

Consumer engagement with tech in the drive thru is driving marketing in less direct ways as well, and **HyperActive Tech** is one company investigating how to best use the dynamic abilities of digital signage to drive consumer interest.

“We think that the way you go through the drive thru in the coming years is going to be substantially different,” says Scott Marentay, chief operating officer. “The idea of engaging people with a digital strategy is going to be huge.”

Marentay says he sees social media playing a greater role in the future of digital signage. For instance, additional screen space could be used to run a Twitter feed or show people enjoying the latest LTO on Instagram.

Especially for socially savvy, tech-connected Millennials, seeing friends on the screen—along with the prospect of seeing themselves—could work as a powerful marketing message.

Of course, this would have to be used strategically so customers don't linger. Ideally, however, leveraging social media in the drive thru would create an exciting, connecting experience, which would promote repeat visits and LTO purchases.

**NEC Display**, a leading projector and display manufacturer, aims to balance display efficiency and effective advertising in the drive-thru space.

“What we're seeing are brands looking for different ways to push impulse buys without breaking up the flow of traffic,” says Richard Ventura, vice president of product marketing and solutions. “To do that, there's been a lot of experimentation and requests for integration of new data points into the menuboard system, like integration of social media or mobile ordering apps.”

While software specialists continue to explore the best ways to use beacon and RFID technology to streamline customer orders, some simple tech tweaks are having immediate effects on sales in the drive thru.

This is especially the case for LTO marketing. Because digital signage allows for easy updates, LTOs can be marketed by daypart or according to inventory. In fact, Ventura says he has seen some restaurants test out LTOs that are exclusive to the drive thru, giving customers an added reason to pull the trigger on an impulse purchase.

Special drive-thru LTOs also provide easy-to-prepare and easy-to-repeat orders, allowing employees to move people through the line even more quickly.



To ensure that these benefits can be fully realized, NEC developed technology to provide the stability of a static display with the versatility of digital.

In other words, a special drive thru LTO will only be effective if it's actually present on the screen.

To make sure that potential computer failures don't lead to any downtime or revenue loss, NEC built in a back-up for its systems.

If one feed goes down, the system is self-aware enough to immediately replace it with an alternative feed or menuboard, so there's no disruption in service or marketing.

By conquering downtime, NEC quelled another fear faced by brands that are hesitant to invest in the digital technology.

“There's a reason why there are so many NEC screens out there in the restaurant industry,” Ventura says. “Our low failure rates, high reliability, flexible design, and extensive feature set are all incredibly important and useful for restaurants.”

For outdoor products, physical durability also plays a crucial role in reliability.

Recognizing the need to protect valuable digital signage from the elements, **ITSECLOSURES** creates environments to ensure sensitive hardware works in any situation—come sleet, dust, or searing sunlight.

The switch to In Plane Switching (IPS) panels outdoors has given the company the ability to broaden the temperature range in which digital menuboards can be used. The company's ViewStation enclosures support an impressive range of temperatures, from -40 F to a steamy 120. This switch to IPS, coupled with LED backlighting, reduces power consumption and allows enclosures to use fan-only cooling solutions versus compressor-based systems.

Together, this confluence of improvements drastically reduces lifecycle costs while increasing reliability.

ITSECLOSURES is able to enclose a wide variety of dimensions and set-ups.

While these digital signage investments need to be protected from the elements, it's also crucial that these protective measures not obscure the information on the menuboard.

ITSECLOSURES products come with museum-quality antireflective laminated safety glass for top-notch outdoor visibility. The LCD lighting features automatic dimming capabilities

that soften the look in lower light conditions. In addition, the company's proprietary glass combination allows 99 percent light transmission and UV protection and is completely serviceable in the field.

These types of savvy precautions are what have made the company successful for 30 years in protecting what is becoming an increasingly valuable and expensive investment for restaurants.

“We are often called upon to clean up after ‘signage’ companies who think an enclosure system is just another ‘light box,’” says Jennifer Bissell, director of sales and marketing. “ITSECLOSURES has a reputation for doing it right the first time with unparalleled customer support, both pre- and post-installation.”

By locating a vendor that understands restaurants' expectations and goals for digital signage, brands can confidently take the leap toward new technology in the drive thru. As more restaurants make the move, it remains to be seen just how much higher these improvements can push convenience and commerce in such a high-impact aspect of the quick-service industry.