A COMPLETE GUIDE TO HEALTHCARE DIGITAL SIGNAGE

CHALLENGES:
The greatest pitfall of any digital signage strategy is improper planning.
Lack of cross-departmental buy-in can lead to underutilized or underperforming digital signage.
Few resources exist detailing the actual process of digital signage implementation.

KEY TAKEAWAYS:
It’s important to build a dedicated cross-departmental team prior to initializing a digital signage strategy.
Having a trusted digital signage partner is crucial to an efficient and cost-effective implementation.
Digital signage strategies do not end at installation; they must include ongoing content creation and support plans.
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Introduction

Since the early 2000s, the popularity and utilization of digital signage has grown like wildfire, with nearly every industry across the globe adopting the technology in one form or another. While that may read like hyperbole, the numbers are there to back up the claim.

In 2010, the global market for digital signage sat at $5 billion, with the U.S. market alone accounting for $1.6 billion. As of May 2019, Grand View Research predicted the global digital signage market to reach $31.71 billion by 2025, driven predominantly by the retail and healthcare markets.

The question then becomes, “Why the extraordinary, exponential growth?” In short, it’s because digital signage works. Research has proven time and again that digital signage is one of the most cost-effective, high-performance advertising and communications solutions on the market — regardless of the industry it’s used in.

Digital Signage Benefits at a Glance

- Digital signage captures 400% more views than static displays
- Digital billboards and displays have a recall rate of up to 89%
- 19% of Americans have made unplanned, impulse purchases after viewing digital signage
- Digital displays can increase brand awareness and recall by up to 31%
- Companies experience an overall 31.8% increase in sales volume with digital signage
- Digital displays can increase customer browsing time up to 30%
- Digital video displays reach up to 70% of Americans each month

Industries Utilizing Digital Signage

- Retail
- Hospitality
- Healthcare
- Education
- Government
- Corporate Communications
- Automotive
- Manufacturing
- Transportation
- Entertainment
- And More
Digital Signage in Healthcare

While these statistics lend insight into the efficacy of digital signage in industries like retail, hospitality, and even entertainment, their implications in healthcare may not be so clear. For instance, how does capturing 400% more views than static displays help improve patient and visitor experiences in hospital settings?

Though digital signage’s higher views and recall rates may not necessarily lead to direct sales or ROI in a healthcare setting, as they might in a retail environment, this enhanced engagement comes with a host of benefits unique to healthcare facilities. Digital signage has been proven to effectively lead to reduced levels of anxiety, confusion, and frustration, as well as improved overall experiences for patients, visitors, and staff members alike.

Here are a few ways that leading healthcare facilities are utilizing digital signage.
Waiting Room Displays

Long waits can be one of the most frustrating aspects of any hospital or healthcare facility visit — especially for those experiencing pain or discomfort. One of the most beneficial locations for displays in healthcare facilities is in waiting rooms, as digital signage has been shown to reduce perceived wait times by up to 35%, according to Celia Anderson of Digital Signage Today.

This reduction in perceived time is due to digital signage’s ability to hold its viewer’s attention for longer than static displays. Whether the digital signage is showing a slide show of health tips, the latest news and weather updates, or simply reruns of The Golden Girls, the distraction helps lower anxiety, alleviate frustration, and engage the visitor in something more than worrying over their test results or focusing on their pain.

James Hope-Falkner, CEO of Accademia, a studio that creates site- and condition-specific video art for hospitals and patients, says:

*Movement can both draw the eye and keep it there. There is also a profound healing effect the observing of movement has on our brains. Like if you’ve ever looked at a fire, or at the ocean for long enough, it puts you into a different state of mind where time moves quicker and you’re not analyzing, over thinking or worrying. It’s more like a sense of daydreaming. A bit like a trance. It is this effect that we are trying to replicate in hospital wards and waiting rooms, almost tricking people into not worrying, by shifting their attention.*
Wayfinding Stations & Kiosks

Another major challenge for healthcare facilities, especially large institutions like hospitals, is the ability to quickly, clearly, and seamlessly guide visitors to their destination. Those arriving at a hospital, patient or otherwise, are often under a significant amount of stress. This is only compounded when they’re faced with the challenge of determining where they should be going.

The anxiety and frustration associated with unclear directions can have a serious effect on the visitor’s overall experience. Interactive, touch-screen wayfinding kiosks and other digital signage can play a critical role in keeping visitors comfortable, calm, and well-informed.

