

## Effective Content for Digital Out-of-Home Advertising

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When it comes to effective digital out-of-home advertising, what's on the screen matters as much or more than the screen itself.

Designing content for digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising isn't the same as designing content for traditional media such as print, radio or television, because DOOH can engage consumers wherever they are and deliver targeted messages.

At the end of the day, though, all content must be driven by the consumer and what is going to engage him.

### Keeping it close to home

Outcast Media, which operates a network of more than 12,000 video screens mounted on convenience-store fuel pumps, faces the challenge of providing intriguing content every day.

"Our case is a little more unique than other cases," said Matthew Stoudt, CEO of the Los Angeles-based company.

"At the gas pump, we literally have one of the most captive audiences you can imagine,

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*Keeping content interesting, such as by offering customers a chance to win money, draws attention to the digital signage screen and provides an attentive audience to advertisers.*

because they are stuck there with a six-foot rubber hose," he said. "So our issue is not getting them to look up at the screen, but getting them to pay attention to the screen for longer than the intro comments."

Effective digital signage content is "sticky," that is, it gives its intended audience a reason to take a glance, and another and another.

"Digital signage pages built with stickiness in mind tap into a subconscious longing on the part of a viewer for something that's

relevant, interesting and fresh,” said David Little, director of marketing for Lenexa, Kan.-based digital signage provider Keywest Technology. “The fundamental step toward building stickiness into digital signage content is recognizing one simple fact: Most people in any given society share common interests in some very basic things.”

Weather information is a great sticky topic, Little says. News, sports scores, stock market averages and traffic reports also are likely to attract the eyes of consumers.

Keywest Technology has partnered with Tulsa, Okla.-based audio/video marketing company IOHI to roll out Keywest’s MediaZone digital signage hardware and software solution as the centerpiece of a new digital signage system at Jiffy Lube franchisee shops around the country.

Flat-panel LCD screens located in Jiffy Lube waiting areas take an incoming feed, such as a cable or satellite television channel, and incorporate custom Jiffy Lube product and branding videos showing the franchisee’s latest offers, product information and promotions.

Jiffy Lube-branded ads also rotate in the schedule of on-screen presentations, and custom ticker messaging and time and temperature info have been added to grab and hold viewer attention.

“Hopefully, we can help Jiffy Lube upsell their customers while they are watching CNN or whatever they have playing at the time,” said Dana Justus, director of operations for IOHI.

A new buzzword making the rounds in the digital signage industry is “hyperlocal,”

meaning something that is in close proximity to a customer (such as in the neighborhood where he lives) as opposed to something that is in the general vicinity (such as in the city).

For marketers relying on digital signage to advance their communications goals, hyperlocality is an important concept to grasp and leverage. A digital signage application featuring some sort of available “hyperlocal” news, information or data will give patrons an incentive to look at the digital sign and, in so doing, see the marketing information that’s being presented.

Featured content can even be delivered by daypart — for example, traffic information in the morning while people are on their way to work and overnight weather information in the evening when they are on their way home.



*An increased resolution allows the screen to be segmented and helps customers enjoy the same high-quality experience they would with HD electronics in their own home. Photo courtesy of IOHI.*

Consider the case of a retail store specializing in camping, fishing and hunting equipment, where informal research shows 80 percent of customers fish, hunt and camp in the immediate area and 60 percent of those customers take a fishing, hunting or camping trip within five days of their visit to the store.

“With those two critical pieces of information — where the customers go and when they go there — it would be relatively simple to build ‘hyperlocal’ information into the shop’s digital signage playback to help build and hold the attention of patrons,” Little said. “State or county conservation department data might reveal lake levels, average water temperatures and other information for area lakes likely to be visited by fishermen shopping at the store. Similarly, weather information and forecasts are widely available that could be used to help shoppers determine conditions before they head for the great outdoors.”

Jiffy Lube’s digital signage system allows the company to slot ads depending on the location of the shop; for example, advertising automobile winterization services in areas that experience severe winters. Some franchisees have even created ads spotlighting employees of that particular location, showing their years of experience, certifications and so forth.

“It’s just a reassuring thing for the customers to see,” Justus said.

### Display

It’s not just what’s delivered on a digital screen that’s important, experts say. The resolution at which it’s delivered is a key factor as well.

***It’s essential to have insight into why people are at a venue, how long they are there, what they are doing right before they arrive and what they are doing after they leave.***

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Consumers are adopting high definition (HD) as a standard for video delivery. According to research firm In-Stat, more than 39 million households in the United States have an installed HDTV set.

