

RETAIL SIGNAGE: PRACTICES TO INCREASE RETURN ON INVESTMENT



Project Methodology

The goal of the Retail Signage: Practice to Increase Return on Investment report is to further explore the connection between high-level design practices outlined in the *Landmark Design Survey and Digital Sign Design Survey* developed by the Signage Foundation, Inc. in 2014 and successful strategies developed by executives, consultants, designers, and fabricators for employing signs to support business success.

Interviews:

An initial survey group was selected across a spectrum of disciplines to develop an overview of sign best practices in two major areas:

Management

Executives in leading retailers and leading consultants were selected after initial discussion with the project team and a review of the business areas where sign decisions were made.

Design Integration

After the initial interviews with executives these participants were surveyed on the specialty areas that were in the purview of sign and identity practices. Architects, designers, retail specialists, display specialists, and digital specialists were selected based on this survey.

These survey subjects also recommended examples that could be used in the summary of the report to illustrate the practices.

The interview subjects were given access to the *Landmark Design Survey and Digital Sign Design Survey* to compare the leading sign practices with standards for design excellence determined by the research. They later used this information to help support making selections of leading case studies.

Identification of Best Practice Case Studies

After the interview sessions determined the range of best practices and a series of statistical approaches for determining corporate success across a variety of retail groups, the selection process for case studies began. The process started by referencing the practices outlined in the interviews with a report published by the Design Management Institute of leading retailers based on a dollars per square foot (The most commonly used approach to determining retail performance). While all these companies exhibited the design attributes for success found in the interviews and in the previous research surveys the goal was to seek examples across a wide spectrum of industries. Selected case studies were based on research of leading companies across a range of commercial building types followed by recommendations from the steering committee based on the overall best practices derived from the interviews.

Report Content Summary

Introduction - ROI and Design Focused Organizations
 Case Studies - Leading Design Focused Organizations
 Management Strategies that Are Central to ROI Case Studies - Leading Small Community Based Organizations
 Collaboration Strategies that are Central to ROI Case Studies - Leading Collaborative Projects including Convenience Stores, Historic Districts and Digital Signs

Restaurants

A review of the fastest growing new restaurant chains in the last decade followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Apparel

A review of the most successful retailers in the last five years using dollars per square foot as a reference followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Banks

A review of a publication on the leading community banks in America using Return on Equity as a reference followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Convenience Stores

A review of the most successful retailers in the last five years using dollars per square foot as a reference followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Strip Shopping Centers

A review of the literature of leading commercial developments using lease rates as a reference followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Downtown Districts

A review of the literature of leading commercial developments using lease rates as a reference followed by recommendations from the survey group.

Digital Signs

Recommendations from the survey group based on successful new commercial developments utilizing digital signs. These signs were too recent to provide statistical background information.

Case Study Analysis

Case studies were analyzed by utilizing the interview results and the results of the previous research survey to determine best practices. Descriptions were based on observation with follow-up questions to the survey group. In some cases executives, designers, and consultants for the case study companies were added to the survey group for follow-up questions and review. Statistical information was also added to paint a picture of how the profiled organizations perform relative to their peers.

Introduction

ROI and Design Focused Organizations

Organizations calculate return on investment (ROI) when making investment decisions. Companies establish their own benchmarks for ROI in order to prioritize which media approaches should receive greater investment based on an anticipated return. Signs are physical elements that serve multiple roles for a business. A sign can reinforce an organization's brand, communicate and inform customers, and support an enriched customer experience. While most organizational investment strategies are proprietary, there are three common approaches that companies utilize to integrate ROI in sign decisions:

Return Based on Sales in Dollars Per Square Foot

Retailers make investment decisions based on how much revenue they can generate in a set footprint of space. Developers also invest in properties based on how much they can charge per square foot of space and the entire building value is also based on how much can be charged. Sign design decisions can be extrapolated on how much it is felt that the sign contributes to the retail layout and location's value. This metric used to be more simply applied, but is now clouded by other technological approaches to finding destinations.

Brand Equity

Brand management has become a significant metric on a company's balance sheet for measuring value, particularly if the company is publicly traded. Signs reinforce the quality of a company's brand and have steadily become a major part of a company's overall marketing strategy. Because of advances made by branding firms, signs are often integrated into architecture which increases their overall aesthetic value.

Return Based on Experience Design Analysis

Experience Design is a relatively new management approach, but plays an integral role in the investment process of a company who wants to establish close relationships with its customers. In experience planning, elements of the customer experience are broken into touch points and measured.

