

DIGITAL SIGNAGE



The Top 10

PITFALLS



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Adding a digital signage network to an organization's communications mix can reap a variety of rewards, including increased sales, greater employee satisfaction and instant dissemination of critical information, such as emergency warnings. In fact, the benefits are as diverse as breadth of applications for digital signage.

It's no wonder then that corporations, retailers, government agencies, hoteliers and arena and convention center management firms, to name a few, are relying increasingly on digital signage to advance their communications goals. However, adding a network of digital signs isn't a commitment that should be made without considering the ramifications of the decision. Quite a chasm exists between committing an organization to adding a network of digital signs and actually executing the installation and accruing the benefits envisioned.

Frequently, organizations that are new to digital signage encounter unanticipated problems that could have been avoided with a little foreknowledge. Over the years, Keywest Technology has observed many new digital signage users experiencing the same pitfalls over and over again.



In an effort to help others avoid these issues, Keywest Technology has prepared this white paper. Not only does this paper identify the 10 most commonly encountered digital signage traps, it also offers practical steps organizations can take to avoid falling victim to these perils. Keeping these Top 10 Digital Signage Pitfalls in mind as you plan your organization's new digital signage network will make the experience smooth and rewarding.



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NO. 1: LACK OF A CLEAR PURPOSE

Someone in your organization, has read digital signage can make marketing messaging more effective. It can reach potential customers at the point of purchase, promote desired behavior, target different demographic groups associated with different times of the day, and do so many wonderful things.

But what exactly does your organization need to accomplish with digital signage? That's the seminal question. Without clearly defining the purpose of a digital signage network, it is impossible to find success in any phase of its deployment or use.

Taking the time up front to define the expectations for the system and write them out on paper for the approval of key management will provide direction and focus effort on attainable goals. Struggling to fulfill a nebulous purpose for the digital signage network will rack up unnecessary expense and leave everyone connected with the project frustrated.

There's a powerful temptation on the part of IT managers to look at digital signage playback as if it were a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. It isn't.

NO. 2: TAKING ON DIGITAL SIGNAGE AS AN IT PROJECT

"Digital signage network," the very words sound IT oriented. While there's a lot of IT technology involved with digital signage, taking on a digital signage network as an IT project is dangerous.



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While highly skilled, the typical IT manager does not have the background nor the experience needed to roll out a successful digital signage network. There's a powerful temptation on the part of IT managers to look at digital signage playback as if it were a Microsoft PowerPoint presentation. It isn't.



PowerPoint does an excellent job at making business presentations, but how many TV stations rely on PowerPoint to create and playback the programs, commercials, news and promotions you see nightly? Exactly zero. With respect to playing back video, graphics, text and animation, layering multiple visual elements and building and maintaining a playout schedule, a digital signage network is much more like a TV station than a boardroom with a projector and a PowerPoint presentation. Keep that in mind if an IT manager volunteers to take on your organization's digital signage project.

NO. 3: LACK OF CONTENT

Congratulations. You have a digital signage network. What are you going to display? Having a digital signage network without content is like having a newspaper without print. There's just a whole lot of nothing and overwhelming sense of emptiness.



Communicating in some form must be part of the reason behind the decision to add a digital signage network. However, there is no communication without content. Fortunately, many organizations have



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existing resources to draw upon that can be repurposed as digital signage content. Logos, commercials, promotional video, print advertising, plans and drawings can all be reused in whole or part to communicate a message on a digital signage network.

Additionally, RSS Internet feeds are a tremendous resource for updating a digital signage network with fresh “newsy” content, weather and sports scores that can give an audience a reason to take a second or third look.

Having an individual identified to own the project will minimize the impact of the unforeseen problems that inevitably creep into any complex undertaking.

Regardless of where it comes from, content is critical to the success of a digital signage network. Knowing where it will come from is as important as actually having the digital signage network in place.

NO. 4: NO ONE ASSIGNED TO MANAGE THE PROJECT

While it’s not like designing the International Space Station, putting a digital signage network in place can be a complex undertaking. For that reason, it’s essential that any business or organization taking on a digital signage network assign someone to manage the project. Having an individual identified to own the project will minimize the impact of the unforeseen problems that inevitably creep into any complex undertaking.

Just as bad as having no one assigned to manage the project is its closely related cousin: management by committee. Offering up conflicting directions from multiple individuals will leave your system integrator bewildered and your project incomplete.



