



Project Content **PLAYBOOK**

The all-in-one guide to digital signage **content, design, and strategy.**



TABLE OF CONTENTS

3 INTRODUCTION

|

5 CONTENT TYPES

|

16 DESIGN MUSTS

|

24 STRATEGY

|

40 RESOURCES

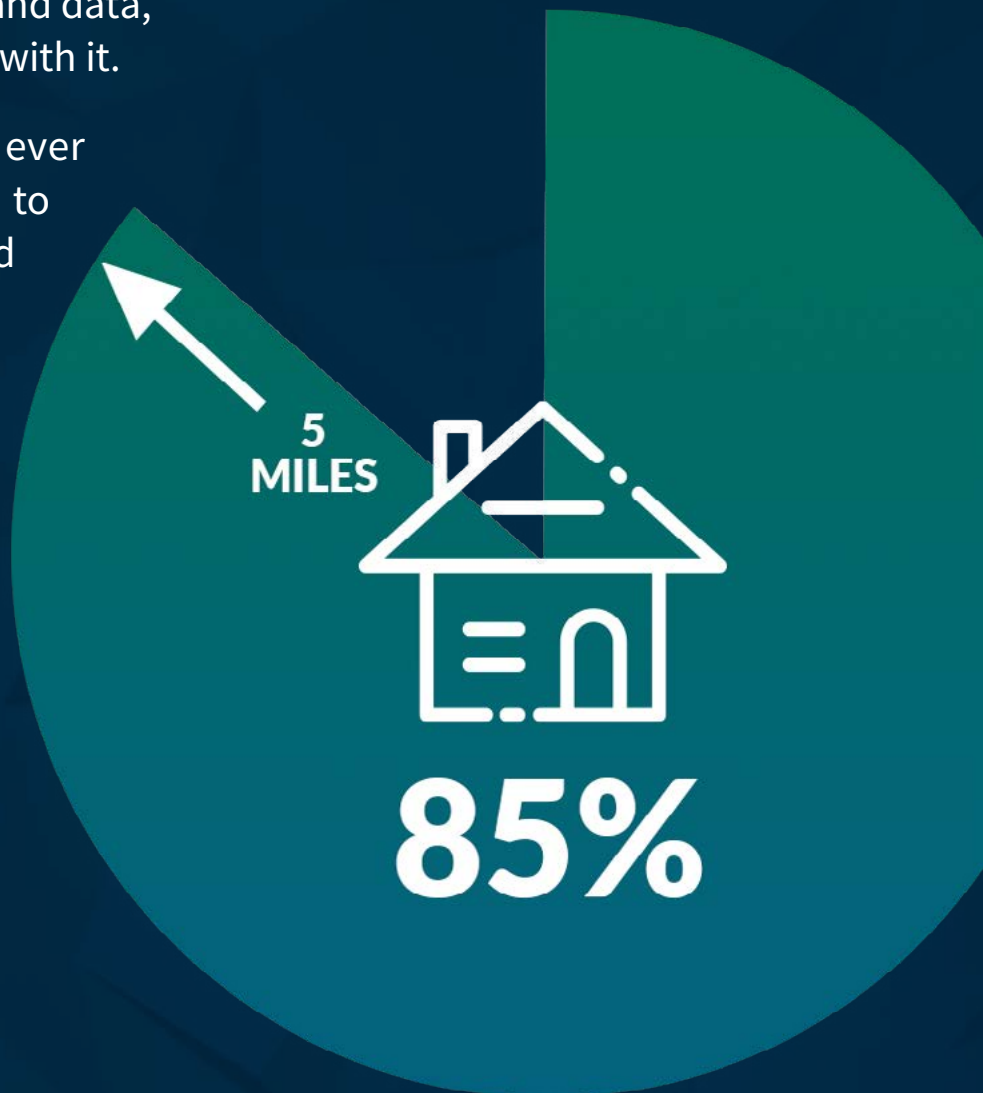


INTRODUCTION

Customer engagement behaviors continue to change year over year and marketing has become more challenging and difficult, given the increase in daily noise. Competition is fierce and abundant. Every day, information is presented to our brains through social media, YouTube, email, websites, radio, TV, robocalling, texting, apps, and blogs, causing information overload. There is an abundance of information and data, but we don't know what to do with it.

