The **Business Case** for **Digital Signage**

DIGITAL SIGNAGE WHITE PAPER

Table of Contents

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What is Digital Signage?

When people say "digital signage", they usually mean big screens used to inform and persuade. Simply put, it's the use of any display to present information digitally.

Retailers and advertisers were among the first to adopt digital signage (DS), drawn by the possibilities of adding motion and sound to their marketing efforts. Retailers extended the idea of the window display by using screens to promote items in-store, while advertisers saw a new way to attract the public's attention to their clients' services and products.

As monitors and related hardware have become cheaper, more organizations have begun exploring the technology as a communications vehicle. DS is now commonplace, even expected by the public. In the same way that a company without a website is seen as untrustworthy, an organization without DS risks being seen as outdated and no longer relevant to modern lifestyles. The question isn't if you should get digital signage; it's what you can achieve with it.

First, organizational communications supplemented by DS are better at effectively reaching their target audiences. Second, it's a powerful communications vehicle for security and weather alerts, saving time and, potentially, lives.

Of course, people have always communicated visually, but visual communications that are dynamic – not only showing moving images to grab attention, but creating and revising content nearly instantaneously—change the game completely.

DS content can combine multiple windows, tickers, animations, and much more into one unified presentation medium, controlled from either one computer or multiple users across a network. Systems with these kinds of capabilities offer considerably more flexibility to deliver content to targeted audiences at specific times.

Large Displays

Interactive Touchscreens

Video Walls

Webpages & Intranets

How It Works

Digital signage has three main components:

Microsoft Teams

Displays: The first thing people think of is the signs themselves, including LCD displays, electronic billboards, scrolling message boards, projection screens, video walls, TVs and even desktop PC monitors. In the past few years, DS has also expanded beyond fixed displays to include mobile devices like tablets and smartphones. When it comes to the displays and devices that deliver messages, new technologies are always emerging.

Mobiles

Software: The second component is the software that allows people, working individually or in groups, to create, manage and approve the content shown on these displays. Content management software also generally incorporates routing and scheduling tools. Content creation can involve sophisticated applications such as video editing software or tools as commonplace as PowerPoint. If the software being used is web-based, content can even be created and changed remotely.

Interactive Room Signs

Hardware: The third component is the hardware used to distribute and play back content. This can range from media players distributed over a network to individual, stand-alone media players showing basic PowerPoint playback. With networked versions, a DS network operator pushes content to multiple players at once, or allows players to pull content from a server as needed.

Why Should I Use It?

We see DS at airports, bus stops, banks and restaurants every day, but many businesses are still unsure about the benefits for internal organizational communications.

If you want to communicate with people, they have to pay attention to you. You can put your messages out there, but if people don't receive them, or don't notice them, they're pointless. TVs and computers have trained people to look at screens for information, so DS is a natural choice to reach large audiences.

It's visually better than static ways of delivering content, like email, printed posters, and bulletin boards, because:

- screens are bright and show motion
- sound can be added to draw attention
- multiple things can be shown on a screen at once
- what's on the screen can be changed throughout the day
- it's cheaper than print for big audiences

DS is extremely versatile and helps reach different viewers in different ways. Some people are visual, some are more auditory or musical, while others prefer to physically interact with things like touchscreens. DS does all these things, so it gets information across to all types of people.

More and more businesses, hospitals and schools are using DS. Companies use it to welcome visitors, show meeting schedules, or tell employees what's for lunch. Students on campus are reminded that registration ends tomorrow or told that the west entrance will be closed this week. As the day comes to a close, screens in a clinic might show local weather and traffic, so people can plan their commutes. What you show is really only limited by what you can imagine and create.

Because people are becoming increasingly reliant on screens for their information, DS is more memorable than other mediums. Arbitron's Digital Place-Based Video Study mentions that 70% of U.S. residents have seen a video display in public in the past, and 47% of them can still recall the content a month later.

And DS isn't as expensive as you might think. Though big screens are the most common type of display, you can use desktop monitors and smartphones as digital signs; basically, anything that can show a digital image can be a digital sign. You can start with screens you already have to keep your costs down and give yourself flexibility for expansion in the future.

