# Simplify and Diversify **Facility Management** with Digital Signage

**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**.

# Modernize and Maximize Your Space

Digital signage has changed the way facilities are managed. You're no longer stuck with placards and arrows for wayfinding, sirens for safety and boring plaques for meeting rooms. An enterprise-class digital signage system can integrate with your current technologies to give you a modern, dynamic communications system.

Digital signs help you integrate people, place, process and technology with a real-time communications solution. Inform and engage your audience – whether they're staff or visitors – by publishing messages, media and alerts across a building or across an entire campus. Show visitor greetings, staff announcements, energy dashboards and real-time shuttle mapping to enhance the visitor experience and improve safety.

- Publish messages to a single screen or across multiple facilities
- Use CAP-compliant alert triggers for safety notices
- Enhance the visitor experience with interactive wayfinding
- Use room signs to manage shared spaces more efficiently

Everything from publishing announcements, to broadcasting alerts, to managing rooms and shared spaces, can be done using a single software application to create, manage, approve and schedule content to screens. This can all be managed by a single person at their computer, or by people at different locations interacting with your software over the web. And messages simply drop off playlists once they expire, so you don't have to worry about recycling printed notices.

# The Benefits of Digital Signage

Facilities of all kinds have numerous things to keep track of. Using an enterprise-class digital signage application lets you show real-time data to inform and motivate everyone across your organization.

Digital signage makes facility management easier and more efficient by putting all your various data sources under a single umbrella – using powerful data integration features to pull in and display information from all of your various operational technologies and apps. This saves you time and money, and makes the experience of negotiating your facility better for both internal and external stakeholders.

Digital signage is modern and dynamic, allows real-time updates, reduces printing costs and clutter, integrates with safety alert systems, and allows you to tailor your content to specific audiences.

## For Your Facility

Digital signage is invaluable for communicating with staff. Workflows and efficiencies improve when people are well-informed, and your communications become centralized, rather than fragmented.

It might take a busy person some time to get around to reading an email, but with digital signs, you are immediately reaching your employees when and where they need it. And messages are updated in real-time, so you can be sure that the communications your people are receiving are accurate.

Putting information on displays can also reduce the workload on your already busy staff for better time management and increased productivity. Paired with other operational technologies and workplace management systems, a centralized digital signage system can improve both work processes and collaboration.

## For Visitors

You can really connect with people who come to your facility, and make them feel comfortable by giving them the information they need. A well-designed signage system will make your facility feel friendly and well-organized.

Large screens showing news feeds and tickers, current weather and forecasts, and upcoming events attract people's attention. Video walls make a great first impression, and interactive kiosks let visitors have control over what and how they search for information. Show facility info, call lists, historical timelines, donor spotlights – there's really no limit to what you can put on a touchscreen.

Each of these options – either singly or combined – will help you engage your guests, reduce the stress of their visit, and improve their overall visitor experience.

## For the Environment

In good faith, we can't make the claim that using digital signage will save the earth, yet it can be an important first step in being responsible members of society and stewards of the planet.

Obviously, getting your messages out to audiences using a digital signage system requires less paper than traditional methods like bulletin boards, posters, banners, printed newsletters, mail, flyers and so on.

Digital messages are just that: digital. They do not use paper – so no trees are cut down; no water, inks or solvents are used; and when the message is no longer relevant, it doesn't go to a landfill to decompose and emit methane, but is simply deleted. Some systems also offer device control, so you can shut down screens and players right from your desk.

## For the Bottom-Line

The larger your audience, the more cost effective communicating with them via digital solutions is.

In a single year, printing individual newsletters, posters and mailers may be cheaper than a digital signage investment.

However, over multiple years, a digital signage system offers a more sustainable and inexpensive option:
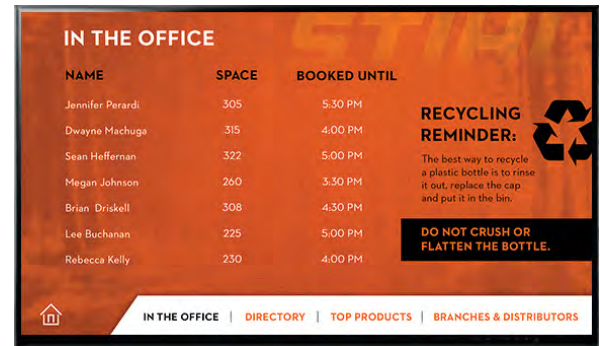
- The purchase price of a digital signage system is a one-time cost, whereas printed communications are a continuing revenue drain that seriously adds up over time.

