

What You Need to Know in Planning and Budgeting for Digital Signage in Healthcare



Before you buy...

This document serves as a guide for what to look for and what to ask of vendors when budgeting and planning to purchase digital signage for your hospital or healthcare facility. With the increasing amount of information about digital signage available on the web today, this guide is specifically tailored to address digital signage issues as they pertain to the healthcare industry only.

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Digital signage is quickly becoming a critical part of the patient, employee, and physician experience in healthcare facilities across the country, directly impacting the ways in which hospitals are communicating with their key audiences. Digital signage in the healthcare environment can educate patients and enhance their perception of the quality of care they receive at hospitals, as well as keep employees and physicians well informed via a reliable communications system.

Digital signage can change behavior. But to be effective, it must be relevant. It should target each healthcare audience uniquely and communicate with these audiences differently depending on where they wait, work, eat, and congregate. Only when you combine these elements and present them in a visually captivating way can you ensure a successful digital signage application.

Your digital signage solution should also be able to capitalize on the power of your brand. When you effectively communicate your brand, you can alter the perception of the quality of care you provide. Your brand comes from the inside—from your culture, leadership, vision, progress, services, and employees. You want people to know, recognize, and identify with it. It is important for your digital signage vendor to understand the nuances and importance of branding in healthcare and provide a system that supports your efforts in promoting your brand to your key audiences.

Getting started...

When budgeting for digital signage for your healthcare facility, you will need to consider the one-time start up costs versus annual fees so you can plan accordingly.

HARDWARE & SOFTWARE

Monitors

Monitors display your signage campaign. It is important to choose the right size monitor for any given location. This can be accomplished via an on-site survey, so make sure your vendor is willing to walk your facility with you to fit each location with the appropriate monitor. This on-site survey is also important to ensure your facility's existing infrastructure will allow monitors to be installed in your desired locations.

Plasma vs. LCD monitors

In almost all cases, you will want to purchase LCD monitors.

- LCD technology requires less electricity (less power consumption) and has a lifecycle approximately 2 times that of plasma.
- LCD technology has fewer issues with burn-in, a major problem with plasma technology.
- LCD monitors weigh less than plasma monitors.

- LCD monitor prices have dropped significantly.
- Like plasma monitors, LCDs are becoming available in larger sizes including 50" or above.

Price range: Price varies considerably for monitors. A 40" LCD monitor can cost \$1,500 or less and a 65" monitor up to \$12,000.

Questions to ask about monitors:

Can I use my existing LCD/Plasma screens?

When selecting monitors, it is important to consider the varying feature sets of each, such as automated timers. The availability of certain features may impact your decision.

Media Players

A media player is a device that delivers the content, consisting of images and/or text, to each monitor. The number of players required will be determined by the physical monitor location and the type of content delivered. Different content programs will need different players. For example, a monitor in the physician's lounge playing content directed exclusively toward physicians would not be able to share a player with the monitor located in a nearby patient waiting area. It is possible for one player to support multiple monitor locations, but only if those locations are physically proximal to each other and play identical content. The actual configuration can only be determined by an on-site survey.

Media player software

If priced separately from the player hardware and not part of a complete system, the price for software can be around \$500 or more. Make sure any price quotes you receive include technical support for your system.

Price range: When researching media player pricing, please make sure you know the difference between the player and the player "system." Be sure to ask whether the player system includes the software license necessary to run the program and deliver the content to monitors. Player hardware usually starts in the \$1,200 range and a player "system" including licensing and player support can raise this one-time fee closer to \$3,000.

Questions to ask about media players and media player systems:

1. Is the price quoted for the player alone, or the player system which includes all software licensing and technical support? Or does technical support require a separate annual fee?

2. Does your digital signage vendor have the proper licensing to legally display all of the formats supported by their player?