“From the moment patients and visitors enter a healthcare facility, they expect to be informed and guided through the often- hectric healthcare environments,” says Jamil King, national healthcare sales manager for technology provider Panasonic System Communications Company North America. “Wayfinding tools can both greet patients and visitors and can help them easily navigate through a medical building or hospital complex.”

Wayfinding kiosks offer a range of capabilities, from simple to advanced. Some provide basic maps of a location, along with basic steps on how to travel to the user’s desired locations. Other more advanced applications can even provide QR codes that will send step-by-step instructions to the user’s mobile device.
Visitor & Patient Information Displays

Digital signage for patient information can take many forms, from displays that greet visitors at the facility’s entrance to check-in kiosks. These displays serve to simplify the patient or visitor's overall experience, allowing them to breeze through the check-in process, whether through a digital display itself or simply by informing the visitor on where and how to begin the process.

Visitor and patient information displays can also provide a range of other useful messages for those entering a hospital, including:

- Visitation hours
- Queue management information
- Intuitive directions to areas like the cafeteria, gift shop, and restrooms
- Menus for on-site eateries
- Healthcare awareness program information
- Welcome messages
- Ads to nearby hotels, restaurants, and more
- [May need more insight from BLM here]

Check-in kiosks (or patient in-take kiosks) are another form of visitor and patient information digital signage that can play a key role in improving guests’ overall experiences. These kiosks help accelerate the check-in process by providing a more intuitive and efficient method than traditional paper forms. This also helps eliminate lines and the need for human assistance by allowing the visitor to check themselves in, update records, and manage a variety of important documents — all from one easy-to-use screen.
Additional Applications & Benefits

In addition to waiting room displays, wayfinding kiosks, and patient and visitor information displays, there are a variety of other uses for digital signage in healthcare environments, including:

**Staff Communication**

Digital signage can efficiently update staff in disparate locations throughout the facility, including break rooms, patient rooms, admission areas, operating rooms, and more. These displays can quickly distribute critical information like policy changes, patient information, staff rosters, operation schedules, ongoing training opportunities, human resources information, patient intake statuses, and emergency information.

**Advertising**

Providing ad space for local businesses, partners, and other companies helps hospitals in multiple ways. It creates a passive source of income that can help maintain the digital signage network and increase ROI. It also provides visitors with information that they might normally need to acquire from staff members (which can be a serious drain on their time). It also offers space for the healthcare facility to promote its own services, driving revenue and increasing awareness.

**Patient Room Displays**

Some healthcare facilities are even incorporating various displays in patient rooms. One way digital signage is being used in patient rooms is to digitize patient charts, improving information accuracy and saving doctors and nurses valuable time. Digital signage is also used to help educate patients on their conditions, upcoming procedures, and ongoing treatment plans. This visual component helps improve retention and ensure that the patient is well-informed about their care.

**Menu Boards**

Digital menu boards are becoming a popular replacement for static menus in both the restaurant industry and on-site eateries in the healthcare industry. These boards are significantly easier to update than traditional menus, saving those managing the environment considerable time. They also afford these managers the ability to remove items from the menu when supplies run out, without ever having to explain that the item is no longer available.

**Honors**

Another noteworthy use of digital signage in healthcare is boards that highlight donors. This not only honors those that have contributed to the success of the facility, but also inspires others to do the same. These boards can also be used to spotlight past and present patients, sharing personal stories of brave individuals and providing hope to others.
Safety & Emergency Services

Keeping visitors, patients, and staff safe and informed is one of the most important capabilities of a healthcare facility, and digital signage can play a crucial role in the speed and efficacy with which critical messages are distributed.

From a single, centrally controlled system, emergency messages or alerts can be transmitted to all digital signage screens throughout the facility, informing all viewers simultaneously. In the case of an emergency, such as a natural disaster, these alerts can also provide highly visible information on where to exit the building or seek shelter.
Improved Visitor & Patient Perceptions

Entertainment, education, information distribution, and wayfinding are all exceptional benefits and uses for digital signage in healthcare facilities. However, the physical displays and kiosks can have a secondary effect that can prove to be equally valuable — they improve visitor’s and patient’s perceptions of the facility and the people that run it as a whole.

According to Forbes, people tend to form their impressions of people and businesses alike in as a little as seven seconds. Digital signage helps ensure a positive first impression by enhancing the aesthetic appeal of the facility and presenting a technology-forward appearance.

