

The Effective Use of Digital Signage In the Medical and Health Care Professions – *Increased Safety, Care and Productivity in Patient and Staff Communications (An Overview)*

J. Stephen Lanning

&

Judy L. Hoffman

Sponsored by



www.noventri.com

Introduction

There exists a quiet revolution that many people now experience, yet do not realize it. That revolution is one of digital “everything” which is now permeating our lives and influencing us as never before. The digital signage industry, likewise, is a major part of that influencing, in ways we may not even realize. Driving down the road you suddenly see a ‘new’ hotel, you look closer and realize it is the same hotel you have passed many times over the years. The difference? Effective and colorful digital signage, which was not there before, is now in place.

Another instance: You are deep inside a new building that you have never been in before looking for a specific office. Suddenly the fire alarm rings and people start to move about. The overhead ‘TV screens’ instantly show a “You Are Here” map that routes you to an easy exit.

There are hundreds of applications for digital signage that are currently in use and there are many other uses that remain to be created by various owners as they learn to use this flexible communication technology. The healthcare industry is no exception.

The wait in a hospital or doctor’s office can be nerve-wracking, and for some, downright frustrating. With HIPAA increasing the complexity of patient handling, it is crucial that both nurses and staff stay up to date while lessening the strain. This is where digital signage, in its many applications, can provide logical and efficient answers for all medical stakeholders concerned.

As more digital signage users become adept at creating increasingly functional applications, the healthcare environment will improve. We are going to review a few of the applications now being used. The author desires feedback. You will find contact information at the end of this overview.

Index to Health Care Digital Signage Topics

- Executive Summary
- Improper or Ineffective Applications of Digital Signage
- Patient Diversion—The ‘Good, Better, Best’ Solutions
- Small Office Applications
- Building Additional Office Revenue Streams
- Emergency and Wayfinding Signage to Immediately and Clearly Inform
- Controlling Remote or Satellite Locations From a Single Station
- Hospital and Larger Building Applications
- Choosing a Digital Signage Vendor that Fits Your Future

Executive Summary

Frost & Sullivan studies have shown that messages shown on digital signage are 22% to 150% more likely to be noticed and are more likely to receive some kind of attention or action. Other digital sign stakeholders have reported a much greater increase.

One example is a firm with a large workforce that had posted signs throughout the workplace, trying to get employees to simply walk across the street and get their free flu shots, resulting in little response. After deploying a single digital sign over the employee's time clock, they experienced virtually 100% participation!

The healthcare industry is seeing an increased interest in digital signage with total expenditures for 2008 reaching a total of \$375M and an expected growth of 153% in the next year. Therefore, doctor's offices, medical complexes and hospitals should seriously entertain the idea of digital signage as part of their patient and staff communications and education.

Digital signage can be used for one or more of the following:

- **Educational or Instructional** – Informed patients are easier to work with. Digital signage in waiting rooms and examining rooms offer a means of educating patients about new procedures, common medical conditions, and more.
- **Lobby and Wayfinding** – Digital signage can provide directions and maps for wayfinding purposes. Displays can be large screen flat panels or touchscreen technology.
- **Emergency Alerts** – Complexes can send emergency alerts instantaneously over a network of displays.
- **Increased Revenue Stream** – Use displays as a means of revenue by offering advertising spots for healthcare related products and services.
- **Scheduling and Patient Services** – Keep patients informed as to appointment times, doctor's schedules, and with touchscreen, offer patients the ability to request prescription refills, schedule appointments, and more.

The healthcare industry is seeing an increased interest in digital signage...

With a quality digital signage deployment, healthcare facilities can feel secure with quality emergency alerts that can be programmed with various messages to immediately inform the populace on what specific actions to take.

Office managers can create, change and edit a plethora of messages easily to create money-saving and patient-calming actions. From a single site, all the screens in an office, building and/or within a geographic location can be fully controlled.

Databases may also be integrated to show "Doctor In-Out" lists or "Doctor On Time" lists; actions that save front office staff from the dreaded tap-tap on the glass.

Improper or Ineffective Applications of Digital Signage

Most quality digital signage applications require considerable expenditures with hopes of long-term usage and deliverability. Unfortunately, many digital signage applications are under-performing, under-utilized and not delivering anywhere near their promise. What are the common pitfalls?

