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Maximize the Guest Experience with **Digital Signage** for **Hotels and Resorts**

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**.

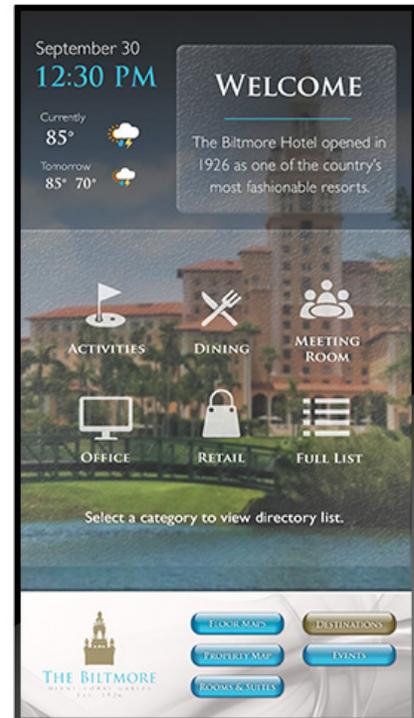
Introduction

There's no doubt about it – hospitality is big business. The travel and tourism sector in the US alone generated over one and a half trillion dollars in 2015, employing more than seven and a half million people – roughly one out of every 18 Americans works, either directly or indirectly, in an industry that is related to travel or tourism.

This seems to be increasing each year with business travel and related events, like conventions, being where the most growth will come from. That means a lot of people from all walks of life will be coming through your doors, all of them needing different things at different times.

Hotels and resorts always strive to deliver excellent service to distinguish themselves from competitors. Digital signage can give you the tools to do just that. It reaches more people, with the most up-to-date and useful messaging, and costs almost nothing to manage and maintain once it's up and running.

Whether you deliver digital communications to digital signs, video walls, or interactive kiosks, you can improve the guest experience, increase customer engagement and satisfaction, reduce perceive wait times in queues, increase revenues and brand loyalty, and cut down on printing costs.



What is Digital Signage?

Digital signage is simply the presentation of information on any kind of digital display (usually large screens) in a rotating playlist.

The screens are placed in high-traffic areas to maximize viewing exposure, or in specific locations to target one particular audience. Web-based digital signage lets you send visual communications to literally anywhere with a web connection – across multiple departments, buildings or even to properties in different cities.



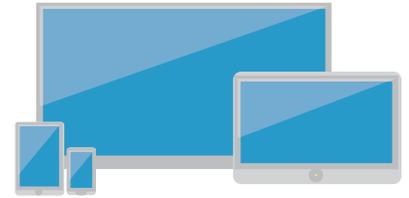
Digital screens are much more appealing than lots of flyers and posters, and don't need to be taken down later and recycled – the messages simply drop off the playlist when they're no longer relevant. Digital signage also reduces your environmental footprint since you're saving paper and waste.

And because the displays are digital, you can also have movement – live streaming, video, motion graphics and tickers; and can even add audio, if that makes sense for where a display is located.

All digital signage systems have three main components:

Displays

Also called screens – this could be an LCD or projection display, reader board, scrolling message board, video wall, and even desktop PC monitors. Digital signage can also extend its reach to include mobile devices like smartphones and tablets. Anything with a screen is a potential display for your system.



Software

This is how you create, manage, approve and schedule your messages to your displays, choose how long each message stays up, when the message retires from the playlist, and which messages go to which displays. You can choose a single image that takes up the whole screen, or multiple windows on screen - including data feeds, animations, video windows and more, all working seamlessly in a unified screen layout that reinforces your brand and your message.



The system can be maintained by a single person from a desktop, or many people at different locations can interact with the system in a networked or cloud deployment.

Hardware

These are the machines that distribute and play back your messages – players can be network-distributed media players or individual stand-alones showing PowerPoint slides. A server pushes your content to multiple players in networked environment, and that server can reside in your facility or in the cloud.



However, just putting screens up on your property is not enough. You need to develop a strategy for effectively leveraging your digital signage system to use its fullest potential.

The Benefits of Digital Signage

Digital signage is modern and dynamic, and allows you to show a vast amount of information in an accessible, convenient format. It lets you engage guests by delivering data in real-time, while reducing the burden on your staff – all while reinforcing your brand.

Your Guests

Hospitality is all about a superior guest experience – making sure their time at your property is pleasant and effortless, and gaining their loyalty so they'll come back. Digital signs can help keep your guests involved and up to date.