- Print costs rise steadily each year, due to increased paper, printing and transportation costs.

- You have a potentially unlimited audience for your digital messages versus a set number based on predetermined print runs.

- Digital communications are dynamic, not static like their paper counterparts – digital signage systems can display video, cable feeds, animations, tickers and transitions to grab attention and keep audiences interested.

- Digital signage technology can handle hundreds of messages at once, as opposed to the limited space you have to communicate ideas and information in printed materials.

- Digital messaging allows immediate corrections and retirement of messages, versus lingering newsletters and printed retractions or apologies.

# Screen Placement

As we all know from advertising, location is key to reaching your audience. The same goes for daily communications on your digital signs. Anything with a screen can be a digital sign - from a single large-screen TV, to banks of monitors in every hallway; to video walls, touchscreens, desktop monitors and even BYOD devices, like smartphones.

When planning where installed screens will go, the main thing to think about is message saturation. If you only have one display in your building, not everyone who needs to see your messages will. Here are our top five tips for placing digital signs:

**1. What = Where**
Content drives everything. Before you decide where your screens will go, you have to know what will be on them.

- If you're only trying to reach visitors, you don't need screens in the staff room.
- If you plan to show weather and traffic for the ride home, you'll want your displays near exits.
- If your content is interactive, make sure people can easily touch the screens.
- If you plan to use audio, you won't want displays with speakers in quiet zones.

Start with a good plan that outlines your goals. Map content to delivery locations that make sense. Consider when and where your audience will need that information, and put your screens there.

**2. Keep it Accessible**
Even the biggest, brightest screen won't draw attention if it's mounted high up near the ceiling where no one will notice it. The general consensus is to mount screens at eye level or just above that. Also, be careful of glare from windows or overhead lights. If people can't easily read and interact with your content, you're wasting your efforts.

Accessibility is especially important for interactive content. If you have interactive wayfinding or other touchscreen designs, you should ensure that shorter viewers or people in wheelchairs can use the kiosk along with everyone else by placing displays lower down or including controls at the bottom of the screen.

You also have 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. Be sure to research your ADA options before you commit to any system.

**3. Target Traffic Areas**
High traffic areas are best for digital signage displays. This may sound really obvious, but we've seen this simple rule get ignored because of physical or network concerns. It's great that you have a nice, sturdy wall with network cabling already in place for that video wall. But, if it's down a side hallway that's rarely used, you won't get the most out of your investment.

Place displays in areas where people frequently congregate. You're likely to have more than one announcement that you want them to see, so putting screens where they linger will give them time to see everything you want them to.

**4. Think Small**
Most of the time, you're dealing with large displays. But, don't discount the power of smaller screens to reach your audience.

You can use screensavers on computers around your office or campus to deliver digital signage playlists. You can also embed playlists into websites, or use a desktop messenger that people can click through. Make sure you design your content for where it will show up – for smaller screens, keep messages short.

In some environments, a small display showing a single message playlist may be more effective than a large screen with multiple zones showing lots of content. You could mount small displays in cubicles, library stations, or even cafeteria booths to send targeted ads and announcements.

**5. Get Personal**
Now that you've placed your big and small screens, what about mobile screens? Just because your audience isn't in front of a screen doesn't mean you can't reach them.

You can make message playlists available for smartphones and tablets so that viewers can simply grab an RSS feed or go out to the web to see your announcements. You could even develop a quick app that gives your audience a shortcut to stay updated.

This is a great way to reach audiences who are always on the move, like a remote sales force or students who are off campus. Making your digital signage displays accessible, readable, relevant and convenient is the key to success.

# Content Strategy

Even though you may not be the one who creates communications, you'll still need a good idea of what your organization wants to show, to whom, how often, and on what displays. This will all play a part of planning your digital signage system.

## Targeted Content
Different audiences need different content, and often go to a particular place depending on their needs. With digital signage software, you can publish messages to a single screen, across all screens in a building, across an entire campus, or to facilities spread across the globe.

Think about who visits your facility, who works there, and what information they might need or want. Walk around your space in their shoes, and tailor screen placement and content accordingly.

