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**BUILDING A STRONG
ENGAGED AUDIENCE WITH
CUSTOM SIGNS**

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SIGNS ARE CENTRAL TO SUCCESS

In any trade, there's one tool that's central to success. A welder has a blowtorch. A plumber has a wrench. In the world of marketing, that tool is signage. The importance of "the tool" centers on its ability to get the job done. Just like a plumber's wrench is vital for loosening and tightening pipes, a good piece of signage is superbly effective at communicating your brand and its messaging to potential customers. Without it, you wouldn't be able to get the job done properly.

As a marketing professional, it's important to understand signage as an instrumental tool for success, including what its function is and how to use it effectively.





SIGNAGE IS BUILT TO ENGAGE

What sets signage apart from other types of marketing collateral or advertising materials is more than just its ability to convey a message—it's also about making a bold impression. Signage leverages a number of features that make it undeniable, engaging customers in unmistakable ways.

Conscious Engagement

When people are actively looking for something, their brains are trained to look for stand-outs. The size of signage makes it an effective stand-out piece of marketing, allowing you to attract the attention of onlookers in an active way. Whether they notice the logo, color or shape of your sign, they'll immediately begin to process it once they affix their attention. If your sign is what they're looking for, it'll have proved effective as a guidepost; if not, you'll still have made an active impression.

Social Engagement

Did you know that signage doesn't even need to be in front of someone to make an impression? Thanks to its scale, signs are often used as guideposts or wayfinding markers in conversation, creating passive, social engagement. How many times have you given directions like, "turn left at the green sign" or "it's right across the street from the triangular red sign?" Secondary to communicating its front-facing message, a sign has the ability to define its surroundings, making it crucial in social engagement.

The ability of signage to engage absolutely everyone in some capacity puts it at the core of any marketer's repertoire of advertising tools.





CUSTOMIZE THE MESSAGE FOR THE APPLICATION

Signage in and of itself as a medium may be powerful, but without conveying the proper message, it may fall short of its true potential. Without a clear, concise message, your signage won't be interpreted as anything other than a sign. It's like having a toolbox with no tools in it.

Depending on your signage application, the message you choose to portray could take a number of different forms. It may be a call to action or a brand call-out, just as well as it might be a simple wayfinding message.

Let's take a look at a few signage applications and the messages that lend themselves to each:

Overhead Storefront

This is almost always going to be simple wayfinding signage. It's your business' name and logo, and nothing more. There's nothing convoluted about this message: it says "here we are!"

Storefront Signage

Whether it's in the window or displayed out front, this type of signage needs to create an appeal and offer a call to action. These are the "50% off sale inside" or "check out our newest line of shoes" pieces of signage common in retail.

Tradeshow Signage

When you're literally surrounded by competitors, your signage needs to be focused on brand messaging. These signs are few in words, but strong in imagery and branding, using your colors, logos and slogans liberally.

Point-of-Purchase Signage

This type of signage is meant to do one thing: close the sale. It'll be simple and straightforward, with a single value proposition that reinforces a call to action, reaffirming a customer's decision to purchase.

It doesn't matter which need comes first—the message or the medium—it's the duty of a marketing professional to connect the two for a harmonious solution. Creating the right signage based on a message or tailoring the ideal message around an application means formulating an effective piece of signage.



ALL THE VARIABLES MATTER

Even the best message is easily lost to onlookers when a custom sign isn't properly designed. The dynamic of colors, shapes, imagery, material and other such variables needs to be balanced. If it's not, attention shifts between these variables and diminishes the power of the signage itself.

Color

Choose colors that are complementary to your branding, yet work together in harmony. Avoid swaths of color that are too strenuous for the eyes or too dull to stand out. When in doubt, white and grey are smart fillers and can be used to break up more vivid colors.

It's also important to consider color psychology when creating signage.

Knowing how your colors may be perceived by those viewing your sign can play into the messaging you choose to deliver:

 RED	 YELLOW	 GREEN	 BLUE	 PINK
Power Excitement Love	Happiness Contentedness Competence	Environmental Harmony Envy	Trust Masculinity Quality	Sincerity Femininity Sophistication
 PURPLE	 BROWN	 BLACK	 WHITE	
Authority Power Wealth	Ruggedness Aged Simple	Expensive Sophisticated Exclusive	Purity Happiness Sincerity	

More than just knowing different colors and their meanings, knowing how they play together can be key in helping you create a piece of signage that backs up the message it's conveying.



