

Picture Perfect

Signage options ensure customers get the message

When it comes to digital signage, location can be almost as important as the message. It doesn't do much good to have dynamic graphics or clever messages if the customer can't readily see it. Not all structures are capable of supporting signage, and the best place for a sign might be in an area that doesn't have the capability to hold it. That's when it's time to call in an expert.

The focus of solutions from **Premier Mounts** is to provide its customers with the ability to maximize their digital experience by the strategic placement of audio and visual equipment and digital signage. The company can make recommendations during site surveys to determine the best places for maximum signage exposure and consumer engagement. Often, that spot might not have the structural capability for signage. That's where Premier Mounts' expert in-house engineers can creatively design a way to mount the digital signage.

"We draw on nearly 40 years of AV experience in order to provide our customers with innovative ways to deliver indoor and outdoor digital messaging," says Rich Pierro, co-CEO, Premier Mounts. "We engage with our customers as early in the process as possible, heading off potential challenges before they even arise."

Content strategy is also crucial, and Premier Mounts uses its long-standing partnerships with content management providers to help.

"The right content can increase revenue and direct customers to order higher-margin menu items," Pierro says. "Our content partners can educate our customers to develop the right content strategy for them."

There are a variety of quick-service and fast-casual AV solutions from Premier Mounts, including the Habitat Outdoor Digital Media System, a weather-resistant outdoor enclosure with a modular design to allow for expansion from single to double or triple displays using the same bolt pattern base plate. This unique, patent-pending solution has an operating temperature of 0–50 degrees Celsius without the use of air conditioning, resulting in approximately 70 percent energy consumption. It also features a unique air-flow system and positive airflow to keep out dust and dirt, and is IP56/NEMA 4 rated.

The Symmetry Series is an easy-to-use, configurable flat-panel display mounting solution



designed to provide easy installation and deliver precise alignment features to ensure perfect display bezel alignment. The solution offers a multitude of configurable options for wall, ceiling, and floor stands, and is great for digital menuboards and video walls and can reduce installation time.

The P-Series Low-Profile Tilting Mounts are for flat panels up to 175 pounds, typically with a display range of 26–65 inches. They feature post-installation leveling, lateral alignment, a locking security barrel, 10 degrees of continuous downward tilt, and an open mounting frame for easy access to power sources and cables.

Some restaurant owners become so used to static signage placement that they may overestimate its effectiveness; however, upgrading signage can offer customers a clearer message, enable rapid changes in promotions, improve upsell opportunities, and decrease the costs associated with continually printing and replacing menuboards.

Reductions in costs combined with improved technology over the past several years have made digital signage solutions more cost effective than ever before.

Peerless-AV, a Peerless Industries Inc. company, is a designer, manufacturer, and distributor of audio/visual solutions. The company offers sleek, modern, and cost-effective indoor and outdoor options especially suited for quick-service restaurants.

"The technology to upgrade your menuboard signage exists, and we have many solutions that were designed with the quick-service operator in mind," says Brian McClimans, vice president of global business development at Peerless-AV.

Peerless-AV's SmartMount Digital Menu Board Mounts, for example, allow for an easy installation of digital menuboards on any wall surface within the restaurant. Available in landscape and portrait layouts, the SmartMount line fits 40–42-inch and 46–48-inch displays, and offers eight points of micro adjustment for perfect alignment. All mounts in the line are also equipped with Peerless-AV's Increlok continuous and fixed tilt mechanism. With a ceiling adaptor kit, the mounts can be converted for projects requiring a ceiling mount.

"These solutions make installation a



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breeze, which can be a top concern for owners,” McClimans says. “There’s no need to worry about losing sales due to closing for renovations.”

McClimans adds that another advantage of upgrading technology is the increased ability to communicate with younger consumers.

“Today’s consumers, particularly youths, are digitally driven, and quick-service restaurants need to communicate with this in mind,” McClimans says. “Fresh content is the expectation and business operators have to move to the next medium to appeal to customers that demand things that are quick and eye-catching.”

For many operators, a hybrid signage solution can still work. For smaller operators, or those who don’t change the menu frequently, a static menu board combined with some digital technology might be the most cost effective.

