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Photos courtesy of Omnivex

## THE CASE FOR CONTENT: *Digital Signage* VIEWER EXPERIENCE STRATEGIES By Keith Kelsen

**Southcentre Mall in Calgary, Alberta, recently underwent a \$104 million renovation to bring it to the forefront of the upscale shopping centres in the area. The project includes a digital signage system powered by Omnivex software. Read more about this installation online at [svconline.com](http://svconline.com).**

Not surprisingly, advertisers have used every screen available to deliver messages. Just as with the early Internet, content creators typically initiated from a printed brochure mind-set as opposed to creating media true to the medium itself. In time, savvy advertisers consider the special nature of each screen and the audience experience to maximize the opportunities. Making the most of digital signage is no different.

In the current media culture, because people have learned visual language from movies and television, and standards of interaction from the Internet and mobile devices, those habits will transfer to digital signage. But there are also characteristics of where and how viewers encounter each screen that make communicating through them different. The viewers' relationship to the screen and the mind-set they bring to the encounter changes from screen to screen and so should the type of content.

**SVCONLINE.COM:** Read more from Keith Kelsen's book *Unleashing the Power of Digital Signage-Content Strategies for the 5th Screen*.

There are three basic types of digital out of home (DOOH) networks that determine both the placement and approach to creating messages for these installations:

### POINT OF TRANSIT (POT)

The viewer is in transit past the sign and is not expected to linger. These can be signs along the side of a highway, where they are visible to large numbers of diverse viewers passing at fairly high speed, or they can be in airports, train, or bus stations, or other locations where people are passing more slowly. Content is most like a traditional billboard in that it needs to quickly create a thought-provoking impression and is usually more focused on a brand rather than a particular offer. Its value over still images is twofold: Motion can attract an otherwise inattentive eye, and a digital sign's message can be changed at frequent intervals or to match the time of day or other external conditions—the same sign can highlight a coffee brand during the morning commute and a chicken dinner in the evening.

POT networks include digital billboards, signage inside transit hubs, and exterior-facing retail signage.

### POINT OF SALE (POS)

Typically for a retail environment, screens can be at the shelf, or elsewhere within a store, and even in the public areas of a shopping mall. Viewers are in the ideal mind-set for making a purchase; they are often actively searching for information about products and services, or weighing one brand against another. Thus, content on a POS network can help drive these consumers to make a particular purchase through presentation of a value proposition along with a call to action. Unlike a POT network, you have the opportunity to present a longer message (the viewer is already at the shelf and engaged) or even an interactive one (because of the proximity of the viewer to the screen). Our experience is that the quality of the content leads directly to higher levels of sales uplift and enhances the shopping experience. As with the other types of digital signage networks, content on a POS network can be targeted toward the time of day and demographic knowledge about the customers who come to the store at a given time or day. In addition, in-store signage can be tailored to precise product offerings and, if connected to an inventory system, can change or stop offers based on the availability of an item.

Within the POS network category, there are at



**The digital signage system at Southcentre Mall provides shopper entertainment, wayfinding, advertising, and access to customer service information.**

least three relevant subcategories to consider: brand-owned network, retailer-controlled network, and signage in the public areas of shopping malls.

### POINT OF WAIT (POW)

These networks are tailored toward dwell-time viewers, either while waiting for or during an activity. Often there are three primary goals. The first is to provide key messaging geared toward brands and products related to the service provider. The second, and equally important, is to increase customers' satisfaction by altering their perception of how long they are actually waiting. The third is to provide interesting, relevant content in various venues. These networks might be found in a hospital or doctor's office, health and fitness centers, a corporate lobby, break rooms, or a bank—anywhere that individuals gather and wait for services or have dwell time. Because of their dual nature, these networks perform best with a mixture of messages that combine brand, product, or service information along with segments that offer entertainment and educational value. Depending on the nature of the service provider's environment, the expected real waiting time, and the needs of the brand, the entertainment and educational content may be as simple as a weather forecast, or it could extend to brand-building community messages, longer news segments, or games.

POW networks apply to: health care and fitness, bars and restaurants, service lines, elevators and office networks, corporate communications, theme parks and museums, and stadiums and event venues.

Creating content for digital signage takes thought, process, and strategy to create compelling, effective content. With digital signage, content (with relevance) is king and experience is key. On these pages, we introduce you to veteran content creators who understand how to make appropriate and compelling digital signage content.

*Keith Kelsen is chairman and CEO 5thScreen, founder of MediaTile, and the author of the book Unleashing the Power of Digital Signage-Content Strategies for the 5th Screen, from which this article is excerpted. ©2010 Keith Kelsen all rights reserved.*

**SVCONLINE.COM:** Read more from Keith Kelsen's book and about digital signage success stories from Hard Rock Café, Novus International, St. Joseph Hospital, and Southcentre Mall.