

WHITE PAPER:

DIGITAL SIGNAGE IN FINANCIAL SERVICES:

Marketing and IT Converge to Achieve Today's Business Objectives





EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

Financial institutions are facing a confluence of market forces that are driving a shift in both marketing and IT strategies. Like most organizations, financial institutions have had to grapple with the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic and the shift to remote and hybrid work models. At the same time, customer relationships have changed, with consumers making shorter, less-frequent branch visits while conducting most transactions online.

That's not to suggest that brick-and-mortar branches are a relic of the past. On the contrary, banks will always need physical locations to conduct more complex transactions and support customers who opt to visit a branch.

What's changed is how banks engage with customers in the branch environment. Increasingly, banks are adopting digital signage solutions to welcome customers, promote products and services, and enhance their brand image. Digital signage can inform, educate, and entertain, and make wait times seem shorter.

Digital signage has many use cases within financial institutions, but capitalizing on its benefits requires a well-thought-out strategy, enterprise-class technologies, expert implementation, and ongoing maintenance and support. Marketing and IT teams must work closely together and with the right third-party providers to ensure that digital signage delivers the expected return on objectives (ROO).

DIGITAL SIGNAGE: MARKETING/TECHNOLOGY HYBRID

Marketing/technology hybrids such as digital signage fuse timeless advertising techniques with state-of-the-art technology. While yesterday's VHS or DVD-based digital signage initiatives allowed marketing departments to deploy players without involving IT, today's dynamic digital signage deployments require a collaborative approach.

Digital signage uses flat-panel monitors to display high-definition graphics and video to customers, employees, prospects, and passersby. The displays are often coupled with audio equipment to create a multimedia experience.

The displays and audio systems are attached to media players that contain the content. Media players range from multi-output and high-performance players to standard players with processing power comparable to a desktop PC.

Although content can be created, deployed, and managed manually for each sign, the process would be too complex and time-consuming for a large, dynamic digital signage deployment. A centralized content management system (CMS) allows the messaging to be updated as frequently as needed, customized according to location, time of day and other criteria, and distributed to the appropriate digital signs.

Content and program scheduling information are sent via the wide-area network (WAN) to the local-area network (LAN). Managed network appliances within the LAN are then connected to media players via cables or Wi-Fi.

DIGITAL SIGNAGE USE CASES IN FINANCIAL INSTITUTIONS

Banks and other financial institutions can utilize digital signage in many aspects of their operations. One of the most obvious is at the front door — signage can be used to greet branch visitors with engaging and helpful content. Timely and useful information such as financial data, news feeds and educational videos can also improve the wait time experience.

Digital signs can be deployed throughout the lobby and other parts of the facility to promote bank services and offers. Promotions can easily be updated and customized for specific audiences.

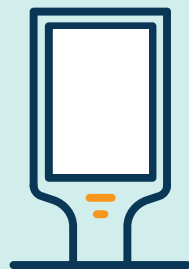
It's important not to forget the drive-thru, where more than 60 percent of transactions are conducted. Outdoor digital signage that can withstand the elements creates another opportunity to engage customers.

But digital signage isn't just about selling and brand awareness. It can increase efficiency by providing an interactive digital directory to help customers navigate the bank without approaching staff. It can also be used to welcome new employees, announce events, and communicate changes in procedures to keep staff informed and engaged.

Digital Signage ROO

Calculating the ROI of digital signage can be difficult. ROO is generally more helpful when assessing the value of signage solutions. It looks at the intangible benefits of signage and how it helps achieve specific objectives. For financial institutions, the ROO analysis might focus on:

- Increased deposits
- Increased sales of financial products
- Enhanced customer satisfaction
- Strengthened brand loyalty
- Reduced staffing requirements



DIFFERING VIEWS OF DIGITAL SIGNAGE

Digital signage requires the coordinated efforts of marketing and IT to effectively converge messaging and technology. In many ways, this convergence is already happening — marketing has become more tech savvy and IT has increased its role in customer-facing initiatives. However, digital signage requires physical hardware within the brick-and-mortar branch. It requires creativity, business savvy, and technological expertise to bring the digital and physical worlds together.

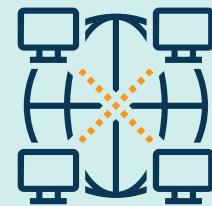
For marketing, it's all about delivering the right message to the right person at the right place and the right time. The marketing team is weighing image, awareness, branding and messaging, content creation and management, and the all-important customer experience.

IT by necessity is immersed in the nuts and bolts of the IT infrastructure, including bandwidth, security and integration. IT teams possess a wealth of knowledge regarding the operational requirements and capabilities of existing applications and systems, and how new initiatives will impact, and be impacted by, legacy systems. This knowledge is crucial to digital signage success.

Marketing and IT teams should collaborate early and often on digital signage initiatives. Marketing should drive the project in terms of its goals and objectives while relying on IT to ensure successful implementation of the technology and ongoing management and support.

IT plays an integral and enabling role in the following areas of digital signage solutions:

- Hardware selection and integration
- Software selection and integration
- LAN, WAN, and Wi-Fi connectivity
- Staging, testing, and installation
- Cyber and physical security concerns
- Management and technical support



STRATEGY AND CREATION: MARKETING DRIVES, IT ENABLES

Content is king. In order to maximize the value of digital signage, financial institutions must deliver timely and relevant content to their customers. The content should be localized for each branch in addition to promoting the bank's overall brand.