Since tech has grown to become so deeply rooted in people’s lives, businesses that utilize cutting edge technology are immediately perceived to be more trustworthy than those that don’t. As more of the healthcare industry adopts digital signage, it’s probable that those who do not will begin to be seen as dated and less capable by their visitors, patients, and employees alike.
Before Your Begin

Prior to diving into the digital signage process, it’s important to understand something:

These benefits, statistics, and uses for digital signage go a long way toward proving the technology’s efficacy and motivating healthcare professionals to implement displays in their own facilities. However, this information is no secret. In fact, many of these figures appear in industry examinations across the web — from blogs and articles to websites and white papers.

While these data points have become statistical staples for the digital signage community, there are few resources beyond them that truly dive into what an effective digital signage implementation strategy looks like, or how to get started developing one in the first place.

When combined, this leads to the single greatest pitfall within the digital signage landscape — poor planning.

The Greatest Pitfall of Digital Signage

Facilities managers and other leadership see the incredible ROI of this technology; they read about its many benefits; they understand how, where, and why to use displays; and they decide they want it for themselves. Without proper insight into the actual process, this often leads to the development of vague strategies that result in cramped timelines, strained budgets, and leadership teams that have little idea of how to bring the strategy to life — if they’ve been informed of the strategy at all.

To succeed with digital signage, those looking to implement this technology must know more than the basic benefits in order to develop the robust strategy they need. Here are some of the elements they’ll require:

- A clear end-to-end overview of the digital signage process
- Examples of the kinds of questions they will need to be prepared to answer from the start
- Insight on what kind of partner to seek out
- A detailed look at the kind of cross-departmental team they will need
- To know what kind of hardware and software options are available
Initial Planning

Perhaps the reason that few resources exist on the actual process of implementing digital signage in a healthcare facility is because every digital signage provider’s process is different, and the specific needs of each healthcare organization are likewise unique. This can make defining the process, even from the 30,000-foot view, a challenge for many.

There are three critical steps that must be taken at the very beginning of the process by the healthcare facility that wishes to implement digital signage. These steps are foundational, and they will be essential to the planning phases that will take place once a digital signage provider has been selected.

As previously mentioned, the greatest pitfall of any digital signage strategy is poor planning, and the success of an implementation strategy is fundamentally tied to how thoroughly each of the following three steps are performed.
1. Gather Information

Whether you are an executive in a hospital, a facilities manager, the head of marketing, or an IT manager, if it is your responsibility to oversee the implementation of digital signage throughout your facility, your first goal is to gather as much information as possible.

Start by seeking answers to foundational questions like the ones below.

- What is your budget?
- Do you have a timeline goal in mind?
- What is the goal of the digital signage in your business?
- If your goal can be clearly defined, how do you plan to measure your success (whether ROI or ROO)?
- How many displays are you considering utilizing?
- Do you have a general idea of where these displays will be located?
- Are all the necessary members of your facility’s teams aware of the upcoming project? Do they have questions, concerns, hopes, or expectations?
- What are the expectations from your facility’s leadership surrounding this digital signage deployment?
- Do you have a plan for content creation or an understanding of how content will be created in the future?
- Are you familiar with the various pieces of hardware and software that will be required?
- What questions do you have for your digital signage partner, once selected? How can they help you plan and understand their process better?
- What are your major concerns?
- What are the ideal characteristics of a digital signage partner?

This step will likely include a variety of meetings with various staff members (something that will ultimately help you in the following step, identifying your key team members), and it will undoubtedly take time to find the answers to these questions.

It's important to know where your confidence and knowledge lies in terms of digital signage. To set your project up for success, identify what you know and which areas you need more help and insight.

Remember to take your time here, as the answers to these questions will not only help you with the following two steps, but they will prepare you for the conversations that will occur once you've built your strategic foundation and selected a digital signage partner.

"It's important to know where your confidence and knowledge lies in terms of digital signage."
2. Identify Key Team Members

It's critical to develop a team of individuals that is both committed to the success of your digital signage campaign and capable of making the decisions that will be required during the execution of your strategy. In short, buy-in from your internal team is crucial to your overall success, and ensuring that this team has clear visibility over the entire process will ensure a smoother roll out.

During the information gathering process, you likely spoke to several leaders of various teams throughout your facility. It's probable that these individuals will become part of your digital signage team moving forward. Start by selecting capable individuals in the following areas:

- **Information Technology** — Having an IT manager or member of the IT team on your digital signage team will ensure that you have the technology expertise you need to make the right decisions. They will be able to provide detailed answers to tech questions that you may not, including information about networks, cybersecurity, and more. Your IT team will play an integral role in the implementation of digital signage, so incorporating them from the start will help avoid any missteps.

