Digital Signage Buyer's Guide

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Chapter 1

Uses & Benefits of Digital Signage

Communication through digital signage is one of the most cutting-edge strategies for messaging in our modern advertising landscape. While digital signage can be applied to industries of all kinds, it's particularly useful for those that require attention-grabbing and flexible messaging:

Corporate communication
Healthcare
Food service
Education
Government

It's a great way to provide clear, direct messaging, but it's also a powerful way to improve advertising ROI. A 2012 survey of American consumers by FedEx found that 76 percent of shoppers will enter a store they've never visited based solely on its signage. What's more, 68 percent of these consumers believe that a store's signage reflects the quality of its products or services.

The benefits are great, but implementing a digital signage strategy can be complicated. There are plenty of factors to consider, including the company's needs, signage hardware, software, content management strategy, and the signage vendor.

With that in mind, we've compiled a digital signage buying guide to walk customers through the purchasing process.

Chapter 2

Components of Digital Signage

Every digital signage solution has three components:

Hardware – Video screens, media players, and cables

Software – Applications, widgets, and the content management system (CMS) that brings it all together

Content – Video, images, feeds, text, and any other messaging put on display.

Each of these components will affect the capabilities of the signage solution and the types of messages that can be displayed, but regardless of the chosen hardware and software, the setup and deployment follow a simple process.

1. **Digital signage screens are mounted and installed in locations that maximize visibility and viewer engagement.**
2. **Signage media players are connected to each screen via HDMI or DVI cable. Each of these players connects wirelessly to the internet, and each screen will require its own player.**
3. **Users log in to their CMS dashboard—accessible via the cloud from any web browser—to create custom content templates and schedules for each signage screen.**
4. **The media player pulls content from this CMS and stores it within the device until it's ready for display.**
5. **The media player displays content on each screen as scheduled, with the user controlling content, scheduling, and layout remotely via CMS.**
6. **After publication, content can be removed, updated, or rescheduled via CMS dashboard, creating a simple, user-friendly system for digital messaging.**

Chapter 3

Choosing a Digital Signage Player/Hardware

Don't progress further in our digital signage buying guide until you understand your hardware! In this chapter, we'll review different types of players, storage options, input devices, and the different operating systems (OS) that run on each device.

Digital Signage Players

Digital signage players come in two styles:

External Players: These are small devices (about the size of a router) that come preloaded with digital signage software. These devices tether to each display and connect to the CMS via Wi-Fi, creating a powerful and flexible display solution.

System on a Chip (SoC): SoC devices are similar to Amazon Fire Sticks or Google's Chromebit. These convenient tools turn nearly any television or digital screen into a digital signage tool and save users the hassle of connecting devices or cords. However, they typically feature less flexibility in content storage and overall function.

Storage Options

In terms of storage for your content, users have two options: The newer solid state drive (SSD) and the older hard disk drive (HDD).

These days, SSD storage is the preferred option due to its speed, reliability, and smaller size. It's more expensive than HDDs, but it's important to understand that HDDs offer higher levels of storage than SSDs.

Therefore, content strategies that demand large amounts of video may be too much for SSD devices to handle. In these cases, HDD storage may be the better choice.

Input Devices

The input devices used to connect digital screens to their media players also come in two styles:

DVI: DVI cables are larger, typically featuring a 24-pin connection point. These cables are the older option of the two and support video only—meaning that an additional input will be needed for users who need audio in their signage display.

HDMI: HDMI cables feature connection points about the size of a USB contact. HDMI supports both video and audio and is the newer of the two options—making it the ideal choice for most digital signage installations.

Operating System Options

Users will also need to select which OS will house their software.

Windows: Stable and familiar with plenty of flexibility

iOS: Popular and stable, though rare to see in a digital signage solution

Android: Free and user-friendly, though limited in function

Chrome: Another free and easy-to-use option. However, its long-term performance is untested in the digital signage market

Linux: Unmatched flexibility and customization but with a steep learning curve

Chapter 4

Selecting Digital Signage Software

Next, users will need to select digital signage software for creating, controlling, and scheduling their content. Ask these questions before committing to a solution:

Does it coordinate easily across every device in the organization?

