

## **“All-in-One” Dynamic Digital Signage offers new supply opportunities.**

“Simple” dynamic signage can fulfill communications needs.

*By Lyle Bunn  
Feb. 2008*

Every good sign announces, informs, brands and sells, preferably all at the same time! This simultaneous capability is a primary driver for dynamic digital display networks and robust networks have been finding their way into almost every area where people shop, work or wait. A key development has been the emergence of “all-in-one” digital signage.

“All-in-one” displays are full-function units that are easy to install and use. They are typically “plug and play” out of the box in several configurations that include media loading from a flash media card or USB memory stick or a connectivity option. Content can typically be playing within minutes of providing power to the device.

Steve Harris, VP of Digital Display & Communications, which recently launched a new line of media player systems, [thesimplepicture.com](http://thesimplepicture.com) says “The emergence of “all-in-one” digital displays presents sign providers, digital printers and communications providers with an immediate opportunity to get involved with one of the fastest growing industries in the economy.”

There are many applications for the simple approach where the content doesn’t need to be refreshed often or no internet is readily available, such as:

- menu boards,
- tourist or visitor attractions
- Lobby and staff displays
- The store-front of a shop, real estate or professional office
- A product shelf or other customer-facing location.
- Schools can use “simple” signage to display reminders, safety messages or images of school teams and activities.
- Community centers, sports or arts facilities can use all-in-one signage to promote future events, news and information.

“Simple” signage is an attractive alternative to the use of TV in a waiting area because it does not typically use audio, can be used to promote on-site services and present community information and does not display the bad news, sitcoms or comedy that is typically displayed on TVs in waiting areas.

While networks of multiple LCD displays have been growing, the technology for all-in-one, “simple” signage has made significant advances and may outpace the 24% compound annual growth rate of network displays.

“All-in-one” dynamic signage includes a playlist management capability to manage the content that is presented on a display of 7 to 40 inches in size. Playlist configuration or a push-button control can allow for “day-parting” in which different content is played at different parts of the day. Some all-in-one signage uses a USB drive or flash memory card for content loading, which others integrate connectivity by internet or cellular.

Small display sizes of 7 to 11” are easily used on a retail shelf or embedded into a display. 11 to 21 inch displays are well suited to reception, service or cash-out counters, which larger all-in-one displays are an excellent option for menu boards, at ordering counters or for staff or visitor communications. Such displays allow lobby display, menu boards, schedules, reminders and notices, special offers or product or service information to be presented in a compelling way in order to achieve economies and better communications results.

Steve Harris adds “The most important aspect of the evolution of the “digital signage appliance” is that it makes digital signage accessible to a huge, currently underserved market – the non-networked digital signage user”. He added “ To this point, the digital signage industry has been fuelled by software, hardware & display companies looking to sell their wares into BIG opportunities involving hundreds of locations. Mom & Pop restaurant, retailer, real estate, dentist, insurance office, travel agents and corporation have largely been overlooked. When sign companies have looked for solutions, they found a confusing landscape of complicated, expensive PC based systems that were overkill for their needs. To this point the digital signage industry has been swinging for the fences. The Simple Picture strategy is all about hitting singles”.

Research reported by Scala in summer 2008 offers some insights into the all-in-one market potential and directions. In 600 interviews with end user organizations resulted in the following statistics;

- 32% of organizations interviewed expected to add between 1 and 24 displays in the future.
- 43% of displays added in future would not have any 3<sup>rd</sup> party paid advertising.
- 26% of future digital signage displays would be entirely or mostly employee-facing, 30% mostly customer-facing and 44% entirely customer-facing.

Digital picture frames such as those available at consumer electronics stores lack the ruggedness, product life or vivid display of commercial grade displays, but are pointing the way to a market that may be as much as 10X the demand for networked digital display. For this reason, other commercial display providers are beginning to offer all-in-one displays.

NEC was recognized with a DIGI Award in fall 2008 for the MPD-SBC-16 media player. Mike Zmuda, Director Business Development of NEC Display Solutions notes that “integration of the media player and playout software into the NEC display eliminates the need for an external PC, providing for clean, hidden integration while reducing the bill of

materials needed for installation, eliminating the hassle of hiding hardware equipment and simplifying installation”

Samsung offers MagicInfo embedded in several display models for LAN managed digital displays and MediaTile provides an “all-in-one” option that includes cellular connectivity. Noventri has provided its all-in-one display as meeting room notice boards, noting that the high resolution display and solid-state media player have many other applications.

While signage through unchanging, static presentation of text and graphics has always added to an environment, dynamic LCD digital signage can enliven an environment and dramatically improve the awareness of offers and information. Customer and staff-facing displays are being installed in virtually every kind of retail, consumer service, hospitality, health care, transportation and entertainment venue, as well as in patron, student and corporate walkway and waiting areas such as bank line-ups, welcome/reception, at or in elevators, waiting rooms, and retail isles, retail shelves and end caps.

“Simple” signage is especially powerful at a point of product selection or ordering. Retailers and service providers can easily present the features and benefits of an offering to activate a sale or “up-sell at the point of purchase.

Sign providers and digital printers are noticing that AV providers and local system integrators are not only providing dynamic signage equipment, but are also offering to produce “content.” This offers additional revenues and an ongoing relationship with the signage customer, while leveraging in-house capabilities with digital content authoring tools.

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