Mounting brackets and cables

Display mounts range in price, as the mount size and type are dependent on the size of the monitor as well as other installation requirements. In most hospitals, it will be most “space-effective” to mount a monitor to the wall, versus taking up valuable space with a freestanding digital display.

Please be aware of other items you may require that should also be included in your price quote. These can include PC mounts and ceiling mounts, video connections, and physical security locks. Only an on-site survey can determine how many of each is required so you can obtain an accurate price quote.

Power drops and network connections are usually the responsibility of the client.

Price range: Depending on the monitor size, wall mounts can range from \$250 to \$1,000 or more. Be sure to budget for an average cost of \$750 per monitor, which includes standard cabling between the player and the monitor.

Questions to ask about mounting brackets and additional hardware:

1. What other hardware is required to run this system?
2. What hardware is my facility responsible for providing?

SURVEY & INSTALLATION

On-site survey

It is in your best interest to work with a vendor who is willing to walk your hallways with you, versus one who will only do a survey over the phone. This is where working with a company who understands healthcare and the challenges presented by the physical layouts of healthcare facilities will be to your advantage.

The on-site survey will take into account your communications objectives based on your unique audiences. Who are they? Where are these audiences waiting, congregating, etc. What are they doing in the presence of each monitor? An effective survey will require assistance from marketing, IT, and facilities and will assess the following:

- monitor size appropriate for each location
- proper mounting and all hardware required
- location of players and distance to associated monitors
- types of programs to run on the monitors
- goals and objectives of those programs, and more

This survey provides your vendor with all the information necessary for a proper installation and setup. For planning purposes, figure 2-4 hours survey time per requested monitor location.

A vendor who performs this type of survey will understand and know the layout of your facility and will be able to make recommendations and guide you with any necessary changes should you decide to add new monitors, change the location of monitors, or remove monitors.

Price range: An on-site survey is usually charged at an hourly rate, so plan for approximately \$150-\$175/hour plus any travel-related expenses.

Questions to ask about the on-site survey:

1. Do you provide an on-site survey as part of your service?
2. What does the on-site survey entail and what will you be looking for during the survey?
3. What will I end up with as a result of the on-site survey?
You should receive a detailed written report for all possible locations, the components needed for each location's installation, and detailed project pricing.

Installation

A proper installation will require a thorough on-site survey. Each standard monitor will require approximately 8 hours per installation, including cabling and player installation. If there are any special requests such as putting monitors in elevators, the on-site survey will determine how much more time these special or unique installations could take.

If your vendor does not actually perform the installation, you will want to find out how closely your vendor monitors 3rd party installations and who to go to if there are any problems. Note also that your vendor will most likely require assistance from your facility services department in surveying, planning, and performing the actual installation. Your vendor will not want to put any holes in your walls without obtaining proper permission first, and would probably even prefer that your own facilities personnel drill any necessary holes themselves.

Price range: Plan for installation fees ranging from \$125-\$150/hour.

Questions to ask about installation:

1. Does your company perform the installations or do you use 3rd party installers?
2. What information can you provide about any 3rd party installers you use?
3. How much time is required of my facility services department in assisting with installations?

CONTENT & CONTENT CREATION/MANAGEMENT SOFTWARE

Content and content creation/management software

Before you move forward with purchasing system hardware and software, you need to think about the quality and availability of content. Beware of vendors who price a system without including digital signage-specific content development or management costs. These vendors assume you will create, fulfill, and deliver your own content. Be careful not to assume that you can save money on content by using videos, PowerPoint presentations, etc. and other content you may have on-hand that was developed for media other than digital signage. Just having a supply of content does not ensure it is of the quality and format needed for large digital screen viewing.