It's reinforcing…
Ask any communicator and they'll tell you that repetition is key to getting an idea across. Today, images and messages constantly clamor for people's attention, and it's important that your message doesn't get lost in the crowd. DS allows you to schedule messages to repeat as often as you like, and more frequently during peak times, making sure that people are seeing what you want them to see.

It's unifying…
Achieving unity in how a brand is presented means that marketing, communications, training and other groups have to work together. DS gives you a community forum to put that cooperation into practice. It also provides a controlled medium where branded templates and presentation style can be predetermined. Determine your design and branding standards, distribute them to your people and let them get to work promoting your message.

It's inclusive…
DS is a crowdsourcing tool. You probably already have able communicators available to you – people who can easily distill many ideas down to a tight, concise message, but you have no way of channeling their talents. DS lets you tap into their full potential by getting them involved in communications. A well-planned communications system that includes DS can find these people and enable them to craft and post content that boosts your message and enhances your audience's perception and participation.

Bottom Line Results

A Watson Wyatt Communication ROI Study shows that effective employee communication drives employee engagement and increases financial performance. Over a five-year period, companies worldwide ranked as "highly effective communicators" had a 47% higher return to shareholders and are three times more likely than lower-ranked companies to measure their communication effectiveness. They ensure their employees understand how they affect the overall business, which motivates them to be more productive.

Managers are key players in engaging employees. Half the highly-ranked companies provide management training in effectively communicating the organization's vision to employees, and are three times more likely to give managers the tools they need to deal with resistance to change.

Employee turnover, absenteeism and productivity are also positively affected by good internal communication practices. Watson Wyatt's WorkUSA Survey indicates that employees who are engaged are 300% more likely to exceed performance expectations, miss 20% fewer days of work and are a lower turnover risk. Engaged workers are 50% more likely to be top performers in the organization.

DS is a powerful tool in engaging employees, allowing you to include more people in the communication process, creating more owners with the permission and ability to share information. With pre-approved templates and just a little training, you can expand the number of communicators, which reduces the overall time spent creating and disseminating your message.

This is not just about making people feel included – this is a bottom-line imperative. Management must be able to communicate mission and goals, and recognize employees. When employees see a direct connection between what they do every day and what the company's goals are, they have greater commitment to getting the job done, trust managers' decisions more readily and have fewer on-the-job conflicts. The organization runs more smoothly, and productivity increases. This is measurable.

DS enables you to:
- Reach all your employees
- Highlight key messages
- Approach situations proactively
- Achieve goals with current performance data
- Conduct ROI activities
- Update employees on company news
- Maintain consistency of brand and message
- Reduce response time to problems and crises
- Minimize micro-managing by keeping everyone up to date
- Recognize employee contributions and achievements

Recognizing good work can also produce real-world benefits. The WorldAtWork Study shows that recognition programs have an "extremely positive/positive effect" on employee satisfaction, increasing motivation (58%), engagement (64%) and employee retention (34%). Employee recognition encourages everyone to be at their best, which means they work more efficiently.

DS provides a ready vehicle for banding your managers and employees together into a cohesive whole. They walk the halls during their day and see messages from the company reminding them why they're there, see familiar faces being commended for doing good work and feel like they're part of something.

Clearer goal definition

Better manager performance

Increased productivity

Higher employee satisfaction

Lower turnover and absenteeism

Higher returns for shareholders

Pixels vs. Paper

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.

We're not trying to "green wash" DS, which obviously has its own carbon footprint, but it can definitely make an impact on your green efforts through reduced printing, energy management and education.

As the environmental and economic challenges of our times are more and more on people's minds, they will naturally be attracted to more modern, cleaner, more efficient technology. They will feel like they are moving along with the times, rather than languishing in the past.

There is value, though impossible to calculate on a spreadsheet, in presenting your organization in a modern, up-to-date way. Adding DS to your communications toolkit just heightens your perceived value, building trust and confidence in your target audience, making your organization more attractive.

