Increase Efficiencies with **Room Management** and **Office Hoteling**

DIGITAL SIGNAGE WHITE PAPER

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We're here to help! If you have any questions about your application or our products, please contact us at **800.572.4935** or **salesteam@visix.com**.

Digital signage (DS) is a great tool that makes it easier for people to find your meetings and events, and gets them excited about those programs in advance.

Why continue to print banners, paste up room schedules, and clutter hallways with pop-up stands? You can save time, paper and waste by putting your event listings, promotional ads, wayfinding and more onto your digital signs.

Event Promotion

Successful event promotion requires saturation – advertising the event across multiple mediums where you're sure to catch your audience's eye. Digital signs should always be a part of your advertising mix.
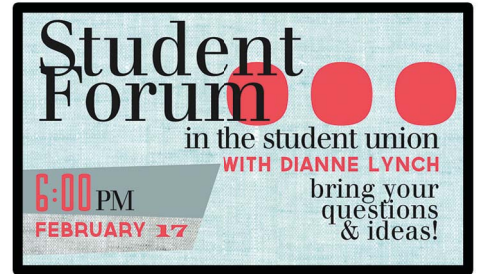
Most DS content management software allows for dayparting when you schedule messages. Dayparting – being able to schedule messages at specific times during specific days – gives you a huge advantage over printed posters and web notices. If you know your target audience will be in a particular building, lounge or lobby at a certain time, you can show them events they'll be interested in and grab their attention.

Make sure you always include a call to action in your event messages – like a link to a website with details, such as where to buy tickets or deadlines for registration – so your audience knows the next step they need to take. It's also a good idea to publish policies for submitting events for display if you have a large volume of events or a lot of people contributing to your DS, such as on a college campus.

One great idea is to use a QR tag in your message. This way, viewers can grab a snapshot of your message QR code and their smartphone will direct them to event details, ticket sales, maps, webpages or other resources that they can take with them.

Remember to keep messages clear and concise, and start communications at least one month before an event or deadline to build momentum.

Sharing Schedules

Every organization has meetings, conferences, training or some event that requires an itinerary or schedule. Why not publish your schedules on your DS system?

Event schedules posted to big screens allow for real-time updates that printed notices can't match. You can organize your schedule messages by date, topic or room – whatever system makes the most sense for your facility and your audience.

Most content management software has the ability to integrate popular calendar and scheduling applications, so you won't have to create your messages manually. This saves you time by pulling data straight from your application to automatically update displays throughout the day for timely and convenient delivery of agendas.

If you have event descriptions or instructions, deliver these in separate messages (perhaps in simultaneous windows on the screen) or refer viewers to the web for more information.

Wayfinding

If you're hosting an event, people have to be able to find their way to it. Wayfinding is a natural partner for event notices on digital signs.

Wayfinding can be anything from the event name and location with an arrow pointing in the right direction to a custom interactive design presented on a touchscreen. If you have a very simple facility map, you could show it as an image in a window next to the event announcement on your screens, or show both full-screen, one after the other.

Interactive wayfinding maps on touchscreens provide an engaging way to give your audience a lot of information in one place – maps, point-to-point directions, directories, facility information and more. You can use these as stand-alone kiosks, or pair them with your traditional DS by incorporating a hot spot into your screen layout.

We have two other white papers – *Get Interactive with Touchscreen Digital Signage Designs* and *10 Steps to Successful Interactive Wayfinding* – that cover these topics in detail.

Office Hoteling

Today's workforce is increasingly mobile, and there's been a shift in how workspaces accommodate on-the-move employees. Traditionally, companies have occupied entire buildings or floors of buildings with lots of private offices, conference rooms, and dedicated desks for employees. Recently, some organizations have started rethinking how they use their physical space – creating smaller, more communal areas that:

- Maximize existing workspace
- Foster more collaboration and teamwork
- Accommodate mobile and remote employees who don't need a dedicated space

Some studies show workers who are frequently out of the office (salespeople and the like) spend as little as 30% of their time physically in the office, and many companies have increasing numbers of workers who telecommute. So some are asking – why have permanent work spaces for everyone?

Hoteling simply means providing workspace on an as-needed basis, rather than the traditional one-workspace-per-person method. This reduces the amount of physical space needed, lowering overhead cost (by up to 30% in some cases) while ensuring that workers have access to office resources when they need them.

Mobility is not only inter-office (travelers), but also intra-office (in-house). Different employees may need different kinds of workstations at different times for different tasks (e.g. an enclosed office one day and open space the next and a meeting room the next - all within the same office). Studies show that physical desks are actually only used 45-50% of the time – employees may be in meetings, temporarily working in other departments, on training courses, traveling, on holiday or ill.

