

Love's Travel Stops Case Study

Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores welcomes motorists and professional truck drivers to its 24-hour travel stops located across much of the United States, and puts a premium on offering great in-store experiences for customers. Love's uses a wide range of mediums and formats to communicate services and offers to customers, and in 2015 started working with ComQi to rapidly roll out a wide range of digital billboards, digital posters and interactive stations. By mid-2017, almost half of Love's stores had gone digital and more than 1,100 connected devices were driving targeted content to screens.

In this case study, you'll learn why Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores went digital, what's being done, why and how, and find out how digital displays are working for the company and Love's customers.



Love's Travel Stops & Country Stores is headquartered in Oklahoma City, Oklahoma. Founded in 1964, Love's has more than 430 locations in 41 states. Love's provides professional truck drivers and motorists with 24-hour access to clean and safe places to purchase gasoline, diesel fuel, travel items, electronics, snacks and more, as well as a

selection of restaurant offerings. On-site Love's Truck Tire Care centers offer roadside assistance, tire care and light mechanical services for professional truck drivers. Showers, CAT scales and other services for professional truck drivers are also available. Love's, which remains family-owned and operated, employs more than 17,000 people. To learn more, visit www.loves.com.

Making Love's Stores Digital And Dynamic

Love's Travel Stops have the familiar, friendly feel of travel stops found across the United States, but in many respects, Love's is very different because of the wide variety of customers being served, and the physical footprint of their typical stores. They're big, always busy places, and the clientele varies from professional truck drivers making pit stops to minivan-filled families stopping in for gas, snacks and refreshments.

Love's offers many products and services, and because of that, has a lot to communicate through store marketing. Messaging starts at the pumps and store exteriors, and customers coming inside see everything from posters to brand promotional counter mats. In 2015, Love's started considering a gradual migration to in-store digital marketing.

Highlights

July 2017:

- **185 "live" stores**
- **1,100+ connected devices**
- **Four content zones, inc. tiled video walls**

Benefits

- **Sales increases**
- **Enhanced customer services**
- **Improved compliance rates**
- **Faster promotional changes**

“Our executive leadership had the foresight to see that the landscape of marketing was rapidly shifting from the consumption of print media to digital,” says Jarred Smith, Love’s Manager of Digital Experience. “Our customers are always on

the move, so quickly delivering targeted, relevant messaging to them was paramount in the decision to switch more and more of our marketing to digital platforms.”

Finding The Right Technical Partner

Love’s cast a wide net to find the right technical partner to help plan, test, fine-tune and then rollout its in-store network. The company issued an extensive Request For Proposal (RFP), and over and two-months whittled the options down from 50 companies, to a handful, and then to retail-focused digital signage solutions provider ComQi.

“It was clear to us that ComQi was the premier vendor for our team and our exact needs,” says Smith. “Their proven

record of successful integration into the retail space was principal in our decision to partner with them. When we coupled that with their best-in-class content management system, it was a no-brainer decision.”

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Working with ComQi from the inception, through idea sessions, technical planning, field tests and initial roll-outs, Love’s has gone from zero digital screens in early 2015 to almost 200 locations nationwide, with more than 1,100 connected devices driving in-store screens.

Varied Digital Touchpoints



The Love’s Travel Stops in-store digital network is tuned to the dynamics of the store and the needs of different customers.

Both leisure travelers and commercial truck drivers are visually attracted by large, **billboard-style mini video walls** located above the soda fountain and coffee areas. Groups of screens tiled side-by-side to create large, wide billboard displays are used to promote in-store snack special offers, new products and promotions. The screens are also a go-to resource for information about monthly promotions, special events and exclusive Love’s offers.

Screens located directly above the diesel counter feature content tailored to the specific interests professional drivers, with driver-specific product promotions and reminders about Love's service offerings, like TirePass, Love's Truck Tire Care and factoring services with Love's Financial.

