

# What to Consider When Choosing a Digital Signage Solution

By Michael Ferrer



## Improve Communication

Recently, I stayed in a hotel with my family. In the lobby when we arrived, there was an orange cone with a wooden stick attached to it and a sheet of 8 ½ x 11 printer paper with a sign directing the flow of traffic to the front desk. Someone who works in the digital signage industry would cringe at just the thought of seeing this. Even someone who doesn't work in digital signage might, too.

That's not to say the hotel wasn't trying to effectively share a message. Another sign had a message about wearing a mask and keeping a six-foot distance from other guests. These signs communicated necessary information to keep my family safe. But from a customer experience perspective, they fell short. By implementing digital signage and other technologies in hospitality environments, businesses can elevate the customer experience. In the case of the orange cones, the hotel was trying to get the customer from Point A to Point B quickly and efficiently. Conveying safety messages on an easy-to-read digital sign that could also show messages to inform us of available services or dining options not only helps minimize anxiety but could help promote the hotel's premium features. For example, digital signs stating "Indoor restaurant is closed due to COVID-19" or "Please enjoy our outdoor dining with individual firepits for each group/family" showcase the variety of amenities a hotel has to offer.

## Location, Location, Location

The adage is true for the location of your business – and it's just as true for the location of your digital signage. Where businesses place digital displays and information really depends on the information you need your customers and guests to know. Engaging customers even before they enter the facility can provide necessary and actionable information.

One trend we have seen throughout the pandemic is the installation of outward facing displays. A digital [LED poster](#) bright enough to be placed outside of the entrance or in the window where customers can see the information without even entering your business is ideal for keeping social distancing measures in place. For example, businesses can display messages conveying rules and regulations, or that maximum occupancy has been reached, or letting you know how many of your party can enter, for instance "Additional Capacity Available 1/100" to communicate capacity limits.

Positioning this information on an outward facing display is one of those lightbulb moments – why didn't we think of this before? Provide customers the information they need before they need it to improve their experience!

## Virtual Concierge

With fewer employees working any given shift and the need to reduce face-to-face interactions when possible, digital signage can also be used as a virtual concierge. Press the Ask Me button on a digital kiosk and a video pop-up chat window would come on. An associate on the other end of the video chat call would then be able to answer your questions. This helps keep both the guest and the associate safe while still being able to engage and provide a positive customer experience.

## Connect to Cameras and Sensors

Digital signage can be used to inform customers if store requirements aren't being met and reinforce those requirements. For instance, cameras can detect if customers are standing too closely together and notify them, via a digital screen, the optimal place to stand for safety. Additionally, sensors and signage screens can work together to provide a count of people entering and leaving a store, providing a dynamic solution to inform customers of the venue's maximum occupancy.



## Connect to Data

If you went shopping at any big box retailer at the height of the pandemic, you certainly saw dry erase boards and makeshift signs declaring “NO TOILET PAPER, NO HAND SANITIZER.” Digital signage can be used to inform customers which products are available – or rather, which products are out of stock that day. When the stock is replenished, you can instantly inform customers about the real-time status of items.

Having digital signage that can connect to the store’s inventory management system can minimize customer frustrations, lead to more positive customer experience, and increased sales. It can automatically show product availability including aisle and shelf location, as well as give alternative online ordering options.

## The Resurgence of QR Codes

With the rise of outward facing digital signage, we are also seeing the QR code take center stage again. It makes sense – it’s a simple, no human contact, no touch solution for customers and guests to get information right on their smartphone. There are also some big names bringing QR codes back. In May, PayPal announced that retailers could create a unique QR to accept payment – a great option to reduce the needs for the customer to touch an in-store device and the retailer to exchange cash with the customer. Restaurants, retailers and other businesses are also finding ways to implement QR codes. For example, restaurants have overwhelmingly opted to upload their menu online and create a QR code which they place at dining tables, in the front windows, or entrance door for those wanting to order curbside. Guests simply scan the code and browse the menu or promotions on their smartphones; again, reducing the need to touch a menu by both the guest and the

server. Businesses can dynamically change the QR code and content depending on the time of day or real-time conditions to easily share information or promote special products and services. It took a pandemic, but QR codes and other touchless technology options are likely going to continue to grow in 2021.

## How to Communicate the Message

Once you implement digital signage, the question of what you communicate comes into play. Using too much text is going to be as ineffective as the orange cone with the piece of paper attached to it. The most effective way to communicate is using less words and more graphics. By now, we all universally know that two hands with some bubbles means “Wash your hands” and a face with a mask means you should have one on to enter a building. Using universal graphics to convey messages to your customers will help maximize your digital signage use.

As you look ahead in 2021 and consider digital signage solutions, purchasing an easy to use solution that can transition with your business as needs change is the ideal option.

### About the Author

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