Consider the different areas visitors may go to, and share relevant information to those locations:
- Lobbies – show visitor welcomes, wayfinding maps and building directories
- Hallways – display daily messages, deadlines, and general facility information
- Waiting Areas – publish queuing stats to reduce perceived wait times
- Elevator Banks – show targeted programming and news feeds while people wait
- Meeting Rooms, Labs and Shared Spaces – use room signs to show availability and schedules
- Exits – show transport schedules and maps so people can wait in safety and comfort

You may also have content that only staff need to see, so those screens will be in restricted areas, like break rooms and lounges:
- Building policies
- Safety regulations
- IT notices and updates
- Compliance procedure

## Attract Attention

When you show timely, relevant information, you keep your audience engaged. In a very short while, they will become used to getting news and updates from your digital signage system, and start depending on it. But first you need to get their attention with visual hooks.

Using auto-updating messages and tickers will save your time and effort. These can be from existing systems in your facility, or pulled from outside sources. After an initial set-up, these continue refreshing their content automatically. Your audience always gets the most current information available, and you can concentrate on managing your digital signage system.

Some examples:
- Day, date and time
- Weather
- News headlines
- Event schedules
- Webpages and intranets
- Queuing info
- RSS feeds
- Social media

# Interactive Experiences

Today, it seems nearly everyone is interacting with touch devices – smartphones, tablets, kiosks. So, it makes sense to use interactive screens in your digital signage system.

- You have a single source for lots of information
- Your audience chooses what is relevant to them
- It alleviates the burden on support staff
- There are no printing costs, and no waste
- It's clean and modern

## Interactive Wayfinding

Help your visitors get where they're going with engaging touchscreen maps and directories. Interactive wayfinding improves visitor satisfaction, eliminates confusion and eases stress to make a great first impression.

Include directories for staff, departments, rooms and events showing visual paths from kiosk to destination. You can also build in quick reference buttons to find elevators and restrooms, and include ADA controls at the bottom of the screen for convenience.

Wayfinding projects coded in HTML5 scale to any screen size, and including a QR code on screen lets people take your wayfinding with them. SMS prompts can also send turn-by-turn directions to their phone.

## Touchscreen Directories

This is a common pairing with wayfinding maps. People know who they want to see, and the interactive screen lets them find where they need to go and how to get there. You can plot directions straight from the directory to your maps, and can organize touchscreen directories by staff, departments, buildings, events – whatever your visitors might need.
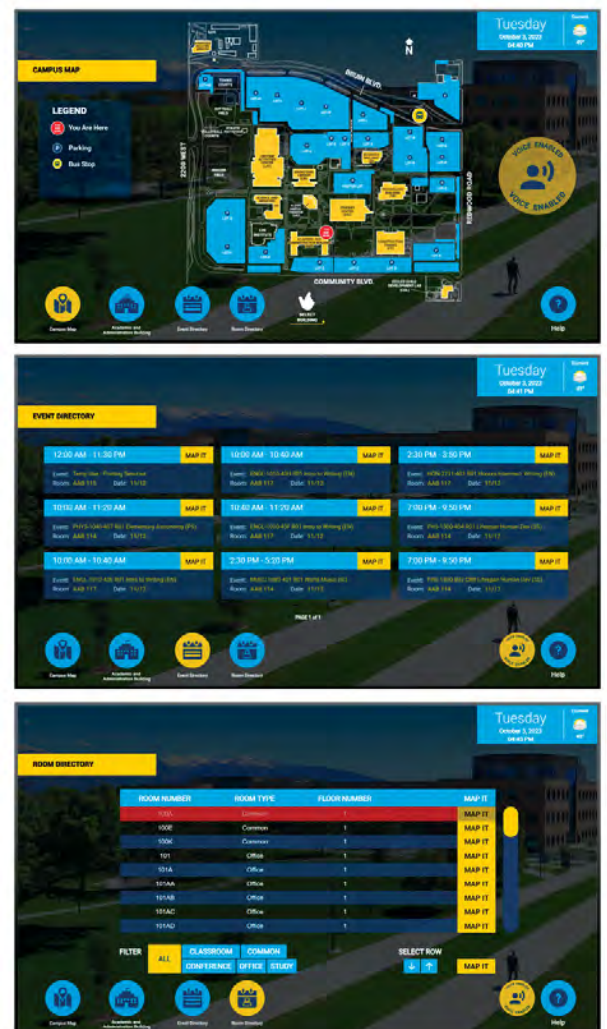
## Shuttle Maps

