



GREAT SIGNS AT GREAT PRICES



10 Things to Know Before You Buy an Outdoor LED Sign

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Chapter 1: Meet the LED: Master of Efficiency

Lighting can end up being more expensive than most people think, especially for larger buildings. Anyone looking to cut back on energy costs should seriously consider the benefits of LED lighting, like those who use light-up outdoor signs that tend to eat up a good amount of energy.

About LED Signs

Instead of using traditional light-up outdoor signs, businesses should consider the use of LED (light emitting diode) outdoor signs. LED signs last longer than traditional signs, use less energy, and produce less heat, making them a superior option to normal light-up signs. There are a number of benefits towards investing in LED signs, which include:

- LED lights won't burn out because, unlike traditional light bulbs, LEDs don't have filament. Instead of burning out, they dim over the course of 11+ years, or roughly 100,000 hours.
- LED signs consist of individual panels known as modules. They basically allow the sign to be configured to any size, and make it easy for business owners to program and schedule different messages on the sign using software on a computer that is controlling the sign.
- Each LED sign is arranged in pixels. Most high quality signs have three LEDs per pixel in order to provide higher resolution.

Saving Money

The less energy that is used, the more a building owner will save on their utility costs. While LED lights may cost more initially, it's the long-term savings that make the investment worthwhile. In addition to using less energy than traditional lights, LEDs last much longer, so building owners won't have to pay for repairs or replacement very often.

Chapter 2: Learn the Jargon

When choosing an LED sign, there are many important factors to consider. Three of these are pixels, pitch, and matrix. Understanding the meaning of these three words will help you immensely when trying to decide between sign manufacturers and different models.

Pixels

Signs are made of many tiny LEDs, which are grouped together into larger groups known as pixels. Pixels can be comprised of anywhere from 1 to 25 LEDs. Larger pixels are better for viewing at a distance, while smaller pixels are better for close-up viewing. If you are familiar with the pixels used on standard computer screens, the concept is similar here.

Pitch

The term pitch refers to the distance from the center of one pixel to another. The more densely packed the pixels, or the smaller the pitch, the sharper the image appears.

Matrix

A matrix is the number of horizontal and vertical pixels, which gives you the physical size of the sign. For example, a sign that is 50 pixels tall and 100 pixels wide has a matrix of 50x100.

Examining a sign's pixels, pitch and matrix helps you decide whether it will effectively meet your needs. Always ask a sales representative about these factors before making a purchase.

Chapter 3: How These Factors Affect the Sign

For business owners, choosing to purchase an LED sign is an excellent idea. LED signs allow them to change their messages or to spread their message over multiple statements, both major advantages over traditional billboards. The following are important factors that business owners should consider when choosing LED signs.

- **Pixel:** The LED lights are grouped together in pixels. The amount of lights per pixel varies. The more LED lights in a pixel, the higher quality the sign will be.
- **Pitch:** Consider, for example, two LED signs of the same height and width. The one that has the smaller, tighter pitch will emit a crisper image. Whether you need a sign with a smaller or larger pitch depends on how your sign will be viewed. For clean close-up viewing, select a lower pitch, like 16 mm. For clear viewing from a distance, choose a higher pitch, like 89 mm.
- **Matrix:** The matrix determines how many pixels high and wide a sign is. It determines the actual physical size of the sign. The matrix is important because it determines how many characters will fit on each line. This is a vital consideration when choosing color LED signs. Choose an ideal matrix based on sign location, your viewing distance, and the size of your message to be displayed.
- **Color or Monochrome:** Business owners will need to determine if a color LED sign will be more effective for them than a monochrome sign. This isn't always the case and depends a lot on what the business owner is trying to achieve with his or her messages. If only text is going to be used, then color isn't really necessary.

Chapter 4: Location, Location, Location!

Before you purchase your LED sign, it is essential that you think about the location where you will be displaying it. This determines the type of sign you'll need to purchase and helps you make decisions about size, message display type, and color.

Viewing Distance

How far away from your sign will people be when they see it? If they will be in traffic on a nearby road, for example, you need a much larger sign and larger text than if they will be right next to the sign while walking on the sidewalk. As a general guideline, you can read 20-inch letters at a distance from 600 feet and 2-inch letters from a distance of 60 feet.