Pay careful attention!:

1. There is a lot of readily-available content that does not transfer or translate well into proper viewing on large, high-definition digital monitors.
2. Videos vary in length and quality and do not always deliver messages that are appropriate to your audiences and where they are waiting.
3. Many PowerPoint/Word presentations contain too much content and text for digital signage. These file formats usually do not look good on large monitors.
4. Be careful of vendors who say they “can do whatever you want,” or “we serve any industry.” Healthcare is complicated and unlike other industries. You need a vendor with solid healthcare experience, one who understands your challenges and knows the impact of digital signage on your audiences.
5. Digital signage content needs to be planned, managed, delivered, revised, and updated routinely for multiple audiences, all with varying communications needs. It is wise to look for a vendor who offers you options:
 - 1) content that is readily available for healthcare and digital signage,
 - 2) content to which you can simply add your own call-to-action and/or branding messages,
 - 3) content you can completely customize

Look for a vendor who provides a dependable library of fresh, animated, and dynamic screen content to meet your needs.

The importance of unique, audience-centered content that is current, visually captivating, and relevant to your audiences and their location when viewing your digital signage, cannot be stressed enough. Digital signage is a living, breathing system that needs to be continually fed, and in healthcare that means a “healthy” dose of the right kind of healthcare content.

To be effective, your digital signage product should be able to do the following:

1. **Provide call-to-action** – Effective content draws individuals to your screens, and enables them to respond by providing phone numbers and web site addresses. It also allows you to gauge the effectiveness of your content by tracking results, such as appointments made, attendance at screening events, etc.
2. **Appeal to an individual’s senses, values, and emotions** – Effective content can convert current patients into loyal patients and visitors into patients while ensuring employees refer their friends and family.
3. **Target your unique audiences** – Effective content is audience-centered.
4. **Engage audiences where they wait, work, eat, congregate, teach, etc.** – Delivering the right content at the right time depends on your audience’s location within the hospital. Otherwise, your audience will not be in the right frame of mind to absorb the information. Content needs to be communicated relative to your audience’s situation, whether they’re eating in the cafeteria, waiting to undergo an imaging study, or waiting for results of a loved one’s surgery.
5. **Strengthen your brand image** – Is your content and display a unique identifier for your facility? Does it differentiate the various facilities in your health system? For example, your children’s hospital should have a different look and feel than the main hospital. Your vendor should be able to provide different “skins” and backgrounds for your monitor displays to support your different facilities and waiting areas, if requested.

Additionally...

Your digital signage healthcare content needs to:

1. Relieve patient anxiety with “what to expect” messages
2. Encourage patients to use your other services
3. Ensure people visiting patients also come back to use your services
4. Establish your facility as a health resource, not just a place people go to when ill
5. Inspire employees to refer their friends and family
6. Support physician efforts at patient education
7. Provide patient education to help employees maintain a state of survey readiness for Joint Commission visits
8. Address commonly asked questions and improve customer service
9. Encourage referrals and event registration

10. Let people know they are important, their time is valued, and their healthcare concerns are legitimate
11. Recognize outstanding employees and introduce new physicians
12. Effectively communicate with physicians and staff about upcoming events, CMEs, quality metrics, etc.
13. Be flexible and creative – the possibilities are endless!

Tips for optimal content and design layouts:

- **Make the most important point the most prominent** – Consider where you want the viewer’s eye to go to first.
- **Keep your image consistent with your brand** – and the rest of the marketing in your hospital.
- **Use color, contrast, and font/image size well** – These are significant points that can catch a viewer’s attention or lead them away.
- **Understand how motion affects the viewer** – Is your display too busy? Is there too much movement or none at all? Where is the viewer going to look first? Does the movement distract from what you are really trying to convey?
- **Deliver content you want your audiences to see, feel, experience, and learn about** – Don’t overdo it. Deliver your message, give your audience a chance to respond, and move on. If the point is important, make it again at another time. Reinforcement is good, redundancy is not.
- **Remember to keep it simple!** – It’s not always easy to do so, especially in healthcare, but remember the point is not just to deliver a message, but to deliver it in such a way that the viewer understands the message and is provided with the opportunity to respond to it.