It is more challenging than ever for a business or organization to reach their customers and build a relationship worthy of their undivided attention. Every marketing medium available to you provides a unique opportunity to reach your audience. Outdoor digital signs provide the highest performing tool for high frequency communication to your audience.

Research indicates that 85% of customers live or work within a five-mile radius of your business.





Digital signage is a significant investment, and many don't know that it requires the right fuel to operate at its highest performance.

If a car enthusiast buys a Ferrari, they do so with the intent that the best maintenance plan, fuel, and care be used. This is included in that decision.

Budgets for marketing tend to vary between companies and organizations, so you need to do your homework, and make sure you choose the right play for your team.

CONTENT TYPES

Six fundamental types of content drive an effective marketing plan for outdoor digital signs. Understanding each type of content will help guide the design and execution of your strategy.



#1



BRANDING

**Purpose: Name recognition. Tagline recognition.
Increase familiarity. Increase ability to recall.**

A digital sign plays an integral part in your overall branding strategy. Two key pillars in building a successful brand are communicating your promise and being consistent. Your high frequency marketing tool allows for the opportunity to consistently communicate that promise. Great branding content for your digital sign will utilize your colors, logo, and tagline to increase familiarity with who you

are and where you are located. Over time, your audience will quickly recall your name, promise, and products when making a decision on where to go. Or better yet, be able to provide recommendation when in a conversation with family, friends, or colleagues.



#2



TIME SENSITIVE

Purpose: Cater to daily/hourly changes that can be communicated in a way not possible with static signage.

The days of changing a reader board or posting banners are done. With your sign investment, you now have the tool to communicate these messages in a strategic manner to drive more business and engagement with your products and services. Broadcast your current promotion or upcoming event.

If displayed promotions or events regularly change, your audience will be more inclined to pay attention to your sign on a more frequent basis as they pass your location daily.



#3



COMMUNITY MINDED

Purpose: Enhance “Good Will” assets within the community. Pursue causes important to the company.

A major player in the increased noise of our daily lives comes from marketing. Every business and organization is trying to communicate their message. The constant stream of marketing makes it easy to tune out many of the avenues reaching you. Freshen up the noise by promoting a positive message absent of your business marketing. The

community minded approach will help grow your “Good Will” and encourage an easier path for your customers’ brains to connect with your sign and your brand. Promoting a cause your business or organization supports is an excellent way to show another side of who you are.

#4



CALL TO ACTION

**Purpose: Move someone to act. Sales promotion.
Increase signups for an event.**

Your passing traffic, if you have been managing your sign's content well, will be more open to engaging with you over time. Introducing Call to Action content is how you will drive impulse stops and activity. According to a new CreditCards.com poll, 5 in 6 Americans say they have made impulse buys. It's likely that 30% or more of your business

is from impulse purchases. With effective content design, you can drive that number higher. When selecting the right call to action, focus on the product or service you want them to engage with and how to act on it right then and there. Putting your phone number or email address will not help.

#5



CROSS CHANNEL

Purpose: Promote other channels where you have more than 8 seconds to engage with the customer.

When you pass any sign along a roadway, you realistically have less than 8 seconds to engage with the customer. In most cases you will have less. Regular communication on where they can find more information on

you, your products, and services can be helpful. Directing them to a social media account or website acts as a reminder and secondary call to action for your customer.



#6



ATTENTION GRABBING

Purpose: Form habits of attracting attention. Create active minded watching versus passive minded glancing.

The noise is often noise because it's not different enough to capture our attention. Our human brains are wired to notice difference. This can come visually, as we will discuss later in our book, or it can come through information. Attention grabbing content will push the audience to say things like,

I hadn't thought of that... You're right!... Maybe I should consider...

If you can become a constant source of "DIFFERENT" information, you will become a source of dopamine. Training your traffic to look at your sign through attention grabbing content will push brand awareness through the roof.



**CONTENT
TYPE:
#NEVER**



#1



TIME AND TEMP

Prior to the invention of time and temperature units in the 80s and 90s, most people just knew the name of their grandpa's bank and that they gave away Dum Dums in the drive-thru. When sign companies started putting these little, square signs with changing light bulbs or digit flippers, those same people still knew the name of the bank but also that it was 3:32 and "HOT". These type of signs were the original dynamic signage with changing data

that represented real-time, local information. With today's technology, your full color digital sign will only show time and temperature when you can't think of anything better to share. It's a cop out. Instead of showcasing how your business can help, your audience sees the time and temperature. The information is benign and already easily accessible to us on our wrist, phone, and car dashboard.

