

Five Considerations for Digital Signage in the Modern Sports Arena

Digital signage can positively influence fans' enjoyment of a sporting event, but it's important to convey the right message at the right time. Learn what to consider when choosing a digital signage system in a sports arena.

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Sports arenas, with a captive audience for approximately two to four hours, offer an ideal venue for digital signage. In the past, the audience at a sporting event would only see static billboards, which were easily ignored. Digital signage, however, provides fresh, meaningful content that can provide a “wow” factor, keep the audience engaged, increase revenue and bring in new advertisers. But for the highest impact, it's important to consider the following.

Content delivery to various display elements

Even the smallest sports arena is far bigger than a large retail space, so the sheer number of screens needed for an arena's digital signage network must be taken into consideration.

For example, many stadiums have a Jumbotron, a large screen above the field that any audience member can see. But there are also smaller digital signage screens situated throughout the stadium's concourse. Stadiums also have club levels and executive suites, both of which feature

their own screens. Game statistics, real-time information about other events happening around the league, advertising, wayfinding and menu boards can all be displayed on these screens, providing useful information to the audience and keeping them engaged.

These screens will be of different sizes, types and resolutions, will be located in different parts of the stadium (e.g. suites, the box office or the concourse) and will feature different content. However, they must be able to work together and the



VIP Suites at the Colts Stadium. Different spaces in an arena will require different screens, but it's important that the network have a software platform that can play any content on any screen.

network should feature a digital signage software platform that can play any content on any screen, no matter the size, shape or resolution.

Real-time operation

For digital signage to work in a sporting arena, the content must be relevant to the viewers. An arena should take advantage of the natural ebb and flow of the sporting event it's hosting and should have a system that allows for real-time operation as well as content composition of various real-time sources.

“Advertisers can sponsor specific events that occur during the game,” said Yael Elstein, vice president of marketing at C-nario, a global company that provides digital signage display, distribution and management platforms.

For example, ads can be specifically designed to run after a touchdown in a football game, a goal or a yellow card after a soccer game or a foul in a basketball game. Specific ads can be sold for halftime breaks or injury breaks and different rates can be charged for these different intervals. These intervals provide added flexibility and options for advertisers.

But to have this flexibility, the system must have the capacity for real-time operation, so an operator can cue up the necessary video when needed.



Displaying advertising is a key component of digital signage in an arena, and integrating it with relevant information that the audience needs helps maximize its impact.

Integrating broadcast with advertising and data feeds

While it is important for a digital signage network to display advertising, it is equally important that the content be varied. All advertising all the time becomes easy for viewers to ignore; instead, the content also should feature entertainment, news and game information. The content should be creative and diverse.

“If (the content) is too predictable, people will lose interest,” said Brian Schuvert, senior vice president of sales and marketing at A2A Media, a Boston, Mass.-based provider of turnkey digital signage solutions.

One example of good data content for a sports arena's signage network is scores. On game day in any sports league around

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the world, other teams will be playing simultaneously. While watching the game in the arena, the audience also will want to know the scores around the league.

Information also can be used to attract customers to new eateries, stores or amenities within the stadium. Fans at the concession stands will want to see the game while they are in line.

Screens can be separated individually or they can be part of a video wall. A video wall can be split into different sections or zones, which allows the wall to display the game, other entertainment, advertising and information simultaneously.

Some screens in the suites, concession stand areas, etc. can be interactive, allowing fans the freedom to see the information they want to see at a specific time, providing a more personal experience.

“Interactivity makes the screens come to life and gives people a reason to go back to the screens,” said Marc Kline, executive vice president for sales and marketing of the Reach Sports Marketing Group of Minneapolis, Minn. “It’s what local advertisers are demanding.”

Video distribution

An important consideration is video distribution — the ability of the digital signage to distribute HD video from multiple sources with the existing infrastructure and with any new hardware that is installed. If the network only can be run on the most advanced screens, some arenas won’t be able to take advantage of digital signage.

An ideal system will allow an on-site employee to monitor the event and cue up different ads or entertainment at appropriate times.

“The challenge for stadiums is usually the high initial cost involved in network infrastructure. Our solution enables stadiums to run digital signage systems over their existing infrastructure while enabling future migration when budget allows,” said Eyal Rom, vice president of business development for C-nario.

A stadium may have the money to invest in a digital signage system, but the stadium may not have the money to invest in new screens and new network infrastructure as well. Deployers also may want to see how successful the network is before committing any additional dollars to new screens. Therefore, the network should be flexible enough to be run on the stadium’s existing technology, but be easily adaptable to any upgrades the arena makes.

Monitoring and control

Part of the thrill of watching a sporting event is the unpredictability. Unlike a television show, which has definite commercial breaks, sporting events can be interrupted by timeouts, injuries, touchdowns, goals and assorted other events. The digital signage needs to work smoothly to keep the audience entertained and informed when these pauses in the action occur.

To do this, the arena must have real-time monitoring of the event from a central unified system. An ideal system will allow an on-site employee to monitor the event and cue up different ads or entertainment at appropriate times. All this should be

done in a simple, easy-to-use manner, while reducing operational costs to the minimum.

The system also should be able to be managed remotely. If the digital signage in an executive suite is being used for a conference and not an actual sporting event, then there is no need to have an employee on-site monitoring the digital signage.

About the sponsor: C-nario is a provider of end-to-end software-based digital signage solutions across all industries, including advertising, retail, corporate, public, media and entertainment sectors. C-nario's cutting-edge technology enables playback and management capabilities of high-impact video displays in any size, shape and resolution. The company has recently installed new applications tailored specifically to the sports market. To date, the company has deployed in 40 countries through its global partners and international value-added resellers. C-nario has offices in the United States, Europe, Asia and Israel. For more information, visit www.c-nario.com.