While companies use a combination of the approaches profiled to the left, they all are unique based on their strategy for achieving success. We can analyze how successful companies integrate signs in their value calculations by observing what people consider effective signs and reviewing the companies that employ those signs. In the *Landmark Design Survey and Digital Sign Design Survey* developed by the Signage Foundation Inc. in 2014, a number of attributes were analyzed for their effectiveness.

LEADING ATTRIBUTES INCLUDE

- Legibility
- Enjoyable to View
- Informational
- Quality
- Appropriately Scaled
- Uniqueness

Fortunately many top companies incorporate effective sign design approaches into their development strategies. The Design Management Institute, in its annual report on design-oriented companies, has measured the returns on design-oriented Companies and have found they have increased in value at a much faster rate than other companies. In addition, many top retailers employ effective sign strategies, allowing us to provide a closer look at the effects of those strategies.



LEADING RETAILERS IN TERMS OF ROI BASED ON \$ PER SQUARE FOOT IN SALES (2013)

- Apple Stores®
- Tiffany & Co.®
- lululemon athletica®
- Coach®
- Michael Kors®
- Select Comfort®
- True Religion®
- Vera Bradley®
- Birks & Mayors®
- Fairway Market®

Buffalo Wild Wings

Summary

Buffalo Wild Wings is an owner, operator and franchisor of sports-themed restaurants. Its restaurants focus on creating a community around the sports experience including watching sporting events or other programs on its projection and flat screens, competing in Buzztime Trivia, or playing video games. The open layout of its restaurants offers dining and bar areas that provide seating choices for sports fans and families. The restaurants are spread through all 50 states.

Management Team

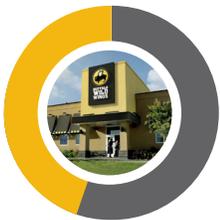
Buffalo Wild Wings boasts a strong internal design team of in-house designers and architects with a holistic approach to building design that touches every aspect of the exterior and interior. Innovation is led by the senior executives who manage the complete visitor experience. The company works with outside consultants and architects like Fitch on guideline development, with a focus on creating a vocabulary that can be integrated into every aspect of the experience.

Slightly more than 40 percent of Wild Wings stores (485 of 1080) are managed internally, providing ample opportunities for experimentation. For franchisees, the organization offers extensive design, permitting and documentation support.

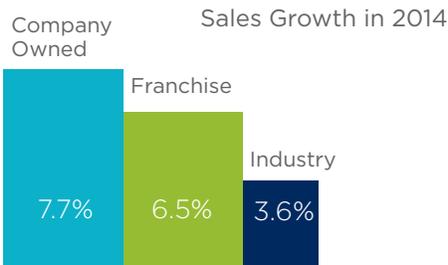
Design Strategy

Buildings are developed to adapt to local conditions based on a seven-year rolling plan for organic expansion. The company has an anti-big box approach focused on extensive repurposing of a wide variety of building types at locations near commercial concentrations of power centers, hospitals, movie theaters and college campuses.

KEY STATISTICS



485 of the 1080 Buffalo Wild Wings stores are owned by the company.



Key Design Success Attributes:

Buffalo Wild Wings utilizes a sign approach that balances consistent branding adapted to unique environments. Based on visitor research by The Signage Foundation, Inc., as a part of Signs and the Downtown Experience, this approach produces the highest score across a range of design metrics including:

Architectural Integration:

Every Buffalo Wild Wings exterior is designed as a complete building envelope. Signs and architectural elements are designed together and adapted to specific urban and suburban site conditions.

Legibility:

A focus on a diversity of brand elements ensures recognition from a distance, even with relatively small individual elements. A balance of symbol, color, type and pattern ensures the messaging is conveyed from long distances.

Enjoyable to View:

The restaurant uses an ensemble of design elements and creates areas around crowd elements like outdoor seating and dramatic landmark entrance towers.

Well Designed:

Buffalo Wild Wings offers a modern and fresh design approach, focused on simple but effective messaging integrated into the entire customer experience. The graphics approach shares similarities with the most recent design innovations in stadium design, seen at the University of Phoenix Stadium (home to the Arizona Cardinals) and MAPFRE Stadium (home to the Columbus S.C. Crew) and others.

Balanced Illumination:

A combination of internal illumination for tightly controlled messages and external illumination for highlighting architectural elements.

