

Why Do We Keep Mishandling the Digital Signage Handle?

Written by David Haynes
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by Dave Haynes, Editor, **Sixteen:Nine**

The kinds of people who keep debating what the digital signage industry should call itself are the same people who made you crazy at corporate offsite meetings as they turned those dreaded “Mission Statement” exercises into all-morning marathons.

These are people who like jumbling words together and then holding them up like they just modeled something out of clay.

They make me crazy.

The digital signage industry IS the digital signage industry. You can go ahead and conjure up some pretty, mind-blowing word-salad handle for it, but that is not going to change anything. It's FAR from perfect. But Digital Signage is baked in.

So is Digital Out Of Home. That's an even clunkier term, but the advertising agency people who control millions upon millions of media dollars have settled on it. There are ongoing attempts to call it something else -- notably, digital place-based advertising -- but that's not really catching on. The agency people call it Digital Out Of Home (or DOOH) because they already call the billboard and poster business Out Of Home (as in people consuming media outside their homes), and the LED and LCD stuff now popping up like weeds is just the Digital extension. To them, it's logical.

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I write all this because everyday, these two handles are getting mishandled. Everyday, I read stuff talking about DOOH as though it is just another way of describing digital signage. Like they are interchangeable. Everyday, I see stuff about “digital signage advertising” and “DOOH networks” for universities and private companies.

Sheesh.

If you are talking about the software and technology that puts content on screens, and the ecosystem that drives and supports all that, you are talking about digital signage. If you are talking about networks that run alerts and safety messages on campuses, schedules in event centers, prices on menu boards and sales promos in stores, among MANY things, you are talking about digital signage networks.

If you are talking about the networks that exist officially (or less overtly) for the purposes of making money from selling advertising -- and about the eco-system that drives and feeds those efforts -- you are talking Digital Out Of Home.

It's actually quite simple. So why it gets mixed up and misused so often completely escapes me. And this is not just my little semantics rant. The agency people are steadily demanding clarity from the ad network operators who want their money. When they see an industry driving around in cars and talking about their trucks, they just roll their eyes. They are demanding complicated stuff like solid, professionally validated audience metrics from networks... from an industry that can't yet reliably get its name right.

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