

GENERAL INFORMATION ON SIGNAGE

INFORMATION SHEET

Signs & Success – why they are linked

“Research shows 40% of turnover is attributed to the right image.”

Have you considered the impact that your sign has on your business?

Signs are one of the most efficient and effective means of communication. They do not merely direct your customers they also present the image, brand and purpose of your business. Signs are such a powerful communication medium that it is impossible to quantify the benefit they bring to your business. There is no doubt, however, that well thought out and designed signage is a product differentiator that will give you a marketing edge over your competitors. Additionally, signs can create a mood, feeling and atmosphere – particularly important in the Retail sector.

A sign is the most direct form of visual communication available. In fact, so many people use signs without a second thought that it is easy to overlook their importance.

What Signs Can Do For Your Business

Signs perform three major communication functions for your business: they give information and direction, provide a format for street advertising, and build your profile and image.

Signs Give Information about and Direct People to your Business Location.

Signs can correct an unfavourable location by substituting effective communication for undesirable site characteristics. If your business is located on a site that is not visible or in a building that visually does not correspond with the goods or services offered, your sign could overcome this disability. In addition, when your site is located off a busy traffic artery or in an area that is not easily accessible, your sign can communicate to people who are passing several streets away.

Signs are the most cost effective method of Advertising

Your sign provides an easily recognizable display format for the goods or services you are selling. For most businesses the street is where potential customers are. The message conveyed on the street reaches the people who may wish to purchase.

Street advertising also helps people develop a memory of your business name and the products and services you sell. People tend to buy from businesses they know. Signs can build an image for your business and help you identify with the market segment you are trying to reach.

Through materials and design, a sign can appeal to a given group of potential customers. For example, some firms attempt to capture the youth market, others senior citizens, others unmarried single people and so forth. If you have a particular market segment that you wish to attract to your business, your sign can be an important means of bringing these people in.

The Advantages of Signs

On-premise signs are your most effective and efficient means of commercial communication because they are inexpensive, available, practical, easy to use, always on the job, and directly oriented to the trade area of your business.

Signs are Effective

Your sign is an integral part of your advertising program along with the other forms of commercial communication such as television, radio, newspapers, magazines and billboards. There are four basic criteria used to judge the effectiveness of these advertising media:

1. Coverage of the trade area
2. Repetition of a message
3. Readership of a message
4. Cost per thousand exposures of a message.

Two other criteria important for the small business owner are:

1. Availability
2. Ease of use

Let's see how signs measure to the above criteria:

Signs are oriented to your trade area. Signs do not waste your resources by requiring you to pay for wasted advertising coverage. The people who see your sign are the people who live in your trade area. Signs are always 'on the job' repeating your message to potential customers. Your on-premise sign communicates to potential customers twenty-four hours a day, seven days a week every week.

Human nature ensures that nearly everyone reads signs. Studies have shown that people do read and remember what is on signs. When special items are displayed, sales increase for these particular items within the store.

Signs are inexpensive

When compared to the cost of advertising in some other media, the on-premise sign is very inexpensive.

Signs are easy to use

No special skills or resources are needed to operate a sign once it has been installed. If it is an illuminated sign, all you need to do is flip the switches and that may not be necessary with timing equipment. Once the initial expenditures are made, no special resources or professional services are needed. You need only operate and maintain your sign.

Checklist for Ordering a Business Sign

Before you select a sign for your business there are several things you need to consider. A competent sign company in your area can help you with the answers to some of these questions if you are unsure how to obtain them.

Who are your customers? Potential customers for your business are people who reside in your trade area. Most of your customers come from the immediate area within a half mile to a mile of your business location. Trade areas come in assorted shapes and sizes depending upon the business. Trade areas may also vary seasonally.

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How do you get information on potential customers?

Plot a dot map of your customers as soon as you begin business. This is easily done by plotting the addresses of people who stop in your store (and particularly of those who purchase) as a dot on a street map of your area. Within a short time you will have a fairly clear idea of the trade area from which you are drawing your customers. You will then be able to decide what type of sign would best meet the needs of the people in that trade area.

How are you going to communicate with the customers?

In order to communicate effectively, a sign must be noticeable and readable. After a period of time a sign can become stale. By periodically changing some small design element or by using changeable copy, a sign can continue to attract interest. Time and temperature devices or rotating and moving parts can be used to maintain interest in a commercial message. Time and temperature units also provide a needed public service.

A sign must be readable. A sign needs to be large enough to read. You need to know how far a person is from your store when he first sees your sign and the real speed of traffic on your street. With this information, a competent sign company can use a formula to calculate the necessary size for your design and build you an effective sign.

What are you trying to say?

Decide on a message that is clear and simple. Focus on key words. Choose one or two words that describe your business. Clever or strange names may only attract certain customers and have the effect of limiting your market. Be brief. The cleaner and clearer the message, the more impact it has.

What image are you trying to portray?

Design of your sign is very important. Your sign tells people a lot about your business. Stark simple design and materials may suggest discount prices and no frills. Elegant and expensive sign materials may suggest luxury goods and services. Two basic design considerations are important when ordering a sign.

Physical elements of sign design. These include considerations such as size, placement, materials and structure. The biggest sign that you can afford may not necessarily be the best one for your needs. A sign should blend with its surroundings. A sign that is either too big or too small will not communicate your message effectively. The materials used for your sign determine its appearance and performance. For example, differences in cost, appearance, colour, durability, flexibility and reaction to extreme weather conditions can be found in the many types of plastics available. The structure of a sign also contributes to its effectiveness. Pole covers and cantilevered construction help portray an attractive message.

Graphic elements of sign design. Graphic elements of design include layout of the message, colours, lettering, shape, symbolism, harmony, and daytime versus nighttime lighting conditions. Legibility is a test of good design. If your sign is well designed, it will be easy to read. Legibility means that the letters or characters on the sign are distinct from one another. Some colour combinations of background and letters give excellent legibility while others are very poor. To test your sign's legibility, drive past your business and see if you can read it from a distance.

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Look at it both day and night. Some signs are difficult to read because of illumination problems such as glare from street lights, signs on nearby business establishments, or shadows caused by buildings. A well-designed sign blends with the environment, has a message impact and overcomes viewing problems.

How much should your sign cost?

You should consider several factors when determining the cost of your on-premise sign. A sign is an investment. Your sign is one of the most permanent parts of your business and is exposed to weather and constant use. The average life of signs varies from five to eleven years, depending on type of materials used, construction and other factors. Find out how many years of service to expect from your sign.

Maintenance costs. *No business can afford to have its sign fall into disrepair.* A dilapidated sign tells the public that you are not concerned with your business image or their visual environment. Some types of signs are virtually maintenance free while others require more attention. Always replace burnt out bulbs or tubes.

Energy consumption. New technological developments now enable some types of signs to achieve energy savings without sacrificing effects. Enquire about new energy saving bulbs and internal materials.

Owning or leasing options are available which may be attractive to newly established businesses.

Custom or standardized. Some large companies offer standardized types of signs that are cheaper than signs that are custom designed and constructed. Many of these standardized units can utilize ingenious design techniques to bring forth creativity and individuality. Often the standardized units can be arranged in different configurations depending on your needs. Some standardized sign units use the highest quality materials and are designed to be relatively maintenance free. Mass production will enable these units to be sold more cheaply than a bespoke sign.

A business without a sign is a sign of no business!

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Exit

Austin Luce
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The advertisement features a green background with a white silhouette of a person running, a large white arrow pointing right, and the word "Exit" in a stylized font. The Austin Luce logo, a stylized 'L' inside a circle, is positioned in the bottom right corner.