

How to reinvent the Campus Store: The Benefits of Digital Signage



This paper reviews the imperative to reinvent campus stores, the benefits of digital over paper signage, and some of the most beneficial ways in which digital signs can be used in campus stores.

— Gene Ornstead, 11/03/16

Introduction

Infinitely adaptable and highly engaging, digital signage offers significant advantages over printed signs. As new technologies and declining prices continue to fuel demand, digital signs are becoming more present throughout our public spaces. Retail stores represent the largest usage of digital signage by any industry,¹ and no wonder. Stores that employ digital signage experience a host of benefits, from increased foot traffic and sales to more satisfied, loyal customers. As campus stores struggle to remain relevant in a time of declining textbook revenues, many are adopting a more focused retail marketing approach. The deployment of digital signage can be an important component of this transition.

Redefining the Campus Store

In 2010 the National Association of College Stores (NACS) launched an initiative encouraging its members to reinvent themselves to recapture and retain relevancy among their student shoppers.² In campus stores across the US, textbook sales and foot traffic were down, in large part due to the federal Higher Education Opportunity and Affordability Act of 2008, which mandated that college bookstores distribute lists of required books and their ISBN numbers during registration, opening the door for students to purchase elsewhere.

To address textbook sales challenges, the NACS recommended that stores make traditional textbooks available in multiple forms, from e-books to rentals. To position stores for future growth, the organization recommended a host of aggressive, retail-minded strategies. This included getting student input into products and adding new feature areas like grocery goods, cafes, and gathering areas to encourage return business after the start-of-term textbook rush subsided. In response to these recommendations many campus stores have begun to expand their product mix to include items like technology peripherals, nutritional supplements, non-logoed fashion, and values-based items such as those that give a portion of profits to a cause. Others have formed partnerships with large retailers like Bed Bath and Beyond. Others have added cafes and seating areas to encourage students to spend more time in store. In the application of all strategies the emphasis is on being youthful, hip and relevant to the 18- 24 aged student shopper.³ Campus store managers are counting on this shift to a retail management mindset to revitalize their stores.

“Today, it’s much more important to focus on true retail management,” stated Jackie Middleton, associate vice president for facilities and auxiliaries at The College of Wooster, in an article published on universitybusiness.com. “We needed to grow retail sales to make up for the shortfall by selling what we’ve never sold before.”⁴

Now widely used by successful retailers, digital signage can be an important tool to help campus stores increase sales and relevancy.

The Impact of Digital Signs

Digital signage delivers a world of benefits not possible with paper. Not only can digital signage deliver significant savings over the long run (along with immeasurable intangible value), once deployed it's considerably easier than printed material to update and maintain. Along with these core benefits, digital signage offers retail businesses a host of advantages that include:

- Cost savings
- Greater control
- Message flexibility
- Greater viewer engagement
- Audience relevancy
- Reduced environmental impact

Reduced Costs

Over time, digital signs deliver a greater return on investment (ROI) than print signs. Although the up-front purchase cost is higher than with print, digital signs eliminate the ongoing repeat costs of printing, distributing, and installing print signage. This can quickly impact the bottom line for applications that require frequent reproduction of multiple and/or large printed signs. Novartis Pharmaceuticals, for example, cut costs by a whopping 90% when the company installed a digital corporate communications system in 15 buildings across its 200-acre campus.⁵ Benefits can be equally significant over time for less frequently updated signs as well.

"Novartis Pharmaceuticals, for example, cut costs by a whopping 90% when the company installed a digital corporate communications system in 15 buildings across its 200-acre campus."

Greater Control

With printed signage, stores must rely on their print supplier to reproduce and deliver the signs; with digital signage, stores gain complete internally-managed control over the creation, delivery and timing of messages. This eliminates the headaches and costs related to printing delays and enables faster delivery of time-sensitive promotions and other messaging. Digital signage with integrated content management features, such as ViewSonic's Signage Manager Express, make it easy for anyone with basic computer skills to create, schedule and manage content from a PC or laptop.

Flexibility & Real-time Updates

Going digital delivers the immeasurable value of infinitely adaptable messaging. By contrast, once a printed message is displayed it remains static and unchangeable for the duration of that sign, poster or banner's lifespan.

The dynamic nature of digital signs opens up a world of possibility, with the ability to swap out messages based on anticipated audience, season and time of day or to best support current objectives.

Viewer Engagement

Delivering a message by making it visible to your audience in no way guarantees that it is actually being received, read, and comprehended. Purveyors of print signs tend to talk about capturing attention; the digital signage industry expands upon this concept, focusing instead on viewer engagement – the idea that not only does an audience notice a message, they become involved in it as well. Engaging signage draws viewers in, capturing their interest at a deeper level that ideally results in emotional involvement, greater awareness and increased sales. Digital signage, with its ability to offer up a changing array of relevant messaging, entertaining content, compelling multimedia, and eye-catching images, is both more noticeable and more engaging than static signs. Interactive touchscreen digital kiosks and signs invite true interaction, exponentially boosting their engagement quotient.