Basically, there are many full-time desks being occupied on a part-time basis. The average organizational cost of one desk is $10,000 a year, which wastes resources needlessly and costs the organization money. Hoteling reduces the number of desks you need and therefore reduces the amount of real estate necessary to contain all those desks, making your organization more flexible.

Hoteling is possible with handwritten notebooks or simple calendars, but these fail when scaled beyond a few desks. Convenient, scalable scheduling tools are required for success, and a single, centralized space management system is critical for large organizations. A hoteling system can be as simple as an interactive monitor with your scheduling software, so that people can book rooms from a central point, or as complex as a touchscreen map with the option to book a room instantly by touching it on the screen.

This is **not** hot desking, though many sources use the two terms interchangeably. Hot desking, which started back in the 1980s, was unassigned seating system with no reservations ahead of time – workers came to the office and then tried to find a space (and sometimes there were none available). This led to greatly increased worker dissatisfaction and organizational chaos.

Hoteling has taken the best ideas of hot desking and applied centralized scheduling for space management so that everyone can reserve their workspace in advance. This guarantees people have what they need to be happy and productive at work, while still providing organizational flexibility.

Some of the benefit of a hoteling environment are:
- Reduces real estate overhead by allocating workspace efficiently
- Accommodates a mobile workforce and promotes a telecommuting environment
- Improves utilization of shared spaces and reduces desk vacancy
- Provides greater flexibility in where and when to work
- Decreases energy consumption and costs
- Cuts down on IT, phone, furniture and other resources for permanent stations
- Increases employee satisfaction and improves talent acquisition/retention
- Unifies space management by employing centralized booking technologies

Ensuring staff and clients have a place to collaborate is one of the most important necessities in any organization. But it's not enough to just have the rooms; you have to provide effective room management.

People need to quickly and easily schedule the rooms and resources they're looking for if a hoteling strategy is to succeed. DS management solutions give you the tools to ensure your workforce's hoteling experience adds to their employment experience.

Digital Room Signs

If you have a large number of meeting rooms, why not extend your DS system to include individual room signs for each one? It's not as expensive as you might think.

Room signs are usually interactive panel-PCs that house both the media player and the screen. That saves you money on hardware, and they should tie right into your DS software for easy content management.

Interactive room signs can display reservations from the room scheduling application you use (like EMS or Exchange), and some interactive models allow you to reserve rooms right at the screen. If they can talk with your DS software, you'll be able to show your other content in addition to event schedules.

If you can, use Power over Ethernet (PoE) room signs that allow you to run one Ethernet cable to the meeting room sign that supplies both power and data, so you don't have to worry about concealing bulky power bricks.

Recently, offices and campuses are taking advantage of technology developed for the retail world. Electronic paper signs (EPS) are a great option if you just need to display room information and don't need interactivity at the sign. The models are battery operated and very affordable.

Content Ideas for Room Signs:
- **Event schedule** for current day, room, conference or facility
- **Maps** and/or interactive **wayfinding**
- Department or personnel **directories**
- Speaker **introductions** and **bios**
- Break and **registration** information
- **Shuttle** or **airport** information for traveling visitors
- **Alert** communications and emergency exit **directions**

Try to limit the number of items in your room sign's playlist to 3-4 items relevant to the events in that room that day. Remember that your main goal is to get people where they need to go quickly and conveniently.

Obligation as Opportunity*

You've spent a great deal of time and effort getting all of the details organized for a meeting or event, so it's understandable that sometimes it feels like displaying that information on your DS system is just a footnote at the tail end of the process. However, that final obligation should really be viewed as an opportunity…a chance to:

- raise awareness of – and involvement in – your programs and events
- create a positive experience for visitors, especially those new to your facility
- promote the image of your organization as one that cares about keeping people well-informed

No matter how extensively you've advertised a specific event (a training session or lecture, for example) or an ongoing initiative (such as a quarterly blood drive), there's no call to action quite as powerful as an eye-catching entry on a big screen in a lobby or hallway announcing that the session will be taking place soon.

People on the move have already overcome one of the primary factors in low event attendance: inertia. Potential attendees "at rest" tend to remain at rest, but get their attention while they are in motion, and they are much more likely to keep moving and ultimately attend the event.

