Digital Signage Basics for Ad-based and Information-based Systems

When the topic of digital signage comes up most people immediately think of flat panel displays with some type of advertising on them. The fact is that digital signage is much more than this. Over the years it has come into its own as a full featured communication medium with a multitude of uses. While advertising applications for retail and food services are certainly needed, some of the fastest growing applications are in corporations, education, municipalities, and healthcare with employee or public facing networks.

There are benefits that each business model has in common. Overall digital signs are intended to be experience enhancers and behavior modification devices. They are intended to facilitate a call-to-action message on the sign. In other words, they add something to the venue experience that is intended to be of value to the viewer. They ask you to do something after looking at the sign and prompt you to take that action. It may be building brand awareness for future reference or an advertisement prompting you to buy something at a location. It may also be to give you information that will prompt you toward further awareness of a situation or condition.

The Benefits for Ad-based Systems:

Purchasing decisions are made at the point of sale. Digital displays capture more views than static signs. Not only do they capture more views, but their recall rate is significantly higher than traditional media and over 70% of the population is exposed to digital signage every day.

The following is a partial list of benefits in ad-based digital signage from a customer engagement, sales promotion, and loyalty generation perspective:

· Enhances customer experience
· Influences customer behavior in their purchasing decisions
· Increases impulse purchases
· Provides greater recall and retention of information
· Reduces both real and perceived wait times
· Gets more attention with motion graphics and video
· Promotes brands and facilitates up-sell and promotion of special items
· Create loyalty by providing a unique customer experience leading to return visits
· Improve customer service by providing relevant information when customers need it
· Differentiate from the competition
· Entice customers with improved store aesthetics
· Keep customers in your establishment longer
· Increases overall sales

The following is a partial list of benefits in ad-based digital signage from a system management perspective:

· Centralized and remote management, with near real time updates of content

· Ensures visual consistency and compliance across multiple locations

· Display targeted content to cater to customer wants and needs

· Increase engagement with special deals or coupons with time sensitive ads

· Easily change screen templates for new items, new pricing, sold out items, and more

· Use day-part scheduling to show different items based on the time of day or day of the week

· For food services it is easy to comply with new menu board ingredient regulations

· Eliminate the recurring costs associated with printing and installing new static signs

· Interact with various data sources to provide automated data driven marketing

· By adding mobile interaction viewers can download content to their device for later use

· Collect valuable data about how customers interact with your digital signs

· Digital signs reduce employee interruption by providing answers to FAQ inquiries
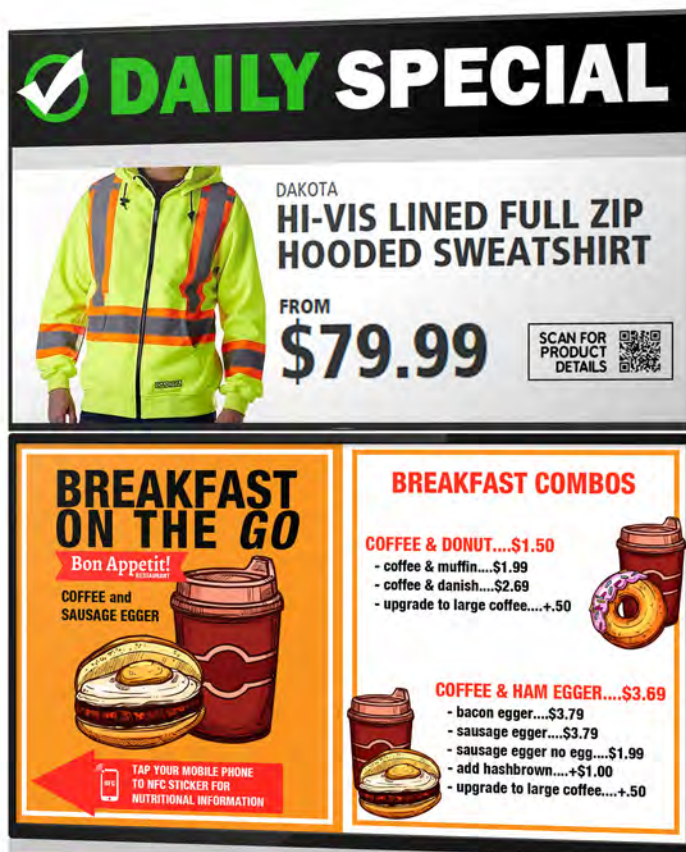
The Benefits for Information-based Systems:

There are obvious differences in the two basic digital signage business models. In a nutshell, ad-based systems rely on hard investment dollars spent and receiving hard dollars in return, while information-based systems rely on hard investment dollars spent and soft returns that can't directly be rung up on a cash register. The soft returns are less tangible but no less valuable. The key objective is the dissemination of information and matching the investment to the value of what is being shown.

Employee facing networks in corporate settings are a prime example of information-based systems but many of the benefits port over to applications in education, municipalities and healthcare.

Digital Signage within a corporate environment allows management to convey policies, guidelines and other information to employees. It is a highly visible internal communication platform designed to keep staff in-the-know resulting in a well-informed, more productive team.

Both scalable and flexible, Digital Signage can be used in any organization—large or small. As digital signage hardware becomes more affordable and scalable, it's attractiveness to corporate IT managers and other decision-makers increases.

The following is a partial list of information-based digital signage benefits from an employee perspective:

· Improve employee and company-wide communication to motivate and empower employees

· Creates a sense of community and boosts morale

· Helps with employee retention

· Sharing company metrics and performance engages workers

· Supports company branding initiatives

· Fosters workforce collaboration

· Provides consistent information throughout various departments and locations

The following is a partial list of information-based digital signage benefits from an overall management perspective:

· Clear, convenient group messaging in real time

· Schedule content in advance so messaging can update automatically

· Keep employees informed with calendars, schedules and upcoming events

· Design new content with provided templates without hiring designer help

· Digital signage allows you to display multiple forms of content at once

· Automated data feeds display real-time internal and external information

· Ability to overcome spatial limitations by fitting more content onto one sign

· Provide directions and interactive wayfinding options for people in large facilities

· Improved workplace safety and emergency notifications in real time

The Importance of the CMS

While the display is the most visible part of the digital signage system, the content management system (CMS) is the most essential component of any successful deployment. Selecting the proper CMS for your application is a make or break proposition.

Most of the major CMS provider's do somewhat similar things but they do them in different ways. At the top-level, content is created. This is followed by the importation and distribution of content in the system. The management control separates who gets what and when. Along with that there is also delegation of authority of who is allowed to manage and change content and in many cases, there is reporting. It is those different ways things are done that makes all the difference. It becomes all about the tools available to you and the user interface.

Here are a few suggestions that may help you decide what CMS to use:

· Begin with understanding what you want your digital signage to do.

· What types of content will you be using?

· Who will be supplying the content?

· How often will it need to be refreshed?

· Will the same content be displayed on all screens?

· Will there be levels of management required?

· Will reporting be required and in what format?

· Do I need the CMS to monitor my network "health"?

· Is SaaS or on premise the desired format?

· What level of complexity can you tolerate?

· What level of support will be necessary?

Once it becomes clear what the purpose of the digital signage system is then focus on two major issues: The creation of great content and dedication to keeping it current and relevant and the selection of a CMS software package and vendor partner that will work with you to effectively and efficiently manage the entire process.

*Written in collaboration with Alan C. Brawn CTS, DSCE, DCME, DSSP, ISF-C

CAPITAL NETWORKS ™

Jim Vair • PRESIDENT
jvair@capitalnetworks.com
905 946 1122 x 231