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THE DRIVE-THRU PERFORMANCE STUDY

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ARE YOU MAXIMIZING DRIVE-THRU ORDERS?

Making the Change

The move to digital signage is gaining traction.

Digital signage is becoming the norm rather than the exception as many operators are moving away from manual boards, both inside and out, in an effort to attract attention and excite customers.

With digital signage, menu changes, promotions, and other alterations are done automatically, and at the exact moment they are supposed to happen. Promotions and cross-selling are made easier, making digital signage a marketing tool.

One significant trend in the drive thru is the evolution of order confirmation from an operations tool to a marketing tool, says Dennis Davidson, president of **Texas Digital**. “Historically, order confirmation has been used to improve speed of service and to enhance order accuracy,” Davidson says. “With the emergence of digital signage, our clients’ marketing teams are engaged in the technology components of the drive thru, often for the first time. Essentially, the order confirmation and digital signage solutions are converging.”

Texas Digital’s solutions include the hardware and software components to deploy a fully digital experience for the drive thru. These solutions include products for presell merchandising, the menuboard, and the order confirmation functionality.

There is an increasing interest in taking digital signage into the drive thru, according to Jan Malinovsky, director of QSR sales at Texas Digital. Malinovsky says that drive-thru signage is about two years behind its indoor counterparts but reliability and costs have improved to the point that digital signage in the drive thru should be a serious consideration for the industry.

“Digital signage content is maturing, and the trends are toward a higher level of automation of content,” Malinovsky says. “Higher levels of automation generally mean integrating the digital signage content management system with the client’s POS or back-office systems to map POS, caloric, or restaurant profile data. Digital signage can be difficult to deploy in multiple locations because of subtle differences. To automate content there must be a continuous data feed from our corporate customers.”

On August 1, Texas Digital was acquired by Radiant Systems, which was subsequently acquired by NCR Corporation on August 24. The acquisition allows Atlanta-based Radiant to meld its point-of-sale technology with Texas Digital’s order confirmation and digital signage for retail and hospitality industries, and those two technologies will in turn



further enhance offerings to NCR customers.

“While Texas Digital will continue to offer its QSR product suite to all brands regardless of their POS provider, the convergence with Radiant will offer an even tighter integration for customers who combine their Radiant POS with a Texas Digital solution,” Malinovsky says.

There are also “soft” benefits to implementing digital signage, says Jeff Collard, president of **Omnivex**, such as the ability to make changes in a nimble fashion, segment markets by dayparts or geographical area, or target specific audiences.

“Although the initial expense may seem daunting, the experience is well worth the investment,” Collard says. “There is more to digital menuboard than just posting menu items, and the cheapest solution is rarely the most cost-effective one.”

The newest trend in the digital arena, says Diane Longoria, director of marketing at **Pointsmith**, an at-store, point-of-purchase management company, is combining digital with mobile technology. Ideally, she says, mobile technology is simply another marketing tool in the kit for restaurant operators. Traditional static menuboard are still useful because many items are a permanent part of the menu, while digital menuboard can be used for promotional items or limited-time offers to boost sales for those products. Mobile technology is the future, and it offers unique opportunities for quick-serve restaurants.

For now, all three technologies can work together.

Wireless Ronin has taken a leadership position in tying together the fragmented marketing technologies to maximize customer experience and spend, including signage, interactive kiosks, mobile, social media, and Web, enabling operators to transform how they engage with their customers.

“Creating smart content has been an important point of distinction and pride for Wireless Ronin for over 20 years,” says Erin Haugerud, manager of communications and investor relations. “Getting your message in front of your audience is the easy part. The hard part is creating smart content that resonates with your audience, is memorable, and results in a positive and measurable reaction.”

Florida Plastics is actively engaged in the development of digital solutions for both indoor and outdoor merchandising, understanding that digital applications continue to migrate into quick serves, especially in menuboard. It’s important to remember, says Tom Radtke, vice president of sales, that in addition to the equipment side of the equation, there is also the process of understanding customers and their buying habits and directing the correct message to them at different points throughout the restaurant.

“After all,” he says, “whether it’s digital or traditional signage, it really is about the message and the strategic approach to what you show your customer to influence purchase behavior.”