



## KEYWEST TECHNOLOGY

### KEY INGREDIENTS FOR A SUCCESSFUL DIGITAL SIGNAGE CAMPAIGN

In mid-February 2012, the TV ratings service provider Arbitron released data counting all viewers who had watched the Super Bowl football championship earlier that month outside of their homes—e.g. at bars and restaurants. Across 44 media markets that were tracked with the company's Portable People Meter (PPM) system, some 12 million people watched the game in these places. That equalled nearly 10 percent of the 123 million adults who live in those markets, enough to lift the 'in-home' Super Bowl audience of 57.5 million people in those markets by 20.7 percent.

When announcing those figures, Arbitron's senior vice-president (SVP) of cross-platform sales and marketing, Carol Edwards, pointed out that while TV ratings have traditionally counted viewers at home, watching sports programming is often a group activity that specifically takes place outside of the home.



Similarly, digital out-of-home (DOOH) networks are drawing a huge, verifiable number of viewers everywhere from fitness clubs to gas stations, from airports to arenas. Nielsen, also well-known for measuring TV audiences, reported adults visiting 12 of these types of venues in the fourth quarter of 2010 were exposed to more than 500 million gross minutes per month of OOH media.

For advertisers, marketers and digital signage network operators with the vision to develop this emerging media market, the opportunity to create successful DOOH campaigns has never been greater. Doing so, however, depends upon five key ingredients:

- Setting goals.
- Choosing the right hardware and software.
- Successful deployment.
- Designing effective content.
- Collecting, analyzing and responding to audience metrics.

Like the pieces of a jigsaw puzzle, these elements of digital signage must be assembled properly to achieve a complete success in DOOH advertising.

### SETTING GOALS

Dorn Beattie, the founder, president and CEO of Solara Adworks in Vancouver, B.C., is one example of a puzzle master assembling these elements. He is currently building a digital signage network—known as Solara360—across North America as a franchisor.

This involves signing up franchisees to provide proprietary liquid crystal displays (LCDs) and related software to sports bar owners as a turnkey system. The system is provided to the bars for free.



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The key to this business model is Solara's proprietary display technology, which enables the playback of local, regional and national ads in an L-shaped space along two sides of each screen, without interfering with the sports programming's visibility. The franchisees secure locations, manage deployment, sell ads and collect content for the loops that are scheduled and played back on the signs. The bar owners share in the ad revenue with no responsibility at all for the signage.

Beattie's approach exemplifies the goal-setting necessary for successful DOOH campaigns. Simply put, his goal is to provide a digital signage system so compelling that the bar owners can't say no.



"We have a 100 percent closing ratio of signing up sports bars," he says.

Also, as that success rate would be difficult to sustain financially on his own, Beattie transitioned Solara to the franchise model, giving entrepreneurial go-getters the opportunity to invest in the necessary technology and then reap profits from ad sales.

Not all digital signage applications, however, involve digital ad networks. Digital signs literally can be used dozens of ways, including wayfinding, as interactive informational kiosks, menu boards, reader boards, door card readers and many more. Beattie's application as well as all of these will only be successful if a clear goal is set and all of the necessary pieces to the digital signage puzzle are assembled to achieve the intended result.

Some goals, like Beattie's, may involve revenue generation and financial success. Others may focus on communicating information to the public clearly. Still others may aim to set a mood for an environment or some kind of self-serve process. But whatever the goal happens to be, investing the time, effort and forethought to develop a plan that achieves what's desired is what's necessary to succeed.

## CHOOSING THE RIGHT HARDWARE AND SOFTWARE

Hardware and software technologies are closely related when deploying a DOOH campaign, as they lay the foundation upon which the campaign's content will be presented to the public.

DOOH hardware includes the displays themselves, the media players that deliver content, the cabling and other components supporting the distribution of content to individual digital signs. The displays need to offer not only sufficient resolution and durability, but also the capability for external control via serial commands (RS-232) or scripts, depending on the campaign's application requirement.



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The media players are, essentially, personal computers (PCs) with a small enough form factor for inconspicuous deployment within or behind the displays' structure. Their computing and graphics processing capabilities support the simultaneous playback of multiple media files, including video, audio and animation, and the generation of other screen elements, such as text crawls. In many cases, they offer both wired and wireless Ethernet connectivity, Universal Serial Bus (USB) ports and connectors to relay control commands, e.g. to turn a display on or off.

Digital signage software generally falls into two distinct areas. The first involves content management applications (CMS) for assembling and arranging various types of media and scheduling their playback, along with media player software to retrieve, store and manage files in line with the playback schedule. The second area involves media player client and server software, which operates via Internet Protocol (IP) connections to control DOOH content distribution across dozens, hundreds or even thousands of displays, along with monitoring those displays and performing diagnostics, creating run reports, etc.