Showing real-time shuttle and bus maps on your screens gives your audience content they care about, and allows them to wait for their ride in comfort instead of sitting outdoors in bad weather. This can also be a safety issue, especially on college campuses. If riders can see where their bus is on the map, they don't have to wait outside at night or in poorly lit shelters. Instead, they can wait indoors and arrive at the stop just before the shuttle does.
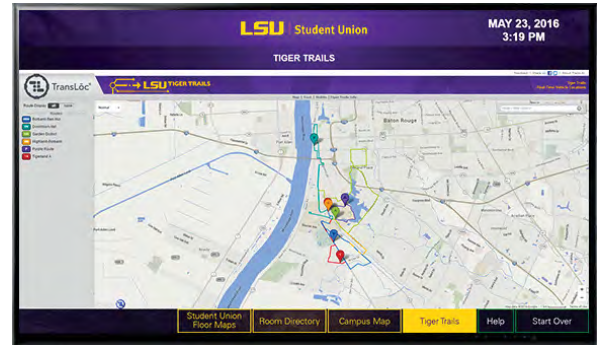
## Building Dashboards

Let your staff and visitors explore current energy and water usage statistics on touchscreen displays by tying into your building management application. Comparative graphs, animated meters and other exciting visualizations make it easy to understand the current consumption and long-term trends. If your audience can see the resources they're using, they can adjust their behavior accordingly to reduce consumption. This also lets administrators track and analyze energy spikes and trends.
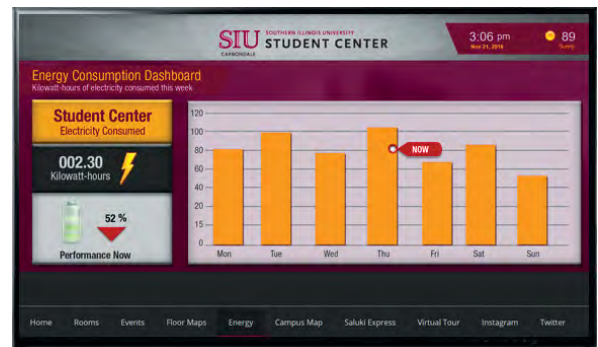
## Donor & Alumni Boards

One interactive screen can access as many things as you like, and takes up a lot less space than dozens of plaques. Recognize volunteers and patrons who have contributed to your success with photos, videos and bios. Names can be sorted by individual, group or company, alphabetically or by giving category. You can also promote ongoing campaigns and programs, and provide instructions for people who might like to donate their time or funding.

## Digital Menus

In a café or cafeteria, you have a short time to get your audience's attention. Use touchscreens to present menu options and nutrition information in an interesting way. You can pair this with an ordering system, streamlining the entire process to save everyone time.

# Space Management

Digital signage helps simplify and streamline the whole process of reserving spaces for meetings and presentations. Room signs are small displays that are mounted outside rooms or shared spaces that pull data from popular applications like Exchange, EMS and Google Calendar to show bookings. They can show room and event schedules, announcements, welcomes, alerts and more.

**1. Allow people to find meetings or open rooms quickly**
Most facilities with a lot of conference rooms use some sort of scheduling application like Exchange, EMS, Google, 25Live or Delphi.

These are great apps for scheduling rooms and ensuring that meetings don't overlap in the same space. But what about the impromptu meeting that needs to find a space quickly?

Great ideas are often spontaneous, as are great meetings. If you have people who start a productive conversation in the hallway and need to take it somewhere private, they don't want to interrupt the flow of ideas by having to go back to their desk (or, more likely, to a receptionist or central schedule manager) to find an open room.

Room signs show you immediately which rooms are booked and for how long, so someone needing a room right away can see if a room is open just by checking the sign. Many models come with green and red availability lights, so people can see which spaces are open at a glance down the hallway.

