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DIGITAL SIGNAGE
BEST
PRACTICES

Get practical, real-world advice and best practices for a successful signage strategy.

Whether you're buying digital signage for the first time, looking to expand your current system, or doing an audit, this guide can help. We've compiled best practices from 20 years of serving customers using everything from a single screen in the lobby to campus-wide and global signage deployments. Regardless of your goals, environment or audience, these tips can help you **communicate better**.

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Planning for Success

Successful signage starts long before you put up a single screen. You'll need to outline objective for your team, technology, communications and workflows. The more you can plan in advance, the fewer surprises, unexpected costs and delays down the road.

Build your team

Identify a technical leader (probably someone in your IT department) who will install, network and maintain the physical hardware. Identify a content leader who understands communications and what type of information you'll be sharing with your audience. Be sure to create cheerleaders: without people to adopt, promote and champion your signage strategy, you can lose momentum over time.

Agree on goals

Nail down what you want to achieve with all stakeholders, and be specific. Get input from HR and marketing managers, department directors and executives. Write down what everyone says in as much detail as possible – this will help you determine ways to measure your ROI.

Map out screens

Place displays in high-traffic areas and don't let wiring dictate placement. You can also mount small displays in cubicles, computer stations, or even cafeteria booths. Consider touchscreens and digital room signs for conference rooms and other shared spaces. Make sure you are ADA compliant.

Consider content

List out the types, sources and brand standards for communications you'll want to publish. Be sure to include any subscriptions, data feeds or applications you'll want to tie into the system. Do you have in-house designers? If not, you may need to budget for creative help.

Plan policies

Draw out workflows for how the system will operate within your organization's hierarchy. List who can contribute, approve and manage content. Outline basic branding, formatting rules and policies. If you're using the system for emergency alerts, create a separate crisis communications policy.

Write a project plan

Detail key action items, timeframes and resources for installation, operation and expenses for 18-24 months. Map out the location of displays and which screens will show what, and address IT issues like connectivity, network and security policies. Be sure to budget for technical support and updates.

Shopping for Software

Make sure you involve an experienced digital signage AV/IT integrator, and ask them to review your plans. Once you've got a potential software vendor, review technical specs and network requirements to make sure the system meets your needs. Then, ask some important questions:

Is it designed for organizational communications?

Workflows are different in offices and campuses, so you don't want a CMS that's made for restaurants or airports. Look for software specifically designed for organizational communications with features like Active Directory authentication, configurable user roles and remote engagement tools.

Does it have easy design tools?

Not everyone is a graphic designer. Make sure your software has easy design and scheduling tools, as well as good-looking templates so people can create beautiful messages quickly and easily. You'll also want to be sure you can import files types your organization is already using.

Does it allow for data integration?

A lot of what you'll want on screen is already in another system you're using. Make sure your CMS can easily import event schedules, weather, news, Excel, XML, JSON, dashboards, social media, SharePoint, webpages and other data that's important to your audience. Be sure you can configure exactly what shows up on screens and when.

Can you manage content for touchscreens?

Interactivity is becoming the norm, so plan for it now or in the near future. Make sure your CMS lets you manage content on touchscreens, and has tools built into the designer so you can add your own interactive elements to layouts. You don't want to have to hire a design company every time you need to add a button or change a link.

Can you use it for alert notifications?

Make sure your CMS can override scheduled content with a few clicks for severe weather, safety alerts and other emergency notifications. The application should be built around Common Alerting Protocol (CAP) standards, and give you the option to replace messages on the entire system or choose specific players to override for local alerts.

What are the purchasing options?

Define your budget and how you'd like to structure payment. Then ask vendors if they offer bundled systems, software-only, hosted cloud or on-premise solutions. Do they offer subscriptions or perpetual licenses? How easy is it to switch plans or expand in the future?

Implementing the System

How your system gets deployed will be unique to you. You might work with an AV or IT company, or you may have your own IT department manage the install.

Consider a pilot

Test your equipment, processes and content on a small-scale before rolling it out across your entire organization. This lowers risk by evaluating goals and resources in a controlled environment. It can also increase stakeholder buy-in through participation, adjustment and final roll out of the system.

Attend training

Take advantage of custom training to address the specific needs of your organization, and focus on the features that are most important to you. Complete courses as close as possible to your implementation date, so you can start using your system while the knowledge is still fresh. Always try to purchase a training subscription if you can, so you can go back to those materials and train new team members.

Prep for launch

When your screens go live, you want to make sure they wow the crowds. Be sure to queue up some stunning content for launch day. Be sure to have at least two branded layouts ready, and include date, time, weather and event schedules, since these are the most popular types of content.

Make a fuss

Once you've run your pilot and made the necessary tweaks, roll out the system across your organization and make a splash. Advertise why you're doing it and what you hope to achieve in some fun, creative way. Make sure your audience understands how you're trying to meet their needs and how they can provide feedback.

Creating Content

The best-planned system can be ruined by poor screen content. Good content means attractive, clear messages that grab attention, are easily understood, and motivate people to do something.

Understand your audience

Know your audiences' interests and needs, and understand the differences between viewers in different roles, generations and locations. Be sure to localize your communications – the people in Denver might not need to get the same messages as Dayton. Look into what motivates your viewers – KPIs, recognition, gamification, etc. – and build your content strategy around that. If you're not sure, ask them.

Design beautiful content

Design specifically for your digital signs whenever possible. Keep text to a minimum and use campaigns for longer messaging. Use established design practices for color, contrast and aspect ratios, and get your content creators some basic design training, if needed. Make it easy and take mistakes out of the creation process by setting up templates for quick message design, especially for repetitive tasks.