Wayfinding assistance is key to making guests' time with you hassle-free, and interactive maps make even the largest resorts easy to navigate. By placing displays at strategic locations, like elevator banks and entrances, you can also use your displays to pique interest in other revenue-generating venues on your property like the business center, bars and restaurants, or concierge services.

You can also save everyone time by displaying the most commonly asked questions on your screens, which frees up your staff to be available for more personalized service. Welcome messages for individuals, groups or loyalty club members make your guests feel like you care.

Highlighting local happenings helps increase the chances of guests finding something fun to do, which in turn adds to their overall satisfaction. Integrating with local transportation services also helps them get to where they're going faster. And combining news and weather feeds with area-specific messages, like "don't forget an umbrella today" when rain is forecast, lets them know that you're looking out for them.

Your Staff

You can also use digital signage in the back office and in staff-only areas for internal communications. Keep everyone informed of what's happening on property, so they can be prepared to put their best foot forward.

You can motivate staff by recognizing employee achievements, keeping them informed of progress towards goals and deadlines, making them aware of training opportunities, and making sure everyone is on the same page with policy reinforcements and reminders.

You can also show live streams or motivational videos, and personalize messages for your staff, recognizing birthdays, work anniversaries and so on.

Your Brand

You can add revenue streams by using your digital signage to advertise loyalty programs and rewards, as well as local offers exclusive to your members. And if you have other properties across the country or across the globe, you can promote other cities where guests can go and expect the same first-class service they're receiving at your location.

Planning Your Strategy

It is vital to develop your objectives in a clear, logical and consistent way. The objectives in turn inform the strategy, which determines the roadmap to deployment and execution – including which software and hardware to use.

The technology you use will be determined by what you want to use it for. Consider the needs of your staff and managers as well as the guests you serve when developing your objectives and strategy.

People

Your IT department will be instrumental in successfully setting up and maintaining your system, but they probably won't be the ones who use it on a daily basis.

Include everyone who might contribute in the early stages. This could be marketing, sales managers, concierge staff, webmasters, department heads, property managers, purchasing agents – even your security team.

Getting everyone involved and on the same page early can give you insights you might not have had and gives everyone a sense of ownership in the new system. It's crucial to get buy-in at every level, or people won't use your digital signage system to its fullest potential.

Goals

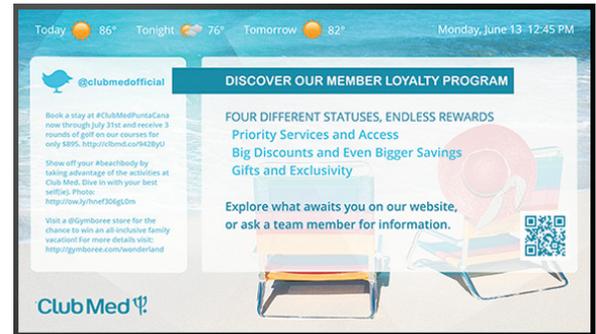
What is it that you want to achieve? Outline your goals in as much detail as possible – this will help clarify workflows for implementing and using the system, and can help you figure out how to measure return on investment once the system is up and running.

Think about how guests and staff will use your digital signage system, and what their objectives might be. Once these are clear, consider how it will operate within your property. What kind of content will be displayed? Who creates and approves it? Where are those approval policies? Where will the hardware be and who will maintain and upgrade it? Who manages software updates?

Write up a detailed project plan with key action items, timeframes and resources. The more you can cover in advance, the fewer unwelcome surprises, like unexpected costs or delays, will hit you later.

Consider things like:

- Where the displays will go
 - Think about traffic flow past them – high traffic areas get more views
 - Placement – putting them too high makes them hard to see or interact with
 - Do you need separate meeting room signs?
- What kind of content to use
 - Should you use static images or moving ones? What about video or news feeds?
 - Do you want a color scheme to integrate into your décor? Or should the displays stand out?
 - Should you use audio? (This only makes sense in areas where sound will not be intrusive)
- IT issues
 - Connectivity
 - Bandwidth
 - Network security policies
- Potential revenue sources
 - Advertising from local businesses
- Outsourced services
 - Graphic designers
 - Paid data subscriptions
- Crisis communication plan
- Future expansion of the system



Infrastructure

Get a qualified IT person involved from the very beginning - have them do a survey of power, network connectivity and IT security policies for every single location you want to place a digital display in. You wouldn't want to purchase and hang a screen, only to find out later that there's no way to get power or data to it.