Showing event information is also an opportunity to ensure that first-time visitors to your facility have a positive experience. Nothing is more frustrating than arriving just prior to a function and being unable to find it due to the lack of adequate directions. Much more satisfying is a situation where a new visitor walks into the building, sees the location and start time for their event prominently displayed and makes it to the room in plenty of time to settle in for the session.
The way in which event information is recorded in a reservation system can greatly impact how easily it's read and digested. Consider these naming tips when booking space for an event:

- Use event names that are descriptive but concise. "Staff meeting" leaves the reader asking the question, "For whom?" while, "Acme bi-weekly marketing staff meeting" is too long. "Acme marketing meeting" gives attendees all the information they need at-a-glance.

- For private events, use discretion in choosing how to describe the gathering. In some cases, you may want to create a somewhat cryptic title that is shared with attendees in advance so they know what to look for. Or, you may choose to suppress information on the event entirely.

- Modifying an event name to indicate a last-minute change in status (e.g., "CPR Training - MOVED") can be a good way to get the attention of attendees who have not yet received the news.

Giving people accurate and timely event information tells them that your organization has a vested interest in the success of their program and is eager to make it a positive experience. You'll want to foster this impression at every opportunity.

Seven Tips for Simplified Facility Scheduling*

Whether you're booking space for paying customers or internal departments, you want to make the reservation process quick and painless – both for them and for you.

Here are some tips for simplifying the reserving of rooms that will leave both the host and the hosted smiling:

1 **Solo Searching** - Provide an online method of searching for existing events and determining space availability. Making event organizers as self-sufficient as possible not only helps them, it also helps your scheduling office by reducing the number of phone calls and emails they have to respond to.

2 **Show and Tell** - Allow online access to information on rooms, including pictures, room attributes, etc. The more information you make available to facility users, the better decisions they can make when choosing a space for their event.

3 **By the Book** - Post detailed facility policies and procedures on your website. Avoid misunderstandings about payment terms, hours of operation, etc. by having that information readily accessible.

4 **Request Convenience** - Allow event organizers to submit room requests directly from the web. Whether it's purchasing a product or reserving a room, customers appreciate the convenience of online transactions. If a process that might otherwise require multiple phone calls or emails can be simplified to an online request and a single reply, you'll have very happy clients.

5 **A Reassuring Review** - Email a detailed confirmation to your customer. As the person coordinating an event, the last thing you want to discover when you arrive is that the room is too small, the wrong meals were ordered, the AV gear you need isn't in the room, etc. Sending the event organizer a confirmation that lists the room booked, event time, catering summary, and all of the resources that have been reserved reassures the customer and gives you advance notice of any errors or omissions.

6 **Remember Reminders** - Send email reminders in advance of the program. While it's the customer's responsibility to be aware of the event they've scheduled, they always appreciate reminders. Reminders are especially helpful for any order deadlines that they need to meet.

7 **Check, Please!** - Generate a clear, concise invoice soon after the event. The customer would like to pay the tab, so they can close the books on the event; your organization wants to realize the income from it.

*Courtesy of EMS Software:. Learn more about EMS scheduling solutions at www.emssoftware.com

Real-World Examples

University Center

At a major university conference center, they have a massive area to cover – 200 guest rooms, five boardrooms, 18 meeting rooms, two auditoriums, and banquet and exhibition space. For a facility this complex, posting who's meeting in which room is no small undertaking. Digital signs placed at the entrances to each conference room help get information where it needs to be.

"When we have an event in Room A, the screen automatically displays what's going on in that room until the event is finished, and then it automatically drops off and populates it with the next event," says the client.

Their digital signage software integrates easily with their facilities management application, making it a simple matter to keep every room current. "It's completely automatic and there was no rewiring or extra coding for us," the client explains. "We just used the integration tools that came out of the box." All they do is enter the data form a single machine and the system does the rest, saving them an enormous amount of time. "It pretty much runs itself. It just does the job."

Peoria Civic Center

Marc Burnett, Director of Marketing and Sales for the Peoria Civic Center in Illinois, which includes a sports and concert arena, banquet hall, exhibit hall, theater, and more than 15,000 square feet of meeting rooms serving around 700,000 people annually, feels that digital signage is a necessity in this day and age.

"Our visitors take it for granted that they will see monitors as they move through the concourse," he says. "This provides us with a channel to provide information about upcoming events, such as concerts or games. Sometimes we offer special promotions and this serves as the platform for getting the word out."

Cache Creek Casino and Resort

In an environment like California's Cache Creek Casino and Resort where clients are constantly on the go, "display location is key," says Mark Harman, Technical Manager. "People walk by for a very brief time and we have to catch their attention and get them to look."

Displays are mounted in gaming rooms, near elevators, in hallways and lobbies, in the restaurant, and anywhere else people might linger for that crucial extra second. Guests can see anything from directional wayfinding, entertainment offerings and restaurant info to spa menus, gaming promotions and rules on how to play different games.