#2



PHONE NUMBER

Digital signs are unfairly perceived to be hazards to driving. The perception is that they distract drivers by making them look away from the road. The premise is sound, but not accurate. Most of your audience, especially if they are the person behind the wheel, will only give your sign a few seconds of attention at most while passing by. In those precious few seconds, they are not going to remember your phone number, let alone have time to write

it down. Google or Siri will help them find your phone number if they want to reach you. Maximize your advertising impact with better content and better call to action.

There are a couple exceptions to this rule, though. If you have any questions about this, give us a call!

(844) 773-7861



#3



QR CODE

No one is going to scan your sign for a QR Code.

The amount of effort it takes the consumer to take their phone out, open a camera or QR Code app, and scan a sign, is in no way worth it to them. As stated before, the few valuable seconds you have with your customer's attention should hook them. If they have to go out of their way

and inconvenience themselves just so they can view your website, your sign is being wasted. Eliminate the extra step, and eliminate friction for the consumer.

Furthermore, the safety issues presented by encouraging the driver to pull out their phone and be distracted are not good. Let's try to keep our audience safe.

Don't believe us? Try it out for yourself:



HOW TO DESIGN

Outdoor digital signs, although large in physical size, are most often very small in resolution size. A typical HD television screen is 1080 pixels tall x 1920 pixels wide. An average outdoor digital sign is 80 pixels tall x 160 pixels wide

(That's a 99% smaller design space!)

Keep this in mind when creating or browsing content to use on your own digital sign.



#1



LESS THAN 10

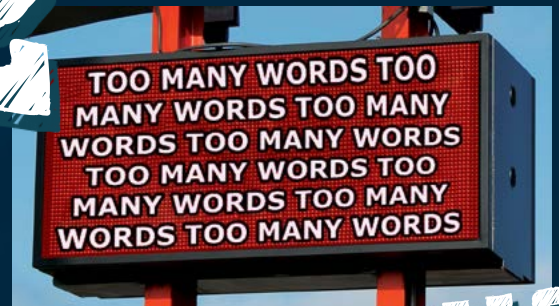
Unless your sign is located at an intersection forcing traffic to stop, your audience will be driving past your sign between 20 and 70mph. You have less than 10 seconds to reach them. If your content piece runs longer than 10 seconds, you are not driving home the entire message and have wasted that impression. The more wasted impressions, the less influential your sign is.

#2

LESS IS MORE

Six lines of text and 24 words is too much.

When it comes to content for your sign, less is more, and it must resonate quickly. Don't jeopardize driving safety on account of a lengthy message.



vs.



#3



NO WHITE BACKGROUNDS

White backgrounds are pleasing and crisp. For most of the printing and digital display world, they are perfect for many of your advertising pieces. However, your digital sign is different. The all-white background requires every light emitting diode (LED) on your display to be running at full brightness. Emitting light

is different than reflective light, and it's important to know that all-white will increase your energy cost, shorten the life of your display, blind traffic at night, and won't help the readability of your text. These factors all increase the chance your message is ignored.



#4



vs.



CONTRAST IS KEY

Contrast is a measure of the difference in perceived “luminance”, or brightness between two colors. The higher the contrast, the more visible & eye-catching colors will be. Having high contrast for text, logos, and directional symbols on

signs is critical for readability at a distance. Bad or no use of contrast could leave an impression that your business is “unprofessional”. Subtly increasing a design’s use of contrast will give it a boost in quality.

HIGH CONTRAST

White and black have the highest contrast, having the lightest & darkest values, respectively. White on black, or the reverse, are great standard options for signage. Black and yellow together are another popular high contrast pair.

Digital signs are usually observed from a long distance. It's good to keep in mind that higher contrast designs will be easier to see the further away you are.



LOW CONTRAST

Opposite color pairs (diagonal on the color wheel) typically have high contrast if their values are different. Purple and yellow are a good example of this. Purple is naturally a dark value, and yellow is a light value, so these opposite colors have high contrast and high visibility. Harmonious colors similar in value, like green & blue, have low contrast & low visibility.

VIBRATING COLORS

Opposite colors with similar values tend to have a visual vibration effect. This is difficult to read and uncomfortable to look at. Red and green together are an example of a vibrating color combination to stay away from.

