

NEC Display Solutions for Specialty Retail

In a world that's becoming increasingly fast-paced, on-demand and interconnected, going digital is a necessary transition for today's specialty retailer. 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 can cost you time and money in and of itself. Instead, you can take advantage of the knowledge and resources of NEC's specialty retail experts, who are well equipped to tailor a display system designed specifically to meet the growing needs of this competitive industry. 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 specialty retail business 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 company, or the localized image of a family-owned establishment. 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, shoppers 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 or movie files. Vibrantly demonstrate the technology behind a vacuum and its ease of use, offering customers a trial preview they otherwise wouldn't experience.

Improves the customer experience. Rather than allowing long lines and wait times to tarnish your shopper's in-store experience, you can entertain them with live news feeds, infomercials and promotional messaging that alerts them to daily specials, limited-time product offers, and even popular items that are just back in stock. When the holidays arrive, you can create a warm and lively ambience with music and video, while opportunities like Earth Day allow for green messaging—and for you to walk the talk by cutting your paper usage and delivery mileage just by going digital.

Informs the customer. A digital system does more than just entertain; it can help your shopper feel more informed. Using touchscreen kiosk technology, a customer can find exactly which aisle and which shelf holds the digital cameras—without wasting precious time. The screen might also pass along a friendly reminder about a sale on memory cards. Just before he leaves the kiosk, he might also be alerted to a photography event sponsored by your store.

Guarantees full compliance with the in-store merchandising plan. No more relying on outside vendors, printers and shipping services to make deadline. Ensure that your POP goes up in a timely fashion by handling it yourself. Digital files can be integrated into your system instantaneously.

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 customer. 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 for reducing your overall usage of paper, ink and plastics. NEC LCD screens are not only recyclable, but also 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 location'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 location, or screens across multiple franchises. Program when your displays turn on and off according to store 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. Instantly retrieve franchise-wide promotions, specials and menu items from a digital archive. Marketing and IT departments are able to collaborate more easily through its all-in-one software.



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 key locations before being rolled out across all franchises. In a pilot program, NEC absorbs part or all of the initial hardware, software and installation costs for the pilot location(s). Once the system has proved itself, NEC can help roll out the digital signage solution for the rest of your locations.

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 Monday through Friday (7am – 7pm CST). NEC can bring coordinated deployment services to ensure deadlines are met, and if possible, with minimum impact on the retail environment. Your project management team will be able to move the effort forward from start to finish with periodic updates and installation status reports. NEC also serves 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 store's staff.

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 retailers 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.

Am I taking advantage of my digital system? Initially, some may think of a digital screen as just another version of a poster, and therefore only should be used to display static content. With new dynamic technology, it's necessary to adjust the marketing department's way of thinking to really explore the versatility and possibilities of a digital system. Digital media can be live, interactive, branded, and can maximize budgets as well as marketing strategies.

What are some general digital display solutions for specialty retailers?

Though some visual display companies may try to convince you otherwise, there is no single “out of the box” solution. Each store or franchise 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 to entertain customers while they wait, consider a cost-effective, one-screen, flash-based shelf talker. For a system with more muscle, you can bulk up your network with software that offers full-time monitoring, auditing and billing capabilities. Solutions can vary in complexity according to the size of your store, 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 Software-as-a-service (SaaS) model is one of the fastest growing segments of digital signage. It can provide a cost-effective alternative to internally managed networks. While you can own the hardware if you desire, you need only subscribe to the software. 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 specialty retail?

Justifying the ROI. Industry case studies justify the savings benefits associated with switching to a digital system. Also, a side-by-side comparison of traditional printing costs versus the minimal costs of digital signage can further illustrate a return on investment.

Perceived network complexities. NEC offers 24/7 service, in-system maintenance checks, and user-friendly tutorials within the software. The marketing team can easily create and control content without burdening their IT counterpart. With a web-based model, anyone can access and maintain the system through a browser — no new software required. If additional training is required, live tutorials may be conducted on-site or over the web.



Who are the key decision makers?

CEO, CFO, CTO, marketing and IT departments

What are some qualifying questions to ask?

Current Equipment/Platform

Do you know what digital signage is?

What kind of signage do you currently use?

What kind of content is on playing on your screens?

How big a part does digital signage play in your marketing plan?

Are you currently working with a digital signage provider?

What existing assets would you like to redeploy? (web, database, advertising, live feeds)

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 display panels would you require per store?

Usage

What are your intended goals with a digital signage system?

How will you use the technology? (Promote sales, build your brand, educate consumers or utilize for internal communications?)

Will you need to retrieve data and feedback from your patrons?

How often will you need to change content?

Does content need to adapt to slow and peak hours?

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?

Will additional electrical systems need to be installed to support equipment?

Will installation need to occur during closed store hours?

Are you required to work with an architect/facilities manager?

Operation

Who will be managing the system's day-to-day operation?

Who is responsible for content?

Image Quality

Would you like high definition-quality playback?

Do you have high-quality videos and photos?

Are you interested in RSS news feeds that crawl across 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 use a WAN/LAN?

Do you currently have a wireless network?

Do you have any bandwidth restrictions?

Does your server need to reside inside your firewall?

Can the system reside within your network, or will it require a dedicated network?

What are the steps in creating a digital display solution?



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.

2. Project deployment. NEC acts as a general contractor in placing orders with vendors, scheduling installations, securing insurance, and finalizing any application/content requirements. A site survey is performed to determine the best placements for your digital signage — how traffic flows, key decision points, proper infrastructure, electrical issues — and the first set of systems are shipped to your location. After 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 can be built to fit your particular requirements and budget. An NEC representative can be available to you and provide support or help with troubleshooting the system.

Why choose NEC?

NEC understands that retail isn't easy. Retailers carry the burden of fulfilling our needs, our wants, and even help us fulfill our aspirations. While doing so, you have to compete for customers in a fierce environment. This is where you must find a solution that's powerful, cost-effective, and able to build your brand and generate loyalty. This is when you turn to NEC display solutions.

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.