

CASE STUDY - SL Graphics

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- David Savage, MD, SL Graphics

Company Profile

For over a decade, SL Graphics has specialised in large format digital print, taking projects from initial design stage all the way through to finishing (laminating and mounting) and installation on site.

Large format digital print products include posters from A2 size and up, including six-sheet to 48-sheet billboards, backdrops and pull-up banners, backlit signage, PVC banners, etc. SL Graphics are experts in providing dynamic solutions to deliver messages and branding for maximum impact with the target audience.

As screen-based technologies have become increasingly affordable, it was a logical next step for SL Graphics to expand into digital signage.

'We've always asked ourselves *What's next? What's going to be the next new thing in digital communication?* and we saw this as the way the future was going,' says David Savage, MD of SL Graphics. 'We always knew it was coming, but for a long time it was just too expensive to set up. Now, with prices having plummeted, this is the way the market is going.'

The Power of Digital Signage

Savage points out that posters still have their place, but in many instances they have lost their ability to capture an audience's attention. Many markets are suffering a kind of poster overkill.

'It's too much of *same ol', same ol'*, says Savage, 'it's getting really hard to grab your attention.'

On the other hand, digital signage has an inherent capability of grasping and retaining attention, through movement, ever-changing content, colour and even sound.

Besides the obvious advertising benefits, digital signage also makes it possible to enhance in-house communications, for instance by broadcasting a staff briefing to all staff throughout the company, at specific times. It is also possible to prioritize data to run at specific times, regardless of what else is playing on the screens, for instance when a bank needs to broadcast an urgent update of APRs.

'The versatility is just amazing,' says Savage.

Comparing digital signage with print media and light box technology, Savage pointed out that the time between approval of artwork and its deployment could be two weeks or more, but that with digital signage, things move much more swiftly.

‘If we sign off on artwork this morning, it could be nationwide in half an hour,’ he says.

Although digital signage is now being most widely embraced by large organisations like the bigger financial institutions, Savage is confident that it will soon replace light boxes, even in smaller businesses who will eventually come to appreciate its many benefits.

However, in order to catch this ‘wave of the future,’ the initial challenge was for SL Graphics to find a supplier they could rely on, to provide absolute confidence to their clients. They began by experimenting with several packages and suppliers, but they kept coming up against hidden costs such as monthly network charges or 3G connections, lots of things that would substantially increase the cost, despite an apparently low initial price.

Enter Radiant Europe

When Savage eventually met Daragh Kelly of Radiant Europe, he was pretty well jaded, and frustrated with the shortcomings of the suppliers he’d approached. But Radiant was a breath of fresh air.

‘When I met Daragh, I knew I’d found a company that was straightforward. He was someone who made it clear up front what we needed for our clients, and all costs involved, so there’s no guesswork and no surprises.’

An SL Graphics’ client, Permanent TSB, wanted to install digital signage in 107 branches throughout the country. It was an important commission and an ambitious project that required top quality screens and media players (PCs) and software that enabled absolute control over content. Radiant was able to deliver, supplying 170 32” LCD screens (some locations had two or even three screens, working off a single media player), managed by Ryarc’s CampaignManager software.

Equally importantly, Radiant was always available to provide advice, resolve issues and provide backup support.

‘I’ve a great working relationship with Daragh,’ says Savage ‘he’s a great sounding board for all kinds of technical issues.

‘We’ve learned a lot in the process of working with Radiant,’ he adds, ‘rather than simply troubleshooting, they take you through the process so that you understand how to deal with similar issues that may crop up in the future. But even now it’s good to know I’ve someone behind me, who’ll be there if I need him.’

Absolute Control

SL Graphics doesn’t only supply content creation along with Radiant’s hardware and software; they also provide network monitoring and scheduling of campaigns, and with CampaignManager software, this is a breeze.

With Radiant's system in place, SL Graphics can now monitor all 170 screens simultaneously, create new content to run only on certain screens at certain times, or on all screens at once, reacting immediately to Permanent TSB's changing needs.

'I can see what's going on in any screen, in any location in the country,' Savage says.

As an ongoing maintenance check, each screen 'pings back' to his office (sends an audible signal to indicate that the screen is working properly) every 15 minutes or so.

'I know within minutes if a screen has gone down, for any reason, and can usually get it sorted in seconds over the phone,' says Savage.

Most causes of screens going offline are simple: a loose power cord or cable, a temporary power cut, etc. However, from their central location SL Graphics can run full diagnostics, implement upgrades, change settings, etc, in any or all of the 107 Permanent TSB locations nationwide.

Cost Effectiveness

Many people are still put off by the initial cost of setting up a digital signage system, but Savage insists that it is more cost-effective than people believe. He says that after the initial expenditure on hardware, which is getting less expensive all the time, the investment will last long into the future, and the value of the space will increase exponentially, with the company being able to change the data they project on a weekly, daily, even hourly basis.

'Say you have an A1 poster space,' he hypothesises, 'You have a guy standing in a queue in a branch, for two minutes in front of a static ad ... I guarantee you he won't read it. But with digital signage, his attention is immediately captured with engaging content such as news, sports clips, etc, and he can experience four separate 30-second ads in that same two minutes. You tell me which is the most cost-effective use of that space!'