**ORANGE
ON
BLUE**

**GREEN
ON
PINK**

**GREEN
ON
RED**

**RED
ON
GREEN**

**LIGHT
ON
DARK**

**LIGHT
ON
DARK**

**LIGHT
ON
MEDIUM**

**LIGHT
ON
MEDIUM**

**LIGHT
ON
MEDIUM**

**LIGHT
ON
MEDIUM**

**LIGHT
ON
LIGHT**

**LIGHT
ON
LIGHT**

COLOR VALUES

It is possible to choose colors that are close together on the color wheel (harmonious colors) and create contrast with different values. Experiment with the values of colors to see what gives you the most contrast. As a result, you can create a harmonious color pair with high contrast.

For example, take a look at these samples – the green text is the same color on all squares, but the value of the blue background changes from dark to light. Because of this, the text becomes less readable the lighter the background gets.

BIG BOLD TEXT

While this best practice may seem like common knowledge, you'd be surprised how much of it isn't. We see many sign software platforms and design software that present users with enough font choices to make your head spin. We'll let you in on a little secret. You'll probably use less than 10% of the fonts and design tools that most solutions offer-and that's okay.

Big bold text is easier to read from farther away. Avoid small thin fonts, and you'll be golden.

#5



vs.



#6



SIMPLE PHRASES

Less is more. Short and simple phrases will be less cluttered, larger, and therefore easier to read. Long sentences will be smaller, will take longer to read, and will be visually overwhelming. Especially when looking at it from a distance.



HIGHEST QUALITY IN

When you create or send assets to use on your digital sign, avoid screenshots, or photos of a photo. If content looks pixelated to begin with, it's still going to look pixelated on your sign. It works best to scale down to fit content, as opposed to scaling up.

If your team utilizes vector graphics (.ai, .eps) for their logos and other assets, you won't have to worry about size affecting quality of these specific files.

#7



VS.



#8



SIMPLE IS BEST

VS.



WHAT'S GOING ON HERE?

NOBODY KNOWS

SIMPLE PHOTO SUBJECTS

Any busy or cluttered photos without a defined subject will be hard to see. With any photo used in content, it needs to evoke 1,000 words. The image drives the impact of your shorter messages. Don't be afraid to crop images in order to better highlight the subject.



CONTENT STRATEGY



CONTENT STRATEGY:

If content types are the “content tools” for your digital sign, and good design is how the content types look and feel on your digital sign, your next questions should be, “How much of a certain content type or design should I use?” and “When do I use what?” A great content strategy answers all this and more.

A well thought out content strategy has one major purpose: To get your sign maximizing the Return on Investment potential.....and the potential is truly incredible!

The Small Business Administration put out a study that shows a digital sign can increase Return on Investment anywhere from 15-150%. Why such a broad range? It’s all about strategy.

Strategy differs from what we’ve discussed up to this point. Content types and design fundamentals are fairly universal, but an amazing strategy becomes so because it’s unique to that sign and business it serves. How is a great digital sign strategy created? Let’s find out!



ENTITY DISCOVERY

There is a huge difference in the overall purpose of a car dealership and a city police department. Without giving it much thought, we can see how the two have completely different goals for their signs. When considering strategy, always

start with a general understanding of how the sign will be used. Not doing so will lead to future frustrations and reduce sign effectiveness. At Project Content, we categorize these entities into six types:

- **Municipalities** – Police, fire departments, city buildings
- **Education** – Schools, colleges, trade schools
- **Not-For-Profit** – Industry associations, charities, community centers
- **Business: Retail** – Liquor stores, gas stations, restaurants, shopping centers, hotels
- **Business: Non-Retail** – Corporate HQ, office parks
- **Business: Professional Svc.** – Law firms, CPA's, financial advisors, real estate brokers, consultants



MUNICIPALITIES

Most government entities use digital signs as effective community outreach. They want to be seen as an integral part of an active community. These entities most heavily use the Community-Minded Content type, as well as the Time-Sensitive Content type in the form of calendar events for the community. If their digital sign

increases community involvement and civic pride, then they see their digital sign as a success. The problem lies in the fact that the return on investment in their sign isn't as easy to track.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To increase community awareness and civic pride.