Finally, DS solutions are more cost effective for large audiences. Over multiple years, a digital signage system offers a more effective and inexpensive option than print:

Digital Signage	Print Communications
Purchase price is a one-time cost	A continuing revenue drain
No cost increases	Annual price increases due to paper, printing and transportation costs
Potentially unlimited audience	Set number of targets based on pre-determined print runs
Lower cost per person reached	Set costs for printing and distribution, repeated with each print run
More frequent, measurable audience exposure	Communication is distributed once, subsequent exposure not measurable
Dynamic – video, animations, cable feeds, tickers, transitions attract and maintain interest	Static – one-time design is only way to grab and keep attention
Can be interactive, allowing the audience to shape their experience	No interactivity
Unlimited space, can handle hundreds of messages at once	Limited space to communicate ideas and information
Up-to-date and current information	Timeliness limited by printing and distribution
Allows immediate update, correction and retirement of messages	Updates require new print runs, corrections require retractions and printed materials linger
Technology constantly being improved, more efficient and cheaper	Print technology has reached the summit of its capabilities

You can also use your DS content to educate viewers on green topics. Offer energy saving tips and advertise your recycling efforts. Make people aware that you're trying to change the culture. You can even tie into your building management system to show current consumption rates of energy and water so people see how much is being used and hopefully cut down.

Democratizing Communications

When we talk about democratizing communications, we mean getting more people involved in the process versus the old-fashioned way of having a communications department pushing out one-way messages.

Why does that matter and what's wrong with the old way? People today are less responsive to top-down communications. With the ever-expanding range of tools constantly being made available, anyone who's part of a community can post news and share best practices. Today, communications is a conversation.

People have become used to contributing – posting on social media, commenting on blogs and news websites, participating in online forums, and using intranets, wikis and a constantly growing array of mobile apps. Web 2.0, open sourcing and HTML5 have changed the very nature of how, and where, we create, share and consume information. With portals like these, anyone who's part of a defined community can post opinions, share best practices, or simply broadcast something that's on their mind (they can even create a new community if there isn't one out there to their liking). And that's the key point - these new forums inspire good knowledge-sharing habits because anyone and everyone can contribute. With a unified communications plan, organizations get to be participants, as well as shapers, of the ongoing conversation.

Organizations should want to help people act on what they know and participate in that dialogue because when people become more involved, they're more likely to get the story straight and share it with others. And that's the goal of modern organizational communications.

While these new methods of communicating spur greater participation and engagement, they can also impact credibility. The community holds participants accountable for the accuracy and soundness of what they say. Modern organizations need to be able to balance the need to constrain what is said while still being able to tap into the enormous potential of a population that wants to participate and has the tools to do so.

Choosing a web-based or networked DS solution, where lots of people can get involved in the process of creating and posting messages, will get better results in terms of understanding, branding and sharing. This doesn't mean you can't put gatekeepers in place to make sure that your overall message and brand isn't distorted. You can and probably should, but you also have an easily-monitored community platform that gives you instant feedback. You'll know when your communications are working, because you audience will tell you so.

> "The system is clean and modern. Every university or institution needing to get a lot of information out to a large number of people should have it."
>
> *Andy Mrusko*
> *Marketing Coordinator*
> *Stamp Student Union*
> *University of Maryland*

> "We have a generation of environmentally conscious students who want a sustainable way to deliver information. We've already reduced our paper usage by 10-15%."
>
> *Bill Ashby*
> *Associate Dean of Students*
> *Newcomb Hall and Student Activities*
> *University of Virginia*

> "To communicate, you've got to use multiple channels because different people perceive messages differently. People must be integrated into the solution or it ultimately has no meaning."
>
> *Sam Kennedy*
> *Assistant Director of User Services*
> *Virginia Commonwealth University*

How Should I Use It?

Start with what you want to accomplish, then tailor the technology to that purpose. You can learn about how to shop for and implement digital signage in our white paper – 13 Steps to Successful Digital Signage.

The objectives for DS systems are as diverse as the organizations that use them. The following are some of the goals companies have addressed with a digital signage solution:

- Reduce costs by
    - Delivering information more efficiently
    - Reducing the cost per communication
    - Improving the reliability of communications
    - Leveraging past investment in infrastructure and resources
    - Reducing costs and time in message creation and distribution
    - Reducing training costs
    - Minimizing reliance on printed materials
- Generate new revenues by
    - Increasing sales
    - Improving cross-selling
    - Collecting advertising revenues
- Reduce perceived wait times
- Improve brand perceptions or experiences
- Increase awareness of events, products or services
- Speed up transactions or other interactions

Once you have concrete objectives, you should outline in some detail how the system will operate in your organization. What kind of content will you display? What will the system components be, and where will they be housed? Who will actually operate it, and which budget pays for maintenance?