An **interactive touchscreen** located in the store aisles features route planning, local weather, special offers and information on all of Love's service offerings. The design shares the look and feel of typical smartphone apps, drawing user attention and offering navigation that feels familiar



to just about anyone. Love's staff often use the touchscreen in their store to help customers look up product information, or to assist with route planning.



A separate **“Mobile to Go Zone” interactive touchscreen** showcases 10 different electronics products each month with large, bold photography and multiple product images. It features items on sale, new items and bestsellers. The full Mobile to Go Zone product catalog is also available on the screen, enabling customers the ability to browse and learn more about all products.

Getting The Messages Right

Customers ignore screens unless the messages are eye-catching, creative and relevant. Love's chose to build an in-house content development team which gives them the creative flexibility to create new and visually-exciting promotions on a sustainable, frequent basis.

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“The ability to be nimble with changing promotions and design choices, on the fly, has proven to be a contributing factor to our continued success,” says Smith.

Rather than targeting messages to individual screens, Smith says the creative team understood from the start their messaging had to be big and bold to cut through all the visuals in a store, get noticed, and influence purchases or other actions.

“We were early adopters of the “billboard” style approach to our digital signage. We understood quickly that we have a very limited amount of time to deliver our message to the consumer. We stick to large imagery and short, direct messaging to serve up easily-digestible information to our customers,” said Smith. “Our design team members come from varied backgrounds, and that allows us to maintain a fresh and consistent look for not only Love's, but with the brands that we represent in our marketing initiatives.”

Love's creative efforts have particularly impressed Stuart Armstrong, President of digital signage CMS and solutions provider ComQi.

"Digital signage has grown increasingly common in convenience store environments, but much of what's been done to date has not performed

well," says Armstrong. "The retailers tried to make money off of screens running unrelated third-party advertising, or didn't put a genuine investment in creative. Love's, from the start, understood the medium and the opportunity, and they're making the most of it."

Creating A Solid Technical Foundation

The 1,100-plus connected devices that drive content to screens on the Love's network all run off ComQi's EnGage content management system, which is optimized for retailers who need an ultra-reliable, easily-scaled and managed digital signage operation.

All the nodes on the network, dispersed across some 200 stores in 41 states, are managed in the cloud, using just a browser as the control center.

One of the most important aspects of EnGage, for Love's, is the robust remote device management

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capabilities. "We can monitor all devices in our network in real-time to ensure that we are proactive in any issues that may come up," says Smith, noting that screen downtimes are below industry norms because of tools that allow issues to be remedied automatically, or by operators who can see and resolve problems remotely.

Smith says the network's success to date also owes to a "painstakingly-built" infrastructure plan that ensured what was put in-stores was appropriate and consistent across every location.

Measuring Impact

The success of the program is immediately evident in the rapid rollout, with nearly half of the stores installed with digital, just two years into the program.

Feedback from customers and store personnel has been uniformly positive, with store general managers especially liking the ability to interact with customers using the touchscreens, providing helpful information like route planning or weather along routes and at destinations.

Going digital has greatly improved compliance

levels – ensuring the correct information is posted when and where it should be, according to central plans. This has been particularly important for tobacco products pricing – which varies by jurisdiction and is subject to state and federal laws.

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Digital cigarette pricing boards have significantly decreased the amount of manual labor required to keep pricing accurate.

The digital displays are aligned with Love's omnichannel marketing efforts, assuring customers have a variety of ways to interact with the brand, whether it's in the store or on the road.

"Our goal is to provide consistent branding for a seamless experience for the customer," said Kris Kern, Love's Manager of Creative Development.

The Love's digital team uses the analytics engine available from EnGage to track interactions on store touchscreens, generating insights on what products and services generate the most interest

from customers store-by-store, and overall. They understand not only what interests customers, but also when the touchscreens get the most activity and which travel stops have the most users.

The biggest impact is on the bottom line. Love's tracks promotions on its screens against similarly-performing stores that are not yet installed with digital screens. Like most retailers, Love's keeps sales data private, but in general, the company has seen clear and consistent positive impacts on sales when products and offers are promoted on the screens.

The Love's network continues to expand to more stores.