How Digital Signage Is Changing Corporate Communications

…And Why the Internet of Things (IoT) is Redefining the Corporate Environment

Introduction

Digital signage is dramatically changing how organizations are communicating, replacing bulletin boards and posters with high impact visual messaging that increases operational efficiencies and engages staff and customers.

Operations and Human Resources professionals are finding that traditional communication channels are not an effective means to realize business goals. A unified Content Management System (CMS) platform, running everything from performance dashboards to employee training portals, can drastically improve employee satisfaction and retention, productivity, policy compliance and more.

Companies also benefit from using a CMS for driving internal corporate communications, as well as customer-facing communications.

This position paper gives corporate and internal communicators both an overview and ideas on how networked digital displays drive important messaging across workplaces of all kinds, both behind the scenes and in front of your customers and partners.

You'll learn how content is defined and used, how both live and stored data from company systems and Internet of Things devices are reshaping how communications are done, and how ComQi's EnGage platform is a powerful, unified hub for delivering timely, relevant and impactful workplace and corporate messaging.

Highlights

Business communicators are shifting from the old ways of getting messages to staff to new digital tools, and particularly always-on, ever-present digital signs.
You'll get ideas on using screens for:

- KPI Performance Dashboards
- Workplace Safety
- Training
- Compliance
- Workplace Navigation
- Staff Messaging
- Motivation and Community
- Corporate Branding

You'll also learn how ComQi's industry-leading EnGage platform serves as a data-driven hub for all aspects of business communications.

Turning On The Message

Baby boomers and the population wave behind them worked for decades in offices and facilities that did staff communications built around notice boards in break areas, posters taped on walls and doors, notices slipped in pay envelopes and inbox trays, newsletters, intranets, and mass emails.

Those tools did the basics, but that's about it. Business communicators have often struggled to find more effective delivery methods. Almost 90 per cent of businesses still rely on email to get the word around, but research suggests about a third of company emails never get opened and read.

The huge wave of millennials now coming into the workforce is conditioned to an always-on, instant-access world of mobile communications and the Internet. They want what they need to know, whenever they need to know it. Usually immediately.

Business communicators have also been looking for ways to go beyond the basics of creating awareness, instead wanting internal communications that drive engagement with staff - inspiring them, encouraging innovation, and keeping them interested. It's expensive to recruit and hire people, and employees who feel they're part of something, and making an impact, tend to stick around.

Digital signs do that work, and those screens are always there, on, and when done right, targeting messages by time, location and context.

Broad Possibilities

Business communications is anything but one-dimensional. The possibilities have been greatly broadened by the ever-expanding capabilities of digital signage and interactive digital stations.

Let's look at some of the key applications and how they're being optimally used:

Performance Dashboards

Executives and people running operations in companies have fast access to key performance indicators (KPIs), but data-driven systems like ComQi's EnGage platform can tie in real-time and archived data from company systems and devices to provide real-time dashboards on digital signage displays.

That can happen in many, highly diverse ways.

Companies are using displays tied to real-time data to optimize operations on factory floors and logistics operations. Software like EnGage can easily be set up to trigger content and draw charts and other messaging on screens based on what the data is saying. For example, if a production line is falling behind targets, simple color coding and messaging can be automatically triggered to displays within view – making the full team aware, not just the person in charge.

Some companies are using live-charting and stats as motivators, celebrating top performers in sales, customer service and other departments in photos and numbers. In Australia, a major automaker has displays in its head office lobby showing real-time sales data pulled from dealer sales management systems, so everyone knows what vehicles are motivating buyers.

Other companies are using live data for gamification, bringing the ideas of mobile and desktop gaming to screens in production and operations areas, and pitting teams and offices against each other in visually fun contests built around KPIs.

That's all possible with a blend of open software platforms, dynamic web and presentation tools like HTML5, and access to structured, reliable data from company systems.

Getting Trained

Touchscreen kiosks can be the first step to proper training for new employees, or those looking for wage hikes or promotions through added skills and certification.

Interactive screens can be used to not only provide on-demand, video-driven training, but can be tied in with other systems like employee databases and access systems to log and validate training sessions. For example, the ID badge used to gain access to restricted areas can also be used to log in and create a record of a required training session for a staffer, and be used again to close out the session, only when all the training steps and videos are completed.

