

DSE 2011 Showcases Dynamic Signage Maturity

By Lyle Bunn
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DSE 2011 set a significant new high water mark in terms of industry insights, information, contacts and business value.

While I have attended every Digital Signage Expo (DSE) and just about every other major industry event in the past ten years, never have I enjoyed and got so much value from a trade show and conference experience. The DSE delegates and the composition of event elements make it a primary event for dynamic display network information, to start new relationships and advance existing ones. DSE offers quality “face time” with industry leaders and innovators.

The elements of DSE2011 delivered the highest value in industry networking and relationship building that I have yet experienced in trade show and conference participation.

Over the busy, compressed period of just several days, the wide range of education, roundtable, keynote and specialty-subject addresses, awards, exposition and industry announcements were as well-scheduled as such an information-rich event could allow. The physical layout enabled easy access and minimized the transition time between areas of registration/connecting, keynote, conference sessions, show floor and special trade show floor focus areas such as the “Content Pavilion” and APEX Award display. The Digital Signage Federation (DSF) meeting area on the show floor with its very helpful and courteous volunteers offered a comfortable oasis, meeting place and useful industry and technical information from Digital Signage Expert Group (DSEG) and other DSF Education Committee members and executives.

While events, publications and association activity reflect the maturing of this high growth, high-value industry into its adulthood, DSE events have served this maturing well. While DSE has increased in its importance as a key point of insights, education, gathering and advancement of the industry, it has also advanced the positioning of the dynamic place-based media platform as part of the broader family of communications and marketing infrastructure that supports the success of brands, organizations, commerce, public safety and the experiences of patrons, visitors, patients, travelers, staff and students.

Presentations by PQ Media and many other industry “insiders”, show floor discussions and demonstrations and the APEX Award winners (which are covered in other event summaries and releases) illustrated the considerable progress of the “rising tide” of dynamic place-based media.

7-Eleven Network: The announcement by Harris Corp. in its providing the software and operating infrastructure for the significant 7-Eleven network reflected industry advancement and directions. Significant planning, assessment and a Request for Proposal

process had been undertaken by network owner DDN in selecting the Harris InfoCaster and Punctuate media platforms and Harris managed services. In being announced at DSE, 500 of the planned 6200 total stores (the nations largest network) are already operational using two displays per location, each with directional audio. Four minute loops present ads promoting 7-Eleven, in-store and out-of-store brands in ads of 7 to 15 second duration in five separate day-parts.

Viewer targeting with content and ad campaigns to the zip code and store profile level are inherent in the system. This very refined, “granular” level of playout location targeting is consistent with similar previous announcements by Harris Corp of systems for MacDonald’s, Amway Center (Orlando), Marina Bay Sands (Singapore), Bank of China.

Qualified audience: “Advertisers don’t buy screens, they buy audience” noted Mike DeFranza, Founder and President of Captivate Network in his presentation in “Transitioning the Business Model.” Captivate is the world’s largest in-office digital place-based network and DeFranza serves as Chair of the Digital Place-based Advertising Association (DPAA). He advised network operators that “small but well qualified viewer numbers are better than big unqualified numbers”.

Christian Vaglio-Giors, co-founder, CEO and Chairman of Neo Media Group noted that “DOOH is today part of the media landscape” as he outlined the increased economies of scale, Average Revenue per Unit (ARPU) and Revenue per Employee (RPE) offered when DOOH networks grow in scale.

Richard Ficher, president and CEO of Premier Retail Networks said “It’s about the experience, not the technology” noting that “custom content is the differentiator.” He used the term “branding zone” to describe the powerful use of visual media to introduce and reinforce brand messages in a retail or dining environment.

“Content is the Payload”: Shelley Palmer, who has received two Emmy Awards and is nominated for four more (to be announced April 3, 2011) spoke about “signs” and “relevance” in his opening keynote address.

“Anybody will watch anything, anywhere, anytime on the best available screen” noted media guru Palmer. In making his point that “social media is simply the instrument by which a compelling concept is presented and engaged” he noted that all signs “amplify a message.”

Palmer added “a sign is a TV message, billboard, printed ad, iPad, phone or any digital surface (because everything is digital now)” he reinforced that “Content is the payload” (*the Shuttle “Discovery” launched during DSE*). He urged brands, advertisers and providers of dynamic media to “focus on expressing concepts and ideas” as he reflected “a technology is meaningful when it changes the way people behave.”

“Demographic” is a DMA (Designated Market Area)” said Shelly Palmer in punctuating the importance that “relevance is the act of contextualizing a message” and that “hyper-local is really about hyper-personalizing.”

“He who is closest to the point of sale and decision with relevant messages wins” noted Palmer.

Effectiveness and economy: “The TV is not the center of the living room,” said Jose Avalos, Worldwide Director of Retail and Digital Signage, Intel Corp. in his day 2 DSE keynote address, adding, “the remote control is!” “The attractive, easily seen display at or near the point of purchase is the center of the communications continuum.” He continued by explaining that this central device has the capability to reach audiences in the environment while also triggering an “audience of one” engagement that might include an immediate mobile commerce or opt-in session with downloads and browsing, or a future internet session. “Don’t make the user feel hurried or watched,” he urged. “Let the end user take the information with them to consume how, when and where they want.”

Avalos reflected that dynamic place-based media is beyond speculation on “when” it will happen. “It has happened,” he said.

He indicated the need to continually advance reliability and scalability as dynamic media continued to provide increasingly functional place-based communications and economies. “Dynamic media delivers value at the point of engagement” Avalos said, adding that better relevance and engagement can be achieved by pushing media and processing to the network “edge” where display and interaction occur. “This “edge” processing reduces overheads and costs in many ways, including infrastructure, connectivity and efforts,” he said.

The Intel booth was a visit location for most delegates where gestural navigation and Intel® Audience Impression Metric (AIM) Suite were on display to illustrate location-based media engagement.

At a conference session on Anonymous Video Analytics, Intel’s Bill Colson reflected the key role that Intel® Audience Impression Metric (AIM) Suite plays in describing viewer demographic and display watching patterns, toward viewer metrics and refinement of content messages. “The digital signage market has a big challenge”, said Bill Colson, “the lack of affordable measurement is part of the reason digital signage has taken so long to gain traction in the advertising industry.” The value and applications of AVA was described by Raji Kalra, Managing Director, Planet-Tek using case studies that referenced Whole Foods, Harley-Davidson and other deployments. “It is all about maximizing the impact of Digital Signage and the investment in it,” said Colson.

Customer Engagement Technology World (CETW) in San Francisco, April 26-28, 2011 is the next major industry event. It will offer further insights and advancement to the way in which marketing and communications goals are served by dynamic place-based media. See you there!

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