- **Project Management** — It’s important to bring in a dedicated project manager early in the planning phases of your project. Whether your digital signage strategy is small-scale or sprawling across multiple facilities, there will be a variety of moving parts that need to be monitored and managed. A dedicated project manager will help ensure the project stays on track and within budget, and they will be the single point of contact for all questions and updates, both from your internal team and your digital signage partner.

- **Marketing** — The screens in your facility will need content, and it’s likely that marketing will be your primary resource for content creation. Some facilities are so focused on acquiring and installing the physical signage network that they overlook marketing’s role in its daily operation. When they are finally brought on late in the process, it can blindside the team and lead to rushed or subpar work — at no fault of the marketing team. By bringing marketing into the equation early, you can gain valuable insight into the team’s capabilities and how this new tech will affect their day-to-day activities. They can also begin the process of creating content calendars early on, ensuring a smooth transition where each display is filled with stunning, relevant content from the start.

- **Facilities Management** — One particularly important group or individual to have on your team (an often overlooked one, at that) is facilities management. Facilities managers are responsible for the purchase, installation, and maintenance of all facility equipment — and that should include digital signage. Facilities managers will be able to provide invaluable insight into where the digital signage is most needed or requested, code and policy compliance, and the facility’s overall operating budget. While your digital signage partner will ensure that all displays are compliant with all applicable codes and policies, it’s important that facilities management be involved and kept up to date during the entire process.
3. Select a Digital Signage Partner

Once you’ve gathered the essential information needed to begin planning your digital signage strategy in earnest and identified the key team members that will support the project, it’s time to research and select a digital signage partner. With so many potential value-added resellers or providers, it’s important to know precisely what type of support you are searching for.

If you’re looking for total support from start to finish, there are a few key qualities and capabilities to keep in mind:

- **Trustworthy** — Digital signage is a serious investment, so it’s important that you work with a partner that you know has your best interests at heart. Look for a partner that has a long track record of success in digital signage deployments and expertise in healthcare. Then, just talk to them. Don’t focus on your specific project idea, however. Instead, just get to know their team and make sure you and your team mesh well with theirs. It’s possible that you will work with this team for some time, so establish the foundation for a relationship and make certain you trust their capabilities.

- **Vendor Neutral** — Finding high-performance hardware and software that stays within your budget is always a challenge. A vendor-neutral or vendor-agnostic partner can help ensure that you’re never spending too much for capabilities you don’t need. They will work with a variety of manufacturers to create a custom solution that is perfect for your unique project.

- **Supportive** — The work associated with digital signage doesn’t end with installation. In fact, that’s where the work truly begins. Find a partner that offers ongoing support and maintenance for as long as you need it, as well as a business that’s willing and able to expand your digital signage network as your needs demand. If a prospective partner’s process ends at installation, it’s likely best to move on to another potential provider that sees digital signage for the ever-changing, ever-growing technology that it is.

“Digital signage is a serious investment, so it’s important to work with a partner that you know has your best interests at heart.”
The Process

Once you’ve chosen your digital signage partner, it’s time to dive into their process. Understanding what steps that entails beforehand can help you navigate the many questions and decisions that you’ll be faced with moving forward.

It’s important to know that each digital signage provider’s process will look a bit different, and many times the specific steps aren’t revealed until the project has already begun. While we can’t speak to any other business’s process, we can lay out BLM Technologies’ six basic steps to digital signage deployment.

BLM Technologies’ Process

The exact breakdown of each business’s methodology will not be the same, but the general milestones will likely be similar for any partner that offers total support from start to finish. To ensure that your project remains on-track, within budget, and as stress-free as possible, identify a partner that is transparent about their procedure and how it helps answer all your questions to develop the perfect customized solution.

BLM’s process was specifically designed to walk businesses through each step of a digital signage strategy, ensuring that each piece of the puzzle is in place before moving on to the next step. That includes the formation of your dedicated in-house team of experts, the development of the digital signage strategy itself, the installation process, and much more. Here’s what you can expect from BLM Technologies’ comprehensive process.
1. Initial Discovery

The first step of BLM’s digital signage process is to have a conversation to get a better idea of your vision. We’ll discuss things like budget, estimated timeline, number of displays, and more. The information you gathered during the initial planning phase (starting on page 13) will be pivotal to this conversation, helping us build a strong foundation to work from.

If you’ve already developed your internal team of experts, be sure to invite them to this call. Their insight will be invaluable to the strategic development process, and their attendance will keep all parties clear on their next steps. If you haven’t developed your team or are unsure of how to do so, BLM will walk you through that process and help answer any questions you might have.