The “Let’s Do It Ourselves” Syndrome

Recent advances in digital signage have made this a wasteful if not a dangerous option. A manager may think, “We can buy signage software, we can pull engineering and graphics talent from our employee pool, get with the building manager and put up a few plasma or LCD screens and viola! We have digital signage for less than a vendor would charge us.” This philosophy may work great...at first (if you can get it to work at all). What happens when employees move on or updates and repairs are needed?

Another area often overlooked with DIY digital signage is the content. Your content virtually never comes out the way you want it to in a do-it-yourself scenario, resulting in content that will negatively reflect on your office environment. The cost to remedy this situation far outweighs the cost of doing it right the first time. Thus, it is best to find a full service digital signage provider that will provide content creation and management that is attractive and informative.

The TVs in Waiting Rooms Gambit: Creating Your Patients Waiting Room Ambiance

This is usually the first ‘obvious’ step for patient diversion. It is usually much better than asking patients to look at the same magazines that were possibly in the office on their last appointment. Digital signage content that is repetitive can also result in sameness, defeating the purpose of the digital signage.

There are many ways to keep digital signage ‘fresh’. Office managers or selected staff can regularly change content to reflect the seasons, deliver a personalized message or reinforce their brand to avoid showing content that does not change.

Patient Diversion—The ‘Good, Better, Best’ Solutions

Most offices provide television viewing in waiting areas. What about watching TV shows with news about flu shot registration, office news and notices, and health tips all on the same screen?

Consider small screens in each examining room that offer patient testimonials about a successful procedure they received at your office. A pre-op patient could view the steps and benefits of a procedure they are about to undergo in the privacy of the examining room.

Nurses and staff have reported a noticeable difference in patient anxiety where TV is inserted into the environment. The contentment ‘graph’ goes up dramatically with both patients and staff when more information is freely distributed through quality digital signage.

Lessening the “Tapping On the Glass” Syndrome: Good for Both Sides of the Glass

Tap-Tap-Tap...

”Excuse me, how much longer is the doctor going to be?”

Keeping patients informed is *the* vital function of digital signage. Creative uses can include a ‘Countdown Clock’, a

patient numbering system, or an alarm-type system that alerts the waiting room that the doctor is running late, had an emergency or other possibilities.

Animated characters can remind patients about taking their medicine regimen, getting regular blood pressure checks, or annual checkups. What about a message that firmly reminds patients to have their insurance information ready?



Small Office Applications

We Are Also Talking About Expanding Creative Talents

Besides the foregoing applications mentioned above, there remain many creative uses yet to be discovered by an especially creative staff. Today's office culture requires dynamic changes, oftentimes at the drop of a hat.

Patient Self Check-in Kiosks

Patients can update their insurance information, their address or phone numbers—whatever you usually require for patient profiles, relieving front desk personnel through more streamlined check-ins. With this kiosk technology, patients can make appointments or request prescription refills online all within the waiting room.

Kiosk, or touchscreen technology, is very reliable, dependable, and conforms to HIPAA privacy policies. Digital vendors can work with individual offices to establish a system that provides proper handling of patient information.

Train and Communicate Through Diverse Technology

Healthcare facilities can use a well-defined digital signage network for corporate training and meetings. Displays placed in meeting rooms, lunchrooms or other common areas are the perfect medium for motivational meetings and training sessions, providing information from the top down.

A digital signage screen in the lunchroom can alert nurses and staff to policy or procedural changes, upcoming events or to announce a new employee.

Building Additional Office Revenue Streams

Everyone enjoys additional revenue. Pharmaceutical companies, healthcare product companies, surgeons and others are always looking for a good place to spend their advertising dollars. Waiting areas in healthcare establishments are a good fit with the perfect target audience; one that is health conscious and desiring health related messages. This is a true win-win opportunity.

Offices would have full control over their advertising policy and can choose the type and kinds of advertising they will accept. A larger venue, such as a hospital or assisted living community, is in a good position based on sheer numbers of screens available and options they can give an advertiser.

