

Getting Close

Localization is key to success.

By Shonan Noronha, EdD

Retailers are becoming increasingly aware that localization and target marketing are keys to success. Dynamic digital signage enables customization of content and flexibility in delivery to displays in-store, out on the street or in the palm of a hand. But even as the new mobile and interactive technologies are converging to offer advanced capabilities, the sheer volume of options flummoxes many retailers. That's where one opportunity lies for AV systems designers and integrators who are aware of consumer behaviors and have the expertise to select appropriate technologies based on the retailer's stated objectives and marketing communications strategy.

Retail digital signage applications cover a wide spectrum of technologies, from menu boards in restaurants, to interactive wayfinding systems in hotels and point of sale kiosks in stores. The selection of an appropriate platform depends on factors similar to signage in other environments, but subtle differences specific to the industry of the retailer (or the markets they serve) will play a critical role. For instance, a private-label fashion retailer is likely to be more concerned about maintaining a specific look than a convenience store owner. Similarly, the selection of displays could be influenced by the attitudes within a specific industry. For example, you may find companies with an earth-friendly mindset



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The auto dealership streams live video to show customers the precision and care that goes into repair and restoration.

preferring to use greener display technologies.

Even though smaller retail customers are super busy running all aspects of their business, it is important to get their input during the planning stages of a deployment. A clear statement of objectives and expected outcomes should guide the planning process. A solid foundation is critical to success, and planning discussions should include content creation or acquisition (television feeds, assets created by the retailer's advertising agency, etc.), content management system (CMS), adequate bandwidth based on the content pass-through, network support, viewer analytics and staff training, among other factors. Many a retailer has been surprised by the actual operating costs of a signage solution,

so it is best to discuss total cost of ownership and return on investment as early as possible, and within the context of the selection of hardware and CMS.

New technologies have a way of attracting shoppers, so you can expect a crowd to gather around a 3D display or reach out to touch an interactive screen. Fashion designers, auto dealers and other high-end retailers are using interactive displays to engage customers by luring them into exploring a full slate of offerings or allowing them to customize product. These retailers use technology not only to show off their wares, but also to add value by enhancing the in-store experience for shoppers. They seek to develop a closer relationship with customers by creating an immersive experience with a focus



OTG Management

An iPad app lets diners place orders at an OTG eatery at Delta Airlines, at John F. Kennedy International Airport.

on the quality of their products or services.

For example, at The Experience Auto Group, the Ferrari Maserati dealership in Fort Lauderdale FL, an interactive videowall invites shoppers to customize the car of their choice. In another area, a recently installed videowall displays real-time video of the restoration of classic cars. “The owner wanted customers to get a feel for the precision and care that distinguishes this dealership,” said

creation, scheduling and management. “The capability to playback multiple video formats [Adobe Flash, DivX and H.264], ease of refreshing and uploading content to multiple sites remotely, expandability and cost made MagicBox the perfect choice for this application,” said Ehr. The system gives the customer the ability to stream live video footage to the videowall from multiple sites.

Ehr said that the owner wanted to use his iPhone or iPad to control

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Nick Ehr, President, Broadcast Technologies, the design/build firm that installed signage for the auto dealer in all its locations.

The design and integration of videowalls is becoming easier with new displays featuring on-board image scaling. Ultrathin bezel 46-inch Samsung LCDs were installed in a 3x3 array at the Ferrari Maserati dealership. The selection of the media player and other components was equally critical, given the customer’s application. The system employs a MagicBox Aavelin 1080p media player along with the Composer Professional Software for content

what content appears on the videowall. The system enables this through a combination of an Extron switcher and Crestron control. “Through Creston-Apple integration, we have given him the ability to stream content from the MagicBox, DVD player, satellite or camera sources to the videowall or to other TVs around the dealership,” Ehr noted. “He also has the ability to control audio [music], and we will be integrating Crestron’s Green lighting solution to enable control of lighting and HVAC—all from his iPad or iPhone, at the dealership or offsite.”

Applications built on the iOS

platform are also providing new revenue sources for developers. The food and beverage industry is rapidly embracing management solutions that enable staff to take customer orders, process payments, and print kitchen ticket orders and customer receipts from an iPhone, iPod Touch or iPad. Restaurant concessionaire, OTG Management, has deployed an iPad application that allows its customers at John F. Kennedy International Airport in New York to select and place meal and beverage orders at tableside kiosks. Proximity to the end-user puts integrators in an ideal position to recognize the need for customization, and to leverage special programming skills to create an effective application. Retailers seeking to increase foot traffic and revenue are often willing to go the extra mile to engage customers.

According to the *Ryan Report 2011: Digital Signage in Retail Financial Services*, adoption of digital signage at the 167 banks surveyed is skyrocketing. Survey results showed that the banks’ chief motivation for deploying signage is to increase revenue. The report highlights several shortfalls of signage deployment, which are also common across a number of industries, and should be noted by all those involved in signage projects. These include challenges

with providing new content and the use of CMS, actual operating costs, failure to lever-

age the message localization and targeting capabilities of the system, and lack of collaboration with key internal stakeholders.

Although localization of messaging does not require geographic proximity, effective messaging does depend on a thorough understanding of local markets and the ways that specific technologies can help merchants capitalize on local customer needs. Providing unique solutions that leverage localization capabilities to increase your client’s sales is also a great way to separate your offering from generic, low margin, commodity signage solutions. ■