EDUCATION

Most education entities see their digital sign as a way to keep the community and student body aware of activities. Similar to that of a municipality, these entities also want to drive attendance to events. Post-secondary schools want to drive increased tuition and class sign-ups. In addition to Community-Minded Content and Time-Sensitive Content,

they also use Branding Content to enhance school pride. An education entity's ROI is similar to a municipality entity's.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To increase community awareness in school activities and overall school pride, potentially gain revenue from tuition and athletic events.



NOT-FOR-PROFIT

This entity is also very community-minded in purpose, but may have a more focused mission. Internally, they position themselves similar to a business entity. Not-for-profit entities often use the Call to Action Content type to drive donations, and promote fund-raisers, pledge drives, and planned giving opportunities. ROI for a

not-for-profit entity can be measured by an uptick in volunteers, overall donations, and, increased mission awareness.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To increase mission awareness and financial health of the organization.





BUSINESS: RETAIL

When we think of digital signs, this is often the first entity category that comes to mind. Popular content types on these signs include Branding, Call to Action, and Time Sensitive. Retail entities want people to see their sign while passing by and TAKE ACTION IMMEDIATELY. The top priority is to drive traffic into the business location. A retail business' life blood is getting people into their location, and their digital sign should be an integral part

of the overall marketing strategy to help drive that traffic.

Of all the entity categories, retail is the most straight forward in measuring ROI. It is all about driving foot traffic consistently and often.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To increase both foot traffic into the business location and branding awareness of the business.



BUSINESS: NON-RETAIL

The difference between non-retail and retail focuses on the absence of foot traffic at non-retail businesses. Think about the corporate location of your favorite restaurant, department store, or a brand of something you like. Obviously, they're not selling product from their corporate address, but the benefits of brand awareness still exist.

Non-retail locations will likely support Cross-Channel Promotion content to further your ability to engage with their brand beyond what is possible with a digital sign.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To maximize brand awareness and cross channel promotion.



BUSINESS: PROFESSIONAL SERVICES

Digital signs haven't always been popular for this entity category. Lawyers, dentists, doctors, etc., saw digital signs as unprofessional when they first came to market. Today, that rule is out the window for one simple reason. Digital signs work.

This entity category is heavy on Branding content because their brand is built on trust and dependability. Community-Minded content is also vital to this group for the same reason.

The use of Call-to-Action content generally revolves around promoting triggers that would require you to use their services ("Been hurt in an accident?", "It's time to file your taxes", etc.) The ROI for this



category needs to be a committed, long-term measurement due to the nature of professional services. Measuring new clientele over a rolling multi-year period is a good start.

OVERALL PURPOSE: To promote trigger points that would lead to new clients with a focus on Branding content to instill trust and dependability.

Feeling better about entity categories? Let's dig deeper into areas that will further develop your unique outdoor digital sign strategy and explore "how" people drive past your sign.

"STREET SMARTS"

Here's a quick question for you. Think about the blue transportation signs on highways, right before every highway exit. The ones that have all the restaurant, hotel, and gas station logos on them with arrows pointing to where they are located from the end of the exit ramp. How big would you say that just one of those logo rectangles is? Seriously, take a guess. We bet you're wrong. Check out below how big they really are.





Each of the rectangles that make up the sign above are 3 feet tall by 4 feet wide.

Pretty amazingly big, aren't they!

The truth is, our eyes can play crazy tricks on us, especially when we're traveling by a sign at 65mph.

The distance between the traffic and your sign, along with speed, makes a huge difference on what works and what doesn't when it comes to content.

INTERSTATES AND HIGHWAYS

If your sign is located along an interstate or highway, it's probably at least 20ft – 50ft in the air. The reason is often you are having to get above the clutter of entrance/exit ramps and frontage roads. These obstacles also create more distance between passing traffic and your sign. Another influencing factor is driving speed, as most traffic is going to be zipping by your sign at 50-75mph. Distance and speed are two major factors that influence sign effectiveness. There is a reason why interstates usually have massive billboard size digital signs. They need to be big enough to make up for the distance in viewership and to catch your attention because the time you have to see the sign is limited.

Whatever your content suggests must be powerful enough to warrant that spur-of-the-moment reaction that causes your audience to take an exit ramp and come find you. Strategies that are heavy on Branding, Cross Channel Promotion, and Attention Grabbing content types are key here. Including a quick directional snippet (ex. Exit 54 and turn left) can be helpful too.