Can it manage other types of signage (mobile devices, touch screen kiosks, etc.) in addition to mounted displays?

Is it easy to use for content creation and layout organization?

How well does it integrate with other data sources, such as Excel sheets, dashboards, or websites?

Can it adapt for CAP alert messaging in times of crisis?

Users also need to think about device security, how much support they'll need, and whether they'll want a one-time cost or an ongoing subscription for services. Before committing to digital signage software, users should identify their must-have features, content, and integrations, and then compare this list against available vendors.

Chapter 5

Content for Digital Signage

Content is the engine that powers digital signage and, naturally, is a significant topic for any digital signage buying guide. Content is the way signage users connect with their viewers and the way they achieve a stronger ROI with their digital signage.

Develop a Content Foundation

A content foundation is the underlying framework that will determine what content is created and how it's displayed. Here's a brief outline of the process:

Determine goals: What will the content achieve?

Develop a strategy: Based on these goals, how will the content be assembled and what applications/widgets will best suit its needs?

Assign a digital signage champion: Make sure the organization has a dedicated point-person for digital signage decisions, support, and advocacy.

Which Content Elements Should Be Included?

Every content template used should feature several elements, regardless of industry:

Text elements: Written material that provides vital information. Balance this with other design elements and white space for maximum effect.

Content design elements: Aspects of design that enhance the written message; photos, charts, videos, and graphical elements all fall into this category.

Call to action: No matter what message the signage is pushing, there should be a clear and direct call to action that compels consumers to interact with the brand.

Best Practices for Content Creation

Not all content is created equal! Make sure all content posted on digital signage is crafted with care:

Visual appeal: Above all, content needs to look good. Get familiar with the elements of design, color schemes, and white space balance to make sure each layout is easy on the eyes.

Quality control: If users misspell words or create unappealing layouts, it'll damage the value of the messaging. A thorough quality control process for all published materials is a must.

Chapter 6

Qualities to Look for In a Digital Signage Provider

Next in our digital signage buying guide is a brief review of how to select the best digital signage provider. Users should take care to research their options thoroughly before committing to a vendor:

Ask about experience: Are they known in the industry? What's their track record? Look for customer testimonials or case studies that prove the quality of their service.

Learn about pricing: Different providers offer different pricing packages based on the client's needs. Users should consider whether they need just one element of a digital signage solution (hardware, software, etc.) or a full turnkey solution that includes all the components.

Understand their service options: Does the provider stand behind its products? What are its policies for support, ongoing maintenance, warranties, and customer service?

Meeting industry-specific needs: Some providers specialize in healthcare digital signage, while others may specialize in retail options. Work with a provider who can deliver exactly what's needed and avoid making concessions for the sake of convenience.

Chapter 7

Planning Your Digital Signage System

With the above chapters of our digital signage buying guide established, it's time to plan the digital signage network itself. Use these as a guide:

1. Identify Goals: As before, think about the purpose of digital signage before installing it in the building. Some areas will feature higher foot traffic than others and will do well with fast-moving signage, while other areas—such as waiting rooms—have a captive audience with time to read longer messaging.

2. Determine the Scope: How many digital screens are needed? Is it a single signage installment in a healthcare office? Or a company-wide shift to digital advertising across multiple locations?

3. Know the Budget: Be sure to factor in other issues aside from the initial signage investment, such as the projected ROI from the solution.

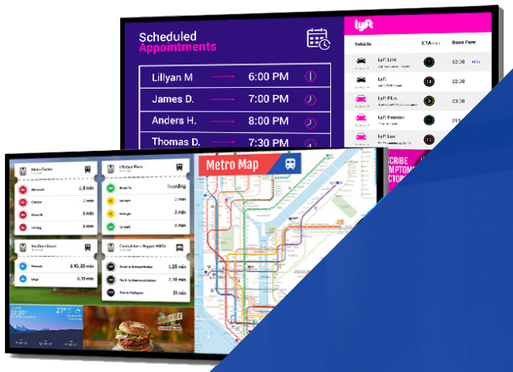
4. Know the Deadlines: Digital signage integrations don't happen overnight, and the signage provider will need a timetable for installing and setting up equipment across locations.