“Our hybrid solution has been our biggest success so far,” says Paul Falkenbach, vice president of sales and marketing at **National Sign Systems**.

Falkenbach suggests augmenting static signage with a digital option as a pre-sell board to highlight specials or LTOs or in the interior, where customers are likely to spend additional time and may be more receptive to suggested selling by graphics or messaging.

In addition to providing standard packages, National Sign offers a customizable system that users can tailor to their specific store.

In addition to the successful hybrid MenuPlay model that combines a static VersaTrac menu board with a built-in, standalone, digital display, National now offers a robust SaaS solution. It provides content on multiple screens, scheduled playback, off-site content management, and hardware monitoring. Full-service content creation is also

available for either solution.

“Our hybrid solution and rotating signs still works for our clients,” Falkenbach says. “By adding our SaaS solution and expanding our content creation and design, we have solutions for every project, regardless of size.”

Protecting delicate digital equipment from the harsh outdoor elements and the public is another need being addressed by some solution providers.

ITSENCLUSURES designed its ViewStation QSR enclosure to house LCDs and other electronics in the harsh outdoor environments in quick-service drive-thru lanes. The company has developed and incorporated a proprietary air conditioner-less cooling system that allows functionality from -20–110 F, even with direct sunlight exposure. The ViewStation QSR enclosure system is UL Listed and built to meet NEMA 3R ratings.

To keep up with the growing demand of outdoor digital menuboards, ITSENCLUSURES recently announced its Third generation ViewStation QSR line.

“We were very excited to launch our Generation III outdoor digital menuboards in early 2015,” says J.T. Spangler, president of ITSENCLUSURES. “The new and improved ViewStation QSR models have reduced operating costs by as much as two-thirds from our original design. The Generation III does not employ a costly to operate A/C unit, but rather direct cooling, innovative filtration, and the latest in IPS (in-plane switching) display technology. This represents a big leap forward from our first generation enclosure product while employing the latest ‘green’ technology available.”

The third generation outdoor digital menuboards are designed around the use of the

most up-to-date IPS LCD panel. Newer display technology now offers screens that are brighter, with better colors and higher heat tolerance. Cooling of the enclosures requires only filtered ambient air, thus keeping operating costs down. The Generation III outdoor digital menuboards are leaner, sleeker, and more energy efficient compared to the company’s original QSR enclosure offering.

“Learning about our products is a crucial part to our success. We test our digital menuboards on site to help us innovate and improve our products,” Spangler says.

UniStructures Inc. is taking a radical approach to digital solutions for the quick-service environment. USI designs and builds everything from scratch, personalizing each brand’s interior or exterior digital solution to enhance the customer experience while maximizing specific digital functionalities. Combining 35 years of experience in the design and fabrication of drive-thru components with patented components and an array of custom extrusion designs, USI is able to produce a completely custom, personalized solution for each brand in 4–6 weeks.

USI designs and components are used in more than 50 brands and include personalized media components and digital functionality such as live “face-to-face” video, wireless technologies, touch-screen kiosk functionality, 3000 and 5000 NIT direct sunlight readable displays, and interior solutions ranging from 32-inch to 84-inch diagonal screens.

“Our drive-thru sunlight readable displays are the industries’ brightest and most reliable and none of them require heaters and air conditioning to survive even extreme environments,” says Robert Creasy, vice president of business development at USI. “While many of the components are the same, each USI enclosure is uniquely designed to support the display being used and the technology being supported by the individual brand’s solution. There is nothing ‘off the shelf’ at USI.”

Teaming with most of the POS, OCU, and audio vendors’ solutions, USI also modifies its enclosures to support any third-party components to enable brands to craft drive-thru solutions with components of their choice for the order taking and confirmation processes. Taking the “solution” concept a step further, USI designs interior and exterior menu board enclosures to be field convertible from print to digital to protect the franchisee’s initial capital investment.

“USI constantly drives the technology envelope to value engineer and reduce cost to the quick-service brands while personalizing components and addressing issues other providers are ignoring,” Creasy says.