

STREAMLINING THE PROCESS FOR DIGITAL SIGNAGE

The Integrator's Intro to Success in the Fastest Growing AV Market



By Steve Acquisto, Black Box

It wasn't too long ago that traditional AV integrators were called upon to satisfy the majority of video- and audio-related projects. But as digital signage evolved from the simple distribution of broadcast video to software-based data network communications, so did the complexity and confusion. Considering all the knowledge, parts and pieces involved in today's scalable digital signage solutions, it's no wonder that AV integrators and VARs looking to get into this rapidly growing market segment are scratching their heads and wondering where to begin or how much of the digital signage ecosystem they can support.

How does an AV integrator or reseller streamline the digital signage process? To answer that question, you first need to understand the digital signage ecosystem and how the different segments relate to each other and your company's core competencies. What may seem easy for a traditional AV integrator, such as designing and installing the necessary video, audio and signal distribution, may be difficult for the traditional IT integrator. On the other hand, an IT integrator may see the data infrastructure, software and network configuration requirements as easy tasks but not be as comfortable with the video and audio aspects. Today's integrators must develop skills in both areas.

To deliver a total digital signage solution and satisfy your clients, you must not only understand what segments your company can directly support and deploy, but also where you'll need outside help. No one company does it all directly. If you pull back the curtain, you'll see that even today's top digital signage solution providers have plenty of behind-the-scenes help from their partners.

Although most manufacturers and suppliers understand

this and do a great job in delivering parts of the digital signage solution, few of them have the resources to deliver the entire solution. The good news is we are starting to see increased support from manufacturers and suppliers as they take a more holistic approach in supporting integrators. The key is deciding where to turn for those necessary resources and support to build up your ecosystem so you can take your digital signage business to the next level.

Another important thing to consider is how do you educate your clients about digital signage to help them determine their needs? The simplest way I've found to address this issue is through a digital signage survey plan. It identifies your clients' needs for further qualification and solution development, while at the same time educating them on the benefits and requirements to support the solution.

Digital Signage Survey Plan

1. What type of content do you want to display? Static images, video, RSS feeds, live TV? How often do you expect the content to change?
2. How many locations and displays do you want to run the content on?



3. Will the content be the same on each screen, or do you want to show different content on different screens?
4. How do you want to manage your content and be able to change or update it?
5. Do you want to remotely access and control the functionality of media players and displays?
6. Is local input (local messages) from remote sites required?
7. Based on display locations, will you have potential security issues? Can someone simply turn off the displays, change the inputs or tamper with or remove the hardware?
8. Does your existing network have the bandwidth to support digital signage traffic?
9. What are the skill sets of the users?
10. Will the displays need to be pole or wall mounted?
11. Is there an electrical outlet available at each display point?

As the prime integrator and contractor on any given digital signage project, the key to success is not only



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how you chose and manage all your behind-the-scenes partners and resources, but also how to make the process appear to be seamless to your clients. If I've learned anything over the years of designing, presenting and deploying digital signage projects, it's that most clients respond positively when you're able to assist them through the entire digital signage process. The more value you can add and deliver on during that process, the more indispensable you'll become to your clients.

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at Black Box, a world leader and provider of comprehensive communications and data infrastructure solutions. In addition to designing, installing, and maintaining voice and data networks throughout the world, the Company offers more than 118,000 networking and infrastructure products including: Award Winning Digital Signage & Multimedia Platforms; Signal Distribution; Cables, Cabinets, and Racks; KVM; Networking Infrastructure Hardware; Datacom; Power; Security; and Servers. Visit www.blackbox.com/go/icompel.