Digital Signage Explained

part two

With a little help from our friends we take a look at Digital Signage and what exactly does this mean and how you should plan for a successful roll-out.

In Part One we looked at the things to think about before launching into a Digital Media Nework. In this part we look at the actual installation of equipment that will convert the customers expectation into a working solution.

UNICOL has had 45 years of mounting solution experience and has provided mounts for some of the most prestigous projects in the UK. BITS provide installation services across the UK and have an enviable track record so we thought we would also ask Paul Childerhouse of BITS to give us his opinion.

In general there are two methods of presenting content as a dynamic image – from within a screen (plasma, LCD, LED) or projected onto a screen or surface. This equipment needs a power and signal source. Generally the power will be either available or connected close to where the equipment is being sited by qualified electricians. The signal may come from a number of sources, satellite, PC, WiFi, 3G, etc and may have to be boosted on long cable runs.

There are three ways of mounting screens and projectors: floor or surface mounted, wall mounted, or ceiling mounted. So taking these in turn what are the options:

Floor Mounted...
Mainly on stands / trolleys or pedestals, either free standing or bolted to the floor and in some cases bolted to the floor and ceiling. Kiosk style units are becoming popular and fall within this group.

Wall Mounted...
Either direct surface mounted or on a fixed or articulated arm with or without tilt. A matrix of screens can be arranged to make a video wall.

Ceiling Mounted...
In the digital signage arena the most poular method of supporting screens is to hang them from the ceiling.

PC... What makes a successful Installation?

The main components required to complete Installations successfully:

1. Understanding the clients requirements
2. Suitable survey with qualified person
3. Technical appraisal
4. Method and Risk, H&S
5. Coordination, planning, project ma nagement stage including Logistics
6. Installation and signoff
7. Service Support and Maintenance

Step 1: Understanding the client's requirements
This is starting point for most Installations and is a must, the clients expectations need to be carefully noted and then it is up to the installation company to manage these expectations, these can include aesthetics, design, creative, content, colour, Wow factor etc...

These requirements are normally documented and a working document produced, normally a Works Package. This information is then translated onto the next stage – The Survey.

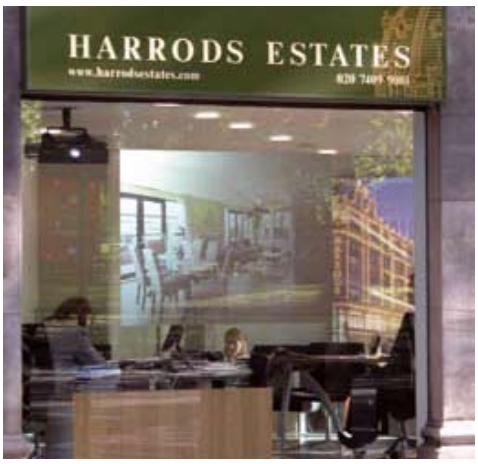
Step 2: Survey
Surveys range from simple to damn right difficult; the surveyor must have the necessary skills to take the clients requirements, translate them into the installation environment, and capture the information and record.

The Surveyor must have far ranging skills:
- Knowledge of Building materials
- Knowledge of Building infrastructures
- Knowledge of Fixings
- Appropriate Cabling standards
- AV knowledge
- Electrical requirements
- Lighting levels
- Working heights and safety requirements

Step 3: Technical Appraisal
This role is to glue the solution together to meet the customer requirements regarding technical competence and performance, within budget.

Step 4: Method and Risk Assessments
A very important part of any install as the installation company needs to adhere to Health and safety at work act 1974, including health and safety law and be trained in writing risk assessments and method statements, All installation staff are expected to manage the installation work in accordance with these procedures.

Step 5: Project Management, Planning and Logistics
To make a large installation rollout successful you need all these elements, the Project Manager should be trained to the latest PM Standards, namely Prince2. The coordination and logistics is best carried out by a single company who is responsible for scheduling the rollout, arranging the logistics and planning the engineers, this way the engineer & the kit gets to site in a timely manner.



Step 6: Installation and Sign off
Engineer's carryout the installations in accordance with the install documentation prepared earlier in the project phase, if a standard install then this will be repeated from site to site, the Installs can be standardized, quality can be measured and the work is easy to maintain. If the work is bespoke then the installation is documented for each site, this document is maintained under change control, for the life of the project.

Once complete, the installation should be signed off by the client or client's representative, any snagging or remedial work should be agreed and the site revisited to complete in a timely manner.
Engineers must have the necessary skills, certificates, tools, access equipment to carry out all tasks associated with the Installation.

Step 7: Service Support and Maintenance
The Installation work is normally warranted for up to 1 year. However, large Digital OOH projects are often funded on advertising revenues hence the screens are large format, very heavy and need to have Onsite support contracts in place.

The main parameters of a support contract are normally listed in the Service Level agreement SLA, this is normally agreed before the contract between the service company and client.

The service reflects the number of day's coverage, Response speed to site visit, first time fix rates etc, and these are normally tailored to meet the customer's requirements and budget.

It is only natural that the customer is interested in the content on the screen and is not really bothered how the screens or projectors are attached to his buildings. However, by including the installation solution provider early in the planning stage, the method of installing the equipment can be designed to provide a clean, cost effective solution. This can make significant cost savings on the whole project.

In any large project it is vital to have a strong team with a proven track record to give the best possible advice and steer the client to a successful solution.