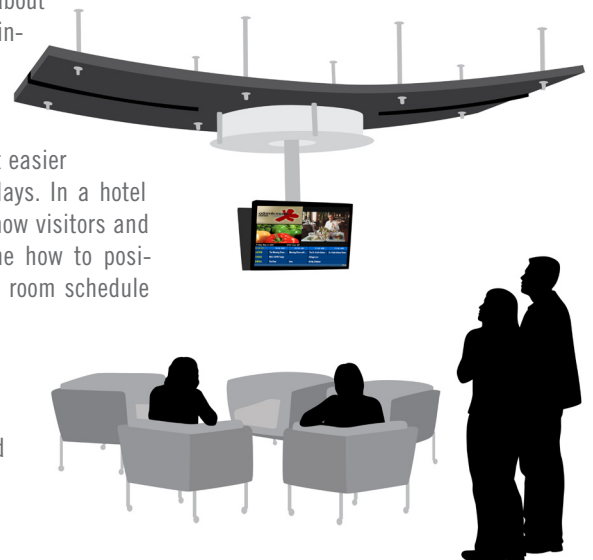
Server software should offer the flexibility either to allow a single network administrator to control content distribution and playback from each individual digital signage player on the network, or alternately to give those selected locally the ability to control a portion of what is displayed on a single or multiple local signs. In the former instance, the enterprise deploying the digital signage network would be seeking to maintain complete control over messaging and a uniform, consistent look across all signs on the network. In the latter case, an enterprise setting up an element of local control over content is seeking to allow their organization to respond to local messaging needs while continuing to maintain a consistent look and feel overall.

## SUCCESSFUL DEPLOYMENT

Deployment begins with important decisions about where and how to position the displays, but also involves ongoing network management.

Understanding the target audience's traffic patterns, habits and demographics will help make it easier to decide where to deploy various types of displays. In a hotel and conference centre, for example, data about how visitors and guests use the space can be used to determine how to position digital signs for wayfinding, digital meeting room schedule screens and self-serve interactive kiosks.

The goal of deployment is to deliver the right information at the appropriate location. Understanding local demographics may also affect the size and orientation of screens within a space.





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Successful deployment also depends on deciding, early in the process, who will be responsible for managing the media players, the displays and the network in general. Some digital signage network plans have been stopped dead in their tracks by conflicts between information technology (IT) and communications departments.

This is particularly true when using a Local Area Network (LAN) or Wide Area Network (WAN). Well-intentioned IT professionals, motivated by the need to protect the security and integrity of these networks, often claim responsibility for digital signage deployment without first considering the sheer amount of work that will entail. Some even decide to build a proprietary system from scratch, adding further burdens of time and complexity, to the point where the digital signage network may never be deployed.

Conversely, many media and communications professionals, who may be well-equipped for content creation and messaging, lack the technical expertise to oversee a successful network deployment.

Given these factors, it is becoming more common for organizations to turn to an outside specialist to deploy, manage and monitor their digital signage network, separately and distinctly from their IT network. This trend has helped them rise from digital signage failure and achieve new success. Consequently, software-as-a-service (SaaS) digital signage networks have been tapping into this trend by providing all of the performance of premise-based DOOH networks without getting bogged down with red tape and complicated IT issues.

The actual physical deployment of digital signage displays, players, cabling and other elements is also an important consideration. Often an experienced digital signage integrator can expedite the process. It is essential that the integrator not only fully understands all of the complexity of the technology, but also brings to the project the ability to act as a general contractor. Modification of walls, studs, electrical service and even plumbing may be required to deploy signs where needed. In these instances, having general contractor experience, including the knowledge of skilled tradesmen who can make necessary building modifications can keep a digital signage installation on track, on budget and eliminate unpleasant surprises.

## DESIGNING EFFECTIVE CONTENT

Several strategies have also been identified in recent years for the development of successful content for DOOH campaigns.

“All content considerations should first be led from the brand,” says Brian Biber, director of creative services for Keywest Creative. “From there, make decisions about goals, initiatives and objectives. To do otherwise will doom a content strategy to being ineffective at best and off-message and harmful to the brand at worst.”







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While Bibler recommends observing and evaluating currently deployed content to identify popular trends in the DOOH business, he emphasizes the value of thinking outside the box by beginning each individual campaign with a blank canvas. The vision for the campaign will then be limited only by what can be conceived for the brand, given its own context.

He also advises learning as much as possible about the audience. The failure to do so can derail otherwise well-executed campaigns, simply because the message is lost in translation.

“A good campaign delivers a targeted message that is innovative, clean and easy to read,” he says. “Guiding the audience through the campaign guarantees the brand message will be received and remembered.”

As Bibler points out, less is more.

“Be sure the text is concise, the images compelling and the dwell times sufficient to allow the audience to absorb the message without losing interest,” he says.

Maintaining interest and in some way engaging an audience is at the core of DOOH success. However, too often not enough thought is given to keeping content fresh, up to date and appealing. To achieve those goals requires someone—either internally or a skilled third-party provider, such as a digital signage content specialist or ad agency—to take responsibility for content. Failing to do so ultimately will condemn a DOOH campaign to failure because the public eventually will lose interest as stale messaging pushes the sign out of mind.