If a meeting has been planned and scheduled in advance, room signs let the participants know they're in the right place at the right time by showing the room schedule outside the meeting room door.
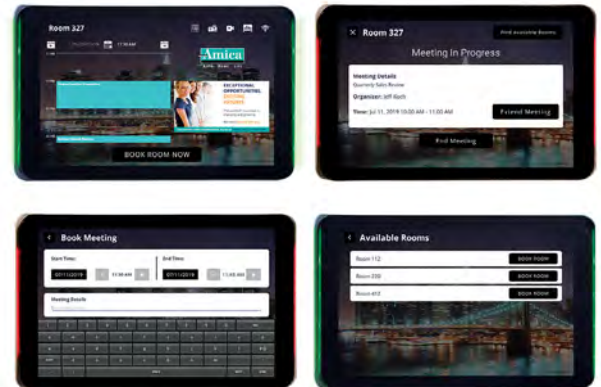
**2. Book meetings at the room sign while keeping calendar apps updated**
In the event of a pop-up meeting, participants may locate a room that isn't currently reserved. But what happens if someone else comes along looking for a meeting room and finds the same one? The pop-up meeting wouldn't be on the room sign schedule, right? Wrong.

Room signs that support interactive booking let people make instant reservations right at the room sign. If your room signs are integrated with your central scheduling application, walk-up reservations are immediately shared with that application to avoid double-bookings. That ensures that your calendars stay up to date no matter where meetings are booked – at the desktop or at the sign.

**3. Extend digital signage to meeting areas so people don't miss announcements**
Some room signs can display digital signage playlists, either through integration with a content management system or by importing an RSS image feed. This is a great feature because it lets your daily media and messages play on the room signs, along with room and event schedules. This ensures that people who are in meeting areas don't miss your important announcements.

This is critical is your room signs are an outlet for your emergency alert system. In the case of a training or conference center, people may be spending all day in those hallways, so it's even more important to make sure your digital signage messages reach the meeting rooms.

**4. Save paper, electricity and installation costs with epaper room signs**
Electronic paper signs are an affordable, wireless, battery-operated room sign option, especially for workspace hoteling. These work a lot like e-readers, in that they are only activated when the information changes. That means you only use the battery when you change the schedule information, which allows an average battery life of three years or 10,000 updates.

These signs are updated via RF communication: an RF transmitter sends out a wireless signal to the room signs, which are RF receivers. This means you don't have to run a bunch of wires to each room sign for power and network. You can simply mount them outside your meeting rooms, cubicles and shared spaces and turn them on.

**5. Use epaper desk signs for hotdesking, office hoteling and more in hybrid offices**

Don't limit yourself to hoteling office space and office desk signs. Just about any space can be part of a hoteling system in a flexible workplace. Book hot desks, touchdown areas, huddle rooms, collab spaces, even a ping pong table. Any part of an activity-based or agile workplace can benefit from custom desk signs.

This pocket-sized, wireless and battery-powered E Ink sign is an affordable solution to show reservations for desks or any shared space. The small 4:3 displays weighs just three ounces for easy mounting to almost any surface using 3M Command Strips. It's affordable, wireless and battery-powered, so no cables. The faceplates are also customizeable, for that personal touch that still works within your décor and brand standards.

**6. Skip the room signs altogether.**

Our Choros AR space booking platform gives you all the features of room signs without any hardware, cabling or apps. Use a smartphone to see if a space is available, see the schedule, book it, find available spaces and much more. And users don't have to download or log into anything.

With Choros, you get all the functionality of a room sign without having to buy hardware or worry about how to provide power and network to shared spaces. And since Choros uses native AR support for smartphone cameras, you don't have to coax employees to download any apps or install any software.

Simply set up your spaces in our cloud-based platform, connect to your scheduling system, then place QR codes near shared spaces and assets to let people quickly scan to book. Whether you have meeting rooms, use hotdesking or want to let people reserve the breakroom ping pong table, all it takes is a simple QR code and a phone.

Because Choros uses WebAR tech, space booking is faster than in any software system. It also gives users an immersive experience using a contactless solution. And because there are no room signs or cabling, it saves you significant installation costs and supports sustainability efforts.

