Digital Signage in Hospitality Environments

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Hospitality environments are a driver of growth in the digital signage industry. People’s increasing need and demand for instant access to information is one such driver; another is the cost and transience of print materials. Print content expires after a length of time, but digital signage content can be refreshed or replaced regularly. Print content, too, is easily ignored; it loses its luster after a week or so or is immediately thrown into the wastebasket. Digital signage content, in contrast, has the opportunity to capture attention and drive action continually and consistently. Hospitality locations also are home to numerous conferences, heightening the need and demand for commercial digital displays and ProAV solutions.

While such statements about digital signage can be applied to almost any industry vertical, hospitality presents some unique concerns and opportunities. This whitepaper seeks to address some general areas of interest as well as ones specific to hospitality and to explore the uses of digital signage within that environment.
Define objectives.

All digital signage installations must have clearly defined objectives and desired outcomes or key performance indicators (KPIs) even at the earliest development stages. Identifying the two items will help determine both hardware and software needs and guide the overarching strategy.

Ask the following three questions when defining initial objectives:

1. What will the digital signage be used for? Is it meant to drive brand awareness? Sales? Information?

2. What is your budget? Does it account for initial and ongoing costs? Will you recoup that initial investment? If so, in what length of time?

3. What is your strategy? Will the digital signage act only as a replacement for print materials? Will it integrate with other marketing initiatives? Will it be interactive either in terms of interacting with the screen or with viewers being able to share content with their mobile devices?

The spa may not be the home to digital signage, but it is a location that will require ProAV solutions such as speakers and stereo systems.
Determine **tactics**.

Tactics should not be mistaken for strategy. Tactics are specific actions that bring the strategy to fruition. In the case of digital signage, tactics can be as simple or as complex as:

**Large, easy to read text:** It’s tempting to use flashy text and fonts, but readability must remain a foremost concern.

**Attractive, high-resolution images:** Items won’t sell if they’re presented poorly. High-resolution images that match the screen’s native resolution are needed as are ones that show products in their best light.

**Animation or videos:** Animations and videos can draw attention to a screen, but the content must be done well and must fit the strategy in place. As with images, animation and videos must match the screen’s native resolution for best results.

**Customer testimonials:** Some of the best stories are ones not told by the business in question. Such stories come from brand ambassadors, people who gladly share their experiences with the business and are willing to have their stories captured and publicized.

Guest rooms are candidates for digital signage and include interactive televisions or small digital menus. Other ProAV components would be needed as well.
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**Daily, weekly, monthly, and quarterly sales and specials:** An editorial calendar is an essential item for determining what specials and sales to share. The calendar also would outline what time of day and how often to share certain specials and sales; for example, ads for happy hours at the in-house restaurants and bars are better served in the afternoon and early evening rather than in the morning.

**Profit-adding offerings:** Besides sharing general information that people will need and want to know – pool hours, locations of amenities, WiFi availability, checkout times, flight statuses – digital signage content can share profit-adding offerings. Massages, premium movie channels, and dry cleaning services typically are add-on items. Sharing information about them increases the likelihood that people will purchase them, resulting in a margin of the bottom line.

**Targeted announcements:** Announcements can be tailored to specific groups such as wedding parties or conference attendees. With a scheduler tied to the digital signage, the process is simple; announcements would be scheduled based on reservations and updated if those reservations changed.

**Calls to action:** As with websites, digital signage demands calls to action (CTAs). CTAs can range from a QR code that connects to a coupon for a specific restaurant; an ad specifying times within which a certain item can be bought; or a social interaction resulting in a discount at a restaurant or shop. The calls must be clear and immediately actionable. Calls to action need to be analyzed and assessed regularly to determine whether they are working as predicted or need to tweaked in some way.

**Integration with social media:** Creating an experience that extends beyond the screen is important. It’s a way of putting the experience in the audience’s hands and giving them permission and ability to share their experiences in the way they wish.
Remember location.

Location always is crucial with digital signage installations. If the digital signage is placed in an obscure corner or isolated from the general flow of traffic, the content won’t be viewed, and objectives and outcomes won’t be realized. The location has to consider three elements: environment, aesthetics, and safety. The first concern relates to the wall to which the signage will be mounted. Will it bear the weight? Does it need to be reinforced prior to mounting the display? The second concerns appearance, and the third considers how the placement could impede or injure traffic.

Common areas for digital signage in hospitality environments:

- Restaurants
- Gift shops
- Transportation services
- Lobbies
- Elevator banks
- Conference areas
- Guest room TV channels (in-room channels)
Don’t forget the outside world.

A hospitality location often is a retreat from the outside world, but guests will want to know about that world and have access to it. Include content on some digital signage that relays world news, local news, stock market conditions, the weather, and flight information.

Pro Tip:

Hyper-local content always is appreciated because it’s relevant to guests. The more relevant the digital signage content is to guests, the more likely it is that guests will view the content, remember the experience of staying at your hotel, stay again in the future, and recommend your hotel to others – all things that lead to increased sales and a growing bottom line.

Just as guests appreciate rooms that make them feel as though they are welcome, they also appreciate content that is specific to them. Digital signage is your chance to create targeted content that speaks to your guests and ensures an enjoyable stay and future reservations.
Work with businesses outside your business.

With digital signage, you can sell advertising to businesses and products within the city and add a new revenue source for your hospitality environment. Content should remain relevant to guests staying with you; ads for legal aid or chain stores are unlikely to matter and, if displayed, will lead to the digital signage content being ignored.

Gyms are another location that are complemented by digital signage and ProAV. Gyms typically require some sort of sound system and peripherals, and they often use commercial displays rather than consumer televisions since the screens will run most, if not all, of the day.
Use touch screens when and where they make sense.

Touch screens need to be placed strategically within hospitality environments. A touch screen will work well in most restaurant settings; it may be superfluous in a setting such as a spa or gym. The touch component, too, has to be considered. Is a single touch point, something akin to using a mouse with a computer, sufficient or are more touch points for pinch-to-zoom and gesture capabilities needed?

Restaurants are ideally suited for touch screens. Interactive menus allow customers to discover additional information, such as nutritional facts, and to place their orders prior to sitting down or coming to the cash register.
About TouchSystems.

TouchSystems, established in 1996, remains a pioneer in the touch industry. TouchSystems works with customers to create innovative touch solutions, such as desktop touch monitors, interactive (single- and multi-touch) digital signage, all-in-one systems, and kiosks. TouchSystems is based in Hutto, Texas and is a certified woman- and minority-owned small business.