A large multi-national food company uses EnGage in multiple ways, notably an employee communications touchscreen program that evolved out of the organizations' need to inform and train staff. The solution uses EnGage to efficiently create, package, and distribute content to operating business units, so that information and training materials are easily accessible by workers.

The solution includes access to the company's policies on health and safety, environmental, ethics, governance and more. Workers can get the information they need, in multiple languages.
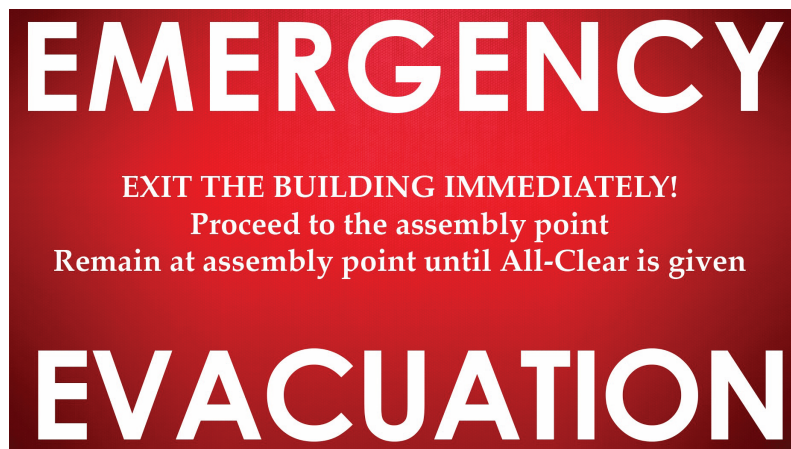
Safer Workplaces

If a picture is worth 1,000 words, video has even more value with comes to workplace safety. Organizations are turning to video to make messages on the importance of safety equipment and safe work practices more effective and impactful.

It's important on many levels. Injuries and equipment breakdowns have direct bottom-line implications. But there's also the powerful message effective videos provide to workers – which their employers care about their safety and well-being.

Getting Trained

Motion graphics and video on screens can tell workers not only simple caution and advice, but reinforce proper methods and the right gear to apply. Digital also has the ability to target messaging by locations and by time of day.

Interactive digital screens running off the same digital signage platform – something easily powered by EnGage – open up new safety and labor messaging capabilities. The important information and refresher training needed to work in certain areas, or with specific equipment, can be made available, on demand, using interactive, touchscreen-driven screens station around a facility, including break areas.

EMERGENCY

EXIT THE BUILDING IMMEDIATELY!
Proceed to the assembly point
Remain at assembly point until All-Clear is given

EVACUATION

EnGage also has the data-driven capability to listen and respond to systems, or be manually triggered based on events on the work floor. What that means, in practical terms, is that it's possible to trigger a message based on data from a building system, like fire or gas leak detection systems. So when there is a fire event, the CMS automatically changes every screen in an area (or the entire building) to a warning message.

Policy Compliance

Digital has huge implications for an organization's liability. It provides the ability to centralize communications from multiple print posters or booklets to one digital screen that offers all the policies through an interactive directory. Corporate policies on safety measures and workplace regulations from all levels of government can be delivered on digital signs and touchscreen kiosks throughout the office for full transparency to the employees.

Most important, compliance rates are much higher when digital delivery is assured and the human factors (local managers putting the right notices up, on time) are removed. The employer can even require an e-signature from employees on the digital kiosks to ensure approval and compliance.

Employees will always have access and visibility to policies and there can be no claim they didn't know about a particular policy if there is a dispute. Employers have the potential to save millions of dollars in a legal matter.

Finding Your Way

On healthcare and educational campuses, and in the office parks of larger companies, finding your way around can be a big challenge - for new employees and particularly for visitors and temporary contractors.

The same wayfinding and navigation tools that are starting to pop up in airports and shopping malls are also being deployed in larger campus-like environments, helping people find their way. Touchscreens enable directories and step-by-step navigation directions, with some smart systems also enabling visitors to tap the screen or scan a bar code to push a web version of those directions to their smartphone. Some offices are now adding Bluetooth Low Energy beacons that, when tied to mobile apps, can also help navigation and even push notices to meeting organizers that the guests have arrived or all the attendees have found the room.