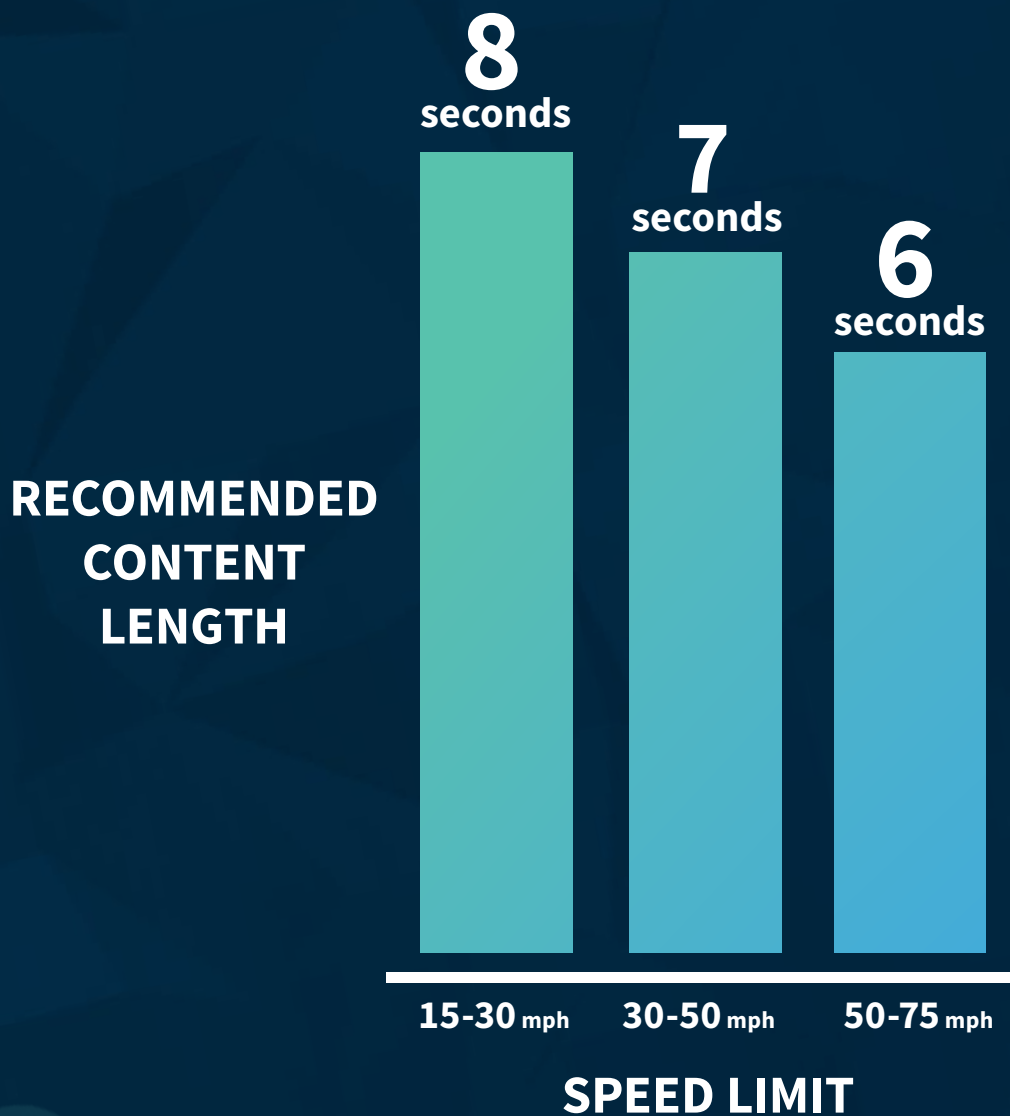
With so many common challenges, why do people use digital signs so much on interstates and highways? The answer is simple: HUGE amounts of traffic. The potential traffic on these thoroughfares far outweigh the challenges. A good strategy can address and mitigate any obstacle.



ARTERIAL STREETS

Arterial streets are major streets that connect larger intersections throughout town. Typically traffic will travel between 35 and 50mph. They also put digital signs much closer to the viewing traffic. City ordinances

may start coming into play on arterial streets with “dark hours” dimming requirements. Municipalities may also have limits on animations and content change rates.



RESIDENTIAL/ NON-ARTERIAL STREETS

You can't get any closer to your traffic or get more of their impression time than on residential streets. Strategies that involve heavy use of Call-to-Action content to get traffic to turn into your parking lot are imperative, especially for retail categories. Content can usually be at the upper acceptable limit for time duration (generally 7-8 seconds) on residential streets due to the slower traffic speeds.

