

Interactive Digital Signage

Delivering the message consumers want, and changing the way marketers deliver

Today, marketing messages are being thrown at consumers on an almost hourly basis, in more places and in more creative ways than ever before — all in an effort just to get recognized. An extraordinary number of precious marketing dollars are spent simply trying to out-shout the louder voices. Numerous ads are too general to target individual needs and desires, and many of these marketing dollars are probably wasted. What's worse is that most marketing campaigns rely on nebulous goals without any real way to quantify specific results. Interactive Digital Signage is about to change the rules of the marketing game.

*"I know half of my advertising is wasted.
I just don't know which half."*

—John Wanamaker, 19th century department store mogul

Interactivity – The Key to Digital Signage Success

As companies seek ways to improve the effectiveness of their marketing campaigns, a growing number are considering ways to stimulate sales and reduce marketing costs. Various options are being touted as a superior alternative to posters, billboards and other "traditional" marketing and promotional vehicles. But, while these options have the unique ability to tailor marketing campaigns regionally down to specific neighborhoods, time of day, month, year, or even holiday, they still fall short of their intended goal of fine-tuning an ad campaign to reach only the targeted market. What's missing is invaluable feedback about the user, which could be used to better communicate the message to the customer. Interactive Digital Signage (iDS) enables the consumer to provide that feedback.

The Benefits of Interactivity

If we look worldwide to places like Europe and Australasia, where this new media has already been adopted, the pattern was similar. When first deployed, digital displays were placed above the viewer and the same content was displayed on all screens either simultaneously or in sequence on some timed loop. The first time consumers see it; it attracts their attention. But with each additional exposure, the ability to attract attention becomes less effective until finally it is relegated to their subconscious as extraneous noise. The next phase was to bring the displays down to eye level, but once you do this, most people want to touch the display. So, why not give the consumers what they want while engaging their curiosity with interactive content?

Interactive Digital Signage (iDS) provides that capability by using a large touch screen display (larger than 26") as an interactive marketing tool. Touch screens offer an intuitive, natural interface, and with that interaction, comes information about the user's wants and desires. Marketers then use this information to precisely target the most appropriate demographic and obtain instant feedback on a product or service. Collecting this valuable information then allows the marketer to fine-tune future marketing efforts.

Users can also be presented with promotional offers based on certain input criteria, and cross-selling strategies can then be employed. Meanwhile, marketers and consumers alike benefit from the use of carefully culled market research and demographic data. Interactivity makes it all possible.

Adaptive Advertising & Marketing

Going forward, iDS could also deploy "adaptive" advertising and marketing by offering the ability to change content based on user inputs while providing a measurement tool to gauge the effectiveness of a campaign. By changing the creation equation, ads could be adaptive and advertisers could continually refine their message, swapping out offers in response to what works.

That way, advertisers would not be limited to a single ad campaign. With iDS, they can dial in different themes and deploy a dozen appeals — dropping the ones that don't work. Advertisers are then able to mine the data for patterns, making connections between the ads that attract customers and the things they buy.

Interactivity not only provides valuable market data, but also creates accountability. Traditional campaigns rely on vague, immeasurable goals, like "creating a buzz", and with the current metrics, it is unclear how a marketing campaign translates in to a specific sale. With specific demographic data provided by iDS, one could determine which display, at what time of day, attracts the most viewers that turns in to a sale at XYZ Store? In other words,

with interactivity, not only can you fine-tune the message, but you could verify what venue is the most effective at attracting the targeted audience.

Taking things one step further, this data could also be used to attract more advertisers. If it could be demonstrated that a specific location, at a specific time of day, draws the greatest number of targeted viewers, would a marketer pay more to be displayed? Would they consider bidding for the right to be displayed? iDS could be marketed to advertisers in a way similar to online advertising, incorporating a pay-for-performance model with the benefit of paying for only the viewers who demonstrate an interest in your product or service.

Content is King

Interactive digital signage as a new media, offers the opportunity to provide content that's dynamic, exciting and engaging, giving people a reason to stop long enough to take in the message. With a whole generation brought up on instant messaging, video on demand, and iPods, the attention span of most people continues to shrink. Marketing campaigns therefore will need to be updated often, requiring fresh content and creativity to attract viewers.

The technology exists to effectively manage a network of remote displays. There are hardware and network considerations, as well as software and security issues, but creative content is what will make it all come together.

Interactivity, on the other hand, creates the interface with the user, which allows the delivery of information that people want or need. For instance, way-finding, self-check kiosks, and ATMs all utilize touch screens that change the information displayed based on the inputs from the user. These venues are often interspersed with advertisements for related products and services. But again, it is the content, or the service that provides the connection with the users that offers the opportunity to tailor the marketing messages.

Paradigm Shift Brings Creative Opportunities

The days of blanketing the media with a single ad that's irrelevant to most of its audience are nearly over. Dynamic Digital Signage and Interactive Digital Signage will create a paradigm shift in marketing similar to what happened with online advertising. Agencies will need to redefine their marketing strategies.

Dynamically changing, interactive content is a new concept. With unlimited creative opportunities, interactivity offers a continuous feedback loop to efficiently tailor content to the intended user. It will now be possible to reach a desired demographic audience with an ad designed not only for them, but sometimes by them, and in real time. Interactive Digital Signage can make it happen today.

About NextWindow

NextWindow is an international leader in the design and manufacture of optical touch-screen overlays, and OEM touch components, from 12.1" to over 100". NextWindow is a privately held company based out of Auckland New Zealand and has its U.S. headquarters in Chicago, IL. For more information call 1.866.870.9733 or visit on the Web at www.nextwindow.com.

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Anthony Uhrick joined NextWindow in July of 2005 as Vice President of Marketing and Sales. With over 20 years of successful sales experience, Anthony is applying his knowledge and expertise of touch screen technologies and business and sales channel development to promote the sale of optical touch screen products. Anthony has grown sales by developing strategic OEM accounts, and by creating a sales channel comprised of distributors, value-added resellers and system integrators. Anthony has held numerous senior sales positions with companies such as 3M Touch Systems, Planar Technologies, Rockwell Automation and WR Grace. Anthony holds a masters degree from Loyola Marymount University. Anthony resides in the Western suburbs of Chicago along with his wife of 15 years, two daughters and Golden Retriever.

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