Dynamic vs. Static Signage: The Advantages of Digital

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The familiarity of printed signage is rapidly giving way to the promise of digital for businesses of all sizes. Thanks to its infinite capacity for change, digital signage is ultimately less costly and more efficient than print, while delivering greater message control and a more engaged audience. Its potential uses are vast and easily adaptable to each company’s unique needs.
Introduction

Infinitely adaptable and highly engaging, digital signage offers significant advantages over printed signs, and as decreasing prices and new technologies fuel demand, digital signs are becoming ever more present throughout our public spaces. Digital signage is similarly becoming more prevalent in business environments of all types and sizes. In addition to traditional functions like meeting room presentation, businesses are discovering the advantages of using digital displays for dynamic signage applications throughout the enterprise, including:

- Conference room identification & scheduling
- Lobby signage
- Dynamic branding and information display
- Employee communications
- Wayfinding
- Emergency notification

In each of these areas digital signage offers significant advantages over paper-and-print alternatives – advantages that can improve efficiencies, reduce costs and increase employee and guest satisfaction, along with enhancing the impact of corporate messaging.

Digital vs. Paper

Change, it is said, is the only constant in life. In business as well as in life at large, however, change can be challenging. The pull of the familiar – in this case paper, plastic, and other printed mediums – can be strong. For one thing, print media can be perceived as the easier alternative. Not only is it intuitively simple (print on paper or other substrate), you more likely than not have an established relationship with a trusted sign supplier. For another, print signage is often assumed to be less expensive than digital.

Both of these assumptions, in fact, are incorrect. Not only can digital signage deliver long-term savings (along with immeasurable intangible value), once deployed it can be considerably easier to update and maintain. Along with these core benefits, digital signage offers businesses both large and small a host of advantages that include:

- Reduced costs
- Greater control
- Infinite adaptability
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- A more engaged audience
- Brand awareness boost
- Support for sustainability initiatives

Below, we review each of these advantages with a focus on how digital compares to the old familiar (printed) ways.

**Reduced Costs**

Because digital signs can be infinitely updated without the costs associated with repetitive print production, digital signage can quickly impact the bottom line for applications that require frequent reproduction of multiple and/or large printed signs. Novartis Pharmaceuticals, for example, estimated it reduced costs by 90% when the company installed a digital corporate communications system in 15 buildings across its 200-acre campus.¹ The cost benefits of digital signage, however, are in no way limited to Fortune 500 companies or large-scale implementations. Over time, the use of the digital medium will deliver savings for less frequently updated signs as well.

Because it eliminates the time-consuming process of managing print production, digital signage can also free up staff to focus on other initiatives. In addition, design time (and expense) can often be reduced, with many content management software apps offering easy-to-use templates. Similarly, some companies have an ad agency or design firm create templates based on their brand guidelines, then bring the job back in-house for content development by one or more staff members – no design experience needed. Finally, with digital signs, businesses of any size can say goodbye to the added cost and inconvenience of rush print jobs and printing delays.

In addition to these measureable cost savings, the advantages of digital discussed below deliver less tangible financial advantages with the potential to add value well beyond the measurable bottom line.

**Greater Control**

With printed signage, businesses must rely on their print supplier to reproduce and deliver the signs, then wait for the person or company responsible for hanging them to complete the task of making the new
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Digital signage with integrated content management features, such as ViewSonic’s Signage Manager Express or DisplayIt! X, make it easy for anyone with basic computer skills to create, schedule and manage content from a PC or laptop. Users can upload virtually any type of media file, then easily format content, schedule playback and save settings. Also available on many ViewSonic® digital signs is a handy PC-less playback feature, which lets users display photos, music and 1080p video from a USB drive. The intuitive on-screen scheduling interface lets users select time, date, repeat and shuffle settings, or choose specific content to play from the attached USB source. LAN control further delivers the power of remote network management, enabling users to not only set up and manage display content remotely from a PC or laptop, but also to remotely turn the display on or off, or adjust the volume and other settings.

Greater Flexibility

Going digital delivers the immeasurable value of infinitely adaptable messaging.

Needless to say, by contrast, once a printed message is displayed it remains static and unchangeable for the duration of that sign, poster or banner’s lifespan. With print, messages are often left unchanged far beyond the point of useful value due to a desire to contain costs – or simply because they’ve been temporarily forgotten.

The dynamic nature of digital signs opens up a new world of possibility, with the ability swap out messages as needed based on anticipated audience, season and time of day or to best support business objectives. The control features discussed above enable users to instantly update content for a single sign, group of signs, or an entire
network of signs throughout a building, campus or multiple locations. Uses are limited only by imagination and your company’s unique needs; among them are:

**Meeting room identification** - Traditional room signs limit information to a static room number or name; their digital counterparts display always up-to-date daily schedules. Many digital room ID systems offer the ability to display nothing more than scheduling information. More flexible options like ViewSonic’s all-in-one mini ePosters offer seamless delivery of data from scheduling software like Outlook plus display of customized content such as brand enhancing messages, paid advertising and news feeds. With an integrated software interface intuitive enough for use by anyone with basic computer skills, ViewSonic mini ePosters free up IT time and put the power of adaptable messaging in the hands of those responsible for content creation. LAN connectivity and Power over Ethernet make the ePosters quick and to easy deploy.

Bottom line benefits: Signs with up-to-the-minute schedules at each doorway minimize confusion and eliminate interruptions from attendees looking for their correct location. The ability to include ancillary info infinitely boosts the value potential of these signs.