Include calls to action (CTA)

Include a call to action in every message so you can measure engagement. Drive viewers to more information or reward them with a discount at the café. Experiment with different CTAs like URLs, QR codes, coupon codes and hashtags to see which your audience responds to. Every call to action should be measurable and used only on digital signs for true ROI.

Get hands-off

It can be a challenge to create content every day. Consider automated feeds and subscriptions to lessen the workload for your content team. You can also set up auto-updating messages from data sources like calendars and countdowns, and ask your vendor about creative or managed services to outsource your content needs.

Maintaining Momentum

Once your system is up and running, you need to constantly monitor, adjust and motivate your team to engage your audience.

Refresh content

Don't let content or layouts get stale. If you've left something on your playlist too long because you forgot about it, your audience probably has too. Keep it fresh by showing new content every day, and show things more often for shorter time periods verses running one thing on the screen all day long.

Update software

Software updates offer additional features you'll want to take advantage of, and hardware eventually needs to be replaced. Be sure to budget funds for updates, or get a support or cloud subscription that includes new software releases. You'll also need to schedule downtime to install the upgrades.

Revisit training

Make sure everyone using the system gets regular training. Even though they might be comfortable when the system is launched, new features can need a bit of explanation in order to provide their intended benefits. Provide a list of resources or best practices that people can refer to.

Enhance and expand

Schedule an annual review of your system, processes and content. Look at expanding your digital signage by adding screens in new offices or new areas within buildings. Audit your workflows to see if you can streamline and improve. Consider new types of content, dashboards or interactive touchscreens to better engage your audience.

Get inspired

Take advantage of our free library of podcasts, masterclass guides, white papers and how-to videos to stay abreast of current signage and communications trends. Go to visix.com/resources today!
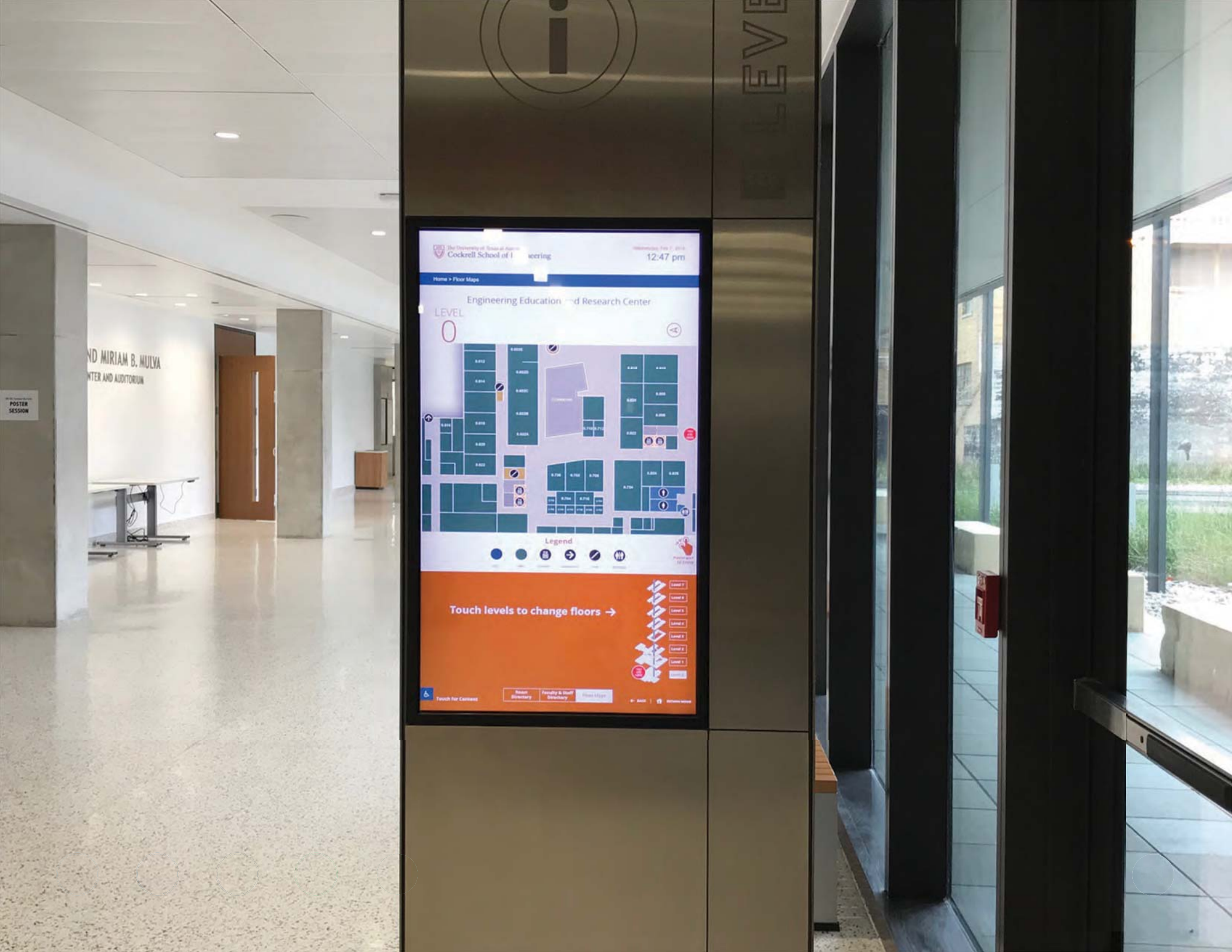
Want to learn more?

We're here to answer any questions you have about digital signage software, creative content designs and audience engagement.

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