"Digital signage, with its ability to offer up a changing array of relevant messaging, entertaining content, compelling multimedia, and eye-catching images, is both more noticeable and more engaging than static signs."

Audience Relevancy

Steeped in a culture dominated by smartphones and social media, today's retail shoppers expect quick, easy access to information. This primes them to notice and respond to interactive screens and digitally displayed information. Retailers representing every category are responding by deploying digital solutions throughout their stores. With 86% smartphone ownership among 18 to 29 year olds,⁶ the college demographic is an ideal audience for digitally conveyed messages.

Reduced Environmental Impact

Less immediately relevant to store profits but vital to the sustainability of our planet, digital signage is distinguished over print by its eco-friendly profile. Replacing printed signage with digital eliminates the waste, energy, water, ink and solvents needed to produce, transport and dispose of print signage. Energy-saving LED backlit technology further reduces signage's carbon footprint compared to other types of displays.

Retail-specific Results

The increasing use of digital signage in retail stores has inspired numerous studies to assess the ways in which it impacts consumer behavior. Not surprisingly, the results consistently demonstrate the ability of digital signage to increase sales, boost customer satisfaction and improve loyalty.

A snapshot of key findings^{7,8} indicates that:

- **Digital signage brings customers into stores.** Eight out of ten retail customers have entered a store because a sign caught their interest with one retailer noting a 24% increase in footfall after implementing digital signage.
- **Digital signs increase sales of promoted products.** 80% of brands experienced increases of up to 33% in additional sales through the use of digital signage when using appeals towards pleasurable impulse buys.
- **Featuring products on digital signs improves sales of related items.** One study showed that when one product is featured, the family of brands experienced a significant halo effect of nearly 7x while the overall category experienced an increase of 11x more than the featured product.
- **Point-of-sale digital signage reduces perceived checkout wait times.** One study revealed that customers perceived their wait times to be as much as 35% shorter when standing in a line with digital POS signs, creating an improved customer experience and added store loyalty.
- **POS digital signage has also been shown to increase brand awareness.** A 2010 Nielsen study found that compared to other methods of POS advertising, digital signs had a much greater effect on brand awareness – a 31% increase in brand awareness/recall when asked about specific brands and a 14% increase in unprompted awareness.
- **Digital POS drives sales and grabs greater attention than static signs.** The same Nielsen study found that around three-quarters of customers surveyed noticed the POS displays, which was 23% higher than the average found in studies of other POS advertising methods. Significantly, four out of the five brands studied experienced increased sales with the introduction of digital POS advertising, with gains as high as 30%.
- **Digital signage increases sales of targeted items.** In a study comparing the effects of print vs. digital signage the items advertised on digital signs experienced, on average, a 49% increase in sales compared to control period with no advertising. Items advertised with static signs experienced only a 15% sales lift compared to the control period.

- **Customers spend more time in stores with digital signage.** One study found that installing digital signage in stores encouraged customers to spend up to 30% more time browsing.

Integrating Digital Signage into the Campus Store

Every day retailers discover new ways to incorporate and leverage digital signs in their unique environments. As campus stores continue to reinvent themselves for greater appeal to their young, technology-savvy consumers, new uses for digital signs will undoubtedly emerge. Among the top uses of digital signage in campus stores today are:

- Digital kiosks
- Point-of-sale
- Welcoming/brand building
- Back room/employee communications
- Revenue generation/ad sales

Digital Kiosks

Free-standing or wall-mounted kiosks can be deployed to serve a variety of sales- and loyalty-boosting purposes. ViewSonic models are offered as easy to implement all-in-one solutions that include integrated media players, easy-to-use content design and management software, and necessary mountings along with the display. Whether primarily informational or highly interactive, kiosks enable stores to enhance customer service and satisfaction as well as potentially reduce staffing costs.

- **Wayfinding** – Kiosks featuring information on store departments and product lines can help your student customers find what they're looking for while sparking interest in new or featured items.
- **Virtual sales clerk** – Interactive kiosks let students drill down to information on the most common product and/or store questions. More robust systems can provide access to a store's complete inventory and enable real-time order processing, enabling stores to reduce on-hand inventory.
- **Bill pay** – Kiosks with bill-payment capabilities provide customers with a fast and efficient check-out process.
- **Customer loyalty** – Any number of programs can be developed to groom frequent customers, including offering points, prizes, coupons and other rewards to create brand and store loyalty for increased revenue and reliable repeat business.

