself, InifiniTech poised for growth and suffused with local pride. This three-man shop is ready to scale, bringing modern video management to businesses of all kinds across Big Sky country.

**To learn more about InfiniTech, visit [infinitechmt.com](http://infinitechmt.com). Explore the Vanco EVO-IP solution at [vanco1.com](http://vanco1.com).**