When thinking about viewing distance, also keep sign pitch in mind. Signs with a higher pitch, or pixels that are further apart, are best for viewing at a distance, while those with a lower pitch are better for close-up viewing.

Zoning Ordinances

Spend some time researching ordinances and building codes in the location where you'll be displaying your sign. Many zones place limits on sign sizes and brightness. You'll save time and money by doing this research before you buy, rather than finding out once your sign is up that it's in violation.

Deciding where a sign will be placed should be one of the first steps you take in developing signage for your business. LED signs provide effective advertising in many locations, but the necessary characteristics of a good sign vary greatly dependent on your location.



Chapter 5: Construction of an LED sign

Constructing and installing an LED sign is an excellent investment for your business. An LED sign gives you the power to target your messaging and reach out to prospective customers. It's important to be fully aware of the construction and installation process for your new LED sign.

Make sure to consider:

- **Local building codes:** Local municipalities have different requirements and guidelines for the installation of LED signs. These codes are designed to protect the general public from endangerment. Understanding the restrictions in the sign codes is the first step to proper construction. Not following these codes may likely result in the sign having to be removed or replaced.
- **Insured contractors:** Construction and installation of an LED sign can be complicated and potentially dangerous if not handled properly. An improperly installed sign can fall off of the building, catch on fire, cause an electrical problem, or fall apart. Hiring an insured sign contractor helps reduce the likelihood of anything going wrong. Working with an insured and licensed professional sign company is the best way to protect your investment and avoid delays.
- **Proper installation:** The proper installation of an LED sign depends on a myriad of factors. The sign's weight, specific surveying results, the building's characteristics, and the local area's weather conditions can all have an impact on installation. Working with an experienced team is the best way to ensure these factors don't impact the sign's installation.

Installing a high quality LED sign can be a significant investment. Understanding the basics of the construction process is essential to protecting this investment and guaranteeing your new sign lasts for many years to come.



Chapter 6: Send a Clear Message

Business owners who invest in an LED sign may feel overwhelmed initially by the task of creating and displaying a clear message. What should be included? Who should you be targeting? How often should you vary the sign's message? Don't worry; creating an effective LED marketing strategy doesn't need to be difficult or overwhelming! A few simple tips can help business owners understand the process of creating a clear message:

- **Understand your customer:** Standing out from a crowded field can be difficult! An LED sign is an excellent way to target new customers using specific messaging created to match the current customer profile. Because the sign is easily updated from your computer, you can vary the messaging depending on the time of day, customer demographics, and shifts in your strategic marketing plan.
- **Match your branding and advertising:** Many of your potential customers likely already know about your business because you've put established branding and advertising to work. Investing in an LED sign allows you to align your digital messaging with your branding by creating a customized and adaptable display.
- **Put your sign to work:** An LED sign allows you to craft a clear and concise message that can be easily modified. You can also use the board to include multiple pieces of information. For example, you can advertise current specials or promotions while integrating public service information.

Creating an efficient and clear message isn't difficult. You need to know your customer, adapt to the changing demographics, and align the message with your established branding. Investing in an LED sign can help attract new customers and boost your business from the first day it is installed.

Chapter 7: Getting to Know Your Software

Will the message that your business sends to potential customers change over time? If so, then it's important that you look closely at the software that's integrated with any LED sign you're considering purchasing. You'll want an intuitive system that you can use without struggle, and one that integrates with the computer systems you have available.

Software is usually included with your LED sign, so it's wise to make sure the software is adequate before making a purchase. Good LED sign software should satisfy several basic requirements. It should allow you to edit and schedule your message center sign from any location by using just one program. This is incredibly useful when you are on-the-go. It should also allow you to preview graphics before they're displayed, so you don't accidentally run a less-than-perfect image to your potential clients.

There are several other qualities to look for in good LED sign software. A Software Key for security requires you to enter a password before changing your sign's message. This is essential to protect yourself from hackers or criminals. Automatic adjustment for daylight savings time is a valuable feature, as is an adjustment option for the length of time for a scrolling text message.

As you run your business, you may find that additional staff members need to learn how to update and make changes to your sign. Look for a sign manufacturer that offers training and support for the software used for their LED signs. This will help you immensely when training new employees or when learning how to better utilize the sign yourself.

