

NEC Display Solutions for the Automotive Industry

In a world that's becoming increasingly fast-paced, on-demand and interconnected, going digital is a necessary transition for today's dealership. But it's hard to know where to begin. With so many options and so many changes in the digital marketplace, researching and deciding on the right visual display solution costs you time and money in and of itself. Instead, you can take advantage of the knowledge and resources of NEC's automotive industry experts, who are well equipped to tailor a display system designed specifically to meet the growing needs of automotive dealers. Using this guide, you can prepare yourself with some common questions and issues to consider when starting a conversation about digital signage systems.



How does a dealer benefit from a digital signage system?

Reinforces your brand image. Digital signage can power your brand with a consistent message, whether it's to promote the national marketing of the parent manufacturer, or the localized image of a single dealership. Loop an exclusive Super Bowl spot from the parent manufacturer the day of the big game, rather than waiting for the courier to deliver a DVD. Logos and their accompanying color palettes are presented in optimal, true form. The color and image accuracy of professional-grade LCD screens, combined with NEC's award-winning SpectraViewII™ technology, far surpasses the varying reproduction quality of printed signage. Additionally, consumers are able to interact with your brand using a digital medium on all sensory levels, adding to the overall experience. You have the flexibility of using photo images, movie files, or even relevant news feeds. No more battling with the manufacturer over promotional signage — split the screen with messaging for both your local dealership and their national marketing.

Increases staff product knowledge and customer sales.

With higher turnover rates, it's difficult to train every new sales employee to readily memorize all the details and statistics that go along with each vehicle. By using interactive displays and kiosks, your sales team can absorb information on the spot, or refer customers to the information on screen. A more informed environment adds volumes to consumer perception. The customer will feel knowledgeable enough to move forward with the sale. To further ensure your ROI, feedback and data from your customer can be used to efficiently place orders and move inventory; if customers are picking burgundy over other color options for a particular model, you can justify ordering more vehicles in burgundy.

Decreases perceived wait time. Rather than test your customer's patience as they're waiting for service, you can give them something to watch to take their mind off things. You may choose to entertain them with TV access, but with display systems you also have the option of educating them about your current sales promotions, service specials and new product offerings. Video adds more drama and glitz to the vehicles in your showroom, as customers can watch them in action, winding through countryside and cliffs. Show off new vehicle features on screen that differentiate you from the competition. Your prospective buyer will see the added value, whether it's the newest fuel-efficient V-8 SUV, or the minivan with the industry's highest safety ratings.

Saves on costs. Static posters and banners are costly to replace over time, especially if you want your content to remain relevant and interesting to the consumer. Going digital saves a step in the production process by going straight from the design phase to live display; no more waiting on printed materials and paying extra for expedited shipping and insurance. By playing a slideshow of JPEG files or video clips in MPEG format, you're able to use common media formats and convey as many messages as you need on one screen, rather than facing the clutter of posters and POS displays. To further help your budget, NEC offers its Total Trade™ replacement and recycling program, which updates your outdated technology equipment with the latest NEC displays. The trade includes regulatory-compliant removal of industrial waste and the paperwork process of verifying it — saving you not only unexpected costs but also time.

Helps reduce your environmental impact. Digital signage is an immediate solution to reducing your overall usage of paper, ink and plastics. NEC displays are not only recyclable, but contain less hazardous materials. In partnering with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), NEC has become very active in developing policies and guidelines to create a more environmentally conscious industry.

Reaches your network's full potential. Simply by using your office's wireless network, you can set up and control your entire display system from a single point of access — whether it's multiple screens in one dealership, or screens across multiple dealerships. Program when your displays turn on and off according to business hours. The system is also equipped with self-monitoring software to prevent black screens, checking for those in need of maintenance and automatically sending an e-mail to the support team.

Enhances your existing infrastructure. A new digital signage system can be smoothly integrated into your current inventory and POS system, with user-friendly templates to help efficiently create fresh content. Marketing and IT departments are able to collaborate more easily through its all-in-one software, while also encouraging other teams such as service and finance to participate and provide promotional ideas. Branding and sales can finally live on the same screen.

Initial concerns when considering a digital signage system:

This will be too expensive. Financing options are available with attractive pricing, terms and delivery options. You could also consider entering an NEC-sponsored pilot program that tests how a potential system would work in a few of your key locations. In a pilot program, NEC absorbs part or all of the initial hardware, software and installation costs for the pilot location or locations. Once the system has proved itself, NEC can help roll out the digital signage solution to the rest of the dealership network.

