

## Integrating Digital Signage and Social Media

The two technologies join forces to create valuable opportunities in corporate communications, on campuses and in retail locations, but proper integration is key to maximize effectiveness.

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People expect instant access to information and a constant connection with friends and family. Governments, corporations and educational institutions worldwide have embraced social media as an important means to create and maintain relationships with users.

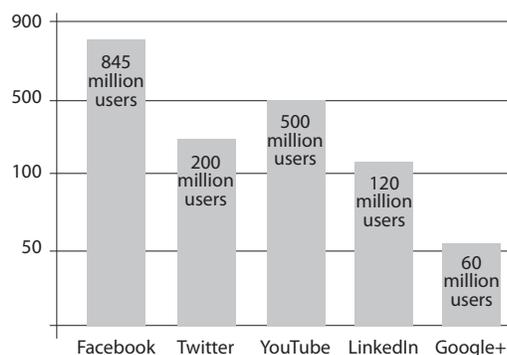
Simultaneously, digital signage has become a part of the visual landscape. Jose Avalos, retail sector general manager for technology firm Intel, said that the digital signage industry has been growing at a 40 percent compounded annual growth rate, and he projects there will be 22 million digital signs worldwide by 2015.

Along with the growth of digital signage comes the explosive growth of social media. According to Facebook, in December 2004, the site had 1 million users. Today, it has 845 million users, and recently filed an IPO offering of \$5 billion.

Twitter shows similar growth. In April 2011, Katie Stanton, Twitter's vice president of international strategy, announced that the platform had 200 million registered accounts, and an estimated 460,000 signups per day.

YouTube has more than 500 million visitors every day, LinkedIn has more than 120 million members and even Google+ has

Popularity of social media



more than 60 million users, according to some experts. It is undeniable that social media has become an integral part of the communications experience.

These staggering numbers will shape and influence digital signage. Digital signage, with its ability to leverage social media feeds and present them in an eye-catching manner while at the same time delivering a sense of immediacy, fosters a natural, symbiotic relationship between social media content and digital signage delivery.

“Combining digital signage and social media provides a real-time interactive experience that encourages the viewer to engage with the signage,” said Vern Freedlander, vice president of production at X2O Media. X2O Media is a full-service

### Benefits of integrating digital signage with social media

- Allows viewers to engage with the signage
- Makes the signage a more personalized experience
- Provides timely, highly-focused and constantly refreshed content
- Keeps content updated without requiring a large time investment by the deployer
- Facilitates advertising and promotional opportunities

provider of software and content services for real-time visual communication applications, including digital signage solutions. “Social media provides a feedback loop that creates dialogue between users and operators. That, in turn, opens up all kinds of new communications opportunities across all verticals. But it’s important to do it right.”

This white paper, sponsored by X2O Media, will discuss how to integrate social media and how it can benefit the conversation in corporations, in retail locations and on campus.

### Integration

There are three keys to successful integration of social media with digital signage: presentation, real-time updates and leveraging analytics.

**Presentation.** Viewers are increasingly sophisticated. Their screens at home show high-quality, well-produced, high-definition content, and they expect the same from digital signage. A screen that does not meet those expectations will be worse than ignored — it will leave a negative impression in the mind of the viewer and

make them reluctant to view the signage again. The brand and the network will lose credibility and the message will be lost.

First and foremost, the screen must be laid out in an attractive manner and be easy to read. Make sure the graphics are presented professionally and the text is large enough to be read easily. Avoid small text or making the screen too busy. It is important to always side with clarity and not overload the screen with so much content that viewers are left feeling confused.

Make it obvious how a viewer can interact with the screen. Have a call to action, such as “tweet us now!” or offer instructions on how to interact. Display hashtags and Facebook URLs prominently, to encourage people to think about using social media.

“Viewers have to comprehend the messaging immediately,” said Freedlander. “That means the presentation has to be clear and well designed. To achieve that, operators must think seriously about using experienced designers who not only have the skills to lay out content properly but who also appreciate the business objectives of the network.”

Incorporating novel ways viewers can navigate through content should be encouraged. Swiping through posts or initiating an animation with a simple hand gesture is a great way to promote viewer interactivity and to draw more users to the signage.

**Real-time updates.** Part of the appeal of social media is its instantaneous ability to share information, news and updates. To fully capitalize on this, the digital sign must be able to display various social media messages in real time. If a viewer tweets something to a designated hashtag, they will wait, at most, 30 seconds to see

if the message appears. Once it does, they might interact with the signage again. But if the message does not appear quickly enough, the viewer will walk away, and the digital signage deployer has lost an important point of engagement.

“A real-time rendering player is essential to achieve the maximum benefit,” said Freedlander. “When it comes to social media, audiences expect posts to be refreshed in real time. Anything less will defeat the purpose.”