H&M

Summary

H&M is one of the largest retailers in the world with a focus on quality discount clothing and accessories. Its key goal is to focus on quality, value and sustainability. To meet these goals, the company has an in-house product design team to stay current and bring efficiency from every level of the process. H&M also has a strong partnership model employing a global supply chain of manufacturers. The company has been on an aggressive expansion strategy, with 400 stores opening worldwide in 2015, mainly in the U.S. and China. Most stores are owned by the company.

Based in Sweden, H&M has more than 3,500 stores in 57 countries.

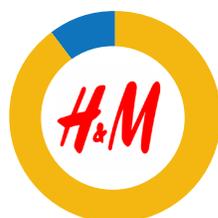
Management Team

Following its partnership approach from the product side to the building sign design and management team the company employs close loyal partnerships that allow it to expand quickly and efficiently into new markets. The central management team focuses extensively on keeping costs down while encouraging creativity, which results in extensive experimentation in new materials and lighting technologies.

Strategy

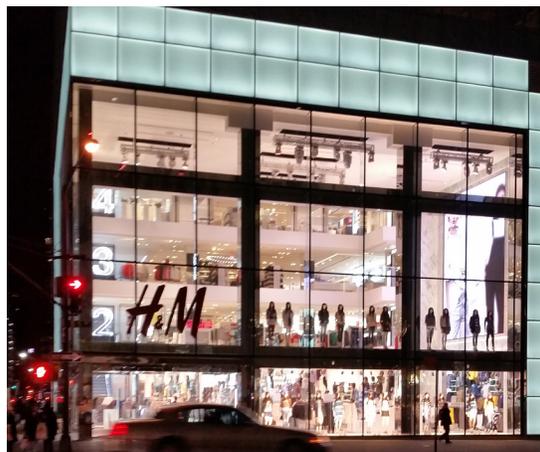
In its global strategy H&M has focused on key urban locations with a focus on architectural and interior novelty and sustainable material approaches. Most stores are leased instead of owned to provide speed and flexibility when expanding into new markets. The stores follow a transparent and lean architectural model to keep a tight focus on marketing new product rollouts, which are frequent concentrations of power centers, hospitals, movie theaters and college campuses.

KEY STATISTICS



400 New Stores planned for 2015.
An 11% increase

Revenues in dollars per square foot (2014)



Key Design Success Attributes:

H&M has a highly successful formula, focused heavily on anchoring its iconic brand name, integration of high-quality architectural elements and dynamic changing display.

Legibility

The H&M brand name is the only major element in the store that utilizes the icon color and dimensionality, which allows it to contrast starkly with the unique interior and exterior environments. The signs are always among the highest-quality elements and are often used to both anchor building exteriors and serve as central interior icons.

Architectural Integration

While graphics and signs follow a consistent approach, the buildings and interiors are unique with specialty fixtures and high quality materials. Most H&M buildings are highly transparent to allow for the sign/graphic/display vocabulary to be seen from multiple exterior and interior vantage points.

Enjoyable to View

The key to H&M's marketing strategy is the frequent changing of products to reflect new fashion trends. Sign graphics and displays support this dramatic change and provide an exciting customer experience by being refreshed often. Only a small palette of signs stay consistent in the store including neon signs that accent and support specific services.

Varied Illumination

H&M stores utilize a variety of different lighting approaches that liven the building façade including channel letters, back lighting, spot lighting and faux neon.

Management Strategies that are Central to ROI

In interviews with leading executives, architects, designers, consultants and retail industry specialists, we are able to observe the management approaches that companies, developers and even cities employ to achieve greater returns on their investment in design, planning and fabrication. In this report these strategies will be divided into management and collaborative methods.

Management

For signs to be part of a company's value proposition they need to be well integrated into an organization's management practices including at the executive level.

Leading Management Practices for Increasing ROI

- Making Sign Excellence a Strategy to Reward
- Integrating Signs into ROI Metrics
- Community Engagement
- Experience Designers Making Signs Central to an Integrated Brand Strategy

Making Sign Excellence a Strategy to Reward

Many companies with effective sign strategies also have tight controls over design development. Many of the leading companies have strong internal staffs that manage and control store development including signs. James Damian of Buffalo Wild Wings® believes that rewarding strong sign and building design through staff accountability, rewards based on brand excellence, and executive recognition leads to stronger sign and building development practices. Many design-oriented companies also collect extensive data on store performance and conduct surveys on customer satisfaction that are included in the compensation process. This has driven many companies to take control of top stores, with tight franchise controls over the store development and approval process.