Content

You need to know exactly what you want to show on your screens. Once you have figured out your overall goals, the kind of content you should display should be clear. Try to detail as much as you can.

- Who creates, schedules and approves content? How many people? What's the procedure?
- List what needs to be regularly created by topic or department
- List sources and file types (MP4, JPGs, event schedules, RSS feeds, etc.)
- Will you include interactive screens or kiosks?
- Will you integrate social media?
- What is your alert notifications plan?

Budget

You need to think about more than just initial costs, but about the foreseeable future – try to budget for 18-24 months, at least. What about software and hardware upgrades in the future, or additional displays and bandwidth as your system expands? What about training your staff – both at the beginning and on an ongoing basis. Will you hire designers to periodically refresh your look? And think about technical support costs.

Don't box yourself in at the start – it will end up costing you more time and money in the long run. It's better to have a single, well-thought-out system that can grow, than creating a series of smaller, ad hoc systems that have to somehow link together.

Choosing a System

Again, work a lot on the front end to save yourself headaches later. Do some research and get a clear picture of your options before you buy anything. Doing things in the right order really helps in the long run.

Software First, Hardware Second

It's great if you have the opportunity to buy a bunch of flat screen displays for a good price, but if you don't know how you'll be managing your content, hold off on that big purchase. It's the software that people will be interacting with to create messages and run your digital signage system, so make sure the hardware supports the software, not the other way around.

If your system is going to live on just one computer and be run by just one person, you might limit yourself in terms of flexibility and expansion. A web- or cloud-based system, or purchasing a licensing agreement, enables more people to participate, and gets more variety in the process and the type of media you deliver.

The more people who get involved and get excited, the better overall for the long-term success of your digital signage system.

Consider these points when choosing which software to run:

- It needs to be user-friendly - easy to use, learn and update
- It needs simple import options and high-quality design tools
- It should have day-part scheduling and automatic message retirement
- It should offer easy data integration tools for auto-updating feeds
- It should include alert notification capabilities, preferably CAP-compliant alerts
- It needs to meet the hierarchy you've already worked out in your plan
- It needs to meet your technical requirements, file types and data integration you've determined you want to use

Think about the software vendor. Are they primarily a software company or do they just dabble in it? Do they understand digital signage for an organization like yours? Will they offer ongoing support and services? Do they have credible references?

Hardware

Buying cheap hardware might save you a bit of money initially, but could cost you more in the long run. However, you don't want to get locked into a single vendor or some proprietary hardware. Your software provider should either be able to supply you with industry-standard hardware, or supply you with the proper specs.

Every year, hardware value depreciates, and things are no longer built to last. Operating systems update and change, I/O interfaces evolve, and physical components fail. Make sure your machines are flexible and adaptable enough to still be of use to you in a few years' time and as your needs change. Otherwise, you'll have to budget in equipment replacement costs.

ADA Compliance

Don't forget to comply with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA), which will affect wording and typography (including Braille lettering), placement of displays and kiosks, and more. Find details online at <http://1.usa.gov/1ZAjb0X>.

Pilot First

Before launching your system everywhere on your property, run a pilot program in an isolated environment. This lets you evaluate the software and hardware, as well as your processes and workflows. It also lets you evaluate how your content is being received, and what changes you might want to make before rolling out your digital signage system-wide. This even allows you to test out different branded layouts and message templates, so you are looking fantastic on day one of the total deployment. You'll see which designs work best, and if your content creators need some design coaching.

It's best to run a pilot launch for 60-90 days, getting feedback from all stakeholders during the run, and then check in with your digital signage vendor to go over what was successful and what needs adjustment.

Content Ideas

Providing guests with the most popular info on screens frees up your staff to provide a more personal touch. Whether you choose static displays, touchscreens, or a mix, your guests will appreciate quick access to what they need.

Differentiated Content

Different audiences need different information, depending on why they are at your property. Hotel guests on vacation want to maximize their holiday, while guests in town for a convention will need to see details on planned activities and meetings. Consider the different areas people may go to, and share the appropriate content to those locations.

