

A Keywest Technology White Paper



Six Basic Digital Signage Applications for the Hospitality Industry



Synopsis

The number of choices for both products and services available to consumers has grown exponentially, creating a demand for better communication systems that place relevant product information closer to the point-of-purchase. Increasing information-on-demand, however, can quickly overwhelm human resources in hospitality settings. Herein lies a major advantage to digital signage. Even though modern digital signage can be passive, today's more process-oriented digital signs can interact with consumers -giving them power to drive the media that interests them- thereby providing valuable assistance in making choices. Additionally, content can be automatically pushed to digital signs from back-office database systems automating the update and management processes, freeing up important human resources for other tasks. Breaking traditional communication paradigms into multifaceted strategies, digital signage synergizes with modern marketing goals; read on to learn six of the more common applications used in hospitality today.

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Hotels, resorts, cruise lines and other hospitality enterprises require an easy, effective way to communicate with guests as well as promote their facilities and service offerings. Traditionally, the hospitality industry has relied upon printed signs to fulfill these functions. However, printed signs are neither easy, nor quick to update. As a result, communications has often been focused on the strategic, concentrating on branding or longer-standing offers, foregoing the revenue possibilities of tactical messaging that responds with time-sensitive offers, such as the appropriate menu –breakfast, lunch or dinner- for an in-house restaurant.



The inability to reach guests with time-sensitive messaging isn't the only drawback of print. Printed signs require the assistance of skilled services, including graphic designers and printers, which place added demands on already tight marketing budgets. Thus, every time a hospitality manager considers updating a sign, there is a real cost involved that must be weighed against the perceived importance and revenue-generating potential of the sign. Over the course of a year, the cost of designing, printing, installing and disposing all of the printed signs in a hospitality enterprise can be a significant expense.

Fortunately, digital signage offers an effective, affordable communications alternative. Additionally, digital signage leverages many of the strengths commonly associated with the IT industry, making it ideal for conveying ads, marketing messages and information far beyond the possibilities of print. With the necessary equipment, individual digital signs in a network can be assigned their own IP address, so different messages can be targeted to different locales within a hospitality setting. Digital signage media servers can be networked with existing property management computer systems and programmed to extract information, such as meeting room schedules, for automatic display on the appropriate digital sign or signs on the network. By leveraging networking technology, hospitality personnel responsible for digital signage can even monitor content playback on all networked signs from a central location.

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Increasingly, the hospitality industry is turning to digital signage to satisfy its informational and marketing communications requirements. Applications vary but can be broken down into six main areas, including: in-room channel, door cards, reader boards, advertising signage, way-finding and hybrid, interactive display.

This white paper is an introduction to the solutions Keywest Technology offers for these hospitality-oriented digital signage applications. Subsequent papers will examine each in more detail and provide information on how they are being employed in real-world hospitality applications.

In-room channel

In-room applications for digital signage can range for simple playback of advertising in the form of graphics or video to a sophisticated presentation delivering channel lineups combined with segmented advertising.



A local origination, in-room channel for a hotel at the simple level can play videos to promote amenities offered on the property or information on hours of operation for an in-house restaurant, checkout times or safety procedures. In these applications, the Keywest Technology MediaXtreme media server resides at the facility's cable TV headend, feeding analog video content in the system for playback in guest rooms.

A more complex solution could involve segmenting the screen of an in-room channel into zones. For instance, one on-screen zone can playback ads for property venues, another can be dedicated to a text crawl to with news headlines, for current weather conditions and still another for a logo to brand the channel. The MediaXtreme was designed to support this level of screen zoning.

Reader boards

Hotels, convention centers, and other venues hosting events traditionally use reader boards to inform guests and visitors of the times and locations of meetings, wedding receptions, training seminars and other organized events. Besides passing along information to the public, reader boards also keep employees of the facility informed.

Digital signage is replacing static and LED-based reader boards with easily updated, LCD and plasma panel technology. Often, the flat-screen monitors used in reader board applications have a portrait orientation (vertical vs. horizontal orientation) and are mounted in the property's common areas to ensure maximum exposure.

To maximize the value of reader boards and minimize the amount of personnel time and effort dedicated to updating signs requires centralized control of each reader board and data acquisition from existing property management software systems.



Keywest Technology has developed advanced MediaXtreme interfaces to tie into property management software packages, such as Opera© offered by Micros Fidelio© and Delphi© offered by Newmarket©, to automatically collect pre-authorized data, such as date, time and location of an event, and reformat pertinent information into an attractive presentation that takes advantage of advanced TV-quality graphics, text and video capabilities of the MediaXtreme.

Door cards

Door cards are quite similar to reader boards -both are used to convey information that's pertinent to a particular event. However, unlike reader boards, door cards typically have a landscape (horizontal vs. vertical) orientation, are 15 to 19 inches and rely on 4:3 aspect ratio LCD panels.



Most often, door cards are found near convention and conference center meeting rooms typically identifying the event being held, meeting times and perhaps identify the sponsoring organization or speaker.

Like reader boards, door cards can run automatically displaying information collected from property management and event data software applications. Keywest Technology MediaXtreme property and event management software modules let the system extract required information and display it at the proper time at the proper room.