If you want design excellence you need to reward it.

James Damia, CEO, Buffalo Wild Wings®

Integrating Signs into ROI Metrics

Most major retail companies have developed elaborate metrics to determine ROI when investing in retail developments. These ROI calculations are based on the same metrics used for successful retail development, dollars per square foot. Successful companies usually rate elements such as identity signs and wayfinding signs very high when making ROI calculations.

Linda Lombardi, Head of Global Store Design for Godiva®, explains that ROI metrics govern every aspect of store investment. Better locations receive more money for signs and design improvements and lower revenue locations receive less investment. This is often seen as a self-fulfilling prophecy as the rich stores get richer and the poor are starved of investment. Well-managed companies increase store revenues by making calculated improvements based on increasing ROI in underperforming space.

If you want to see innovation in signs and brand design, observe how companies expend their resources in less conventional locations. This strategy if improvement is a clue that the company is serious about location as a key revenue generator.

Linda Lombardi, Head Of Global Store Design, Godiva®



Many of the companies that utilize sign best practices often have tight controls over the design program of their facilities, with many operating internally or through strict franchise agreements. Crate & Barrel is considered a leader in this area with extensive design management control, allowing for design programs that both flexibly meet criteria in a variety of locations and also fulfill specific standards for identity.



Starbucks® is perhaps the most famous company to upgrade its corporate brand through a deliberate sign and identity strategy. In 2008, its store identity was considered by many customers to be similar to fast food restaurants. After overhauling the graphic and sign identity as part of a unique store strategy, the brand took off again.

Community Engagement

Successful companies have developed strong community outreach strategies for new stores, but less known is the impact on sign design strategy. Christina Galgan, Design Services Manager at Walgreens®, found companies following a strategy focused on extensive community engagement with local stakeholders develop unique design concepts for store signs, which in turn increases customer loyalty. This approach includes having extensive, clearly designed community engagement methodologies as well as a proactive approach to sign design. This requires design standards that are highly flexible and can be adapted to circumstances on the ground. This approach is the mark of communities that have pursued successful design strategies in sign codes by offering stores an approach to the sign development process that reinforces creativity and unique solutions.

Once a company commits to a sophisticated community participation process design approaches grow much deeper and unique since a structured participation will impact exterior, interior and even merchandising standards.

Christina Galgan, Design Services Manager, Walgreens

The mistake most designers and customers make is looking at sign or building ROI in isolation of the entire customer experience. When seen as a key touchpoint or as a complement to other experiences that support brand, the qualities that make effective signs become more apparent and its value goes up.

Leonard Barzsap, Senior Associate, Lippincott

Experience Designers Making Signs Central to an Integrated Brand Strategy

All of the examples profiled had one major characteristic in common. They all involved experience design teams. Leonard Barzsap, Senior Associate at Lippincott, defines these firms as organizations that can conduct consumer research, map complete customer experiences, and visualize and implement solutions from management improvements to complete design overhaul. The rise of experience design firms like Prophet and Lippincott, along with architectural firms that also develop experience research like Gensler, FRCH and Little have enabled retailers to integrate signs into a larger branding approach that includes advertising, architecture and digital initiatives. These firms are also able to develop metrics to measure the specific ROI effectiveness of different aspects of the customer experience. Making signs part of a holistic brand reinforces their importance, both as conveyers of quality and as a complement to a complete branding strategy. Experience strategy is not just utilized by outside firms. Companies have internalized these practices as well with management teams organizing designers and consultants in-



Dairy Queen was a large company that completely re-invented its brand through an experience design process working with Lippincott. Gourmet Burger Kitchen is a much smaller company that also developed a complete experience approach working with Prophet. Both companies made identity signs a key part of the overall strategy.

Valley Green Bank, Kens Market/Markettime Foods

Summary

Small neighborhood businesses today frequently have undertaken major rebranding and redesign approaches including signs in their best practices. With architects, marketing professionals and designers having access to many of the same best practices used by larger organizations, these businesses have been able to achieve many of the same dramatic successes by employing sign excellence in their strategies.

Valley Green Bank

Valley Green Bank opened in 2006 and expanded to three banks in the city of Philadelphia. The bank has a clear strategy of utilizing new bank branches as part of its efforts to rejuvenate urban neighborhoods. The small bank developed a strong brand early, hiring professional branding company Spark5 Design & Marketing to develop its graphic palette, website and all print collateral. Metcalfe Architecture and Design utilized the graphic palette when designing new banks inside of renovated existing buildings, with each of the three community banks reflecting the unique neighborhood character. The bank was purchased by a larger community bank in early 2015, which will utilize many of the design practices developed by Valley Green Bank.