And despite the ongoing recession, consumers are projected to buy high-definition consumer electronics at an ever-increasing pace. Research firm iSuppli forecasts unit shipments of HD products to triple from 2008 to 2012, when they will number 202 million.

So what does any of this have to do with digital signage? Quite a lot, Little said.

“The same people who live in HD households and watch their high-def TVs day in and day out also are seeing digital signage messaging at airports, hotels, stores and restaurants,” he said. “The growing tide of people exposed daily to high-def programming and televisions demands professional digital signage communicators to ask themselves how well their digital signage messaging holds up to what consumers see every day in their homes on their HDTVs.”

The increased resolution offers the ability to segment the screen, displaying multiple messages at once.

The public increasingly will judge the digital signage messaging they see against what’s seen at home, Little says. Digital signage content producers who lag behind the growing public appetite for high definition

run the risk of sapping the “wow” factor from digital signs.

“While keeping a close eye on capital is a reality of doing business in today’s economic climate, it’s equally real that the number of folks at home with HDTVs is growing,” Little said. “To stay competitive for their attention, deploying high-def digital signs and creating HD content will increasingly become just another cost of doing business — one that even the most frugal business manager won’t be able to afford to ignore.”

Even the choice of colors makes a difference, said Hank Anderson, a content scheduler for outdoor advertising company CBS Outdoor. The company has partnered with Keywest on several digital out-of-home projects.

“For static content, if you do a light background with darker text, you’ll see it a lot better,” Anderson said. “But with digital, if you do that the text will get washed out.” He recommends that with darker backgrounds, the message should be displayed a little brighter.

### Timing is everything

For a network to deliver an effective message, content providers must understand their target audience and develop content to attract that audience.

Effective content depends on the venue, experts say. It’s essential to have insight into how people are going in and out of that venue, why they are there, how long they are there, what they are doing right before they arrive and what they are doing after they leave.



Interactivity keeps customers engaged, making DOOH a more effective medium for advertisers. Photo courtesy of One Media Wireless.

“This is not a medium where you can just redeploy 30-minute sitcoms across all venues,” said Suzanne La Forgia, president of the Out-of-Home Video Advertising Bureau. “It is very important that networks are deploying content that considers how people are experiencing the space.”

Content that may be effective in a situation where viewers are waiting in line won’t be effective in cases where viewers are simply passing by.

In the case of Outcast, the company has to deliver its message in the time it takes for customers to fill up their gas tank.

“Because it is a short dwell time, our content has to be 15- to 30-second clips, so we don’t have the ability to do long-form and

we don't have the ability to do something that creates a long narrative," Stoudt said. "It has to be more along the lines of grab-and-go."

### What tomorrow holds

The future of digital out-of-home advertising is likely tied to another buzzword: interactivity. Instead of being a passive message delivery system, digital signage applications are likely to engage consumers on a more personal level.

Interaction with mobile phones via Bluetooth and text messaging will continue to grow, experts say. Advertisers will be able to offer personalized features such as coupons and other media via the handset, and tracking these interactions to measure the success of a network also will play a part in the overall success of the campaign.

Consumer tracking via facial recognition also is becoming a reality. Several network deployers are testing applications that can sense the gender and approximate age of passersby, giving advertisers valuable information about who is exposed to the message. Future applications will be able to deliver content based on the characteristics of those viewing the screen at any particular time.

According to a white paper commissioned by Keywest Technology partner 1-2-1 View

Media Holdings, these emerging technologies will be able to deliver proof to advertisers that there are individuals who are looking at digital out-of-home ads. And since these technologies are automated, they can effectively collect audience metrics information 24 hours a day, seven days a week, providing a 100-percent sampling of audience information.

And ultimately, consumers will become immersed in the message itself. To glimpse the potential of interactivity in the digital signage space, one need only to visit the Shark Reef attraction at the Mandalay Bay Hotel and Casino in Las Vegas. Screens advertising the 1.3-million-gallon aquarium incorporate infrared cameras that sense passersby. A projection of an aquarium scene moves in tandem with the image of a person walking nearby, bubbling and swirling around their shadow.

"It's very difficult to walk by that wall without reacting to it," Little said. "It is a great way to get someone's attention."

**About the sponsor:** *Keywest Technology, based in Lenexa, Kansas, provides dynamic digital signage solutions, customized content and interactive software. The company offers simple yet powerful tools that blend multiple media types, including video, animation, text and graphics, into an eye-catching page, build playlists, schedule playout and manage changes as they occur.*