For guests, make it easier for them to navigate your property and maximize their leisure time:

- Welcome guests - the general public, groups or specific VIPs by name
- Provide listings and maps that help people navigate your property
- Show event schedules, breakout sessions and trade fair locations
- Advertise on-site amenities, restaurants and retail shops to drive revenues
- Highlight local attractions, upcoming events and community news

For staff, place displays in break rooms and offices, with separate playlists delivering internal communications just for them:

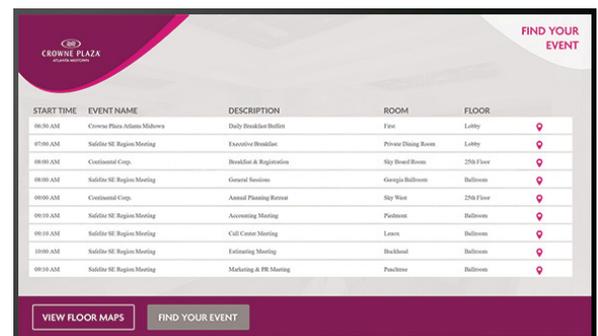
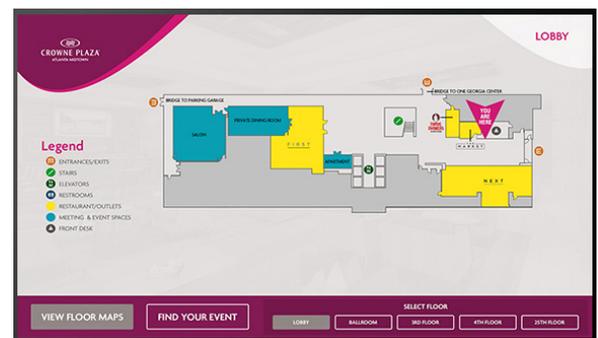
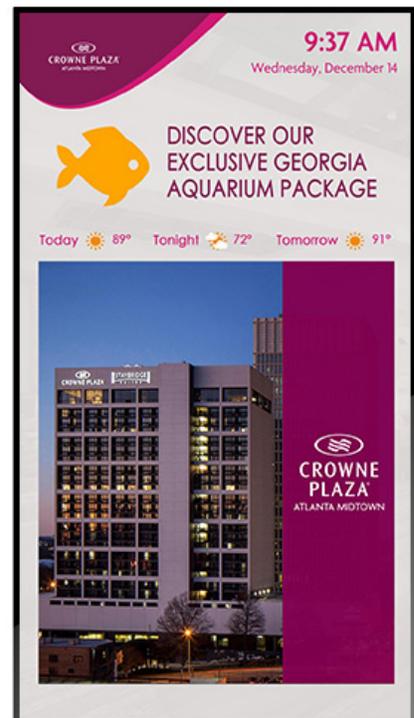
- Employee recognition and achievements
- Policies and procedures
- Training opportunities
- Sales figures and progress to goals
- Incoming groups and vacancy rates

Also, people are increasingly accustomed to getting information on the go, so consider the possibilities of targeting mobile devices such as smartphones and tablets, and publishing your playlists to websites.

Attract Their Attention

You need to show timely info on your screens to keep your audience looking. They'll quickly get used to relying on your digital signs for updates, but first you have to get their attention with visual hooks.

Seriously consider using auto-updating messages or ticker feeds. After an initial set-up, these continue to refresh automatically, so your staff doesn't have to do it. Your audience always gets the most current info available, and you can concentrate on using your digital signage system to get your own messaging out to them.



Some examples:

- Day, date and time
- Weather
- News feeds
- Stock market updates
- Social media posts
- Event schedules
- Video streaming
- Webpages

Many hospitality venues are using large video walls to grab people's attention and impart some "wow factor". The messages there can then direct people to smaller screens and kiosks that will have exactly what they need.



Top 10 Things to Show on Screens

1. Wayfinding and Directories

Help your guests get where they need to go quickly with self-service touchscreen maps and directories. Show property and floor maps, as well as locations for restrooms, elevators, ATM, restaurants, fitness room, etc. List directories of rooms, events, personnel or departments, and give point-to-point directions on your maps.



2. Concierge Services

Sometimes people will want to go out somewhere, and you can use interactive screens and kiosks to help them minimize the fuss. Make it easy for them to make dinner reservations at the newest hot spot in town, book tickets to a show or concert, or just visit nearby landmarks. Combine info like days of operation and opening hours with web access to reservation systems.

