

Plasma revolutionizes traditional advertising

Digital Signage – communication of the future

By Dagmar Bohlmann

Every morning, hundreds of java junkies line up at their local coffee shop. Flashing across a plasma screen before them could be a unique blend of the latest coffee specials, music videos and advertisements of adjacent businesses. The same way Starbucks has revolutionized the world of coffee, custom digital signage is changing how businesses communicate with their customers.

“Digital signage is like broadcasting your very own television channel,” said Catherine Oaks, president and co-founder of Image Base International, a full-service advertising agency in Reno. “The true benefit is the ability to deliver relevant, meaningful content in the right place at the right time. Retailers, hotels and casinos are interested because it creates a compelling environment, attracts and educates customers and provides cross-selling and co-marketing opportunities.”

Oaks is a marketing professional and Webmaster with over 18 years of international experience. She is convinced that the next generation of communication for any company lies in the expanding field of digital media networks.

“Our clients range from insurance and financial institutions to hotels and retail chains,” Oaks said. “This solution perfectly fits the needs of leading national companies such as Nike, REI, North Face or Orvis, who constantly seek to enhance their customers’ experience.”

Mike Winkel, owner of Winkel Motors Pontiac/GMC/Hummer, said that IBI’s comprehensive solution has added tremendous value to his entire organization.

“We are now able to reach our customers more effectively, cross-market our various products and services, provide entertaining content highlighting local events, stimulate all of our team members and have our customers truly understand the ‘value proposition’ we are offering,” he said.



Catherine Oaks (right) leads the team at Image Base International.

“Companies can make digital signage a new profit center by collecting revenues from brands and products they feature on their displays,” said IBI co-founder and V.P. of Worldwide sales Tony Trowbridge. IBI is helping to launch the innovative European software iScreen® in the U.S.

“The one-of-a-kind software has been developed with a broad

user-centered approach. Its fast learning curve allows just about anyone to manage content broadcast easily and efficiently,” he said.

Throughout his career in the information technology industry, Trowbridge has consulted and worked with Fortune 1000 companies to help implement company-wide solutions within the gaming, wholesale distribution, retail, manufacturing and hospitality sectors. He thinks the digital signage industry has gone beyond the “buzz” stage and is now an important and accepted form of advertising.

“In the last 10 years, prices of large format plasmas and LCDs have dropped significantly, helping reduce the overall cost to implement a digital signage solution,” Trowbridge said.

Smart businesses take advantage and redefine their communication strategies to harness the creativity of television, the brilliance of print and the simplicity of outdoor billboards. Combined with the power of the Internet and driven by novel software, digital screens can now clearly define and target specific audiences.

As members of POPAI, the Global Association for Marketing at-Retail, Oaks and Trowbridge sit on the Standards Committee and help guide efforts to implement the next generation of communication tools in the US.

“In Europe, digital media technology has been used for over five years in airports, malls, ski resorts, department store chains

and major hotels and resorts,” Oaks said.

Phil Smilanick, CFO of the company, added, “According to the Weinstock Media Analysis, overall technology sales in the market of digital signs are expected to keep rising from \$810.4 million (2002) to \$2.23 billion (2008). In the next five years, you won’t go into any U.S. airport, movie theater, bank or local coffee shop without seeing interactive digital displays.”

At IBI, Oaks and Trowbridge head a team of creative and advertising professionals. While their specialty is digital signage, IBI provides a full range of traditional advertising services, including unified branding, graphic design, marketing and advertising campaigns, web design and e-commerce solutions. Among their local clients is a Nevada State agency, the Department of Employment, Training and Rehabilitation, for whom IBI has been developing a whole image campaign.

Another client, Marty Kloska, owner of Napa Sonoma Grocery Company, is amazed by the results his new Web site has generated. Reno’s premier gift, wine and fine food store has picked up about 20 percent more business since IBI redesigned its Web site nine months ago.

“But my opinion doesn’t count,” Kloska said. “It’s our customers who compliment us on how easy our site is to navigate.”

“The new Digital Age provides communication tools with the power of a double shot of espresso,” Oaks said. “People who invest now will grasp a huge competitive advantage in the marketplace.”



The principals at Image Base International include Catherine Oaks, president and co-founder (above); Phil Smilanick, chief financial officer (left); and Tony Trowbridge, co-founder and vice president of worldwide sales (below).



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Photo by Alex Lemus

Digital signage allows businesses to deliver the right content at the right time.

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