

ARE YOU PLUGGED INTO THE BENEFITS OF DIGITAL SIGNAGE?

Industry experts explore how, when, and where
to get started



INTRODUCTION

Ten years ago, digital signage was largely used to replace posters and hard copy signage. Today, through the advent of interactive high-definition displays, cloud-based platforms, and networked hardware, digital signage offers a world of expanded capabilities. It's a valuable tool for supporting both external and internal communications; improving collaboration, engagement, and alignment; and in some cases, even bettering the bottom line. In fact, 57% of communications professionals now use corporate digital signage within their organization, which is **leading to 21% higher productivity.**¹

Here's what industry experts have to say about how, when, and where to deploy digital signage successfully across your organization so you can get plugged into its many benefits.

No Longer a One-Way Street

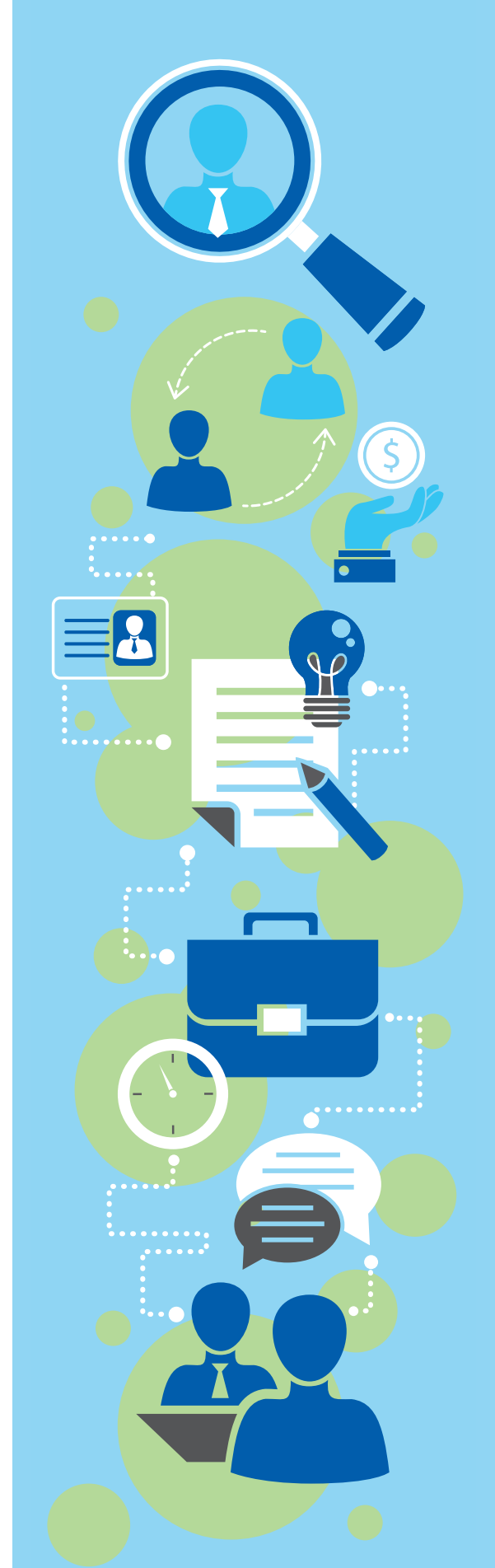
Historically, digital signage was a one-way channel for managers to communicate information to their employees. With the ability to leverage technologies, incorporate interactivity, and promote employee-created content, that's no longer the case. Digital signage can foster two-way communications and engagement.²

And that's what Millennials and Gen Z'ers expect. As Dave Watson, founder and managing director at Neugame Communications, explains, "Millennials and Gen Z'ers are digital natives. They've grown up in a digital environment, and they want to engage with screens, to be able to do live chats, to interact face-to-face digitally."

It's only within the last 3 to 5 years, he says "that enterprises have realized using digital channels actually brings their companies up to the prevailing standard in terms of meeting expectations, and providing real-time information in an agile way – a manner that single emails and print can't do." It's also a more effective vehicle for reaching hourly workers who may not check email frequently.

The barrier to entry for many organizations has been that marketing dollars are almost always focused on attracting customers. It can be difficult to justify the capital expense for engaging internal audiences. Yet, many companies are realizing that if they can boost communications to improve productivity and operational efficiency, they will likely save money in the long run and improve their bottom lines.