3. Event Schedules

Show daily event schedules pulled right from your own calendar system. You can show everything happening for the day, or show individual schedules for specific groups or meeting spaces. Because digital signage can easily integrate with popular scheduling apps, you only have to change the bookings in one place.



4. Weather

When people are on vacation, weather can make all the difference. Show the current temperature, today's weather and five-day forecasts that are updated automatically throughout the day so your guests can plan accordingly. Also, be sure to include the basics like the day, date and time.

5. Announcements

Show news and announcements in your lobby or the back office. Guests can see greetings, promotions and highlights of local attractions, while your personnel get messages with sales numbers and vacancy reports. Separate playlists let you schedule individual messages to a single screen or to every screen on your property.



6. Advertising

Increase revenues by advertising your services and amenities. Show still or video promotions for your on-site dining, gaming and retail outlets to drive sales, advertise special offers and discounts, and increase customer engagement. You can also sell ad space on your screens to local vendors for additional revenues.

7. Property Highlights

Show off your property highlights so guests don't miss the best parts of your facility. Display beautiful photography paired with details about your pool, spa or business center, with available services, hours of operation, and a phone extension to make appointments.

8. Brand Awareness

Use digital signs for reputation management. Promote loyalty program rewards, show your social media feeds to gain followers and participation, or advertise your mobile app. Use touchscreen kiosks to allow people to sign up for your rewards program, fill out satisfaction surveys, and post online reviews and ratings.

9. Transportation Options

Make sure your guests travel to and from your property, and around the area, with ease. Show airline info, public transport options, Uber and taxi stands, or numbers for private car services. Take the burden off your reception and concierge staff by offering direct car rental, bus tickets, or flight check-in on interactive screens.

10. Exchange Rates

International travelers account for a large chunk of hotel business. Display the latest currency conversion rates pulled from the web so they update automatically on screens. You can show the current status of NASDAQ, NYSE or S&P 500, the top gainers and losers, as well as individual stocks' performance.

Room Signs

Replace printed schedules with small digital signs mounted outside meeting rooms and event spaces to help your employees or guests find their meetings and breakout sessions quickly and easily.

Digital room signs eliminate confusion by showing room schedules outside each door, and all calendar data is fed by your existing scheduling app. So, any changes, additions, or cancellations made on your event system will automatically update on your room signs. Any you can also show digital signage playlists on room signs to remind people of break times, quiet zones or alerts.

Electronic paper room signs are lightweight and wireless, so they can easily be moved around – perfect for spaces that are frequently reconfigured. And custom faceplates can be tailored to match your décor.



Stay Safe

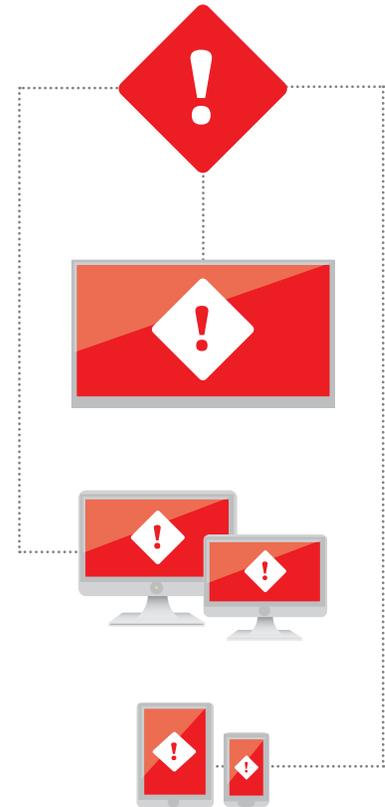
A digital signage system can also be an alert and warning system – with clear instructions to guests and staff, such as evacuation procedures and meeting points. With a single command in the software interface, every screen can immediately warn everyone of incoming severe weather, or other emergencies. You can show alerts across your entire system, or select specific locations or screens.

Conclusion

Most hotel guests form their first impression in under ten minutes. Attractive displays in strategic locations can go a long way to ensuring that their first impression is a favorable one.

A great guest experience requires engagement. Digital signage gives you a modern, dynamic and imminently flexible way to show guests that you're focused on their needs. It makes their travel easier and their time with you more pleasant, resulting in both customer satisfaction and brand loyalty.

In an ever-changing environment like this, it's important to be up-to-the-minute accurate and flexible. A well thought out digital signage deployment can increase access to vital information, and improve both the visitor experience and staff engagement.



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