Digital Signage Explained

With the help of Donna Shaw of Dynamax we take a look at growing a Digital Signage Network. Change is Inevitable - Growth is Intentional.

It's clear that there are many more sizeable digital signage network deployments around today than there were 5 or 6 years ago. This is mainly due to the growth in the industry itself and a better understanding of what these networks are capable of delivering.

The complexity of what the networks deliver has also grown – from regurgitation of bland content to live feeds, Bluetooth interaction and critical alerts. Users are also much more IT savvy today when it comes to developing a rationale and objectives for their digital signage rollouts. The more strategic of these companies are also looking at how to grow or scale their network once it's up and running. Capability to scale a network is often what separates it from the initial idea. This begins with some strategic planning by the digital signage user understanding:

• The network's ability to deliver more than just advertising
• The need for a solid content strategy for differing locations as the network scales
• The need for a solid and competent IT infrastructure which sits at the heart of the operation.

Anyone planning to roll out a digital signage network needs to consider whether they would like it to remain relatively small and in one site – or whether they want it to grow. It's safe to say that when scaling your network to numerous sites you encounter more challenges, however, there can be substantial benefits to the digital signage user if it is undertaken as a longer term plan and you are aware of what building blocks should to be put in place up front to develop a large scale network.

Common Hurdles

When scaling your digital signage network here are 3 key components to consider:

• Networking your system

Ensure that your internal IT department are fully onboard and included in the decision making process. When making your decision select an application that is IT friendly and can cope with any security issues you have. Bandwidth restrictions may also be an issue to be sure to build in scalability in this area.

• Support and Maintenance

Any time, any place, anywhere – should be the type of support you are looking for if you want to ensure your entire estate of signs is maintained – no matter where they are located geographically. Also look for a solution that will provide you with support monitoring that triggers a notification to the network administrator when a screen fails or has incorrect content.

• Reporting / Compliance

It's important that you are able to demonstrate the actual number of times a particular piece of content has played back in any given period. This is as simple as ensuring that the content scheduled to play is played, and that content which should not be played or has stopped – has actually done so.

Content Pitfalls

The content, or messaging, that the screens are showing are critically important – after all that is what speaks to your intended audience, so be aware that it can also drive your audience away. Hence content needs to be relevant to the audience itself – rather like a targeted mailing campaign – you are not likely to send a gardening equipment catalogue to people who live in high rise apartments!

More than the Sum of Its Parts

Successful digital signage is more than the sum of its parts – it's about delivering holistic solutions which ensure network owners, and their targeted audiences, gain benefits from their investment.

As mentioned previously, in order to deliver a successful digital signage implementation a clear understanding of its aims and objectives must firstly be understood. As companies develop this understanding they will also become aware of the potential pitfalls which may develop.

The successful implementation of any digital signage solution depends on a range of elements which when blended together deliver a total solution – if we apply a little maths to such an implementation then we can see a breakdown on these elements and how each of them integrates.

Delivering Integrated Solutions
If we take each of these components on their own they are an essential piece of the 'digital signage' pie – and if they are treated in isolation from each other, then a level of needless complexity is applied to any solution. However, as the digital signage industry continues to both grow and fragment, we are now seeing the development of more and more strategic or preferred partnerships.

Put simply this means that companies who specialise in delivering what they do well, software, screens, hardware, content, installation and network provision – are continuing to develop and hone their own core competencies whilst partnering with other such strategic partners who are also of the same mind. As a result we are seeing convergence within the digital signage sector.

Besides the current economic climate, intense competition is also increasing the pressure on the expectations of digital signage rollouts. If you want your business to thrive and prosper then there are a number of challenges to overcome – not least of which is to achieve high levels of efficiency

from your network, little or no downtime, optimum support and clearly visible operation costs. On top of this it is essential to ensure revenue growth.

As this convergence evolves the biggest impact we are seeing in digital signage deployment is service levels to customers improving, while productivity gains resulting from a more efficient installation process is enabling businesses to focus on opportunities for growing their network, rather than administrative and problem solving tasks. Together the improvements made possible by this new approach in the industry have become a key platform for enabling growth.

In addition to this, the impact of improved R&D as each vendor concentrates on developing their core competencies, will be more innovation in the industry sector – the benefits of which will be passed on directly to the customer.

Hence the 'Power of Partnering' is improving the overall customer experience.

The Key Components for a Digital Signage Solution

Scheduling and Distribution
Content Creation
Network Provision & Management
Screens
PC Hardware
Installation & Maintenance

POWER OF PARTNERING