According to a McKinsey Report, unengaged employees are like weights around an organization, which can lead to slower growth and high-turnover rates.³



Realizing its Power

The key is to understand the power of digital signage and create a formal plan for how to use the channel to engage employees, strengthen your brand, and take the pulse of how employees feel. Experts advise that digital signage is ideal as a supplemental tool to support other communications.

“You wouldn’t put the full HR Benefits Guide on your screens, but you can use it to promote the open enrollment period,” Mr. Watson explains. Signage should rotate a loop of 10 to 12 slides, with appealing graphics and a low word count, so that there is a good chance people will see a full cycle of messages with each message staying up for 15 to 20 seconds. If you need to provide detailed information, refer them to where they can find it.

“More often than not,” Elisabeth Wang, executive director, communications and public relations for Piedmont Healthcare explains, “Digital signage reinforces messages. Employees can reference and learn deeper content that lives elsewhere, but you can take advantage of their micro-moments in downtime.”

Digital signage can also prove useful during crisis communications. It offers an enterprise the ability to send urgent messages with confidence that employees will see them quickly.

“It’s not the only way we’ll communicate during a crisis, but it is an additional vehicle for time-sensitive information,” Ms. Wang says. “Because it is immediate, messaging can be pushed out and pulled back. You can’t retract an email when the problem is fixed, but you can take down digital messaging as soon as it’s no longer relevant.”

Employees also like digital signage because it is not an intrusive medium; it is passive until they choose to actively look at it or not.

For the enterprise, the use of digital signage can be “emblematic of the company being future-focused, even at the store level,” Mr. Watson says. “If you see an organization using cool graphics or state-of-the-art technology like digital signage, it makes you feel that you’re working for, or engaging with a forward-looking company.”

Sign of the Times

According to an article by Matt Boyd on Unily.com, digital signage is the future of internal communications because:

- It’s cheaper than print media.
- It’s more responsive and can be updated to reflect changing moods or the latest deals within seconds.
- It works - research shows **digital signage is 34% more effective** at promoting items than static displays.





Did You See That?

Of course, digital signage can come in many shapes and sizes. But in general, you can't miss a huge display that's on the wall, playing content every day, helping to drive message recall rates as high as 83%. For the digital generation raised on a diet of TV and videos, the screen can transfix.⁴

For that reason, Theresa Birr, former internal director of communications at a Fortune 500 retailer, says, "You want engaging content that is clear and concise. Motion graphics can help grab people's attention since each message has only a minute or less for someone to take it all in."

In a fast-moving environment, another prime benefit of digital signage is the ability to make changes on the fly and deploy messaging immediately to multiple locations, says Mr. Watson. For distributed enterprises, like national or regional retail brands, healthcare facilities, or college campuses, it is essential to have the ability for locations to receive content quickly and efficiently. Information can also be tailored by region or district.



Digital signage platforms also typically provide the ability to customize information to individual locations. One approach is to reserve 25% of the content mix for site-specific information that can be interspersed with other company specifics.

“It’s an easy way to deliver very localized messages,” Ms. Wang stresses. “If the Kona Ice truck is showing up at a site, you can promote that and target only the site that’s involved and interested. It’s also a powerful way to reinforce the brand, if you make sure the displays and images are consistently tied to the brand’s creative look and feel – even when you’re promoting the Kona Ice truck.”

Leadership will often see value in making the shift from producing, printing, and shipping kits and materials to a location to being able to have instant updates that can be far more engaging, with content that is customized and can change daily.



Get Out the Vote

One way to leverage internal digital signage and social media is to encourage employees to share custom hashtags that will be displayed in breakrooms or the cafeteria. For example, create special tags for weekend adventures, culinary creations, and travel photos on Instagram, then feature the posts on a screen in the common areas.⁵

Ms. Wang says that digital signage “can also be a great tool to recognize employees for living the organization’s values, upholding the mission, and reinforcing an organization’s culture. Employees love to see themselves. They love to see their co-workers. Anytime we launch new technology, we include photos of employees at kick-off and during the ‘go live’ event. Those are always the most frequented pages.”

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With platforms that support interactivity, employees can even participate in simple polls that are delivered by SMS or text message. Examples might include voting on the next team event or on which charity to support. Live poll results can be displayed on screens to increase participation and interest. That means enabling employees to “communicate up.”

All of these examples show how the right technology can take even the simplest messages to the next level, sparking the type of two-way communications and real-time information your employees crave and expect.

Fully 50% of employees post about their employer on social media.⁶

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