

Good Neighbor Policy

Five ways to make your EMC a welcome addition to your community

For many businesses, electronic message centers are a fantastic investment: they help their establishments stand out from what can be a crowded landscape of signs, they add flexibility and excitement to sales and promotions, and they have been proven to increase customer traffic and, in turn, rapid ROI. "Signage is the least expensive, yet most effective form of advertising available to your business," reports the Small Business Administration on their website. According to their online guide entitled "Signage for Your Business," those who invested in an outdoor LED sign saw sales increase 15%-150%.

Other observers, however, don't necessarily see it from this perspective. They regard these signs as eyesores or distractions, and have even rallied for stricter sign-control regulations in their communities to curtail the use of EMCs.

Both sides have valid points. Successful businesses and lively commercial districts are essential to the overall vitality of a community. But some city developers and residents don't relish the idea of a mini-Vegas strip of flashing, flipping, and rotating signs in their towns.



Not only can your Adaptive LED display advertise your business, it can also help promote worthy causes in your community.

However, there is room for compromise on what can be a hot-button issue. Business owners can take just a few proactive steps toward minimizing objections by considering these five simple suggestions when putting an LED display into their marketing plan.

1. Be a Booster!

Scout troops, youth sports teams, arts groups, public health organizations, and other local nonprofits always appreciate free publicity. Offer space on your board for your hometown happenings, or emergency messages like AMBER Alerts and weather warnings, as a public service. It not only helps worthwhile organizations, but it reflects well on your business by establishing your reputation as a good corporate citizen who cares about the community.

2. Hold Still!

Animations can be a lot of fun, and really are eye-catching when done well. However, a little can go a long way. Too many moving images are hard on the eye, and difficult for passing motorists to get the whole message, especially if you're not the only EMC on the block.

Keep in mind that the most effective outdoor ads have a very clear and brief expression of ONE idea – "Try a Sundae Today", rather than "Order a Value Meal for \$5 and You Can Get a Hot Fudge Sundae for Just \$1 More". Scrolling images, hopping letters, and whirling graphics should be kept to a minimum – no more than 25% of your ad rotation.

3. Make It Effective and Attractive!

Today's LED technology and intuitive content creation software like Adaptive's Ooh!Media™ and AlphaNet™ make it easy for just about anyone to utilize an amazing range of effects, colors, fonts, and graphics on full color and even mono-chrome boards.

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With all these possibilities at your fingertips, it can be tempting to try to put a little bit of everything into your designs. However, what might look awesome to you on your computer monitor might be confusing and just plain overwhelming to your customers on your outdoor display. Experimentation is great, but keep a few key design rules in mind:

- **Use graphics with strong, basic designs.** Busy details can be hard to discern and will divert attention from your main message.
- **Use large and legible fonts** for easy viewing at long distances; use script or novelty typefaces sparingly. If you're not sure, go outside and check it out for yourself.
- **Use bold colors with high contrast combinations,** such as yellow and black, blue and yellow, red and yellow, or black and white. Avoid white or light solid color backgrounds, however – the color can come off looking muddy or blotchy. A dark colored background not only offers better contrast and visibility for your message, it puts less demand on your LEDs, resulting in lower operating costs and longer sign life.

4. Dim it Down!

Modern electronic LED displays are the result of years of research and experimentation in optics and electronics, the ultimate goal being visual effectiveness and energy efficiency. Adaptive's EMCs balance the brightness of their LEDs with dark background coatings and sunshades that result in a better image through optimal contrast rather than light output. The resulting product is then able to deliver a bright, attractive image that shows up even in the midday sun.

Once that sun goes down, though, far less power is needed to deliver the same image. Most signs can be dimmed for nighttime use, either automatically through internal light sensors, or set with a timer. Either way, make sure that you understand how it works and use it properly – it'll go a long way toward energy savings, your overall profits ... and public goodwill.

5. Keep It Up!

Nothing looks snappier than a brand new full-color EMC, brightly delivering news about your latest promotions. But nothing looks tackier than a not-so-new sign with missing pixels or bulbs, a chipped case, and faded, pinkish colors.

Granted, outdoor EMCs stand up to a lot of abuse year-round, from winter blizzards to the dog days of summer, and all the wind, dust, and precipitation that comes in between, as well as accidents and vandalism. But when malfunctions arise, timing is key. Don't be tempted to just "let it go" and wait for something else to come up.

Adaptive supplies a five-year Peace of Mind warranty with all of its signs which covers most costs of repair and part replacement; your dealer should be able to help get things up and running in just a few days. Often, the longer you wait, the longer and more involved your repair time will be. And, like any other piece of business equipment, it might simply need to be replaced with a newer, more efficient version. Remember – your outdoor sign is the first impression to the public. Make it the best it can be!

As a 21st century advertising tool, electronic message centers offer business owners unprecedented flexibility, creativity, recognition, and control. By capturing the attention of a population that is increasing on the move, EMCs effectively and economically draw customers on a daily basis in a way that newspapers, television, radio cannot. Easy-to-use and increasingly affordable technology makes them accessible for even small businesses.

However, sign owners must also recognize that the bright lights and full-motion graphics that make these signs so appealing from a business point of view might also generate an adverse effect – resentment and resistance from nearby residents or well-intentioned municipal planning groups.

Anticipating these concerns is, therefore, critical when planning to put an EMC on your site. Study your local regulations, take advantage of training opportunities offered by your sign's manufacturer (Adaptive offers both in-house and on-line webinars and training sessions), and be willing to work your way through the challenges that might be raised.

In the end, your "good neighbor policy" will pay off in community acceptance and support ... as well as a growing stream of loyal customers and healthy profits.

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