This will be too difficult. While a learning curve is expected, in-person and online tutorials are available to prepare your staff for the transition. Web logins make it easy for you to make changes from any location, while service support is available 24/7. NEC can bring coordinated deployment services to ensure deadlines are met, and if possible, with minimum impact on the dealership work environment. Your project management team will be able to move the effort forward from start to finish with periodic updates and installation status reports. More often with dealerships, off-hours installation and service are needed and can easily be scheduled to avoid compromising showroom hours. Also, NEC can serve as your liaison among union trades to coordinate the installation of electrical outlets, low-voltage wiring and network infrastructure. Very minimal workload is asked of the dealership staff.

Should I do this myself, or have the manufacturer pay for it? It's common for interactive elements like kiosks to be sponsored by the manufacturer, whereas the overall site systems are purchased locally.

How would I keep content fresh? Your marketing department is currently using the same content creation tools as those used to "feed" the digital signage network. With digital signs, you can dynamically change the content, increasing the ROI on the same content. For dealerships without access to content assets, NEC can help create

digital marketing messaging at a monthly fee. Templates can be created to custom-fit your branding guidelines and provide you with an even easier way to update information. It's important to realize that content can make or break your digital signage system, so a dedication to content renewal needs to be established early on.

There are too many options. Which do I choose? You have several scenarios to consider: is your display system customized and networked to offer the flexibility to grow with your business, or does it only offer you a package deal that's good enough for today? Is it done through one point of contact, or are there several vendors to contract separately? Do they offer expertise specific to your industry, or are you their first automotive customer? The easiest solution for any situation is to deal with a "one stop shop" like NEC, offering total customized solutions through one point of contact.

What are some general digital display solutions for dealers?

Though some visual display companies may try to convince you otherwise, there is no single “out of the box” solution. Each dealer may have their own unique set of challenges and business goals, and there are multiple ways of achieving each one, simple or complex.

If you’re looking for a simple way to translate traditional signage into a digital medium, consider a basic flash memory-based media player (like an industrial DVD player). If you’re intending to gain feedback and data from your customer, consider a networked kiosk. If you just want to create a “wow-factor” within the showroom, consider a video wall to show off your vehicles in action, super-sized. Solutions can vary in complexity according to the size of your dealership(s), budget and IT comfort level. That’s why it helps to have a custom-built system that meets your basic needs today, but prepares you for tomorrow’s growth.

Beyond your hardware components, you’ll also be deciding on a network solution to support your displays:

A SaaS/ASP Network is an external server that resides outside of your company’s network. While you own the hardware, you only have to subscribe to the software. No

maintenance is required on your part. Access is done through a browser-based user interface. SaaS/ASP is preferred when you have a tight timeline (one-day turnaround), a smaller budget, or have limited bandwidth and IT staff to handle day-to-day maintenance. It’s not recommended when you’re dealing with large-scale security issues or require more sophisticated consumer data retrieval (such as using interactive kiosks).

A LAN/WAN Network is an internal server that resides within your company’s network and firewall. You own both the hardware and the software, allowing for complete customization (such as designing interactive kiosk data retrieval). Access is done through a browser-based user interface. LAN/WAN is preferred when your existing company network requires firewall protection, or when your displays demand more sophisticated software writing. It’s not recommended for quick turnaround or those with limited resources.

What are some challenges NEC might face with dealers?

Going local versus national. Most dealerships are franchised with many different brand families. While many situations are dealt with on a local level, the best way to ensure standardization is by going directly to the parent manufacturer, who can delegate from their main office.

IT department is overburdened. Many times the dealer’s IT department will balk at the thought of a new networked system to maintain; fortunately, NEC offers 24/7 service, in-system maintenance checks, and user-friendly tutorials within the software. The marketing department is able to control content on their own, without having to bother IT.

Upfront costs are too high. NEC can offer the most basic “sneakerware” systems, usually built around a simple flash-based media player (or even an industrial DVD player). A SaaS/ASP system can also be offered for those with limited budgets and resources to get started. These systems are networked so that more sophisticated components can be added later on when the dealer is ready.