It's never too early to identify sources of content. These could be select individuals; entire departments, student groups, outside vendors or suppliers; or external, automated sources; or any combination. But now is the time to engage them.

Corporate Environments

To get through to diverse and mobile corporate audiences today, you need to be direct and timely.

DS and messaging systems give you a path to your audience that's flexible and strongly visual. They deliver graphical and video content to a range of room signs, stationary screens or mobile devices, allowing you to reinforce messages, and target key audiences.

Regardless of their location, people stay informed of urgent alerts, benefits information, greetings, directions, or recognition. Whether you use attention-getting screens where people gather or desktops and mobile devices where they work, your content managers can to get the message out, even with little technical know-how.

When they're strategically placed, TVs, video walls, interactive kiosks, and other displays deliver your message to viewers on target and on time. They keep larger groups abreast of important announcements and performance data, and they start selling as soon as customers walk in the door.

On Campus

Nearly every educational community has events that could use more exposure, and today, sharing campus news has never been more critical. Campus communications are no longer just about quality of life; they can also be about saving lives. DS systems make it quick and easy to push urgent updates, even to mobile devices and remote campuses.

It's also a medium that keeps up with the times. Students, staff and visitors are savvy when it comes to technology, and they're more responsive when notified visually.

DS software also makes it possible to share sophisticated multimedia presentations that enhance campus life by engaging and informing audiences about the many details of residential services, social and athletic programs, administrative announcements, and promotions from retailers.

DS can be tailored to any campus' unique setting. Deliver targeted messages and media to specific campus locations no matter how geographically dispersed, or broadcast the same content campus-wide.

K-12 Schools

You have a lot going on every day, and it can be daunting to communicate everything that's happening to students, parents, teachers and staff. In order to do your job efficiently, you need innovative tools that let you inform, educate and engage all of those audiences quickly and easily.

Today's students and teachers are tech-savvy, so DS is a perfect communication solution to show announcements, media and alerts on screens throughout your school and across your district.

Advertise events and after-school activities, centralize morning announcements, showcase student work, show daily lunch menus, PowerPoint slides, library notices and more.

Government Offices

Government communications need to reach broad and diverse audiences, and visitors to their offices and service centers respond to a variety of media.

Dynamic DS delivers important messages - immediately, effectively and affordably - to government offices, military facilities, emergency services, or community-based organizations. Because it's network based, you can share the most up-to-date news and announcements.

Security updates, news feeds, messages and ticker information can be delivered via a user-friendly interface that allows for easy creation, scheduling and delivery of information. Update content instantly or manage content with advanced scheduling.
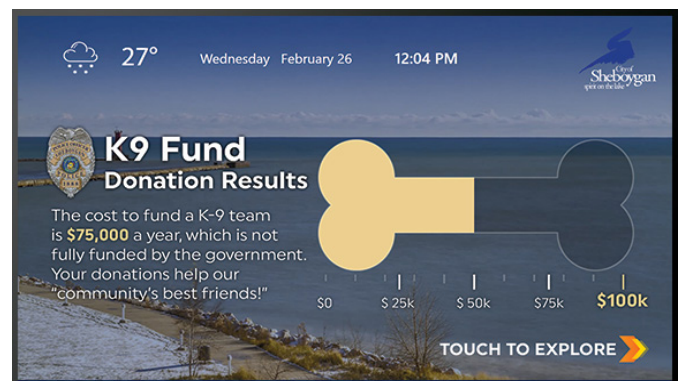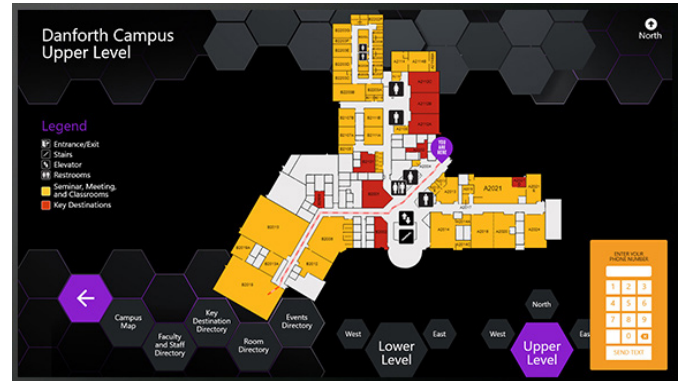
Healthcare & Hospitals

