

Digital Signage Strategies for OOH Advertising

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After many years of success with static billboards and posters, Canada's out-of-home (OOH) advertising industry—including Zoom Media and other companies—has begun to invest heavily in launching digital signage networks in major markets. One might wonder why these companies would focus on a new and still unproven medium instead of expanding their existing inventory of static signs. To explain the reasons, it is first important to define what a digital signage network is in OOH terms.

To be truly defined as an OOH digital signage network, a deployment should at least involve:

- Internet-linked liquid crystal display (LCD) or plasma monitors.
- the ability to change content immediately and remotely.
- inventory in major markets.
- continuous full-motion video.

Beyond those components, a network also requires a clear strategy. This involves analyzing 'the four Rs,' which are:

- research.
- relevance.
- relationships.
- real estate.

Research

In recent years, the industry has conducted research of various establishments and their potential for digital signage networks. This has provided information about the impact of advertising using new technology in the OOH environment.

Today, the industry has gained a degree of confidence that audience recall of advertising on digital signs can justify the capital expenditure of building networks, as it is sufficient to attract investment from advertisers.

Relevance

It is very important to consider relevance to advertising partners by gauging their feedback. There are many technology companies today offering new advertising opportunities, but if advertisers have no need for a particular medium, it will be difficult to capture revenue. After a period of consulting among such partners, there is now a real degree of interest in the opportunity for digital signage, particularly with regard to the medium's immediacy and flexibility.

Relationships

To expand digital signage networks quickly and effectively, the industry needs to build relationships with new partner companies. Launching a digital platform calls for expert assistance in terms of software, hardware and network integration—and these relationships need to continue as networks grow with additional markets and screens.

Real estate

The final important component for an OOH strategy is real estate. It is essential to maintain solid relationships with partners who can provide the opportunity to use their space for a digital signage network.

This is a matter not only of partnering with venues where new technology can be installed, but also of carefully selecting specific locations within those venues where the exposure time to advertisers' messages will be optimized.

Challenges to overcome

Digital signage is often confused with online advertising, so the industry still has a significant task ahead of it, in terms of explaining itself to advertisers. The medium is not yet a standard 'line item' on media buying plans. Once that has been accomplished, most of the job will be complete. Many digital signage network operators are also finding it difficult to convince advertisers to think differently when it comes to content. The education process needs to continue with both ad agencies and clients, explaining how best to use—and benefit from—the medium.