## AUDIENCE METRICS

The final piece in the DOOH campaign puzzle is metrics, i.e. collecting and analyzing verifiable data about content playback and how the campaign is actually viewed by an audience. These metrics may be measured by simple customer exit surveys all the way to

much more sophisticated real-time consumer traffic analysis using cameras and computer analytics to compare “views” with data comparisons of sales lift, item demand, etc., depending on specific advertising campaign goals.



Before going too far maybe we should consider at this point a few reflective thoughts; does everyone really need sophisticated audience measurement that adds to the overall cost of ownership? And, is sophisticated measurement a requirement for digital signage to be effective?

While all measurement may be useful not all measurement is necessary to be effective, as there are plenty of basic ways to gauge results by using standard methods of observation and comparison. It is primarily necessary for those justifying their DOOH advertising campaigns by achieving specific sales goals. This is the lifeblood of any advertising network.



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Of course, there's a lot more that could be said about what makes a campaign effective, such as the content itself, the products, etc., but the efficacy of the digital signage medium is without a doubt on par with Internet and mobile devices. It has become another digital channel that has its place in any comprehensive marketing plan.

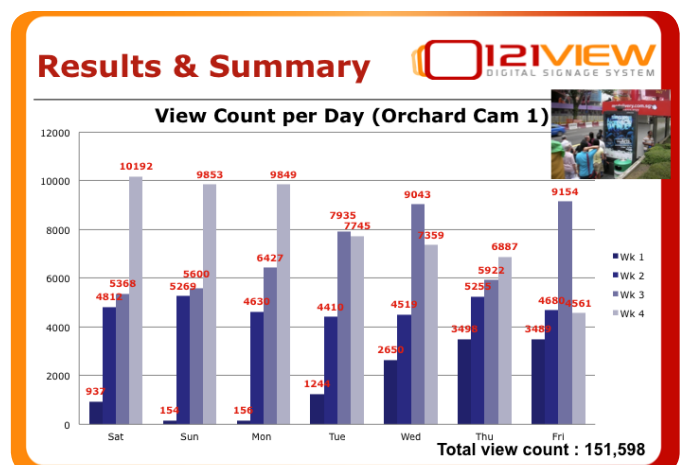
It becomes easier to sell DOOH ads when specific information about viewership and audience size is provided by a third-party source like Arbitron or Nielsen, both of which have recently used a combination of measurement technologies and audience sampling techniques to develop metrics for this medium. This information is also helpful in allowing those responsible for DOOH campaigns to evaluate their approach, tweak their messaging, and redeploy their assets.

For example, in the fourth quarter of 2010 "The Nielsen Company's Fourth Screen Network Audience Report" conveyed a metric the company dubs as the "average minute audience" of those 18 years old or older at a dozen measured "location-based networks" that climbed almost 250 percent compared to the same metric measured at eight such networks in Q4 2009. Translating that into something a little more understandable, Nielsen says the metric means that for the quarter there were more than 500 million gross minute exposures per month.

Whether you call them "location-based networks," "digital place-based networks" or "digital signage networks," one essential element for advertisers has been missing—that is until The Nielsen Company applied its audience measurement expertise to the medium. That ingredient is verifiable audience metrics that media professionals at ad agencies can use to make informed decisions about where to spend their ad dollars.

Mike DiFranza, president of Captivate and chairman of the Digital Place-based Advertising Association (DPAA) is quoted as saying, "quality audience metrics are the foundation of every media investment." Together with consumer research the Nielsen audience metrics are "key elements" for digital place-based networks "to be planned alongside traditional media," he added.

For those considering a rollout of a new digital signage advertising networks, examining the list of businesses and venues Nielsen measured for the performance of similar deployments might be valuable. Doing so should provide some insight on what might be possible. Nielsen gathered its audience metrics from digital





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place-based networks in a variety of venues, including: retail, airports, health clubs, gas stations, bars and restaurants, hotels, health clubs and stadiums. Specific companies measured, included: Best Buy, CNN Airport Network, Zoom Fitness, Outcast/Pump Top, TouchTunes Interactive Networks, indoorDIRECT, The Hotel Networks, TargetCast, RMG Fitness, Outcast: Health Club Media Network, AMI and Access-360 AMNTV.

## THE BIG PICTURE

When a DOOH campaign successfully integrates all five of these ingredients, it will support the needs of corporate communicators, marketers, advertisers and network operators alike. They can impart information, influence consumer decisions and reap the rewards.

For those DOOH campaigns not tied to revenue generation, assembling these five puzzle pieces is equally important. Together, they ensure a compelling message or important information will be delivered to the targeted audience in a way that achieves the desired goal.

Regardless of the specifics of the campaign, setting goals, choosing the right hardware and software, successful deployment, designing effective content and collecting, analyzing and responding to audience metrics will ensure that the thousands of dollars spent on the DOOH project will produce the return on investment that has become the hallmark of this emerging digital communication channel.