Dubuque Grand River Center

The Dubuque Grand River Center in Iowa decided to ignore large displays altogether for their 86,000 square foot events space. Instead, they have opted for interactive room signs mounted into kiosks that can be moved around as the space is reconfigured for particular events.

"We also have room signs that are on each side of every meeting room door – allowing us to display two different messages for the client," says Wedding Director, JoAnn Lavenz.

In the office, they use the software's web-based access to simplify their jobs. "We just log on to the application via the web, use the software tools to create messages, and send them right out to the room signs," she says. "Simply - it helps us with our jobs. It's events made easy."
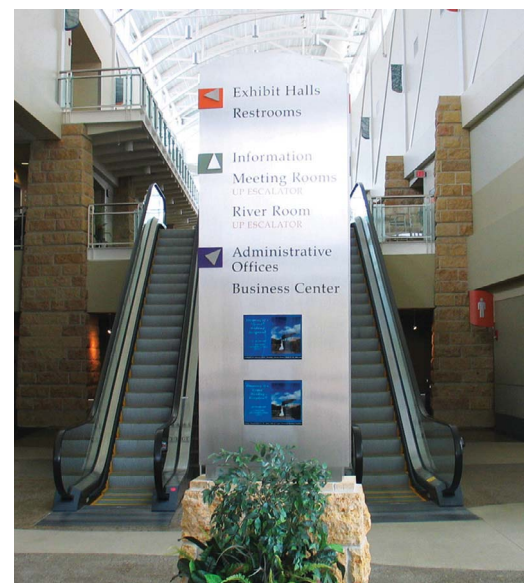
New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention

Just upriver from Canal Street, the New Orleans Ernest N. Morial Convention Center is the sixth-largest facility of its kind in the U.S. It's an impressive place – 1.1 million square feet of exhibition space in 12 combinable exhibit halls covering 11 blocks with a front facade over half a mile long. It has two formal ballrooms and a 4,000-seat auditorium.

"There's a green movement afoot here," says Paul O'Connell, Director of IT Services, "This is important to people more and more now, and signage is big money for a place like us. In a building this size, how much foam core do you think we'd use in a year? We wanted an electronic enhancement that was more than just a perk." O'Connell and his team decided that a large deployment of room signs was what they were looking for.

"We've got 143 meeting rooms, some with one room sign, some with two – 230 in all. Then we have 40 42-inch screens on rolling stands that can be moved to wherever we need them." Messages include general information – like restaurant menus or airport departure schedules, as well as messages targeted directly to the client. "We customize to the client – put their logos on the screens, which they feel is a nice touch, and every meeting room is signed," says O'Connell. Clients get plenty of exposure when using the facility.

He views the adaptability of the room signs as a definite asset. "I see this as an enhancement. Obviously you have to have reasonable expectations, but you're trying to get the client to spend more money on your system. It's a sales incentive," he explains. "We tell them 'We'll do the digital signage for you.'"

Crowne Plaza Buckhead

At Atlanta's Crowne Plaza Buckhead, where a non-stop stream of prestigious clients comes for hotel stays, meetings, conventions and social events, current information is not a luxury – it's a necessity. Combining large displays throughout the venue with room signs outside each salon door, General Manager Thomas DeSousa appeals to a diverse, modern audience.

"Digital signage has brought our hotel into the technology age," he tells us. "It allows us to compete with larger convention centers because the sophistication of the system overwhelms customers on our sales tour. They have confidence in the professionalism they see."

The hotel has also turned their digital signage into a profit center, charging a nominal fee to run commercials and special content for event customers. This not only adds income but contributes to their clients' overall experience. "It's phenomenal for social events," says DeSousa. "It's awesome. It's a great system."

Institute for Advance Learning and Research

The Institute for Advance Learning and Research in Danville, Virginia is a regional technology showcase using digital signage software and interactive room signs as part of their mission to revitalize an area that has been hit hard in the new globalized economy.

"We use and showcase innovative technologies and solutions that are cost effective," says Jason Moore, Director of IT. "We are a catalyst in an economically-depressed region, so we are very interested in high-tech solutions that can help with the revitalization of the local economy."

Their room signs outside boardrooms and the auditorium keep conference participants up to date on what's happening inside the facility and to show weather information so people know what's going on outside as well. "The system grabs weather data from our local television station every five minutes," explains Kelly Fitzgerald, IT Specialist, "so it is all pretty much up-to-the-minute. It really catches the eye and looks and feels very high-tech."

Want to learn more? Contact us at **salesteam@visix.com.**