Ken's Market/Markettime Foods

Owned by one family, these two independent supermarkets are located in Seattle neighborhoods. The family grew the store organically over the years, with Markettime Foods being renovated by I-5 Design & Manufacture in 2008 and by LDG Architects in 2015 and Ken's Market was renovated in 2010. Both stores have unique architectural and graphic approaches focused on complementing their communities.

KEY STATISTICS



Return on Equity (2014)
Valley Green was 8th
in ROE of 4,000 U.S.
Community Banks



Revenues in dollars
per square foot



Valley Green Bank branch in South Philadelphia



Markettime Foods

Key Design Success Attributes:

While reflecting different industries, both organizations are focused on creating environments that complement their local communities.

Unique

Both organizations have focused on ensuring each location has characteristics unique to the neighborhood in which it is located. Markettime Foods and Ken's Market each use distinct landmark signs that match the character and scale of the neighborhoods. Valley Green Bank utilizes a common graphic palette, but applies it to three distinct sign approaches.

Architectural Integration

Both organizations take architectural integration of signs and building very seriously by designing signs into awnings, facades and fascia. Valley Green Bank utilizes color and pattern extensively in its bank designs along with opening up the storefronts with larger windows. Ken's Market/Markettime Foods utilizes awnings and overhangs as sign supports and to tie its buildings together.

Graphic Integration

Both organizations incorporate extensive graphic integration into their store design. Valley Green Bank applies iconography as a graphic pattern in both large format graphics and marketing materials. Markettime Foods integrates large format graphics into awnings and window displays.

Shops around Lenox Classen Curve and Nichols Hill Plaza

Summary

Shops around Lennox and Classen Curve are strip shopping centers that are part of much larger shopping complexes that follow dramatically different architectural and sign design strategies. What they share is a desire to utilize sign innovation to elevate traditional car-oriented strip shopping centers into leading retail destinations.

Shops Around Lenox Design Approach

The shopping center was developed as part of a \$35 million renovation strategy in 2011 by Healey Weatherholtz Properties. Adjacent to the Lenox Mall in Atlanta, the center was renovated by design firms ASD and Cooper Carry to raise the profile of the aging shopping center which had a 40% vacancy rate. The center is anchored by one key tenant, but all the stores have distinct modern storefronts and signs that share few consistencies beyond modern design and quality materials. The one area with the most consistency is the pylon sign where the different brands utilize a similar background color.

Classen Curve and Nichols Hill Design Approach

Developed in Oklahoma City in 2010, the shops utilize a distinctly modern approach with large areas of glass and display surfaces. Mall tenants must utilize a well-organized sign and display strategy to be successful within the tightly consistent architectural approach. Instead of a pylon sign that communicates all the destinations in the complex, one distinct gateway is utilized. WP Glimcher purchased the retail complex in 2014 and sells the location as a singular destination.



Shops around Lenox



Classen Curve

KEY STATISTICS



Key Design Success Attributes:

Both developments are fundamentally different in terms of design, planning and location, but they share some of the fundamental best practices for achieving high value utilizing signs and identity.

Legibility

Both complexes use dramatically different approaches towards identifying stores that are equally acceptable. Classen Curve uses only one iconic landmark gateway sign with no support stores listed. The stores themselves have iconic dimensional signs that pop off the high contrast facades. Shops Around Lenox takes the opposite approach. The pylon signs features all the stores but in a consistent graphic approach while each individual store receives its distinct architectural approach.

Quality Materials

Both developments treat signs as high-quality elements that use strong materials, both for the foreground icons and the sign backgrounds.

Architectural Integration

While both developments are fundamentally different, they utilize clear standards for integration of architecture and sign. Shops Around Lenox conceives the sign and façade as one design while Classen Curve has tight standards for integration of sign and façade including illumination, size and placement.

Integration of Display

Both developments take display very seriously as landmark elements that complement signs. Shops Around Lenox utilizes distinct large windows across all stores, even while each storefront has its own individual architectural façade. Classen Curve has consistent glass facades along with specific landmark window elements that allow showcase displays to stand in stark relief.

Collaboration

Increased collaboration between designers and contractors responsible for each area of the retail development process has helped place signs as a value generator. These groups—including architects, visual merchandisers, marketers and fabricators—are increasingly seeing the value of their work as interrelated.