One of the age-old problems faced by larger companies is meeting room availability and usage. Small tablet-sized digital signs outside meeting room doors, when mapped to data from the calendar servers used by the company, can easily, accurately convey everything needed about the room and its availability.

Those screens are being repurposed by some companies to also run internal communications messaging during downtime, when the room is not allocated.

Company Brand And Mission

Business communicators are often looking to do more than just keep staffers informed. They want to reinforce the company brand, mission and its place in the community. That can happen in countless ways using networked digital displays.

For example, Canada's Scotiabank has a large matrix of video displays clustered in a busy public area below its Toronto head office – showing hand-selected social media messages from customers, colorfully celebrating things like what they did using a bank savings or awards program.

Spaulding Hospital in Boston uses ComQi's advanced multi-display management capabilities to deliver a compelling, emotional set of video wall experiences around its new building on the city's waterfront. Different configurations of displays convey and powerfully reinforce the message of recovery, not only for patients, but their friends and family. Walking into the building or coming on to an upper floor, videos show former patients who, with Spaulding's help, put their lives back together.

Along with high-impact visual storytelling, Spaulding's adoption of digital signage has also reduced the visual noise across its facilities. Posters are now outlawed, in favor of more efficient and green display screens in staff areas.

Digital IQ

In a competitive job market, demonstrating innovation in the workplace is a powerful tool to attract and retain staff. Screens are effective, highly visible tools that reinforce how a company is using technology.

Some companies, for example, are mining social media channels to reflect customer sentiments about their products and services, both in the messages post but also the overall positive or negative sentiments.

Going digital, particularly when it is interactive and can cross platforms from the small screens of phones to the big screens of workplaces, reflects and respects how employees – particularly younger generations – communicate these days.

Staff Messaging

Digital is very effective in conveying both day-to-day and situation-driven communications.

It's the notice about the parking lot being closed for re-surfacing, and the blood donor drive. But it's also the high-alert evacuation announcement that efficiently gets staff to safe areas.

Digital displays enable communicators to get those daily messages up and down on time, and change them on the fly. CMS tools allowing scheduling and targeting that gets company-wide messages delivered on all screens, at once, in an instant.

Digital also helps them get noticed, using motion graphics or scheduling tools to cycle through different messages.
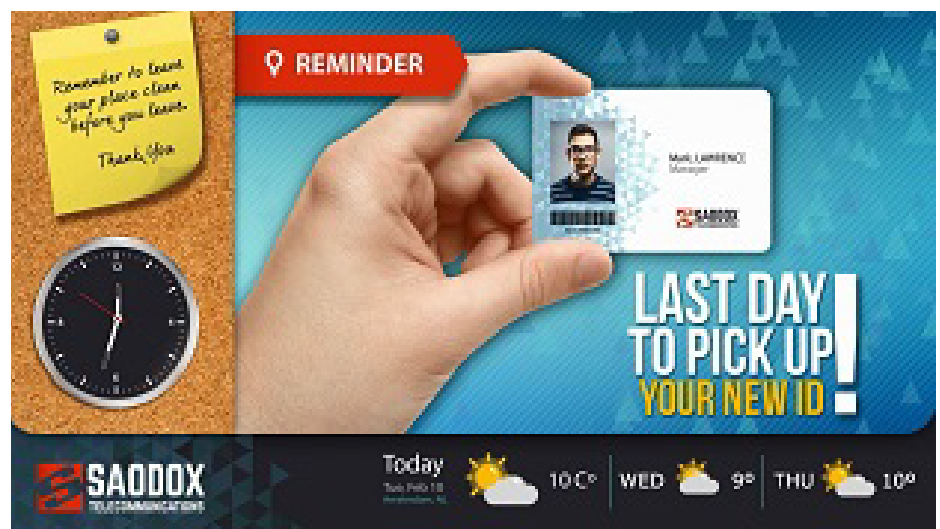
Platforms like ComQi's EnGage enable local and department managers to easily produce messages, using pre-built templates, to post on assigned screens – without the time and cost needed for outsourced artwork and printing.

