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Communication

Digital Elevator Screens

How to Make Them a Powerful Communication Tool in Your Condominium



The digital signage industry is big; about USD 20 billion in fact. Retail, education, transportation and hospitality are among the many end-use industries making use of the medium, with healthcare demands expected to contribute to further growth. The condo industry, although at times slow to adopt new technologies, will likely kick into high gear as well, especially since the Covid-19 crisis. With communication demands exploding to up to ten times more than usual, elevator screens proved an invaluable communication tool thanks in part to their remote uploading capabilities.

For all its size, the digital signage industry is far from uncomplicated, however. Between hardware, software, content creation, management, connectivity, and more (there are actually seven generally accepted elements in all) what at first looks simple actually has a lot of components that need to be carefully considered in order to end up with a great tool and not a great big headache.

The Objectives

To start, determine the objectives that the condominium's Board of Directors want to meet. A vague notion of "improved" communication is not ideal. Instead, if the goal is indeed communication-based, make a list of the specific pain points or goals. For many, this could be a focus on water or hydro conservation, noise reduction, improved recycling or pet etiquette. List the current situation, then what the ideal situation would look like if all the goals are met. How much money would five percent off the water bill look like? Ten percent? How much actual time is wasted by the superintendent and/or manager in the recycling room or garbage chute every month? How many false fire alarms are triggered every month? Perform a knowledge assessment on residents. How much do they know about insurance, rules, etc? Review any letters sent to residents from your legal team over the past year to identify any issues that could be prevented in the future with a solid communication plan. All this will

assist in measuring the results, and ultimately provide a gauge for return on investment (ROI) and return on objectives (ROO). If the goal is not so much communication as it is to provide an amenity for residents to catch up on news, weather and sports, then make note of that too. If revenue generation is the goal, again take note (more on this later). Don't forget community-building objectives too – if book clubs, movie nights and wine tasting events are on the horizon, add them to the list.

The Content

"Content is King" has long been an expression in the digital signage industry and it is key to successfully meeting objectives. Without good content, there is no audience and without an audience, no results. One of the most common mistakes made by condominium corporations is to install an elevator screen and then continue to use it the same way a cork bulletin board would be. Think about this for a second – if status quo is a piece of paper

ILLUSTRATION BY KELCEY DAVIS

on a bulletin board that residents either never see or bother to read, it stands to reason that the same document merely uploaded to a digital medium would produce the same result. No engagement, no call to action, no results. Great communication calls for a different approach. Bigger graphics, fewer words, catchy headlines, even humour, all these go a long way to achieving effective communication. It's worth noting that property managers are not always trained in this "creative-agency" approach. They do not always have the skill set (nor are they paid to) and while email blasts often need to retain all the details, content for digital signage must be edited for maximum impact. To quote Microsoft Canada's Consumer Insight report *"What consumers can see in one glance has everything to do with what they'll do next. If overwhelmed by input or lack the motivation to process it, their brain will stop taking it in. Exclude unnecessary information. Part of achieving clarity is eliminating distractors. Stick to the main message. If something doesn't play a significant role, it's not needed."* Critical advice for condos seeking to use elevator screens for effective communication.



of the biggest considerations for condominiums to take into account is internet connectivity. This tends to be one of the most challenging aspects because let's face it – elevator shafts are rather hostile environments for wi-fi solutions. Hoping a screen will update if and when it catches a wi-fi signal when the doors open in the lobby might cost less up front but could end up costing much more in the long run. If it means outdated content and an audience of frustrated residents. Also, adding screens to an existing network in a building should be carefully documented. Too many fingers in a condo corporation's IT pie can lead to major problems, so be sure your screen vendor is able to provide you with a proper schematic for efficient record-keeping.

The Connectivity

Speaking of systems, while there are different screen options to choose from, one

The "Business"

Just like any other company, digital signage businesses must monetize. This might in-

volve revenue from advertisers, but a condo board should do their homework before selecting this option. Is collecting ad revenue part of the initial objectives listed in step one above? Will communication suffer if it must compete with ads for residents' attention? Could advertising negatively impact the property's brand value? More importantly, how long has the vendor been in business? How much experience do they have in ad sales? Speaking from age-old experience in the advertising business, it's all too common for digital signage companies to project ad revenues from small businesses that either never materialize or are not profitable due to the high cost of acquiring them. Big advertisers don't often play in the small-screen space, but that's another article. At time of writing, Covid-19 is in full swing and in economic downturns, ad revenue can disappear completely. Be sure to hire a vendor that can weather the storm, especially when communication of information critical to residents' health is paramount.

Elevator screens are highly visible and effective communication tools. When objectives, content, connectivity and business considerations are all taken into careful account, they are an extremely powerful way to achieve social and financial success in a condominium property. **CV**



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