

Evolve or Die!

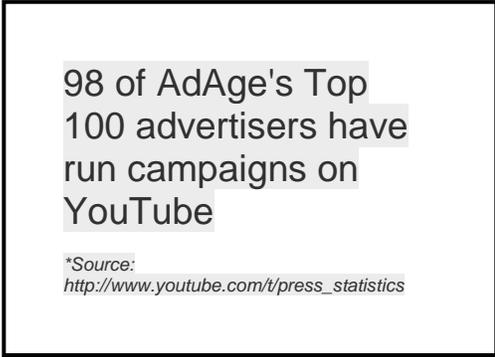
How Social Media Shifts the Digital Signage Content Paradigm

The old content paradigm in digital signage is quickly going the way of the dinosaurs. The loop is dead, just filling space or “wallpapering” is strictly prohibited, being generic has become the equivalent of being boring. Digital signage content is now expected to be interactive, dynamic, as well as venue and brand compatible. Audiences have become increasingly sophisticated around content and presentation. They demand a look and feel that rivals what they watch at home on their HD televisions. Simultaneously they are becoming more and more social around their viewing and shopping experiences.

It is no surprise that the content piece of a signage network has become more of a challenge for network operators. Viewers, advertisers and brands have become ever more demanding looking for a signage experience that is both compelling and full of engagement possibilities. The most successful networks will be those that provide an editorial value add to viewers while they initiate creative new ways for brands to make long lasting impressions.

Enter social media which has become the “must have” content element for many digital signage networks. Stakeholders have recognized social media’s influence and persuasiveness throughout society and are encouraging operators to integrate it into digital signage. Posting one’s activities, compliments and criticisms on social networks has become ubiquitous and brands have directed more resources to leveraging social media to meet their marketing objectives.

Network operators who are on the fence regarding how social media content can integrate into their networks need to seriously look at both the benefits and the expectations of stakeholders. The willingness of audiences to fully interact with brands via mobile devices has become commonplace. Social media is quickly becoming a vital communications conduit that attracts and retains viewers and drives brand awareness. Network operators cannot ignore the symbiotic relationship between digital signs, mobile and social media content.



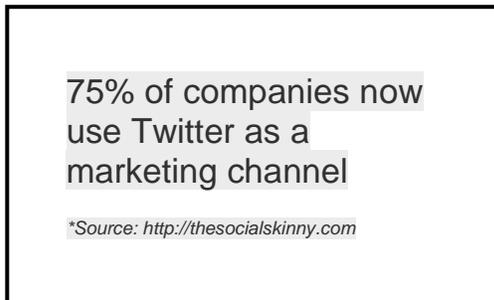
98 of AdAge's Top
100 advertisers have
run campaigns on
YouTube

*Source:
http://www.youtube.com/t/press_statistics

Social media sites have introduced exciting new content opportunities that entertain and inform audiences while creating innovative advertising and promotional opportunities for advertisers. With its “naturally interactive” nature, viewers continue to post opinions and respond to others while advertisers and brands leverage interactivity to create a two-way conversation with viewers.

Across multiple verticals social media is becoming a mainstay of digital signage content. On university campuses social media is

complementing digital signage networks by allowing students, faculty and staff to update content, offer insights and to be valuable editorial contributors to the network. In retail, advertisers and brands have the ability to create special offers and contests promoted via digital signage directed to customers who respond and interact through social media. In turn, customers post to their social networks about their retail experience widening the brand's



overall impact. Social media is also making its way into corporate communication channels creating a variety of opportunities in such areas as human resources, training and sales.

Recently there have been some very exciting examples which clearly demonstrate the shift away from conventional signage content and a move towards social media. The X2O Rogers Cup Experience app developed for the BlackBerry® PlayBook™ allowed select audience members of the Rogers Cup Tennis Tournament in Toronto and Montreal to use a tablet to have a more enhanced viewing experience. Along with a variety of live stats feeds, player profiles and video content, the app featured the ability to send and receive tweets in real time. This created an additional interactive layer that provided users with more editorial information and a greater sense of participation.

Air Canada recently integrated their Yammeffall feed into their internal corporate signage network, displaying their Yammer posts. Social media helped to create a new and engaging way to disseminate news and information and foster a dialogue among employees.