The marketing team should evaluate the CMS to ensure that it is easy to create, design, schedule, edit, publish, and manage content. The CMS should support a wide range of media formats and feature drag-and-drop systems that make it easy to schedule content as needed. A cloud-based CMS provides ready access to marketing teams from any location, helping them to keep content fresh and local.

IT's understanding of the technical capabilities (and limitations) of the current infrastructure will provide valuable insight into the possibilities and considerations for delivering the content to the displays. Current demands on wired LANs, Wi-Fi, and WANs have an impact on content delivery.

CONNECTIVITY: IT GETS MARKETING THE SPEED IT REALLY NEEDS

Digital signage applications can be bandwidth intensive (but not necessarily so). Factors such as type of content, frequency of updates and the system's software and hardware can all influence bandwidth requirements. IT should carefully evaluate these requirements and identify ways to optimize the network for the delivery of latency-sensitive content such as video.

It's also important to consider the impact of digital signage on other systems and applications. The ultimate goal of digital signage is to increase revenue and enhance customer engagement. The value will be diminished if other applications on the network suffer.

IT should work with marketing to balance the bandwidth needs of digital signage with other customer-facing and backend systems. Furthermore, IT's experience in delivering connectivity to everything from security cameras to teller systems can provide insight into possibilities that marketing didn't even know existed.

HARDWARE: EARLY COLLABORATION CAN MINIMIZE RISK

IT's early input in hardware selection is crucial. Everything from power and cabling to routers, switches, and servers can have an impact on the success of the deployment. IT's understanding of the bank's technology infrastructure helps avoid costly mistakes. However, IT and marketing should collaborate to find the ideal combination of performance and functionality and capital and operating expenses.

Of course, financial institutions must address security threats and meet regulatory compliance requirements. Every device with network access creates another opportunity for an intrusion. Digital signage equipment must be properly secured to prevent unauthorized access to sensitive systems and data.

Additionally, digital signage presents a public-facing security concern. There are documented cases in which hackers have taken control of digital signs to display inappropriate content. In financial services, such a breach can carry legal and regulatory consequences as well as cause damage to the bank's or credit union's brand.

INTEGRATION, TESTING, AND DEPLOYMENT: BOTH ARE EXPERTS IN THEIR OWN WAY

Marketing has been A/B testing, focus grouping, and test marketing since the early days of print advertising and direct mail. Today's digital world provides marketing with a treasure trove of data and metrics to integrate and modify message, medium, and audience. Marketers continuously test, adapt, and refine.

IT professionals also live and breathe integration, testing, and deployment. But security and operational necessity require that IT "get the bugs out" before going live. Conversely, marketing moves quickly to respond to competitive challenges and the changing tastes of the marketplace.

An experienced third-party systems integrator with expertise in digital signage and managed network services can provide much-needed support and insight. The right partner can help accelerate the integration and deployment process, while ensuring project success.

MAINTENANCE AND MANAGED SERVICES: BRING IN THE EXPERTS

Ongoing maintenance and management are critical. Signs that aren't working, or that display garbled content, will do nothing to reinforce the bank's brand. However, neither marketing nor IT typically have the expertise or resources to monitor digital signage systems and dispatch someone to repair and troubleshoot equipment in remote branch locations.

Particularly for dispersed, multi-branch operations, these efforts are best outsourced to a managed services provider (MSP). Qualified MSPs provide 24x7 monitoring of digital media players and displays to capture diagnostics and alerts. They also provide comprehensive networking monitoring, management, and support from Network Operations Centers (NOCs). They have the resources needed to troubleshoot issues remotely, support non-technical staff at the branch level, and provide nationwide break/fix maintenance.

USING DIGITAL SIGNAGE TO BRIDGE THE IT AND MARKETING DIVIDE

As the world has become increasingly digital and interconnected, traditional boundaries between IT and marketing have blurred. IT has become a customer-facing organization and marketing is now a technology-driven discipline. Nevertheless, traditional boundaries do not disappear overnight, particularly in financial institutions.

Digital signage can serve as a model for collaboration between the two groups. Early and clear communication is essential. Understanding the opportunities digital signage offers and the challenges both marketing and IT face can create an environment of innovation and collaboration.

Digital signage can help financial institutions address the challenges of changing consumer preferences, rapidly shifting markets, and increased regulatory pressures. Working together, IT and marketing can further the bank's overall goals while respecting the demands and nuances of the two disciplines.

About SageNet

SageNet is passionate about trusted connections. The company believes that by creating, discovering and nurturing trusted connections with its customers, associates and community, SageNet enhances the world that connects us all.

As a leader in managed network and cybersecurity services, SageNet connects, manages and protects technologies and devices across the enterprise. SageNet's collaborative approach provides peace of mind and systems-confidence that empowers an organization to focus on its core mission.

The company offers world-class service and support via its three US-based 24/7 Network Operations Centers (NOCs) and Security Operations Centers (SOCs), geographically-diverse teleports, a central National Logistics Center, multiple data centers, and a nationwide field service organization.

With a three-decade track record in managed services, SageNet boasts a long-term customer base that includes the nation's largest retail, healthcare, financial, utilities and energy organizations. SageNet manages communications at more than 220,000 endpoints. Headquartered in Tulsa, SageNet has regional offices in Atlanta, Chicago, Philadelphia, Toronto and Washington D.C.