Imagery

Imagery is important when it comes to signage design. Whether it's choosing between a serif or sans-serif font, or including your brand logo, or even a single piece of art, picking images that are engaging exemplifies signage.

The golden rule for signage imagery is to keep it as simple as possible. Don't try to use complex images or numerous visuals to boost your sign's appeal. Instead, use minimalism to accentuate the underlying purpose of your sign. If you're creating a sign meant to boost your brand recognition, use your logo; if the sign is meant to sell, focus on the product or the price.

Images can be a powerful tool in creating marketing collateral, but they need to be kept simple when it comes to signage. Make sure they come second to the ultimate message you're trying to portray.

Shape

Shape adds personality to signage. Depending on where you're placing it or what the scope of the message being conveyed is, the shape of your sign has virtually limitless possibilities. Shape can even be leveraged into your brand. Target's iconic bullseye or the Golden Arches of McDonalds are simple illustrations of how emphasizing the shape of your signage can help it become part of the messaging.

Material

Though it may not make much of an impression on your customers, ultimately, the material with which you create your signage will have an impact on its overall application. Vinyl banners will hold up to the outdoor elements in the same way polycarbonate signage will add strength to long-term indoor signs. The material can also be dictated by the application.





CREATE SIGNAGE THAT STANDS OUT



With an understanding of the variables that go into signage presentation, as well as a focus on messaging and application, creating signage that stands out is simple!

It's a step by step process that's made easy by taking stock of your signage needs and closely following a recipe for creation around the objective:

- Define the message
- Define the placement
- Determine color and imagery
- Determine shape and material

With this simple checklist in mind, a professional designer shouldn't have any trouble getting to work on your signage concept. The resulting creation should be a sign that checks off all of your criteria, while portraying a final cohesive message that's engaging.

Once your signage is conceptualized, it's important to check it against a number of criteria before having it fabricated:

- Is the key message or value proposition clear?
- Is the sign pleasing to the eye?
- Will it stand out in its final application?
- Is the branding consistent with your business?
- Is it clean and well-organized in its presentation?

If your signage concept checks all of the boxes, it's time for fabrication. Here, any final production kinks can be worked out and critical decisions about material can be made. Through this point, the diligence of your creation process will culminate in a final piece of custom signage that's ready to be deployed for a high level of engagement among onlookers.



PLACEMENT IS KEY



Nothing can ruin a quality piece of signage quicker than poor placement. If your sign can't be seen or is positioned in an area where its message isn't coming across, its effectiveness will immediately become moot.

Great signage placement revolves around a few key factors, including:

Visibility

As a rule of thumb, your sign should be visible from 10' for every 1" of scale. So, if you have a sign with letters that are 12" tall, it should be placed to be seen completely from up to 120' away. This depends entirely on building clearance, obstructions and more for each application.

Proximity

In applications like trade shows and strip malls, your signage is going to be co-zied up to nearby messaging. The key to effective signage in these situations is to control proximity. In a strip mall, leave 8' on either side of your sign for visibility, for example. At a trade show, use vertical banners to utilize available upward space instead of clashing with nearby booth signage. The more distant your proximity, the more room your sign has to shine.

Opportunity

The best place to put your signage is where the most eyes will see it—or, where it's most applicable. If you've got sale signage, put it near the sale items or right out front where general customers can see. Likewise, if you're trying to attract customers to your business' storefront and it's set back off the road, opt for roadside signage instead of just storefront signage. Signage needs to be seen to be effective!

Placement is often where businesses run into the most trouble with their signage. In many cases, it's a smart idea to have a qualified signage professional take care of placement and mounting for larger signs, to get things right.



SIGNAGE IS THE CORE OF YOUR BRAND

There are numerous different tools available to your brand when it comes to building an engaged audience—but the one tool that’s critical above all others is custom signage. The power of signage to attract, engage and convey messaging to onlookers makes it a staple at the core of your branding efforts. And, no matter what the application or the message at the heart of your custom signage, it’s instrumental in bringing awareness as soon as it’s seen.

A welder wouldn’t be able to weld without a blowtorch and a plumber wouldn’t even think of walking onto a jobsite without a wrench. Don’t take the time to build your brand’s reputation without first making sure you’ve got the essentials covered. Engagement starts with custom signage.





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