The biggest drawbacks to signage on residential streets that must be addressed through strategy are city ordinances on animations, hours of operation, and lower traffic counts.

Craft strategies that are highly customized to the sign's surroundings and area with a focus on Community-Minded content.





PROXIMITY TO AN INTERSECTION (WHERE CARS MUST STOP)

Now that you better understand some of the content strategies tied to moving traffic, let's discuss the importance of intersections.

If your digital sign sits at an intersection, you stand to greatly benefit from stopped traffic and increased impression time. When traffic becomes “captive traffic” because they're stopped, it increases content possibilities that aren't there with moving traffic. Heavy use of Call-to-Action content is ideal in this situation.

If your sign isn't located at an intersection (most aren't), but is fairly close to one, you can still benefit.

Traffic slows as it prepares to stop. While this won't open up all the potential that resides for fully stopped traffic, it will allow for longer site line views because the traffic isn't passing at full speed.

The intersection rule obviously won't come into play with an interstate, but don't forget those frontage roads we discussed earlier. While they stand between your sign and interstate traffic, they have their own, slower, traffic that also sees your sign. Intersections on arterial and residential streets will definitely come into play when perfecting your digital sign content strategy. Don't overlook them.

ENTITY SEASONALITY

The different holidays and turn of seasons we experience throughout the year are great opportunities to expand your creativity for digital advertising on your sign. Various holidays pose great opportunities to capitalize on creative advertising that plays into sales, specials, discounts, or promotional offers. As with all

marketing strategies tied back to digital signage, the goal is to be unique and memorable, tying a one-of-a-kind experience back to your customer or prospect and giving them a reason to walk through your doors. It is imperative to use seasonality to your advantage when putting together your sign strategy.

ENTITY'S OTHER MARKETING CHANNELS

Cross Channel Promotion content, one of the 6 content types, should only be part of your marketing strategy if you have other channels that devote more time to telling your story. The biggest drawback to a digital sign's content is the limited impression time. If you know this as you craft your sign strategy, you'll be better prepared to pair it with additional marketing channels like your website and social media.

If you don't have these additional channels, you should, as they are more than standard practice these days and allow you to fully tell your story across the digital spectrum. Hook them with your sign and funnel them to your other channels. Give this strategy the time and energy it deserves by thoroughly thinking through your options to make sure they're perfect for your entity.



AVAILABLE RESOURCES

You bought your sign to increase revenue. When it comes to the design of content and execution of your marketing strategy with this amazing advertising tool, you can choose to do it yourself or have someone do it for you.



HERE'S HOW CURRENT SIGN OWNERS ARE MANAGING THEIR CONTENT

95% of the market chooses to create content themselves. It's safe to say that not all these folks are practiced designers.

85% **USE SIGN MANUFACTURER SOFTWARE**

This option is designed for the lowest common denominator among employees and utilizes out of date clip art style graphics, with the inability to create multi-layer, engaging animations. Operators' knowledge of the software quickly dwindles with lack of use, and employee turnover ensures inefficient use of the sign.

10% **USE PROFESSIONAL SOFTWARE**

use professional software to design content. This requires sign owners to purchase expensive software and immerse themselves in extensive training or to hire a skilled designer with the experience. Most employers do not have enough work to justify an additional employee, and are not interested in making this investment in their business.

5% **HIRE AN EXPENSIVE MARKETING AGENCY TO DESIGN CONTENT**

Marketing agencies will charge standard hourly rates for designing in this medium, or line-item sign content into part of a larger marketing services agreement. Most small businesses and organizations do not have the budget to sustain this kind of an expense long-term.



WANT TO LEARN MORE?



Project Content

Project Content helps businesses that invest in digital signs create high-quality, digital marketing and advertising solutions within minutes. Provided as a monthly or annual subscription service, we offer several plans that give you the ability to edit and download content from our stock library and request custom content pieces using monthly issued credits. For outdoor digital sign owners who are dissatisfied with current

options to produce high-quality content themselves and choose to avoid expensive, outsourced alternatives, Project Content is a game-changing solution. And unlike the other software platforms available in the marketplace, we provide **every** sign owner an inexpensive way to quickly generate excellent performing advertisements at an extremely affordable price.

