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Using Flexible Integration for Customized Digital Signage Solutions

Digital signage can be a powerful tool in a variety of settings, but to be the most effective, the signage must be able to easily access real-time, specific data.

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While digital signage is an effective vehicle for advertisements, its potential extends far beyond ads. The technology can be used to display real-time information and data, keeping employees and customers informed. But in order to maximize this potential, the networks must be able to integrate with existing technologies and access a company's existing data. This white paper will look at how digital signage is used in four different settings, including in educational institutions, corporate communications, social media and with the Internet.

Educational institutions

Many college campuses (and even some high schools) have their own television networks. The networks display campus events, cafeteria menus, time and location changes for classes, emergency information and other pertinent data for both students and faculty. Digital signage can be a great asset on campus because of its ability to broadcast real-time information to individual screens in specific locations, as opposed to displaying the same content across all of the campus' screens.

"One advantage digital signage has is it can be tailored by location," said Bob Rosenberry, worldwide visual solutions business manager for Houston-based Hewlett-Packard, a digital signage provider.

But for digital signage to be truly useful to students and administrators, it must be easy to update. There are numerous ways for content to be automated in the academic setting, from linking scheduling software to show which rooms are being used for what purpose or when tuition payments are due, to linking to online RSS feeds to automatically import up-to-the-minute news or weather information, to linking to social media sites, such as Twitter, to display tweets featuring certain hashtags.

Uses of digital signage on campus

- Campus events
- Cafeteria menus
- Time and location changes for classes
- Emergency information

"All those events can flow to the digital signage screen automatically," said Alex Wang, president of Fremont, Calif.-based Dynasign, a digital signage provider.

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Corporate communications

Digital signage can be used for more than communicating with customers — it also can be a powerful, quick way to reach employees.

"Digital signage really should be, and is becoming, an integral part of strategic communication," said Tom Racca, president and chief executive officer of BurstPoint Networks of Westborough, Mass., a video communications provider.

By integrating a digital signage network with news feeds or the corporate website, messaging can quickly be changed. For example, if a company has its digital signage linked to a weather feed, when severe weather comes, the signage automatically can be updated to warn employees that a tornado is in the area.

Digital signage also can be used to make conferences run more smoothly. If the company's signage can be integrated with the hotel's system, for example, conference room changes automatically can be updated, the menu for lunch or dinner can be displayed or attendees could even find out what rooms their colleagues are staying in.

Social media

Just like digital signage, social media's popularity has grown exponentially in recent years. Businesses are taking advantage of social media, establishing their own Facebook pages and Twitter feeds. But the two technologies don't have to work alone; digital signage can merge with social media to make customers more aware of a company and develop an interactive relationship.

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Twisplays, a New York-based LED signage company, designs signage that features a ticker-tape screen (2 feet long, 4 inches high) displaying companies' Twitter feeds. This integration of digital signage and social media makes customers aware of a business' messaging while they're on site. If the customer is in a store and the retailer is advertising a sale via its Twitter feed, the customer is reminded of the sale in the store, and might be more motivated to take advantage of the savings. The display also offers information on subscribing to the Twitter feed and the specials that are advertised there, encouraging the customer to either sign up on her smartphone or on a computer at home.

"[The customers] can take the brand home with them," said Joshua Persky, chief executive officer and founder of Twisplays.

The merging of digital signage and social media isn't just beneficial to the company; it's also convenient for customers. While many people have iPhones and iPads that allow them mobile Internet access, putting social media on a digital signage network keeps customers from having to remember to get online and check the company's

Twitter is becoming an integral part of digital signage, as viewers can interact on the social media site and see it appear on the screen.

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feed while in the store. For people who are not social-media savvy, it allows them to see the company's Twitter feed, something they would not otherwise have access to, and encourages them to participate in a conversation with the company.

Existing technology and the Internet

Digital signage players ideally should be Web-based and have a flexible platform to allow for the easiest transition possible. Companies want their digital signage to be able to access existing data without having to enter it again.

"With a Web-based platform, [businesses] can integrate with our players without doing major modifications," said Cindy Lai, marketing manager for Taiwan-based CAYIN Technology, a digital signage solutions provider. "Most of the time, they don't need to change their regular operation or workflow and still can show useful data on the screen."

Just as digital signage is the wave of the future for communication, Web-based platforms are the wave of the future with digital signage.

"We believe the Internet will become the main communication platform in the near future," Lai said.

About the sponsor: *CAYIN Technology, based in Taipei City, Taiwan, provides dynamic digital signage solutions designed to convey pertinent information to targeted customers in a variety of industries including retail, education, hotel, government and healthcare.*

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