The time that visitors spend waiting represents a valuable opportunity to reach them with important educational announcements, programs and advertisements.

Hospitals, clinics, physicians' offices and community health centers around the country are using video, graphics and info bulletins to reinforce messages and inform patients, staff and visitors of important health issues, treatments and news. With easy-to-use templates and scheduling features, even people with limited technical skills can update DS displays in patient rooms, lobbies, waiting rooms, offices and hallways.

Hotels & Hospitality

DS makes it easy to complement your event planning and execution because it delivers timely information through strategically placed digital room signs and displays. Content that's up-to-the-minute and easily seen gets delivered to displays dispersed throughout your facility, and many systems can integrate with popular room and event scheduling applications.

Provide up-to-date event and room schedules, advertise on site services and keep guests informed with breaking news. DS supplements the guest services you provide and demonstrates your commitment to creating a satisfying visitor experience.

Manufacturing

Do you find it difficult to communicate between the front office and the factory floor? Do warehouse employees sometimes miss important messages? Whether it's in the office, on the production line or in the stockroom, real-time data is the key to productivity.

DS lets you deliver unified messages to all sectors of your business from one easy-to-use application. This gives you more ways to engage your workforce, build community and increase efficiencies. Recognize achievements and keep your employees informed of progress toward goals by showing KPIs, inventory counts, and health and safety announcements.
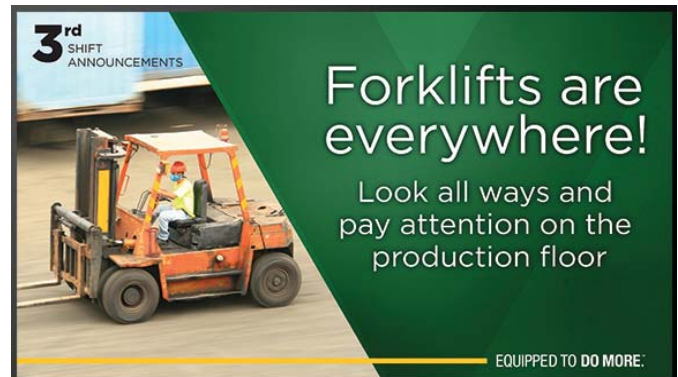
Banking

The migration to online banking means fewer people are visiting branches to transact business. When they do, it's generally to discuss more complex services, so the in-branch experience needs to be just as easy, engaging and positive as their online experience.

Digital signage can bridge the online and offline experience, reinforce your brand, increase revenues, and build trust and loyalty for both customers and employees. Enhance the customer experience with modern visual communications delivered across your lobby, your branch or your entire global banking network.

Show branding and promotions, real-time updates for news, weather, stocks and market fluctuations, currency exchange rates and other vital financial data to attract and engage your in-branch customers. Pull data from queuing systems to reduce perceived wait times and let people find info on self-service touchscreens.

Your digital signs can also be used for internal communications to make sure your staff are always up to date, and room signs help you better manage your meeting rooms and shared spaces.

Retail

Retail is the original market that pioneered digital signage and lot of the design and engagement methods used by other industries today.

Dynamic digital signs can greatly enhance the customer experience, and align your on site and online offerings. Create a fully immersive experience for visitors to your store, restaurant, museum or attraction.

Show advertisements, promotions and branding to inform and entice customers. Reduce perceived wait times and inspire impulse purchases with vibrant messaging to better connect with your customers and visitors. Localize content to as many stores or screens as you like.

To keep employees up to date and motivated, you can send separate message playlists to break rooms, offices and staff areas. Recognize work anniversaries and sales performance for higher morale, productivity and employee retention.

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