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NO. 5: NO ONE TO UPDATE CONTENT

While RSS feeds and subscriptions to news wire services are two sources of fresh information for a digital signage network, where will updated content conveying your company's specific messages and current offerings come from?



A digital signage network that attracts attention has an insatiable appetite for fresh content. Thus, it's essential that an organization taking on a digital signage network assign a qualified, competent person to the task of creating that content. Without someone in charge of the network's content, the text, graphics and video being displayed will soon grow tired. Stale content will have the opposite of the desired result for a digital sign. It actually will drive viewers away and impart a sense of "been there, done that" that will be difficult to reverse.

NO. 6: TAKING THE CHEAP WAY OUT

There's nothing wrong with being budget conscious about a digital signage installation; however, selecting products, including displays, controllers and software, and services like content creation solely on their price tags can result in a system that in the long wrong will cost an organization dearly.

Spending money on an inexpensive system just because it's cheap could cost a business or organization far more than the money saved in lost opportunities.



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Systems designed solely on the price of the components miss the point. Digital signage networks are about communicating information -perhaps a marketing message, maps and directions or instructions- to their intended audience. Spending money on an inexpensive system just because it's cheap could cost a business or organization far more in lost opportunities than the money saved.

NO. 7: NOT KNOWING THE LOCATIONS OF THE SIGNS

Knowing where your organization wants to locate the flat panel monitors in its digital signage network is important for a few reasons. First, locating the digital signage content players needed depends on where the sign or signs they're controlling are located. The length of cable runs between player and sign must be taken into account. Clearly defining the location of the signs will allow you to minimize construction/renovation expense and avoid paying for "do overs."

Second, understanding exactly where the signs will be positioned will make it easier to understand what will be needed to mount the flat panels in use. Are wall studs available where a sign will be located? Or, will a freestanding structure be required? What's the condition of the wall studs? Is electrical power available? What's the status of ambient light sources? Will a window or skylight need to be shaded to reduce glare?

Third, not knowing where the signs need to be located may be a symptom of a bigger problem, namely not having a clear idea about the purpose of the digital signage installation.





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NO. 8: INSTALLERS WITHOUT GENERAL CONTRACTOR CAPABILITY

Installing digital signage can be messy. Drywall and plaster may need to be cut. New electrical plugs with isolated grounds may need to be installed. Beyond those obvious construction challenges, less apparent structural modifications may be required. Those can vary from relocating HVAC ducts to re-enforcing walls.

For that reason, choosing a digital signage installer without the skill and experience to serve as a general contractor for the project can be a big mistake. Depending on the specific installation, it's not unreasonable to assume carpenters, electricians, plumbers and even heating and cooling contractors might need to be involved to make necessary structural modifications. Having an installer who can serve as a general contractor to bring those diverse resources together and manage them properly can save lots of time and expense.

Failing to allocate sufficient time to learn how to use the system not only could be embarrassing in front of management, but disastrous to your communications efforts with the general public, if they're your first audience.

NO. 9: FAILING TO ALLOT ADEQUATE TIME TO LEARN THE SYSTEM

Far too often, the people responsible for new digital signage installations at businesses or organizations are so excited about their systems that they can't wait to show them off to upper management. After all, a significant sum of money went in to making the digital signage network a reality. So showing it off as soon as possible only seems natural.



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However, creating content for a digital signage system, scheduling it and making changes to playback along the way require some skill. It takes time to be properly trained to use a digital signage network. Failing to allocate sufficient time to learn how to use the system not only could be embarrassing in front of management, but disastrous to your communications efforts with the general public, if they're your first audience.

NO. 10: FAILING TO KEEP FUTURE EXPANSION IN MIND AT THE TIME OF INITIAL DESIGN

Designing yourself into a box when first contemplating a digital signage network can be costly. Without casting an eye towards future needs, it's possible that portions of the network might need replacement before they've been amortized to accommodate expansion.

Without exception, experience shows that businesses and organizations that fund the addition of digital signage networks express interest in expanding their systems after they're installed.

Taking these lessons to heart as your organization proceeds with its digital signage rollout will maximize the odds that the goals envisioned for the system will be met. Failing to do so will result in wasted time, resources and money. Even more important are the missed opportunities to communicate an organization's message because of being mired in avoidable problems.

Keywest Technology has years of experience guiding those who are new to digital signage on a path that avoids these traps. Simply contact Keywest Technology when your organization is contemplating adding a digital signage network to benefit from our experience and navigate around the pitfalls.