Pair Choros with EPS 42 epaper desk signs to show desk reservations or display booking QR codes. We also offer small, easily-mounted availability lights to show green when spaces are available, and red when booked. And since Choros integrates easily with your scheduling system, you can showcase space bookings in real time on digital signs throughout your facility.
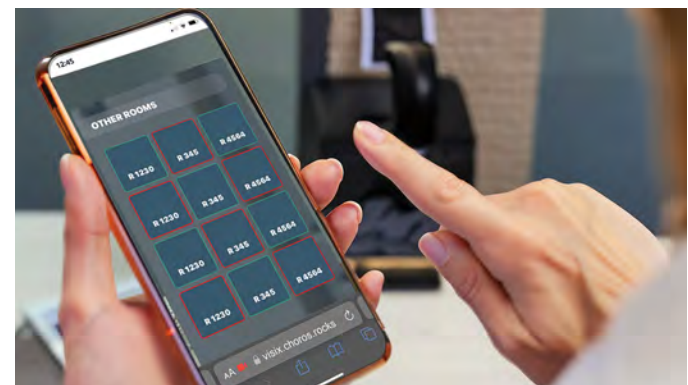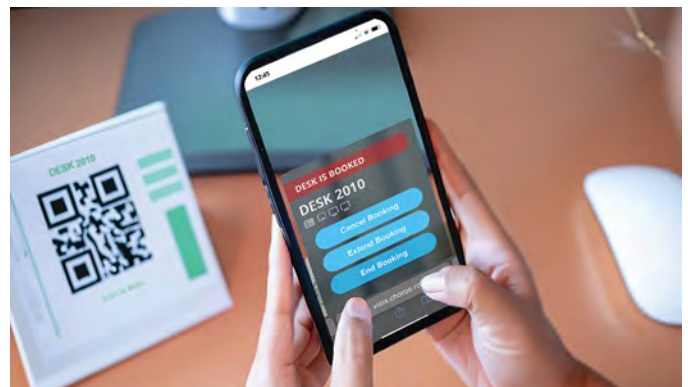
# Workplace Safety

A safe workplace does not happen by accident. It requires that everyone is on the same page –  understands what the risks are, knows what to do and how, and is familiar with the correct procedures and why they are in place. By working together and leveraging your digital signage system to create a cohesive culture of safety, everyone can get on with their jobs without worry.

Reminders about compliance with codes, regulations, policies and standards are always important, and should be included in your playlists. Posters fade into the background of people's awareness quite quickly, and just become part of the scenery. Dynamic, well-designed messages in a rotating playlist on your displays are more interesting, and can be changed frequently.

Choose one or two particular areas to highlight each week, perhaps with special message templates or with the addition of movement (add animated text, use a slow pan, etc.). If there's a good place for it, such as a break room, you might also want to add sound to reinforce the message. Short videos showing dos and don'ts can also be more compelling than just a poster on the wall.

Chances are that you have extensive rules written down somewhere – put them on a dedicated web page and supply a QR code or short URL in your messages to give your employees quick access to everything they need to know.
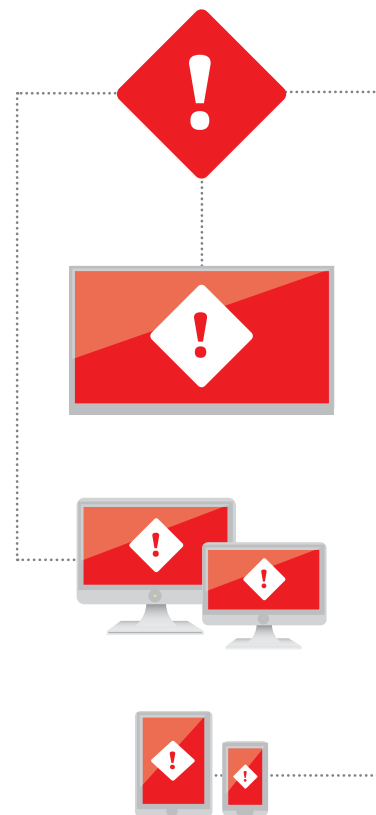
# Emergency Preparedness

Every facility needs to be prepared in case of an emergency. A digital signage system can also be an alert and warning system – with clear instructions to the public 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.

You can activate alerts in the software interface manually, with an email, using CAP triggers (Common Alerting Protocol), or by tailoring an API for third-party systems to trigger alert notices. If possible, you'll want to integrate your system with emergency services in the area, allowing you to coordinate quickly to save time and prevent injury.