5. Connect With the Stakeholders: Who are the primary decision-makers in these processes? Is it the marketing department? The IT department? Each stakeholder in the digital signage investment will need to be consulted, so make sure everyone is kept in the loop.

6. Which Content Is Needed: Users can rely on built-in content delivered through the CMS in a pinch, but companies will see the best ROI by creating their own customized content layouts.

7. Learn the Provider's Additional Services: A quality digital signage provider will offer services beyond consultation and installation; the best ones will help an organization completely optimize its digital signage investment across all fronts:

   Implementation | Content design | Maintenance and troubleshooting
   Personalized usage training | Signature care support



Chapter 8

Screen Guide for Digital Signage

There are plenty of screen options for digital signage these days—too many for our digital signage buying guide to cover! During the screen selection phase, keep these issues in mind to help make the decision:

Are commercial-grade screens needed? Or can the company get by with lower cost consumer-grade screens?

Which resolution will best support the messaging? Most companies can get by with basic HD screens, although companies that want to display highly-engaging visual content may enjoy the benefits of 4K screens.

Of course, the optimal locations for each screen will need to be determined:

- Screen size
- Screen location in the building
- Optimal viewing angles along paths of travel
- Distance from viewers

If users are unsure about these decisions, the digital signage provider will be able to help locate the optimal locations for signage impact.

Chapter 9

The Mvix Advantage

Our clients continue to use our digital signage platform for four main reasons:

1. Our software is content-rich i.e. it has over 50 content apps that auto-update. This means our clients always have fresh content on their screens to keep their audiences engaged.

2. The content apps include simple ones like social media to custom ones like dashboards. This enables you to easily communicate with different audiences in the same facility.

3. Our software is straightforward and easy to use. The user-friendly interface and simple navigation make using digital signage easy.

4. Our solutions, which include software and hardware, are affordable so the ROI, whether monetary or qualitative, is a lot easier to achieve.

These are the rewards you can expect in your digital signage deployment. Our teams will work with you to find a solution that fits your budget, organization and culture:

13 Years of Innovation & Experience: we've been improving our digital signage solutions since 2005, releasing new content apps every quarter, so you can rely on us to be there consistently.

Strong Community: we have a powerful community of customers, integration partners and technology partners to make sure our clients have a successful digital signage deployment.

BrightSign · chrome · LG webOS · MJ FREEWAY

AVI SPL · PHILIPS · PLANAR

Experienced Consultants: our Solutions Consultants stay with us an average of 7 years, so you know you are working with an experienced team to deploy digital signage that will engage your audience.

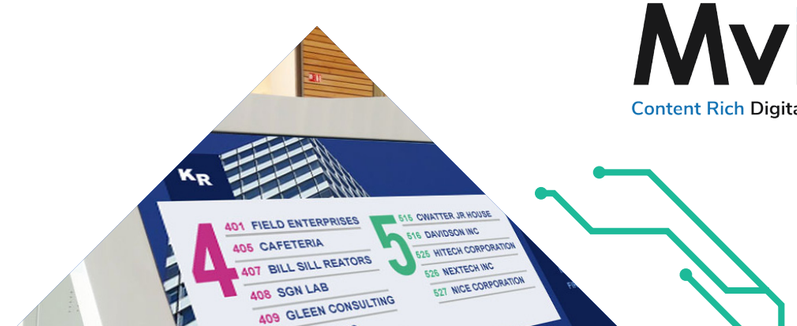
Award-Winning Creative Team – with over 11 years of experience, you can work with our design team like they are your own team to provide anything from still and interactive designs for employee & customer communication, directories, videos walls and more.

Project Management & Implementation: each client gets a dedicated project manager to direct their deployment for a successful, on-time launch, whether you're working independently or with an integrator.

Extensive Training & Knowledgebase : we provide custom, personalized trainings as well as monthly webinars about software updates and new features. Our vast library of FAQs, guides and video tutorials will help you get the most from our solutions.

Superior Support: our tech support team has a 94% CSAT. They can be reached via email, phone or web with coast-to-coast coverage hours. Our Signature Care program includes free device replacement and unlimited warranty among other perks.

With over 50,000 active screens being powered by our software, Mvix has what it takes to help your brand connect with people better.



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866.310.4923
www.mvixdigitalsignage.com

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