Templates

Templates help with branding different types of communications to your unique audiences. For example, a CME template that is easily recognizable to physicians on their way to get coffee in the doctor’s lounge can give them the information they need in a short amount of time. And, if they see this template every month, they will come to depend on it as a valuable source of readily-available information.

File formats

Beware of a company that says you can use any file format, like a PowerPoint presentation for example. Many formats are not optimal or even effective for large-

screen viewing and may even denigrate the value and appearance of your communications. Just because a system allows you to display PowerPoint does not mean everything you see in the presentation will translate and appear in the right size and clarity once it is up on a large, high-definition monitor. Limited file formats may be in your best interest for the digital signage medium.

Content creation and content management fees will vary drastically from one company to the next, so you should make a list of pros and cons and what's included and what's not to help you make your decision. Ideally, you want a system that enables you to create your own content, provides ready-made health content allowing you to target each of your healthcare audiences, and also offers a combination of the two. Some vendors can also supply fully customized content. Your digital signage vendor should be able to provide a variety of static image screens, as well as screens with movement including video, animation, or both.) Some companies also provide modules for weather, traffic, and other applications. It is up to you to determine the value of offering this type of content and its potential impact on your audiences.

Price range: A self-service content management system with graphics and technical support can range from \$500 to \$3,000 or more per player/per year. As this range is broad, you will need to do a side-by-side comparison to see what each vendor is offering for the price. Animated content can cost \$2,500 per animation or \$125-\$150/hour for creating custom content. You are best-served to look for a signage product that offers an animation library for healthcare audiences and allows you to add custom calls-to-action. These features will ensure your content stays robust and eye-catching.

Questions to ask about content:

1. Will I own any of the content and can I take it with me when my contract is up?
2. What do the content management fees include?
3. Once I create my content, what are the data storage fees and why do I need to account for these costs?
4. Does my vendor provide a library of ready-made content of interest to my target healthcare audiences?
5. What file formats will not translate well for viewing on large digital monitors? Which ones translate optimally?

Your content management software should be able to consistently deliver content to your media player system when you want and need it. This software should allow you to create playlists for each monitor and enable you to:

1. Schedule your own timelines for playing content
2. Add and remove screens at your discretion

3. Make changes to an existing screen, remove it from play, and then schedule the revised screen message for play once again
4. Access a web-based system remotely. A locally hosted system may not allow you to update and/or utilize existing or new content. You will need to take into account the limitations of a local system.

EXTENDED WARRANTIES

Warranties and service contracts

It is important to obtain extended warranties for your monitors. Warranties usually expire after the first year, and then you will need to purchase additional contracts to protect your investment. A service warranty typically depends on the initial purchase price of the monitor. For monitors costing \$1,500, expect to pay \$225-250 per monitor (for a \$1,500 monitor) for an extended 2-3 year contract.

Questions to ask regarding warranties:

1. What exactly does my warranty cover?
2. What is the process for replacing a monitor or getting one fixed if something should go wrong?

Training

All vendors should provide training and support in how to use their system. These costs will vary significantly depending on the type of system provided, the number of people to be trained, where the training is to be performed, etc.

Questions to ask regarding training:

1. What type of training do you provide?
2. How long will the training take and how many people can you accommodate?
3. Where is the training performed? Do you have web-based training?

Service and Support

What happens if something goes wrong, technically or otherwise? Does your vendor provide 24/7 support? What if your program just isn't getting the communications job done – is there someone you can call for guidance and support? What happens if you want to include a new facility in your signage plan? Will you have one contact person who handles your account? Does your vendor know your account, or are you just another number?

Undoubtedly, you will have questions and need support. Even if you are using a system where you are in control of your content and its design and distribution, you need to know your vendor is there for you, understands your challenges, your objectives, and your audiences.

For any questions or more information about digital signage for healthcare providers, please call Vericom at 800-800-1090 or visit us at www.vericom.net.