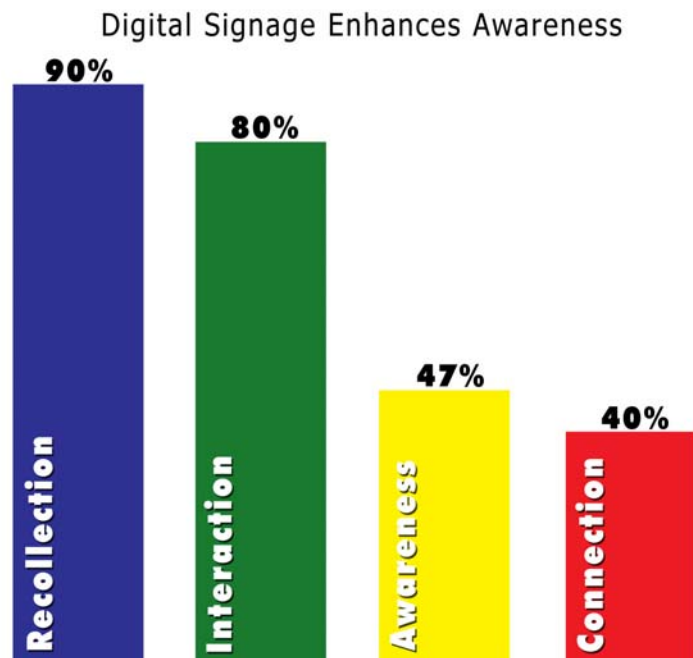
Internal advertising options can vary all the way from a single screen in the waiting room or staff lunchroom to an entire floor or wing of a hospital's private TV network. [See

Hospital and Larger Building Applications below.] This is usually referred to as narrowcasting, a growing means of information sharing.

Options for revenue can vary from day rates to monthly rates for ads that appear on a single screen or multiple ads on multiple screens.

Digital Signage Advertising Works!

Research (Arbitron) shows that digital signage advertising works. Studies show that 90% of visitors recalled seeing digital screens and 80% say they actually watched the screens. Of these, 47% showed an unaided awareness for at least one brand that was advertised on the screens and 40% said that the digital signs created brand awareness for more than one brand that was advertised. Additionally, product recollection was higher for digital signage ads than the same product advertised on TV.



Options for An Outside, Off-site Advertising Broker-Vendor

Never should the healthcare staff need to be responsible for selling advertising spots. A viable option would be to look to a 'broker-vendor' or consultant to sell advertising packages. The broker-vendor generally handles all the solicitation, collects the money and pays you an agreed-upon percentage every month.

If you already employ a marketing person, that person can meet with your digital signage vendor to get what they call 'industry norms' in digital signage advertising and handle the entire transaction from their office.

A Trend is Developing Right Before Our Eyes

This "new media", digital signage, is still maturing and so has huge potential. The more knowledge signage owners have about this trend in their local areas, the more options they will give themselves. Using a *quality* digital signage vendor is imperative to assure that digital signage networks within your office or facility experience minimal interruptions in advertising and can be immediately fixed.

Emergency and Wayfinding Signage to Immediately and Clearly Inform

When it comes to emergency and wayfinding signage, the size or demographics of a populace is not really in question. The question is the quality of the digital signage itself so that emergency routing can clearly be delineated to the most basic understanding of the majority of that populace.

Some digital signage vendors have devised a way to clearly tell virtually any populace what kind of emergency is taking place and then give instructions from digital signage screens in accordance with that emergency. For instance, if it is a fire emergency, a “You Are Here” map instantly appears on all screens showing where the fire is located and the best way to evacuate the building. If a gunman is on the campus, the screen gives instructions to stay in the rooms and what to do. Many different emergency messages can be planned such as water main breaks and extreme weather.

Wayfinding is Given a New Sense of Direction Through Digital Signage

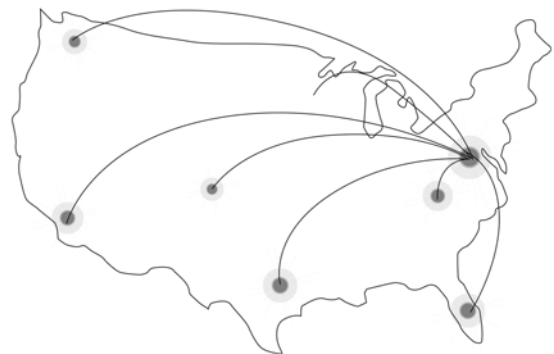
Any medical facility’s wayfinding mechanisms are only as good as the weakest link in the populace it serves. Whether one is dealing with a severely sight-challenged individual or one who needs to read in their native language, there is a digital solution that can meet the challenge.

Careful planning with your digital signage vendor will enable you to make the most of your specific populace and its flow lanes—especially when coordinating with any outside signage.

Controlling Remote or Satellite Locations From a Single Station

Some forward-thinking digital signage vendors have created digital signage software that can be ‘sliced and diced’ in virtually any way that a client wishes.

This gives the digital signage user the opportunity to control an office, a suite of offices, a building, or an entire county or state full of satellite offices from a single secure control unit.