An important aspect of this step is identifying expectations from the various members of your team, the leadership at your facility, and BLM itself. Before truly diving into the process, it’s important that all parties start on the same page, and this initial conversation is designed to do just that.

2. Site Survey

Once we’ve built the foundation for your project and every member of the team is on board, it’s time to start building the framework for your digital signage strategy. To do that, we’ll send out a digital signage expert to perform an on-site survey. This will provide our team with a clear picture of where you hope to place digital signage and what your expectations are for how it will impact your visitors, patients, and staff members.

During the on-site survey, we’ll verify that the locations you have in mind for your displays will be viable. We’ll double-check that each location meets the following criteria:

- Has access to a power source
- Is suitable for digital signage (i.e. that it isn’t a cinder block outside wall)
- Will not suffer from glare or sun exposure during any time of day
- Provides optimum line of sight for viewers
- Will not impede foot traffic or day-to-day activities
- Will provide the most beneficial, intuitive experience possible

We’ll also meet with your IT team to discuss network, cybersecurity, and performance factors to ensure that our recommendations align with theirs.
3. Solution Design

Once we’ve built the framework for your project, we’ll put our heads together to develop a custom solution that best fits your timeline, budget, and vision. As a vendor-neutral digital signage provider, we’ll work with a variety of manufacturers to provide top-of-the-line performance for the best price. That means no long hours researching and comparing various hardware and software options yourself.

During this step, we’ll select the displays, media players, and software that most seamlessly fit your team’s needs and your overall vision. Once we’ve made our recommendations, we’ll walk you through each choice and elaborate on the capabilities of the components to confirm our visions are aligning.

4. Mockup & Demo

We believe it’s important to see a visual representation of what your digital signage network will look like before moving into installation. That’s why we always create a virtual mockup of our customers. This ensures that once installation begins, everything goes up exactly where desired and that all expectations are being met.

We’ll also send out a demo unit to help educate your marketing team on how the software you’ve chosen works. During this training session, we’ll walk you through the software’s capabilities and answer any questions you may have. Our team will also show you how simple it is to take a project from start to finish so that you can seamlessly move into content publication once your displays are installed.
5. Installation

Once everything has been approved and our team has been given the green light, we'll get to work bringing your vision to life. First, our professional installation team will consult with your facility to identify predictable lulls in patient or visitor traffic. This will ensure that work is performed at optimal times of the day and week, when it has the least impact on patient experience. We'll also work with your facilities manager to verify that all displays are up to code and adhering to any applicable policies.

6. Ongoing Support

Some digital signage providers believe that their work is complete once the customer's displays are installed; BLM Technologies understands the need for ongoing support and maintenance plans. If displays malfunction or break down, they can have the opposite effect of functioning displays — becoming detrimental to patient, visitor, and employee experiences.

BLM Technologies offers a wide range of support plans to fit your needs. Our ongoing support ensures that your signage stays up and running and that displays are repaired as quickly as possible if something does happen. Our expert team is also prepared to offer support if you decide your current digital signage network needs to be expanded, updated, or enhanced with further capabilities.
Conclusion

Digital signage has been proven time and again to be one of the most powerful, cost-effective, and transformative communications technologies on the market — impacting nearly every industry on the planet, including healthcare. Now that you are armed with insight into digital signage's many benefits, the pitfall of improper planning, the necessity of a cross-departmental team, and the general layout of an implementation process, you can feel confident moving into the development of your own strategy.

Remember, planning is the most crucial step to any successful campaign, so avoid rushing the information gathering and initial planning phases. Ensure that the team you build is committed to the success of the deployment and find the answers to any questions you’re unsure about. Most importantly, seek out a trusted partner like BLM Technologies that’s capable of bringing your vision to life and putting your hard work on display for all to see.

“Digital signage has been proven time and again to be one of the most powerful, cost-effective, and transformative communications technologies on the market.”
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About BLM Technologies

Spanning more than four decades, BLM Technologies has specialized in a wide spectrum of total technology solutions across many diverse industries. We made it one of our missions to provide strategic digital signage solutions that drive businesses forward, and with decades of technology expertise fueling us, we’ve been able to provide for our customers in ways that few others can. That includes end-to-end technology support — from initial hardware guidance and professional installation to ongoing maintenance and repair service. We may be four decades in, but we’re just getting started. We look forward to becoming your trusted digital signage partner.

Learn more at blmtechnology.com and follow us on Twitter @blmtechnology and LinkedIn.

Ready to get started with digital signage?

BLM is your one-stop shop for all your digital signage needs.

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