Leading Collaborative Approaches

- Architectural Integration
- Integration and Management of Sign, Print and Display
- Cooperation between Retailer and Fabricator
- Careful Management of Digital Media Content

Architectural Integration

Advances in the integration of architecture, landscape and signs has led developers and retailers to value signs in development projects. Jan Lorenc, Director of Design of Lorenc+Yoo Design believes that this confluence of developers recognizing the premium prices given to mixed-use developments (\$100 or more per square foot) and the rise of architecture firms with the ability to integrate signs, graphics and architecture at a higher level has made signs central to the development equation. In addition, the shift of retail from internally focused malls to exterior complexes has put signs at a premium in new renovations. Alan Metcalfe, Principle of Metcalfe Architect & Design, reinforced the idea that retailer's understanding the value of signs as central to building investment has shaped the structure of architecture firms.



ASD | Sky specializes in upgrading retail strip malls, enclosed malls and town centers with integrated architectural facades, streetscape elements, and signs. The close collaboration between sign designer and architects has been one of the major reasons that signs and graphics are seen as fundamental to the improvements in shopping centers.

Integration and Management of Sign, Print and Display

Another new and important strategy that has led to more effective signs is expanding the idea of a sign to go beyond just one on-premise sign to a complete strategy. Anne Kong, Professor of Visual Presentation and Exhibition Design, Fashion Institute of Technology, describes this practice as reshaping sign, architecture and display. Retail buildings are becoming much more transparent, making window and fixture display part of the overall brand identity development process. This also has made sign quality important to the visual merchandising and display teams that control how store design is managed over time.

Signs today have become part of the larger display environment which has improved their value significantly. Sign integrated into larger displays use higher quality materials and have a much more extensive use of creative lighting including neon, marquees, and dynamic LED.

Anne Kong, Associate Professor, Fashion Institute of Technology



Urban Outfitters® has developed a comprehensive design management team that considers architecture, signs and window display on projects. When a sign is treated as part of a display, its value becomes more multi-dimensional. The company has had an impressive rate of return attributed to its overarching design performance.

Developers now have clearer ROI metrics on store improvements which has put the integration of architecture and signs as a significant strategy for mall and shopping center renovations.

Jan Lorenc, Director of Design, Lorenc + Yoo Design

Cooperation between Retailer and Fabricator

Retailing is extremely cost sensitive and many retailers and developers have been known to skimp on material and illumination quality beyond a surface approach. Leading companies are also cost sensitive but have a more nuanced approach to balancing quality and value by having close relationships with fabricators, who are asked increasingly to take a larger role in the development process. Paul Dudley, President of id Signsystems, believes that advances in the fabrication and project management industry have raised the value of signs as part of the store development process. This includes taking a leadership role in prototype development, value engineering, rollout management, and project management.



Transparent building have meant interior signs must do double duty as key identity elements, raising both their profile and the need of fabricators to coordinate them closely with the store team.

Successful retailers usually look beyond the race to the bottom approach for sign pricing and implementation to take a more balanced approach between quality and pricing. This produces incredible pressure on fabricators to create value based quality solutions but also has fueled innovation in the industry.

Paul Dudley, President, id Signsystems

Careful Management of Digital Media Content

Gauging the effectiveness of digital media as a complement or replacement to static signage is still a complex evaluation. The biggest dilemma according to Ben Barr, Sales Manager at Warchfire Signs has been investing in both quality signs and ongoing content. Successful retailers make dynamic digital signs central to their marketing and information strategy, with long-term content strategies and an eye-to- design quality equal to physical signs.



Very few companies have closely integrated digital content into their signs, but a few companies like Cumberland Farms have been exceptions, experimenting in digital signs as a key component of its marketing strategy.

The quality of digital signs and their content is so visible in the environment it is dangerous to skimp on this investment.

Ben Barr, Sales Manager, Watchfire Signs

Wawa Convenience Stores, Sheetz Convenience Stores

Summary

Over the last 40 years two convenience store companies in the Mid-Atlantic and Northeast have grown to dominate their local areas while setting a standard for the convenience store industry. While relatively small in the number of stores compared to franchise chains like 7-Eleven, Wawa and Sheetz stores are known for high performance, often having five or more times the revenue of rivals. Both companies also focus heavily on combining gas stations with convenience stores for newer stores to raise their visibility and allow for stores to grow. Both stores are expanding beyond their current base slowly while maintaining ownership.

