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The Technology and Solutions Magazine for Digital Signage, DOOH, Mobile and Place-based Media



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Get Out!

Not All Digital Signage Flat Panels Are Created Equal

Outdoor Digital Signage
Can Attract a Whole New
Customer Base

By Ryan Moodley

You'd be hard pressed these days to enter any mall, fast-food restaurant, multiplex movie theater, restaurant/bar, home improvement store, or even museum and not encounter some sort of digital signage. Everything from menu boards to digitally looped videos.

The digital signage market is one of the few markets that, even in this seesaw economy, is continuing to grow. And that's one of the reasons you are reading this publication, correct? From retrofitting convention centers to constructing new houses of worship, digital signage is being utilized by businesses and community centers more and more every day.

Why? Businesses are quickly discovering that digital signage is an investment that

gives a bigger and better return than a lot of other advertising channels. You and your customers are able to program content to run for certain periods of the day so that it can be extremely effective with reaching the target audience. The most amazing part is that updates and changes can be made in real time, simply and at no extra cost.

Just like any other market, digital signage, still in its relative infancy, is continuing to grow and morph with the times. Nowadays, basic indoor digital signage is relatively easy to understand and install. Find the right-sized flat panel, select the appropriate mount, figure out if the video signal will be coming from another location or directly from a computer or media player mounted to the back of the mount, run the cable (if



Will the unit have to endure extreme cold or hot temperatures?



necessary) and go. Of course when you start getting into video walls and the like, it tends to get a little trickier.

But, how about outdoor flat-panel digital signage? Where do you get started? Is it cost effective? Do your clients even know what they are missing out on by not utilizing it? And what about the weather? It gets a little more complicated when Mother Nature, as unpredictable as She can be, also has to be accounted for. Simply installing a flat panel underneath a building's eave or dropping it into a self-made cabinet may not just void the warranty on the unit itself, but also create fire hazard and security risks. If you are lucky enough for the unit to survive the elements and devious teenagers, your customer may not be getting the full use of the outdoor digital signage that they were expecting anyway.

The first question to ask is do YOU think a customer can benefit from outdoor digital signage? If so, then it is your job to educate them as to why this may be the case. You want your customers to be able to market to the people that are driving and walking by. You want to catch their eye. You want them to stop and you want them to know more about the company or product, or simply to look at a menu to see what they have to offer. It's as simple as telling your customer it's Marketing 101: the more people that know about your business, the better opportunity you have to get them as customers. And, hopefully, as repeat customers.

And how about those robust customers you already have or have been lobbying to get, such as at amusement and water parks, both

large and small, that are using, or should be using, digital signage, to keep people entertained while they are waiting in line? It's all about keeping the customer happy, amused and informed.

After your (potential) customer realizes the benefits, ultimately, their first question will be, "What would this cost me?" Your response should inevitably be, "Well, you need to spend a little to make a lot." Then explain to them, depending on the scope of the probable job at hand, that just like any other type of electronics, as technology increases year after year, new, less expensive yet still high-quality units continue to enter the market, so the product cost is more reasonable and affordable than it's ever been. So, depending on a customer's budget, most anyone who can already afford to utilize indoor digital

signage can seriously consider, if their business can benefit from it, adding outdoor digital signage in order to lure prospective customers inside, or to keep the customers on the patio entertained so they don't leave. Usually, outdoor digital signage projects are not as large as indoors since fewer units are usually required. Many times, a business needs no more than just one or two.

OK, you have them on the hook, and now you want to offer them a plan. There are many considerations to think about when deciding how and where to install outdoor flat panels. In most cases, outdoor digital signage must endure all different weather conditions, such as rain, snow, humidity, dust/dirt, and even insects, especially if they don't have the benefit of being protected from the elements,

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such as being installed underneath a patio. Also, will the unit be placed in direct sunlight where constant glare and, ultimately, UV damage to the screen itself may occur? Will the unit have to endure extreme cold or hot temperatures? Will it be a portable or fixed install (can the digital signage and mount be moved inside when the business day is over)?

These are just some of the reasons to consider utilizing flat panels designed specifically for the elements. Outdoor flat panels, such as models marketed by Pantel, offer anti-reflective glass, casings that keep rain, snow, dirt, dust, and insects out, integrated heating and cooling systems that regulate the internal temperature of the unit within optimal operating parameters no matter what the external temperature is, and a

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photo cell that automatically adjusts the LCD's light level depending on the sun's position and strength, ensuring customers can easily read the screen throughout the day.

By incorporating outdoor digital signage, a business is not limited to how and where they can use digital signage applications to help entertain, inform, or attract their customers, as well as to help their business grow at the same time. Sure, these units cost a little more up front than your run-of-the-mill flat-panel LCD, but in the long run they will last much longer out in the elements and, thus, save you and your clients much needed funds and time. **SSM**

Ryan Moodley is national accounts manager for Pantel Corp. He can be reached at ryan@pantelcorp.com.

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