**Analytics.** Data is crucial to gauge effective media consumption, and analytics provide a key source of business intelligence. Analyzing and following trends provides network operators and deployers with information that can impact business decisions and content choices, as well as reveal where opportunities lie. Social media offers an unparalleled opportunity to understand who is viewing the signage, when and how.

“What do women who shop at a grocery store on Sunday afternoons instead of Saturday mornings — who also happen to be executives and live in Chicago — think?” said Amy Webb, CEO of the Philadelphia-based social media consultancy firm Webbmedia Group, in an interview on National Public Radio. “(With social media, we) can get really, really targeted now.”

Being able to parse, visualize and communicate the trends revealed by analytics can provide network operators with a deeper sense of how their network is performing. Customizable reporting with real-time data helps an operator know how effective the signage is, what changes need to be made to a playlist and if additional content is needed.

Once properly integrated, social media and digital signage can be used across multiple sectors to achieve incredible communication benefits for both users and operators.

### Corporate communications

Social media and digital signage can be powerful tools in a corporation’s communication arsenal. Typical corporate communication tools, such as an intranet, force users to search out information. Digital signage uses more of a broadcast model, where information is pushed out to employees in an attractive, attention-getting way. Integrating social media with digital signage complements the content and provides a real-time interactive experience.

Say, for example, it is time to renew health insurance, but the benefits package has changed from last year. In the normal course of events, the human resources department might send out an email with an attachment, which employees likely won’t



*Using social media as a part of digital signage increases the speed and quality of conversation between employees, especially in multiple locations.*

read. Or, the new information might be posted to the intranet where the employee has to go to find the information.

With digital signage, however, the HR department can break through communications clutter and post a message about the new benefits, along with a link to the new plan so people can educate themselves. Questions can be asked via social media, and those questions and the corresponding answers can be displayed, benefiting all employees.

Social media also can promote engagement across multiple and diverse locations. Employees can participate in contests, share news or post pictures, all of which can be displayed in offices around the globe. Surveys, questionnaires and employee questions and answers all can be promoted via digital signage. Employees can collaborate more effectively on projects and can receive mentorship from company leadership, thanks to the immediacy and engagement of social media.

Signage content also can be repurposed for other devices, such as smartphones and tablets, allowing all employees to be exposed to the messaging and to participate via social media.

### Campus communications

Digital signage can provide students, faculty and staff members with information about events, news, athletics, emergency information and more. And by integrating social media, students can text and interact with the signage in ways that keep them interested participants, rather than passive viewers.

In recent years, emergency messaging has become a crucial part of the campus communications network. Everything from



*Integrating social media with digital signage keeps students engaged with the school.*

intruders on campus to severe weather alerts needs to be communicated. And by their nature, emergencies require real-time updating. Digital signage offers a way for the administration to communicate with people all over campus in the event of an emergency, while social media allows people to interact with and update content as needed.

Social media has become a natural and essential part of student life. Campuses throughout the United States are responding by incorporating social media into their communication plans, and digital signage has emerged as a vital part of these plans. For example, West Virginia University's digital signage network is seen by nearly 29,000 students and approximately 7,900 faculty and staff members. The network integrates X2O Media's Xpresenter software platform to allow students to use their smartphones and other mobile devices to text and interact with the digital signage in real time.

“The network at WVU demonstrates how mobile devices are a perfect extension of digital signage networks, creating new interactive channels and opening the door

to communication with screens via social media. All of this adds up to an enhanced viewer experience and increased network effectiveness,” said David Wilkins, president and CEO of X2O.

### Retail

One way to create a successful retail experience is to create a one-to-one relationship with the customer. Engagement via digital signage and social media promotes interaction and helps start a personalized conversation with the customer.

“Social media offers an opportunity for conversation,” said Steve Deckert, marketing manager for Sweet Tooth, a Toronto-based provider of loyalty programs to retailers. “It actually can present an opportunity to be extraordinary. Say someone tweets something negative about their experience at your store. If you’re paying attention, you can see that tweet, and approach them to fix the problem before they leave. With that kind of attention to detail, they’re likely to tweet about that, too, leaving the customer (and their friends) with a positive feeling about your service.”

Integrating social media with digital signage can help create a circle of communication, encouraging both customer and retailer to build a stronger relationship. For example, a retailer might display an ad with a QR code on the digital signage within a store. The customer uses her smartphone to use the QR code, which brings her to a coupon, and encourages her to “like” the brand on Facebook for another coupon. She does so, and while she’s there, she “checks in” to the store on Facebook or FourSquare, so all of her friends know where she is, promoting the brand to other potential shoppers.

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Social media facilitates a relationship between users, whether employees at a company, students on campus or shoppers at a store. Digital signage gives social media a large platform to share those messages. But when using the technology, make sure it is engaging, fun and interactive.

***About the sponsor:*** X2O Media is a full-service provider of software for real-time visual communication applications, including digital signage and corporate communication. The company offers content design, management, distribution, monitoring integration and support services for signage and interactive networks of all sizes.