

Digitize your built environment with Digital Signage

Written by Chris Heap, Managing Director, Imperative Group. January 2010.

The use of Digital Signage is a relatively new way of communicating with people when they are out of the home travelling, working, shopping and relaxing.

Defined as “a network of digital displays that are centrally managed and addressable for targeted information, entertainment, merchandising and advertising” (POPAI, 2009), Digital Signage provides landlords with a sophisticated way to reach and engage people in public or private environments in a relevant, timely and creative way.

Today, you are more likely than ever to see a wide array of screens of different sizes and shapes in retail stores & malls, by the roadside and on street furniture, in corporate offices, bars, clubs, pubs and leisure venues not forgetting education & healthcare establishments.

The emergence of Digital Signage is partly due to changing trends in media consumption. We still watch TV, listen to the radio and surf the internet but there are now so many channels, options and distractions that reaching significant groups of people before they go out, or when they’re out is challenging to brands, retailers and even Government departments. One of the answers is to use Digital Signage to reach these people which is why Digital Signage is now the fastest growing media in advertiser dollar spending terms of all media, including the internet.

Walmart for example has been running a Digital Signage network for over 15 years in all of its stores. Their network allows their brand and their suppliers to reach 100 million customers a week with highly targeted content designed to improve the customer experience, drive purchases and improve loyalty.

Digital Signage offers those who own or operate such networks an ideal platform to engage, educate, entertain and inform viewers and in doing so offer quality content that reflects the brand and the built environment for the benefit of consumers and staff, and Digital Signage is highly effective at delivering these messages. For example, Digital Signage is 28% more effective than static posters at delivering a branded message (source: Infoscreen GmbH). For the vast majority of people who do view Digital Signage, 77% recalled the content they saw in a recent retail research study (source: Nielsen & OVAB Europe, 2009).

So why is Digital Signage so effective? In one regard it is because Digital Signage allows what was once ‘one message for all consumers’ (the model applied by traditional & broadcast media) to become hyper targeted: *one message per channel per location per time period per person*. It is therefore highly relevant to that viewer at that time in that location and it is this relevancy,



timeliness and appropriateness that helps elicit a positive response from viewers because it feels designed for them.

It is also clear from almost every study commissioned that implementing a Digital Signage network improves the viewers assessment of the ‘image’ of a location (e.g. the host or landlord), where image relates to peoples perception of modernity, attractiveness and efficiency.

When designed and implemented in concert with the built environment, Digital Signage can enhance and improve the actual or perceived quality of a space, so if you are designing for a client where there is a need to deliver a tangible customer experience and deliver messages in a managed way (be they commercial, entertainment or informational), then it is likely that Digital Signage will offer a solution that adds value to the building, the environment and the people within it.

Today’s Digital Signage can be highly adapted and complementary to the built environment. By way of example, in 2009 Pharmaceutical firm Bayer covered their entire former headquarters in Leverkusen, Germany with an LED digital media display totalling over 17,500 m² to promote its brand.



Launched in early 2009, Westfield shopping mall in West London, England, uses Digital Signage to great effect by using both large format “spectacular” screens to deliver the ‘big message’ and smaller floor mounted screens to deliver more targeted and discrete messages at particular points throughout the mall.

Architects would benefit from considering the deployment of Digital Signage as part of the design and development process because it has such an impact on the form and function of the space once it is fitted and merchandised.

Specifying the Digital Signage network at the construction point, rather than at the fitting-out point is ideal because Digital Signage networks require an infrastructure of power, cabling and mounting systems. Specifying and installing this infrastructure prior to the final fix will save the project considerable expense, limit site impact and enable the network to be installed in a highly sympathetic manner, thus providing a commercial benefit to the construction programme and a seamless finish to the end product upon completion.



Looking around the corner into the future, architects, space planners and landlords have a wide range of exciting Digital Signage developments to look forward to which will add considerable viewer value and experience to any built environment including:

1. Screens will come in even more shapes and sizes. OLED technology will mean that in a few years you will be able to literally “wrap” screens around anything you like (columns, walkways & floors).
2. The emergence of 3D and holographic technology will help bring the picture out of the screen and into the environment.
3. Screens that interact with viewers & users through touch and gesture will provide exciting ways to select information, play games and have fun.
4. Screen and cell phone technology will increasingly converge allowing each to (partly) control the other to enable landlords and user to connect, share and trade information.



It is worth noting that people are now highly digital media savvy and expert consumers and creators of digital media; they themselves create and manage digital content as they go about their daily business twittering, texting, surfing and working. They often expect digital content and have become adept at engaging and using it.

It therefore would seem appropriate that architects, designers, brands, retailers and space planners take into consideration the media habits of the people they are designing spaces for and consider how, where and what digital media could add experiential and commercial value in a manner sympathetic or complementary to a building as people journey through and enjoy the spaces designed for them to work, rest and play in.

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About ARCHI-TECH

ARCHI-TECH provides a targeted audience of architects and other specialty designers with cutting-edge information on the latest advances in the technology and building sectors. ARCHI-TECH focuses on integrating emerging technologies and systems into building design and architecture.

Architechweb.com includes product news and reviews, valuable case studies, industry contacts and networking channels, as well as resources and tips for locating qualified installers.

ARCHI-TECH is part of our integrated media offering including Buildings and Interiors & Sources. All media products are created and supported by a talented staff, whose combined expertise spans more than 150 years.

About the Imperative Group

We are an independent provider of new product, marketing, PR, project management and business development services to the retail, media, broadcast and digital out of home media sectors.

We help digital out of home businesses connect, innovate and communicate their ideas to the wider world to make messages accessible to all and to break down barriers to entry & purchase often associated with complex technical propositions.

The value we add is based on a cocktail of primary knowledge, experience, connections, method and approach gained from working within relevant & specific areas of retail, marketing, communications and technology sectors in the UK and across EMEA.

The group draws on over 11 years of practical experience gained specifically in retail & out of home media networks (inc radio and digital screen media), directly related to a wide variety of key competencies including new product development, project management, marketing, press relations, insight management and business development.

To date, the group's considerable experience has been gained through working for retail and out of home owners, operators and practitioners including Sainsbury's, Viacom (Now CBS Outdoor), Mood Media, Butcher & Gundersen, Applied Television, How and Why and the CAN Media Group which includes StoreCast Media, Innov8 Solutions and The Life Channel businesses.

This experience has been applied to a wide range of retail and out of home media network brands in the UK and US including BPtv, Pret, The Mall Corporation, Tesco TV, Shell, Jewson TV, Kroger, Safeway, Shaws, Scala (EMEA), Premier Retail Networks (Thomson PRN), Dynamax Technologies (U.K), Telenor (Norway) and POPAldigital (UK & Ireland).

Imperative is a full member of the Point of Purchase Advertising International (POPAI) association (UK & Ireland), is an active member on POPAldigital's planning & management forum and contributes to the POPAI US Advocacy committee.

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