Allowing Your Vendor to Control Output at Your Direction

A quality digital signage vendor is also one

who can demonstrate a mutually satisfying long-distance relationship with more than one customer. The distance covered can be across the street, the neighboring county, or across the country. Quality must be definite in that the vendor must display a measurable and dependable quality over long distances.

Hospital and Larger Building Applications

Hospitals, not unlike independent offices, have their own set of issues and opportunities—while they come with greater issues, they also come with a greater reward potential. To generate optimum payback, promote safety, coordinate and manage traffic flows and more, the digital screens must be strategically placed to work together, or ‘flow’.

Special care must also be taken to coordinate the indoor digital signage with any outdoor signage—be it digital or static. A certain ambience to any campus can be achieved in a project if your signage vendor is coordinated to work with your architect and on-site building engineers.

Private in-room TV networks can give patients additional options through a centralized media player that delivers the hospital’s custom messages directly to the patients in the form of education, entertainment and other programming. This is where some institutions elect to broadcast some of their advertising messages. Such programming can be inspirational or informational and can appear around your regular TV programming.

Choosing a Digital Signage Vendor that Fits Your Future

The key point to all of digital signage, its promise, the future and realistic return on investment for you, comes to a screeching halt if your vendor does not have the right *ready-response solution team*. No matter what kind of a whiz-bang presentation a vendor gives you, if they have to be called several times or begged to come to your site for an issue or question, they are not worthy of your business.

As a busy medical facility, work often requires you to plan several years in the future. Any software, equipment or program must have as part and partial of their engineering a *ready-response team* that instills confidence. Digital signage users should be able to pick up the phone, talk to a real person and get real-time feedback.

Individualized Training a Vital Part of the Decision

Your digital signage vendor should be able to explain each part of your purchase and easily schedule training for the personnel who will be responsible for updating your digital signage content.

The actual training should not be difficult to the trainee, but should be a great learning experience in building a new skill. Training should take place with the participant's schedule in mind. Inquiries should be enthusiastically welcomed by the vendor's trainers at any time—up to and including, off-hours.

Group training should also be available so that all will be able to advance their creative talents in line with the signage and software's capabilities and office requirements.

When selecting a vendor ask:

- What kind of track record do they have?
- Are they able to give a sample project before making a final decision?
- What are their training options?
- Customer support?

In Summary

- You should never feel as if the vendor is 'pushing' equipment, programs and software.
- You should feel as though you have a partner in helping you create the office or hospital ambience and functionality *you* want to create.
- The look and feel that you present to the patient can go a long way towards supporting your office mission statement.

About the Authors

J. Stephen Lanning is a freelance writer, researcher and author of several books and training course and is a consultant for digital signage companies and their clients. With over 35 years of business experience in many types of businesses and organizations, he created and co-founded the National Association of Business Coaches that he sold in 2002. He has worked in industries from medical to legal to manufacturing and marketing professional services. Mr. Lanning has been focused upon helping clients make the most productive use of the emerging digital signage potential in business and the professions in a win-win manner. Lanning is the author of the forthcoming article *The Five Key Milestones in Captive Audience Marketing for Maximum Effectiveness*. J. Stephen Lanning can be reached at:

Steve@ExecutiveProductivity.com

Judy L. Hoffman is an internationally recognized marketing and PR communications consultant with clients in the USA, Russia, Europe and South America, serving a wide range of industries including healthcare, technology, fashion, finance, sports and education, with a keen interest in the digital world and the effects of digital signage in the field of marketing and public relations. Hoffman is a freelance writer and has been published in numerous trade journals, newspapers, blogs and newsletters worldwide. Judy L. Hoffman can be reached at: judy@judymae.com



***“We didn’t invent digital signage—
we go beyond it.”***

Noventri (www.noventri.com) and its parent company Specialized Communications Corp. (www.spec-comm.com) have combined staffs with over 130 years of combined technical and design expertise serving thousands of customers coast to coast in the broadcast engineering, pro-video and digital signage industry. We have received Panasonic’s top partner award several years running and also partner with NEC and other top plasma and LCD screen manufacturers to ensure that our customers receive the best equipment available in the digital signage industry.

As a full service digital signage provider, we have a dedicated staff that provides consultation, site surveys, digital signage network engineering and design, installation, integration, content creation and management, plus total training that includes indoor and outdoor digital signage solutions.

State your vision... Noventri listens and then brings your vision to life.