**Lobby signage** - Static lobby signs are a familiar sight in corporate, service and retail environments. Running the gamut from white plastic letters on a felt board and 8½ x 11 printed sheets in Plexiglas counter stand to acrylic logo placards and all manner of building directories and directional signage, these traditional signs are beginning to look undeniably outdated compared to their sleek digital counterparts. In addition to delivering a hefty boost to your brand through their high-tech appeal, dynamic lobby signs deliver the power of ultimate adaptability for uses that include:

- Customized welcome messages for key visitors
- Up-to-the-minute daily schedules
- Enhanced brand visibility via display of ad campaigns, media coverage, promotions, partnerships and more
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- News and entertainment for a reduction in perceived visitor wait time
- Interactive kiosks or wall-mounted signage offering guest email access and wayfinding
- Dynamic building directories for easy updating, wayfinding and ad sales opportunities

Bottom line benefits: Dynamic digital signage in your lobby speaks volumes about your up-to-date brand identity while offering the ability to deliver unlimited messaging customized to your company’s and customer’s needs.

Employee Communications - Safety and morale-building messages become more powerful when static posters are replaced with eye-catching dynamic displays. In addition, the adaptability of digital signage makes it easy to tailor content to specific employee groups or geographic regions, while reaching employees company-wide across all shifts, departments and locations with consistent messaging.

In multi-cultural, shift-oriented environments, the ability to reliably communicate in multiple languages with multiple shifts 24/7 can help inform, motivate and improve staff moral. In warehouse and manufacturing spaces, digital signage can reinforce both general and job-specific safety messages or include real-time quality, accident or performance reporting. In a customer service or call center environment, digital signage content can reinforce problem-solving procedures and remind employees that their courtesy and respect are critical to the company’s success.

Bottom line benefits: Employee-facing digital signage can help maximize your team’s potential by disseminating important HR information; reinforcing a positive workplace culture; building teamwork and respect; engaging interest & boosting morale; and improving safety and quality outcomes.

Viewer Engagement

How much attention a potential audience pays to a sign or display is an intangible yet critical component of successful communication. Simply delivering a message – making it visible to your audience – in no way guarantees that it is actually being received, read and comprehended.
A hot topic among signage providers, whose livelihood depends on the success of their product at communicating a message, purveyors of print signs tend to talk about capturing attention; the digital signage industry takes the topic a giant leap forward, focusing instead on viewer engagement.

In essence, engagement is 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. At its best, messages that directly engage consumers invite and encourage them to participate in the ongoing evolution of the company’s brand.

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. Movement alone delivers a more noticeable message than an unchanging sign; beyond this the following characteristics, as reported by Kelly Eisel in a digitalsignagetoday.com article, will increase the engagement impact of your digital signage:

**Content relevancy** - When you include content that is meaningful to your audience, they are more likely to attend to the other components as well. As Eisel notes, “We recently switched our lobby video wall from just a directory to a directory that also displays news and weather elements. Since then, our viewership has greatly increased. Relevant content is extremely important. Not everyone is interested in your business’s news, but everyone enjoys being up to date with current events.”

**Clean, concise communication** - You don’t want your message to get lost in the shuffle of too much ancillary information. Eisel comments that a clean design is critical to the goal of both including relevant content and making sure your message doesn’t get buried, offering this advice.

**Update often** - Even if the essential content remains the same, changing things up will keep your message entertaining and eye-catching.

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Include photography - Ninety percent of the information transmitted to the human brain is visual. Photographic images capture the eye and hold attention in a way text alone cannot. Eisel suggests stock photography or creativecommons.org for inexpensive user-posted images.

Motion - Rapidly attending to the onset of motion is an important evolutionary trait that supports survival by alerting us to predators and other hazards. Keeping things moving throughout your digital content loop will similarly grab your audience’s attention for longer spans of time.

Interaction - Including a distinct call to action, says Eisel, will let your audience know exactly what to do to get involved.

Brand Boost
Ideally, every communication a company puts forth will support its stated brand identity in look, tone and the content itself. With complete adaptability at your fingertips, dynamic digital signage makes this objective much easier to achieve. Lobby signs quickly boast your most recent accomplishments, partnerships and promotions. Break room signage motivates and instills pride with similar news. Safety messages typically seen on generic posters take on greater meaning when accompanied by your company logo and colors.

The examples, like the potential of dynamic signage, are endless. In addition, digital signage can elevate your company’s image simply by virtue of its modern, high-tech appeal. Regardless your choice of content, the display itself speaks loudly about your company’s resourcefulness and commitment to choosing the latest tools at your disposal to accomplish your goals.

Reduced Environmental Impact
Less immediately critical to business operations but vital to the sustainability of our planet, digital signage is distinguished over print by its eco-friendly profile. When companies replace printed signage with digital they eliminate the waste, energy, water, ink and solvents needed to produce, transport and dispose of print signage. Digital signs featuring energy-saving LED backlit technology further reduce...
the signage’s carbon footprint compared to other types of displays. Companies with stated green initiatives can feel good adding these benefits to their list of sustainability commitments when they replace printed signs with dynamic digital signage.

Conclusion

The familiarity of printed signage is rapidly giving way to the promise of digital for businesses of all sizes. Thanks to its infinite capacity for change, digital signage is ultimately less costly and more efficient than print, while delivering greater message control and a more engaged audience. Its potential uses are vast and easily adaptable to each company’s unique needs. Lobbies, reception desks, hallways, break rooms, manufacturing floors and meeting room doorways all present opportune spaces for leveraging digital signage to improve the impact of your messages, boost your brand and increase customer, guest and employee satisfaction.