“TV and PowerPoint are good enough” attitude. This do-it-yourself approach actually adds more burden to the staff, more costs in installment, and fails to meet the full potential of dynamic digital technology. Using TV (CATV, HD satellite sources) is fine for entertaining the client but there is no added value for the dealership. You also wouldn’t want to see a competitor’s TV commercial play on the screen. PowerPoint is a great presentation tool, however, you can’t schedule the content to play automatically at a certain time and date. If the person responsible for maintaining the PowerPoint presentation is unexpectedly out of the office, then you will have old or inaccurate content displaying. There’s so many ways to go wrong when transitioning into a digital signage system. Instead, learn from NEC’s experience. Not only does NEC know what to do, but more importantly, what NOT to do.

Who are the key decision makers?

Management, marketing and IT departments. Most dealerships are franchised with minimal input from the manufacturer. Some franchises own multiple dealerships and operate individually. In dealing with more kiosk-type solutions that involve data retrieval, most of the time the manufacturer's corporate marketing department acts as the point of contact.

What are some qualifying questions to ask?

Current Equipment/Platform

What kind of signage do you currently use?
What kind of content is on playing on your screens?
Do you know what digital signage is?
How big a part does digital signage play in your marketing plan?
Are you currently working with a digital signage provider?

Budget

How much money do you spend per year on your marketing (static signs, ads)?
Has a budget been set aside for digital signage?
How many systems would you need per dealership?

Usage

What are your intended goals with a digital signage system?
How will you use the technology? (Promote sales or build your brand?)
Will you need to retrieve data and feedback from your customer?

Integration

How quickly do you need to deploy?
Would you prefer start-to-finish project management or working with your own vendors?
What screen sizes did you have in mind?
Do you prefer wall- or ceiling-mounted screens?
Are you a union or non-union shop?

Operation

Who will be managing the system's day-to-day operation?
Who is responsible for content?
If the parent manufacturer is sponsoring a system, will the local dealership have input?

Image Quality

Would you like high definition-quality playback?
Do you have high-quality videos and photos of your vehicles?
Are you interested in RSS news feeds that crawl across the screen?
Do you need to show regular TV programming?

Network Requirements

What kind of IT infrastructure do you currently have?
Do you currently have an IT department?
Do you have an electric and/or network connection at your location or nearby?
Do you use a WAN/LAN?
Do you currently have a wireless network?
Do you have any bandwidth restrictions?
What network security protocol is required?
What are the steps in creating a digital display solution?

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Project Kickoff

1. Project kickoff. Your NEC representative will meet with key decision makers to assess several factors — timeline, ROI model, budget, and generally, what your needs and expectations are for your digital signage system. In collaboration with manufacturing partners, NEC develops a tailored, end-to-end solution, which is reviewed and approved among all involved parties, such as your marketing and IT staff.

2. Project deployment. NEC acts as a general contractor in placing orders with vendors, scheduling installations, securing insurance, and finalizing any application/content requirements among your IT and marketing departments. A site survey is performed to determine the best placements for your digital signage — how foot traffic flows, key decision points, proper infrastructure, electrical issues, etc.. Upon final approval from the key decision makers, the first set

Project Deployment

Pilot Assessment

of systems are shipped to your location. After system installation, testing and equipment inspection, your staff is trained and tutorials are created as needed.

3. Pilot assessment. If you've chosen to go through with a pilot program, this is when you start receiving feedback from customers, employees and advertisers. An ROI analysis is performed, and a timeline is created for additional deployments, as well as any enhancements to the current system. The effectiveness of the project is continually monitored, and when results are hitting targets, your remaining sites take the full move into deployment stage.

4. Ongoing evaluation. A maintenance plan is built to fit your particular needs and budget. Your NEC representative is continually in contact with you to provide any support or help with troubleshooting the system.

Ongoing Evaluation

Why choose NEC?

With NEC, you're equipped with a total solutions package — from diagnostics and implementation to follow-up service and support. Through one point of contact, you have access to the highest quality technology, superior vendors, and an unrivaled industry-specific service team. No one is more committed to your needs, and no one else offers full complimentary consultations.

Unlike competitors, NEC doesn't just offer one solution that's either too big or too small for your current environment. Instead, NEC cost-effectively maximizes the system you start with, equipping it with network capabilities that are ready to grow when you are. Evaluating your unique situation is a hugely important part of the NEC solution process, and can make the most of your investment.

Most importantly, NEC is an industry leader with a longstanding commitment to quality service, product and expertise. There is unparalleled value in working with a global household name, since you can trust that you will be taken care of throughout the lifetime of your digital signage system — and possibly beyond, as the relationship evolves at the rate of technological innovation.