Retailers and corporate clients alike have embraced digital signage as a way to monitor their brands. More and more clients are using screens to keep a close eye on tweets and posts about their brands allowing them to quickly



Students and faculty at West Virginia University view tweets and photos displayed on digital screens throughout the campuses.

respond to issues and to track their customer's reaction to new products and services. In this example, digital signage is efficiently leveraged to allow multiple departments across a diverse enterprise to view the same social media content helping to ensure a consistent response.



VIP guests at the Rogers Cup Tennis Tournament were able to view and send Tweets while watching live matches.

Social media content helps resolve one of the greatest challenges facing network operators: keeping content fresh and relevant. By integrating moderated Tweets, Facebook posts, YouTube videos and other social content around relevant topics, network operators tap into a timely, constantly refreshing content stream that can be presented in a variety of compelling ways. By building on this base and adding the right mix of video content and other live data sources, the network becomes a dynamic, highly impactful communications solution.

More than 300 million
photos are uploaded to
Facebook per day

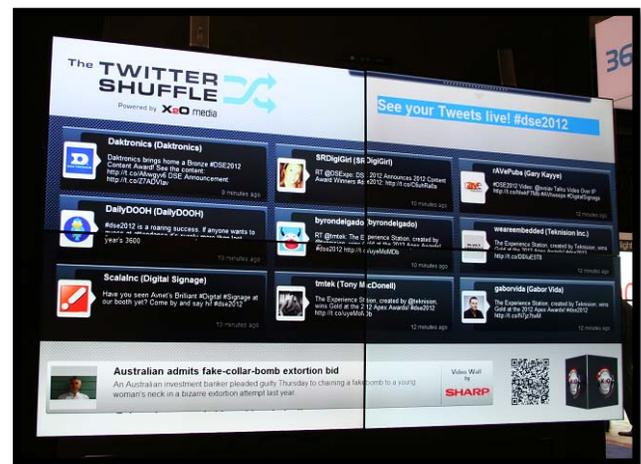
*Source: <http://newsroom.fb.com/content/>

By adding innovative ways for audiences to interact with social media content, network operators create exciting methods for audiences to be engaged. Operators can achieve this in two ways. Firstly, they can promote tweets and posts through activities such as gaming, check-ins, and photo uploads. Secondly they can embrace innovative ways for viewers to physically interact with content through gesture navigation and smart phone apps that give audiences control of the screen. These two strategies, when deployed properly, increase viewer dwell time, provide a more satisfying signage experience and dramatically increase a brand's exposure.

Digital signage is no stranger to evolutionary changes. Over the last few years we have witnessed this particularly around signage content. Early networks featured the same fifteen or thirty second ads that ran on television with little or no modifications. It quickly became apparent that ads that worked well on television didn't necessarily work on

digital signage networks. Network operators began to conduct research and analyze variables such as dwell times and audience demographics and quickly came to the conclusion that content had to work within the same parameters. As a result content became shorter with more impactful presentation and was strategically programmed around day-parting and the client's marketing objectives. Real-time data was introduced into the mix allowing a variety of RSS feeds to be presented on screen. Content became ever more dynamic.

Now we are seeing the next step in this evolutionary process with social media integration. This is just the beginning. Beyond tweets and posts lie the analytics behind the messages. Networks that can dissect the content and visualize the trends and key indicators will provide additional value to both viewers and network operators.



The X2O "Twitter Shuffle" interactive video wall displays live tweets and lets viewers interact via QR code or Kinect camera.

In the future as digital signage continues to evolve and expand on to different screens; desktops, tablets and mobile phones, social media will play an ever important role helping to ensure the network is consistently watchable. Network operators have no choice

but to evolve as well and embrace social media or face possible extinction.

About X2O Media: X2O Media is a full-service provider of software and services for professional digital signage and corporate communication applications. More information about X2O Media is available at www.x2omedia.com. An overview of X2O's innovative social media products and projects can be seen at youtube.com/x2omedia.

About the author: Vern Freedlander is vice president of production services for X2O Media. With more than 20 years of broadcast television experience as a producer, director and executive, Freedlander oversees all of X2O Media's content initiatives. He can be reached at Freedlander@x2omedia.com.