A large US-based hypermarket uses a variety of screens effectively at its bustling, airy head office to communicate with staff, but also to show visitors and brand partners what's hot in their stores week to week.

Motivation And Community

Business communicators are using digital to drive engagement in their companies, and ensure even people working at entry-level positions understand how they fit into the broader strategy and objectives of the company or organization.

Effectively, they're looking for ways to ensure staff feel informed, enrolled and integral to what's going on day to day.

It's a big deal. APPrise Mobile did a workplace survey and found that 68% of workers surveyed said job satisfaction was directly impacted by the frequency of communications, and 50% of those surveyed felt they were out of the communications loop. A third said they wanted more communications.

Well-crafted digital display content, located in high traffic or long dwell-time areas, has the power to steadily inform all staff at an office or facility of the key messages. That can be things like milestones met, financial performance, new contracts, acquisitions made, or awards received.

Done well, they create ubiquitous awareness, and drive staff to the other tools – like intranets, newsletters and mass e-mails – that contain the details.

EnGage As Communications Hub

ComQi's EnGage content management system is a cloud-based platform designed to power communications of all kinds and shapes across a single building, campus or full global network of facilities – all from a secure browser.

The platform can handle everything from interactive, touchscreen driven experiences and elaborate video walls to simple displays made sophisticated by the data-driven content that steadily refreshes itself.

The EnGage platform enables business communicators to plan, create, schedule and distribute across entire networks – no matter the location – or hyper-target messages to specific displays in specific offices, for specific time windows.

EnGage also gives communicators the tools to enable, but closely manage, messaging from remote offices – so a local manager at a branch plant, for example, can use a simple log-in to update a pre-loaded and approved template with new information. This empowers local messaging while still controlling what screens look like far from head office, and what messages say.

Working with IT, business communicators can use EnGage's open design and tools to integrate and use data from company systems. For example, a mining company that has top-line data, in real time, from its global operations could display production volumes and other KPIs on dashboard-style screens. That same data could be used to design and steadily redraw artistic visualizations of that data on large display walls.

EnGage is also designed as an Internet of Things platform to work and interact with mobile devices and tablets, and with the new technologies that are finding their way into workplaces. Out of the box, EnGage supports the following:

- BLE Beacons
- NFC
- RFID
- DMX lighting
- GPIO
- RS232 panel control
- TCP panel control
- Data access through RESTful push and pull
- Streaming video input.

Easily configurable and used by a wide cross-section of companies – from food services giants to hospitals to top clothing brands –EnGage is a powerful hub for any communicator looking to easily, effectively get out messages.

Content-First Approach

Content is key to any media effort – whether that's a simple poster in a break room or an elaborate video wall in a corporate lobby. Whatever the message, it's only effective if people notice it, remember it and act on it.

No matter the use case, smart business communicators understand the key is the message. In other words, staffers don't look at screens, they look at what's ON screens.

That makes content planning important, and it also makes the management platform choice critical. Systems like EnGage provide easy planning and creational tools, and also take some of the messaging burden off central offices, enabling some local, controlled tools for local managers.

The right platform will also have the tools and set-up to take advantage of the fluid, kinetic nature of many workplace environments. One of the reasons there is so much buzz about the Internet of Things (IoT) is the potential for gathering and understanding all that data. But to use IoT well takes systems that make sense of all that data, and then systems that can present all that data in meaningful ways.

We are rapidly approaching a time when business communications will be a blend of simple messaging, visualizations and dashboards drawn from real-time data, and content that's delivered and generated, planned and targeted based on data and guided by pre-set rules.

You know that simple idea of smart homes that turn on appliances and systems based on your user patterns? Imagine business communications that are driven, in part, by what the company and its people and devices are doing. Keeping the content "beast" fed is a challenge data-driven content can help resolve.

"The message from our clients is loud and clear. The need for digital signage to tackle issues regarding staff retention, training and policy compliance is critical," says Stuart Armstrong, ComQi Group President. "It's for this reason that we developed powerful staff functionality into EnGage, our Content Management System, to communicate, educate and motivate an organization's staff. Now business communicators have one comprehensive digital platform solving their communication challenges across the board."

Learn How ComQi's EnGage CMS Platform is Changing the Corporate Environment:

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