# Planning Your System

Modern facilities are dynamic, constantly changing environments, so it's important to carefully plan a digital signage system that can manage operations and maintenance over the long run, and support the performance and goals of the entire organization. It's vital to develop your operational planning requirements in a clear, logical and consistent way. Those objectives in turn inform the strategy, which determines your roadmap to deployment and execution – including which software and hardware to use. Consider the needs of your employees as well as your visitors when developing your objectives and strategy.

## The Right People
Include everyone who might contribute content in the early stages. This could be marketing, HR, admin, web staff, department heads, 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.

## The Right Goals

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

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

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
- What kind of content to use
  - Should you use static images or moving ones? What about video or streaming feeds?
  - Do you want a color scheme to integrate into your décor? Or should the displays stand out?
- IT issues
  - Connectivity and infrastructure
  - Bandwidth
  - Network security policies
- Potential revenue sources
  - Grants
  - Advertising from local businesses your patients and staff frequent
- Outsourced services
  - Content creation
  - Paid data subscriptions
- Crisis communication plan
- Future expansion of the system

## The Right 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.

## The Right 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 will become be clear. Get into a much detail as you can:

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

## The Right 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, players and bandwidth as your system expands.

What about training your users – at the beginning but also on an ongoing basis. Will you hire designers to periodically refresh your look? And think about technical support costs.

A closed or inflexible system will lock you in, making it difficult to change configurations when you need to. Your digital signage system is sure to attract the attention of other buildings or departments, and soon they will want a piece of the action. Or you might expand your current facility. 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-though-out system that can grow, then 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. And doing things in the right order really helps in the long run.

## Software First

A local company has offered you a great deal on flat screen displays, but if you don't how you will be managing your content, hold off on that big purchase. It's the software that people will be interacting with day-to-day to create content 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-based system, or purchasing a licensing agreement, enables more people to participate, and gets more variety in the process and the type of content you deliver. The more people who get involved and get excited, the better overall for the long-term success of your digital signage system.

Here are some tips to get the conversation started so you can choose the best content management software for your needs:

**Is it designed for organizational communications?**
Workflows are different in offices and on campus, so you don't want digital signage software that's made for restaurants or airports with just a few features you can use. You'll want a set of enterprise features like Active Directory authentication, and the ability for administrators to assign predefined user roles or create custom roles to provide the right level of privileges for each user.

**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. If you spend money on screens, and the content on them looks bad, people will blame the system.

**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 software can easily import event schedules, weather, news, Excel, dashboards, social media, SharePoint, webpages and other data you already use.

**Can you use it for alert notifications?**
Severe weather, safety alerts and other emergency notifications need to override scheduled playlists quickly and easily. If you're already using an emergency system, find out if the software can directly tie into it.
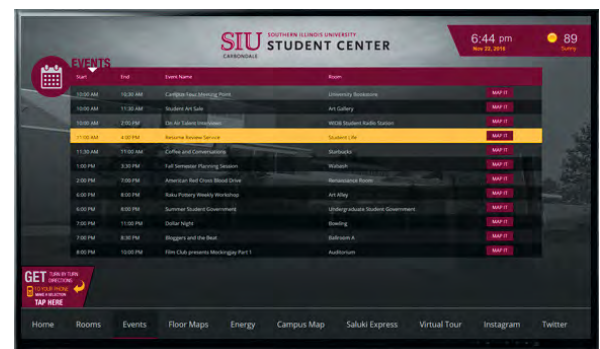
**What kind of signage can I manage?**
You'll want the ability to publish to touchscreen displays, desktops, room signs, webpages and mobile devices. Make sure you explore licenses that allow you to grow the number of displays you control over time, so you can easily expand in the future.

**What are the purchasing options?**
You may already have hardware, or you might need the whole package. Ask vendors if they offer bundled solutions, software-only sales, cloud-based subscriptions, etc.

Also think about the software vendor. Are they primarily a software company or do they just dabble in it? Do they understand digital signage for your environment? Will they offer ongoing support and services? Do they have credible references?

## Hardware is an Investment

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, 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, adding to the overall cost of your system.

## Pilot First

Before launching your system everywhere, 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 content 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.

# Conclusion

Digital signage is flexible and scalable to make your facility run better, and your job run smoother. Why not provide your audiences with modern communications technologies that they'll appreciate?

Regardless of what kind of facility you manage, dynamic signage, interactive touchscreens and digital room signs can help you increase efficiencies, save time and money, and improve the visitor experience.

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