

Why Effective Content on Digital Signage Drives Sales at Retail

By Philip M. Cohen, CEO, Cannabis Medical Network Holdings

There are many different kinds of shopping experiences, whether in-person at a brick and mortar location, on a store's website, or on a desktop, tablet, or mobile device. Customers visit a retail channel largely to shop – to choose among a myriad of products in vertical or horizontal categories.

People who are physically in a store location are poised to become customers – that's why they are there. However, when a consumer visits a highly specialized physical store location for a particular purpose, product, or experience, they are choosing to visit a *retail destination*.

What is a retail destination?

A retail destination not only provides products serving a single sector, but this type of location also will specialize in that sector, often supplying information and expertise unavailable at a general-purpose retail outlet. For instance, at a sports store, a customer can get a tip on his golf swing when purchasing a new putter, often along with other golf accessories. Or at a pet superstore, a consumer knows he or she can get grooming advice when going to purchase dog treats or other pet accessories.

This is an important distinction. A retail destination offers an unlimited ability to expand a consumer purchase every time a customer walks into the store. Why? Because everything offered is something they need now or will need in the future.

Expanding the Basket

Upselling is not new to retail, but operating a retail destination presents a unique opportunity to expand every sale by providing information and guidance. Customers do not know what they do not know. Presenting information that provides options that customers may not have previously considered is a reason to expand the purchase "basket" – enabling customers to buy more than they originally came in to buy.

Selling at the Point of Sale

Usually, by the time a customer has arrived in the store, he or she has done homework, culled through a series of options, identified purchase choices, and will make comparisons in person ahead of a final purchase decision.

But that does not mean that the customer is immune to in-store guidance. Impacting that decision at point of purchase is where digital signage shines. For example, when it comes to a cannabis dispensary, a digital screen gives the dispensary operator the ability to suggest and display a full list of options related to the product that brought the customer into the store. In a retail destination, that product should be just the beginning of the customer conversation.



However, the opportunity to cultivate customer engagement, provide additional information, and help guide each purchase to a more expansive conclusion is altogether dependent upon displaying effective content.

What is effective content?

Effective content is communication that compels a customer to consider products that did not make their short list. Effective content motivates the purchase of more product than what was initially planned, validates the original purchase intent, and/or prompts impulse purchases that were not initially being considered.

Effective content is informative and relevant. It is something new that the customer was not initially aware of and helps position the dispensary operator as an expert and resource for additional information. Effective content prompts customers to ask for more information or take a particular action.

What makes content effective?

Creating customer engagement is what makes content effective. But to be engaging, the message must first resonate with the audience. Content should address customer concerns and questions, which means content must be developed with the customer in mind. Knowing who the customer is and on what he or she will base a purchase decision is essential to ensuring that the customer will be interested in the information displayed.

Don't assume that information alone will suffice. To motivate customers to purchase, there should always be a call to action that encourages a purchase. Such motivation can encourage immediate purchase through showcased or "featured" products, "today's specials," or "buy one get one at half price" offers.

Developing a Digital Signage Content Strategy

Before crafting any message, it is essential to develop a content strategy to ensure that your communications are planned out, resonate with your target audience, and serve your business goals. Creating a strategy forces a retailer to think through the communication process, based on several points:



1. **Articulate business goals.** These could include sales goals for particular high-margin products; signing a certain number of customers up for regular e-newsletter communications to build a steady customer base; and/or communicating particular information to make sure customers are better educated about the products available.
2. **Identify Audience.** A rule that holds true in marketing is that 20 percent of the customers buy 80 percent of the goods. Knowing who fits into the 20 percent will allow retailers to speak and cater to a customer's needs, build long-term relationships, and upsell successfully.
3. **Create a Communications Calendar.** Your communication strategy should accommodate any seasonality in your market that changes buying patterns. Sometimes that means an influx of visitors, or the return of residents from vacations. Capitalize on gift-giving opportunities around established holidays and birthdays of those in your customer database.
4. **Plan Regular Message Updates.** Pay attention to the length of time customers spend in the store on average. How long is a customer's attention available to absorb whatever messaging you develop? Consider communicating in small "modules" of information that can be quickly absorbed and changed frequently so information is always new.

Designing the message.

When selling any product, it is essential to craft and communicate a customer-focused message, which means defining the goals and target audience comes before the message crafting and designing process. That means a retailer may wish to conduct a customer survey, which could be a simple in-store questionnaire tied to inviting customers to sign up to receive opt-in email information about new or featured products.

What if they don't buy *now*?

The value of a single consumer to a retailer is represented by what he or she will likely spend during the entire association with the store. That means that the relationship with a customer is much more important than the value of a single visit – no one likes to feel pressured. Every visit adds up to the lifetime sales total, so encouraging and guiding each encounter becomes an important step toward the next time the customer is in the store.



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