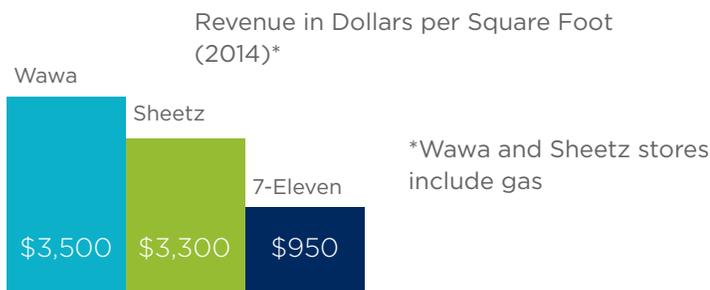
Management Approach

Wawa and Sheetz are privately owned, and own all their stores. This allows for both strong internal design control as well as tight performance metrics for each company. The management approach has resulted in tight expansion strategies; stores maintain very similar customer experiences when growing into new communities. Store layouts and promotions also stay very consistent along with the growth strategy.

Strategic Design Approach

Both organizations have dramatically different and distinct store design while sharing a number of consistencies when it comes to following design best practices. Both organizations have been focused on combining gas and building architecture in most of their locations, with large distinct canopies for gas and architecturally distinct buildings. Sheetz utilizes a more graphically oriented approach, using red as a key identifier for the larger monument structure and building. Wawa utilizes a strong icon along with a powerful architectural structure and gas canopy and less obtrusive monument lighting.

KEY STATISTICS



Wawa



Sheetz

Key Design Success Attributes:

While both stores have distinctly different design approaches, they share similar design attributes which have reinforced their success.

Legibility

Both stores utilize key brand elements that extend beyond signs to reinforce their identity. This allows the stores to be identifiable from long distances. For Sheetz, it is the use of color while Wawa combines a large logo identifier and consistent architecture. Both stores minimize additional sign clutter by having clear guidelines for the use of temporary promotional signs.

Architectural Integration

Both organizations integrate sign design into their architecture in distinctly different ways that are both highly effective. Sheetz uses color on large surface areas and particularly awnings and metal pylons structures. Wawa uses a simple half arch and pitch roof that is reconfigured for a variety of urban and suburban conditions, and is also reflected in monument and wayfinding signs.

Consistency

Both organizations have focused on simple consistent messaging and tight controls of messaging on all of their stores. Tight management control of stores keeps the organization from having too many distinct signs in terms of material, color or logo.

Illumination

Both organizations use illumination in distinctly different ways to highlight their identity. Sheetz focuses on the illumination of their awnings and sign canopies. Wawa focuses on internal and external lighting of their key iconic elements.

Larimer Square, Beale Street Historic District

Summary

Historic Districts must balance a careful respect for historic architectural precedence with the need to create a modern, business-oriented district. Historic Districts also require a clear management approach that integrates city guidelines with encouragement of best design practices for revitalizing the community. These two communities share the exciting private and public best practices for the development of signs in historic districts.

Larimer Square

A historic block in Denver that was saved from destruction through the creation of the Larimer Square Associates in 1963 to manage the properties on the block. The block became a historic district in 1971 and was bought by a development company, Larimer Associates, in 1993. The company has encouraged the local stores and restaurants to take modern and creative approaches to the design of their stores. This is matched by progressive historic district sign guidelines from the city which includes best practices. The development company utilizes lighting and street infrastructure to tie the eclectic storefronts together.

Beale Street Historic District

The main commercial street for Downtown Memphis had been in extreme disrepair with nearly every commercial storefront vacant. Historic landmark status was granted in 1966, but little change occurred until the creation of the Beale Street Development Corporation in the 1970s. The city later developed sign regulations that address the unique scale and characteristics of different districts in downtown



Larimer Square



Beale Street Historic District

Key Design Success Attributes:

Both historic districts represent the blend of aggressive private investment and progressive city codes and infrastructural support. This has resulted in sign excellence in the following areas:

Experience

Both districts looked beyond just the historic architecture of the district to envision how signs could support a vibrant street life and to incorporate these ideas into guidelines and best practices. For Larimer Square, this includes creating a lighting structure that spans and links the street, street-spanning banners and signs that reinforce the major corners. For Beale Street Historic District, this includes major investments in signs for institutions including theaters and public offices which support private sign investment.

