

Duff on Hospitality Law

Digital Signage Part 2: What You Need to Know

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Digital Signage Part II: Some Examples

The size, weight, quality, cost and durability of video monitors limited their use for quite some time. However, the existence of large, light-weight, high-resolution, low cost monitors that can endure considerable abuse has been instrumental in the explosive growth of digital signs.

Other factors have fueled the growth as well.

Quick Service Restaurants (also known as fast food) are under increasing pressure to provide nutritional information about the food they sell. Regulations are in place that require posting of this factual consumer information. It is expensive and time-consuming to print, revise and reprint this information on paper. If a QSR establishment cannot change its menu until it is able to post current nutritional information, then that menu may not change very often or in any substantial ways. Digital menu boards can be controlled from a centralized location, and can be updated very quickly, if, for example, the menu changes, or if the food content or portion size of a dish is changed. At the same time, the sign can be used to quickly promote an entree, or make some last minute special offer, all designed to promote sales.

Digital signs also play a role in more traditional sit-down restaurants. Instead of having a hand-held menu, some restaurants are experimenting with a screen at the table, displaying the menu and allowing the diners to order using the touch screen. They can ask questions and get additional information through the screen or request a waiter to come to the table. With proper hardware and software, there is no reason why the bill cannot be paid using the table screen. Perhaps it would not add to the romance of a dinner, but it might add to the enjoyment and customer satisfaction, if done properly.

We are all quite aware that mobile phones have dramatically reduced the role of payphones. The skeletons of these dinosaurs can still be found. In New York City a group is looking at transforming old pay phone locations into standing information hubs. A monitor would provide information about facilities and services in the general vicinity of the hub. The presence of phone lines at these locations means that the monitors can be connected to telecommunications networks so that pedestrians can request and obtain additional information. What was once an eyesore may become a hip information hub.

The availability of broadband is beginning to transform healthcare, so that doctors and hospitals can provide various types of telehealth services, and experience both cost savings and improved health. Construct an enclosure at a mall or in a rural location, add some hardware and software, and you have a medical kiosk so that a person can obtain medical information and assistance. The presentations on the display could be pre-recorded, providing general information, with the option of speaking to a “live” person for more particularized information.

The kiosk – digital signs within an enclosure – is simply a concept of how to present information and need not be limited to health matters. An automobile manufacturer in conjunction with car dealers might establish kiosks to promote the sale of cars. A board of tourism might place locate them strategically throughout a community to help tourists.

Retailers are making increasing use of digital signage. Strategically placed digital signs in a store highlight new products and special items. Some signs will display several items at the same time. Facial monitoring devices in those displays can sense which of the objects catch the viewer’s attention and which do not. With that information, the sign can display more information about the item or items of interest and ignore the rest. Scanning a prominently displayed QR code with a smartphone, the customer can obtain additional information about the products. With a radio-frequency identification device in the store and a near-field communications feature incorporated into the customer’s smartphone, the store can identify the consumer and communicate directly, perhaps offering a today-only discount on the item that caught the consumer’s eye on a digital sign. This highlights the growing interaction between digital signs and mobile devices. They do not exist in isolation from one another.

These are but a couple examples of what people are doing or trying to do with digital signage. The motive to increase sales and the creative imagination of entrepreneurs suggests there is no limit to what people will try.

What legal issues does all this raise? That is the subject of our third and final installment.

In the meantime, if you have questions concerning digital signs or other telecommunication issues, please let [Greg](#) know.