- **Surveys** – Interactive kiosks provide an easy, adaptable resource for gaining insight into your customers, helping you to better cater to their needs as well as to create more targeted content and promotions.
- **Gift registry** – Often used for bridal and baby registries, kiosks can be adapted for campus stores to offer registries (often tied to the store website) for graduation gifts, Greek life giving, care packages and more.
- **Staff management/Hiring** – Prospective employees can apply for job openings and electronically sign employment documents with a secure hiring kiosk, reducing paperwork and protecting the privacy of their information. Existing staff members can use kiosks to update their address or other personal details, request days off, and check benefits information.⁹

Point-of-Sale Signage

The critical point at which all the elements of a sale – the consumer, product and money – converge, point of purchase communications have the unique potential to influence customer behavior. As noted above, digital signage deployed at the point of purchase can produce powerful results. Deploying signage to achieve these benefits can be simple with small-scale all-in-one screens like the ViewSonic EP1042T 10.1" all-in-one interactive digital ePoster with integrated content management software, one-wire Power over Ethernet installation, 10-point multi-touch interactive touch and easy LAN control. By rotating call-to-action content such as product promotions, rebates and upcoming sales with relevant, attention-grabbing info on campus events, weather and such, stores can further improve impact and reduce perceived wait times.

Welcoming & Brand Building

Digital lobby signs are quickly replacing outdated static signs in many corporate, service and retail environments. Even in campus stores with limited entryway space, a digital sign can do wonders to elevate impressions with the youthful college age audience. In addition to delivering a hefty boost to your store brand through their high-tech appeal, dynamic entryway signs deliver the power of ultimate adaptability for content that invites repeat views and draws students into the store, including:

- Textbook buy-back programs
- Customized seasonal messaging
- Up-to-the-minute current schedules of campus activities
- In-store promotions, sales & loyalty programs
- Paid advertising for in-store products
- Advertising for campus sports, concerts and other events
- Current weather, news and entertainment

Employee Communications

For any workers, safety and team-building messages become more powerful when static posters are replaced with eye-catching dynamic displays. In student stores, your employees are often part of your target customer demographic – young, technology-minded, and impatient to be communicated with on their terms. Digital signage can be an ideal addition to the campus store break room, warehouse or other backroom areas to deliver information on store policies, benefits, safety bulletins, customer service reminders and more.

Revenue Generation

Deploying digital signage in a store opens the door to significant revenue generation opportunities. Many retailers leverage their digital signage as a revenue source by integrating paid advertising into their message rotation. Campus stores are beginning to follow suit, providing an avenue for advertisers to reach the highly sought after college-age demographic. Potential advertisers include brands carried in-store, as well as event marketers, restaurants, and more.

Conclusion

No longer the sole source for textbooks and team apparel, campus bookstores can retain their place as a vital campus resource by taking their cues from successful retailers. Among the strategies employed by today's forward-looking retail stores, digital signage offers the ability to quickly adapt messages based on season, time of day, product and pricing changes, campus events or other variables. Compared to print, digital signage can reduce costs while delivering greater message appeal and customer engagement. In the retail environment, the use of digital kiosks, point-of-sale screens, welcome signs and employee-facing signage deliver wide ranging and bottom-line boosting benefits. These include increased foot traffic, measurable sales life and greater store loyalty along with improved customer satisfaction. The ability to sell ad space on digital signs offers an outstanding added revenue opportunity. Finally, the use of the digital medium can bring a contemporary design aesthetic to the campus store environment, for greater appeal to tech-minded college age shoppers.

For more information, contact ViewSonic sales at salesinfo@viewsonic.com or visit www.viewsonic.com

Sources:

1 THE DATA BEHIND DIGITAL SIGNAGE SYSTEMS. Accessed 9.14.16 at: <http://us.moodmedia.com/industry/data-behind-digital-signage/>

2,3,4 Schachter, Ron. Not Your Parents' Campus Store. Oct. 2010. Accessed 9.14.16 at: <https://www.universitybusiness.com/article/not-your-parents-campus-store>

5 Novartis Pharmaceuticals Corp. Communicates with Employees Using a Digital Sign Network, Digital Signage Today, March 16, 2009, accessed 9.14.16 at: <http://www.digitalsignagetoday.com/whitepapers/novartis-pharmaceuticals-corp-communicates-with-employees-using-a-digital-sign-network/>

6 Anderson, Monica. The Demographics of Device Ownership, 6 OCTOBER 29, 2015. Accessed 9.14.16 at: <http://www.pewinternet.org/2015/10/29/the-demographics-of-device-ownership/>

7 Why Digital Signage? Key Digital Signage Statistics Infographic & Videographic. Accessed 9.14.16 at:

<https://embedsignage.com/why-digital-signage-key-digital-signage-statistics-infographic-videographic/>

8 Khan, Irfan, 18 SURPRISING STATISTICS ABOUT DIGITAL SIGNAGE, Jan. 27.2016. Accessed 9.14.16 at: <http://www.sixteen-nine.net/2016/01/27/18-surprising-statistics-about-digital-signage/>

9 Accessed 9.14.16 at: <https://www.wirespring.com/Solutions/retail.html>

Specifications and availability are subject to change without notice. Corporate names and trademarks stated herein are the property of their respective companies. Copyright © 2016 ViewSonic Corporation. All rights reserved. [18809-00B-09/16]