Way finding

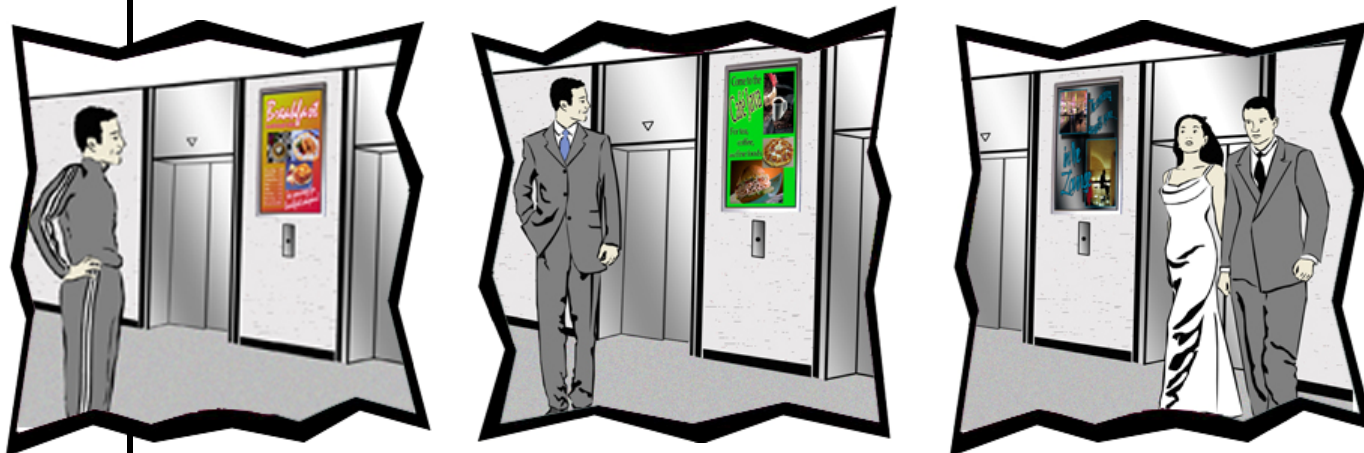
When used in way-finding applications, digital signs replace static directory signage. The advantage of using digital signs in this application in place of static signs is that what's being displayed can be changed instantly to accommodate new way-finding needs or to supplement existing digital signage advertising playback when required.

In way-finding use, digital signs enhance customer experience by directing them to their desired location. Keywest Technology's MediaXtreme delivers the flexibility and instant updating needed for way-finding digital signs applications.



Advertising signage

Day-parting –the ability to present time-appropriate advertising messages geared towards the demographics of an anticipated audience at any given point in the day- may be the chief advantage of digital signage in advertising applications over static, printed signs.



With digital signage day-parting, hospitality facility managers can, for example, promote in-house restaurants based on their breakfast, lunch or dinner specials of the day on the same sign at the time of day when people are most interested in a given meal. Later, thanks to day-parting, the same sign can be used to promote the hotel lounge and special entertainment –all in an effort aimed at encouraging guests to stay on premise and spend their money in house.

Other advantages of using digital signs over print include eliminating the cost of printing new signs; the ability to act tactically with digital signage messaging; the creation of ad material with dynamic elements like video, animation and text; and the ability to combine multiple display panels to add appeal to advertising.

Keywest Technology's robust MX Editor software allows MediaXtreme users to build playback schedules to take advantage of day-parting. With MX Editor, playback schedules for text, graphics, animation and video are created and executed at the precise moment desired.

Advertising signage (cont.)

The MediaXtreme media server supports network television-quality display of all multimedia elements and can be configured to support demanding multi-sign displays. Keywest Technology's MediaCreator Station combines all of the software applications needed to build effective ads for digital signage networks, and the company's X-WARP geometric distortion correction software even allows video projectors to be used in place of LCD or plasma panels and positioned at extreme angles to projection screens for special advertising needs.

Hybrid, Interactive

The mainstay of a digital signage presentation is to playback video, animation, text and graphics in a linear presentation. In other words, Event A is followed by Event B; and Event C follows Event B and so forth.

However, recently some digital signage applications have leveraged the power of interactive digital kiosks to better serve the informational needs of viewers with the traditional strength of linear digital signage presentations to attract attention. The resulting hybrid, interactive digital signage system thus takes advantage of the best of both forms of communications.

In a hospitality setting, a hybrid interactive digital signage system could be used to supplement concierge service, informing guests of attractions and inviting them to touch the screen to drill down to the specific information they are seeking.





Hybrid, Interactive (cont.)

Interactivity can be in the form of a touch-screen, infrared or heat sensor, motion detector or GPI trigger to name a few. All varieties of Keywest Technology digital signage can include interactivity. Keywest Technology also has developed i3, an easy-to-use hybrid, interactive authoring application to allow users to create their own interactive digital signage presentations.

While these six digital signage applications typify those most frequently used in the hospitality industry, they are not all encompassing. Others exist based on the specific requirements of the hotel, resort or other hospitality business involved. These half dozen describe the basic applications in use today in the hospitality industry.

Keywest Technology has created world-class playback and control solutions for each of these digital signage applications. These products –some software, others hardware and software- along with the expertise of the Keywest Systems Group and TotalCARE customer support are allowing some of the biggest names in the hospitality industry to maximize the effectiveness of their on-premise communications efforts.

Are you ready to breakout of your communications bottleneck? Contact us now for a no-obligation quote:

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