In addition to the qualities above, make sure that the software that comes with your sign is compatible with your existing computer system. Following these steps allows you to get the most out of your LED display.



Chapter 8: Stay on the Right Side of the Law

While an electronic sign is a great way to advertise a business, business owners can't just throw them up wherever they see fit. There are certain laws and building codes that have to be followed concerning electronic signs. The following are a few things that business owners should keep in mind:

Traffic Safety

There are a number of regulations concerning the use of electronic signs to aid in driver safety. The following are a few of the things that business owners will have to keep in mind if they plan on placing their electronic signs near traffic, such as by the side of the road:

- **Longitudinal locations:** In order to ensure that drivers aren't distracted, sign codes have integrated rules concerning the spacing between signs. This is a relatively easy code to abide by.
- **Lateral locations:** This rule concerns how close the signs are placed to the road. This is a legitimate concern, since no business owner wants to be at fault for a traffic accident that had to do with their sign.
- **Total information cycle:** Business owners that break up messages into segments will want to make sure that drivers can read through the entire message while driving by, while also taking caution not to distract the driver.

There have been concerns over the years about driver awareness and focus when they are attempting to read the messages on electronic signs. For the most part, studies have shown these to be unfounded concerns, but business owners should be sure that they comply with all safety codes in order to avoid losing money on fines or having to revise their messages.

Chapter 9: Cost/Benefit Analysis of a Sign

According to the Small Business Administration (SBA), an LED sign is incredibly effective at driving traffic for a business. Small businesses that use an LED sign saw an average increase in business of up to 150%. This surge in customers brings more money into the business, and will increase the company's profile in the local community. You can calculate the amount of time it will take to pay off the sign by comparing your increase in monthly profits after the sign's installation to the overall investment. You may be pleasantly surprised at how quickly you see a return on your investment.

Type of Advertisements	Impressions Per Month (potential customers)	Cost Per Month
Radio	11,000	\$4000
Newspaper	17,000	\$9000
LED Sign	35,000	\$1000

Compared to other forms of traditional advertising, the cost of an LED sign is incredibly competitive. For example, the SBA estimates radio advertising typically reaches around 11,000 customers for an average monthly cost of around \$4,000. Newspaper advertising reaches nearly 17,000 customers for estimated \$9,000 per month. Comparing this to the cost and reach of an LED sign, nearly 35,000 customers for a roughly \$1,000 monthly investment, proves that an LED sign is an effective way to market your business for a fraction of the overall cost.

Installing a new LED sign can be a significant investment for your business. You want to be assured that this purchase will pay off in additional revenue and new customers. The cost/benefit analysis of an LED sign indicates the investment is a wise one and will benefit your company for years to come.

Chapter 10: Long-Term Maintenance/Warranty

Purchasing a high quality LED outdoor sign for your business is an excellent way to advertise. Investing in a sign that will last and is as cost- and energy-efficient as possible should be important in the purchasing decision of every business owner. However, business owners also need to consider the service after the sale. The following are some of the services that business owners should look for in the warranty of an LED outdoor sign:

- **Continued support and diagnostics:** Because LED signs are electronic, technical issues can arise, especially considering the fact that the signs are controlled via software and computers. It's important that the warranty offers some kind of support and diagnostics to business owners in order to help solve such issues.
- **Delivery and installation:** Once the sale is made, business owners aren't going to want to pick up the sign and install it on their own. Doing so can be a huge hassle, especially considering how difficult installation of an electronic sign can be. The seller of the signs should provide on-time delivery, assistance with coordinating field crews, and assistance with the set up and launch of Internet connectivity for control of the sign's messaging.
- **Field service assistance:** Sometimes things can go wrong with the sign that aren't software related. If this is the case, business owners will want someone to go out to the sign's location in order to make any necessary repairs. Many sign companies will provide a field service dispatch using a network of technicians to ensure the sign will be back up and running as quickly as possible.



In Conclusion

Outdoor LED signs are a great way to promote your business' brick and mortar location, but knowing all the elements of it are especially crucial. If you are interested in hearing more about these types of signs, please contact us today at Signdealz.



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