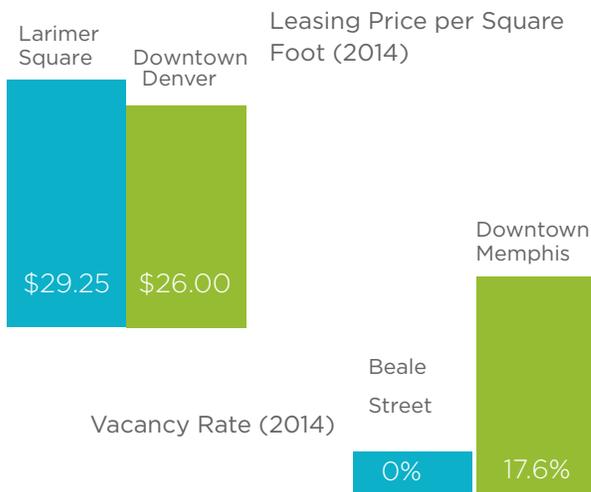
Illumination

Both districts make illumination central to sign strategy. For Larimer Square, this includes a more restrictive approach, minimizing individual sign lighting and maximizing streetscape lighting and interior window lighting display. Beale Street allows for eclectic and dynamic lighting approaches using neon and LED light displays as well as projected lighting.

Graphic Display Integration

Both districts encourage the use of multiple graphic approaches in addition to signs, including awnings, window graphics, wall murals and object displays. These practices are also part of the city guidelines for the historic districts. In Larimer Square, having more than 100 businesses in a small area requires diverse graphic approaches for locations where large-scale traditional projecting signs are not possible. For Beale Street Historic District, painted building signs and murals with projected lighting adds diversity and minimizes clutter from the large-scale projected illuminated signs.

KEY STATISTICS



Taphouse 23, Lit Brothers

Summary

Digital signage is a new area where effective practices are still being explored by leading companies. While there is not yet easy to establish return improvements for companies employing successful digital signage, we can still identify and analyze organizations that are utilizing the new medium effectively.



Lit Brothers Design Strategy

In 2015, Brickstone Realty installed a large digital billboard sign along the roofline of its Lit Brothers retail/office building in Center City Philadelphia. The sign was proposed based on guidelines established by the Market Street East Advertising District which encourages more vibrant signs in the area. In addition to making public investments in return for the large sign, the company had to show the sign was not a safety hazard through a traffic study. The developers also had to show that the sign would not detract from the historic nature of the building, using a design approach in keeping with signs placed on the building in the past. The sign itself was developed using see through GKD media mesh which complements the architecture of the historic building. The company hired a digital media advertising company to ensure that the digital content on the signs will be interesting and reflects the potential of the technology.

Key Design Success Attributes

Architectural Integration

The developers worked with local community officials to make sure the sign was in keeping with the historic nature of the building while updating to a modern commercial environment. The use of a partially transparent digital technology allows the sign to have a more subtle presence on the building, and maintains a strong appearance even when the sign is turned off.

Legibility and Quality

Prototype testing produced a sign that would appear highly legible from a distance and from multiple view corridors and angles.

Content Management

Working with a specialized media advertising firm helps in developing content that takes advantage of the unique features of the sign. In addition, the firm develops scripted content when their advertising is not active on the sign.

Taphouse 23 Design Strategy

Creating and managing digital signs are among the most challenging developments for a small business. Gary Johnson, the developer behind Taphouse 23 in Bridgeport, Pennsylvania, focused on making digital signs the cornerstone of the development of the restaurant. The company went through a prototype process with Watchfire Signs to select a digital display, eventually choosing a 10mm solution that has high resolution for both drivers and pedestrians. The developer worked closely with Braun Signs to integrate the digital sign both into a landmark sign pylon and into the architecture of the building and outdoor patio. The developer then worked with the manufacturer and marketing company to develop templates for the digital display that could be applied to concerts and special events.

Key Design Success Attributes

Architectural and Landscape Integration

The digital display is integrated not just into the larger sign, but also into the outdoor seating area of the restaurant. This approach of considering both pedestrian and vehicular users makes the sign a central part of the visitor experience.

Legibility and Quality

Taphouse 23 made a significant investment in a state of the art display to ensure that pedestrians and people sitting in the outdoor areas of the restaurant would be able to read the display at the same level of comfort as a driver viewing from a distance. Creating templates in advance provides a high quality and clear image.

Content Management

A formal content display approach utilizing sophisticated templates that take advantage of the high resolution screen keeps the display exciting. Frequent content changes and an event-driven approach ensures that the digital sign keeps a central role in the success of the bar.



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