

Take Control of Your In-Store Signage

*How to deploy more immediate, personal and cost-effective
signage by bringing the process in-house*



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Summary

■ Summary

Retailers know that in-store signage is a proven business tactic towards greater profits. As brick-and-mortar stores face competition from online and mobile retailing, retail outlets of all sizes are reconfiguring their in-store signage into a new driving force for profit.



Research shows that about 80 percent of shoppers make purchase decisions while physically in the store, highlighting the growing importance of winning customers at the point of purchase.

Signage works best in retail settings that embrace the shopper's in-store experience, calling attention to sales and specials, and sharing information. Retailers can entice customers with large and bright images, bond with them on a more personal level, cross-promote products in different parts of the store, reinforce a store's image with colors and logos, and quickly lead the way.

As in-store signage evolves, retailers are considering new ways beyond outsourcing to create their signage. New wide-format printing technologies are making it easier and less expensive to

create high-quality, colorful signage at the store level.

■ This paper aims to:

- Recap trends that are now happening in the world of retail signage and why it's so important for retailers to rethink how they create their in-store signage – whether part of a large or medium sized regional chain, store, or independent shop.
- Explain ways that retailers produce their in-store signage and the challenges they face, such as the pros and cons of 3rd party outsourcing versus in-house printing.
- Show how large-format in-store printing is a pathway for retailers to meet the challenges of in-store signage and take control of the whole process for immediate, personalized, and cost-effective signage.

Part I

■ Introduction – Right time, right place for in-store signage

Retail signage has faced a big change in recent years, characterized by affordable new technology and a vastly different retail landscape. With more competition and dizzying economic swings, retailers are competing for customer loyalty through more consumer marketing at the store level. They are increasingly using tactics that include frequent shopper programs, reward cards, point-of-purchase displays, demos, store events, and creative in-store signage.

The trend towards influencing the buyer in the store has resulted in an explosion of signage of all colors, shapes and sizes. A very competitive industry has turned in-store signage into a cash flow area in itself with new potency in attracting the customer. Both large chains with full resources and retailers with smaller marketing budgets and fewer advertising dollars are prime candidates for large-format signage.

Signage can help navigate the space and lead customers to strategic sale areas. A big, multi-colored poster reinforces the brand of the store and informs about product details or special events. Banners can herald on-the-spot sales and promotions, promoting seasonal products or new items. Signs can also be used as entertainment or decorative décor with large graphics of food, products, logos or seasonal images..



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“Whether a retailer creates signs with an in-house printer, at the chain’s headquarters, with an independent agency, or even a pack of color marker pens – there are opportunities to consider in making signs for more profit.”
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Part II

■ Challenges in creating in-store signage

With in-store signage now increasing as a business tactic, it’s worth examining some of the challenges that retailers face in their methods of producing signage. Retailers create in-store signage in two main ways:

Outsourcing in-store signage

- Outsourcing is done in a variety of ways, depending on the retailer’s size, scope and internal procedures.
- Retailer contracts with a 3rd party to create and print its signage.
- Retail chain’s art department or independent agency designs the sign and physically ships the completed sign to each individual store.



Retailers may face these outsourcing challenges

- **Overall cost:** Outsourcing could cost up to 10 times more than in-house, depending on quantity printed. At a time when retailers strive for profitability, outsourcing signage is an ongoing expense. It may not be the best solution to reduce costs and bring an expected return on investment.
- **Inconsistent quality:** By outsourcing, a store may not have the same control over quality that it could have producing the sign on its own. It could lose the opportunity to drive more sales with a higher quality sign, such as a tempting strawberry in bright, large detail in the produce section.
- **Less control over messaging:** Stores lose sales opportunities when they otherwise could respond more quickly to the competition, using more regional selling angles, or simply clear the shelves of products soon to expire. Studies show that sign changes have significant, positive impacts on sales, number of transactions, and profit.
- **Complicated processes:** Outsourcing is not as simple as it sounds, as it may involve uploading artwork, shipping to stores, damaged or lost inventory, packages that didn't leave the warehouse in time for the sales promotion, selling messages inappropriate for a certain location, or receiving unexpected results on the final product.

In-house large-format printing

- Retailer has its own high-quality large-format printer to create signage internally.
- Store creates and prints own signage when needed using today's easy-to-use graphics software and onsite large-format printer to produce high quality, colorful graphics.
- Retailer has the flexibility to make changes or print signs with its own large-format printer after the design department at headquarters or an outside company designs the sign and transmits files to each store.

Retailers may experience these in-house printing challenges

- **Overcoming the myth:** Due to misperceptions about using large-format printers to produce in-store signage, some retailers are losing out on benefits of speed, flexibility, and cost-effectiveness.
- **Myths of large-format printers for in-store signage:** Expectations that the cost of entry is too high for in-house; the solution is too high maintenance; it is not easy to make a sign; and consumables are too costly.

Part III

■ Big steps forward in wide-format printing

- **Opportunities in creating in-store signage:** Stores can take better control of the retail signage process and produce custom-made signage more quickly at a lower overall cost, depending on quantity.

Driving this in-house printing trend are continued developments in wide-format printing technology. Although wide-format printers are not new to the printing market, they have taken giant steps forward in their innovative technology, brilliant print quality, ease of use, larger formats, wider color gamut, convenience, and the variety of media they can print on. With these advancements come new, affordable prices, which allow many businesses to save money and gain control by printing on their own.

Now an everyday sight at many work places, wide-format printing is one of the fastest growing segments of the graphics industry. The output from large-format ink jet printers, from 24 to 64 inches wide, is everywhere – all types of in-store signage, large posters, banners, bus wraps, billboards, oversized box labels, backlit displays, production backdrops, and photographic and fine art reproductions.

- **What to expect from in-store, large-format printing:** Large-format printers for in-store use bring a surprising number of business benefits to retailers.

- **Large poster signs, ready to post:** A key advantage of wide-format printing is the ability to print large poster signs on the spot, one of the most effective ways to turn the heads of shoppers. Stores strategically can direct their customers to the right places with big signs easily spotted down the aisle. They can attract customers with large, colorful photos or illustrations, hitting the right messages.

Although the printer produces large sizes, retailers still have the flexibility to print small- or medium-sized signs when needed, or for locations such as boutique areas of larger stores or smaller sized retail spaces. Many use a variety of sizes to attract customers wherever they are in the store.

- **Create signage quickly:** Because the printer is close at hand, retailers can move quickly to launch special sale promotions or react to a competitor. Stores can skip delays in shipping or the lost time spent running to the sign shop.
- **Professional, high quality colorful signage:** Retailers don't have to trade professional print quality and colorful graphics for the speed and convenience of an in-store printer. Developments in ink and printer technology have resulted in professional quality and color that rival – or are even better than – off-site sign production, and of course, far exceeds the traditional color marker pen.
- **Ease of use:** Stores are often afraid that an in-house printer injects yet another thing to worry about in the high-stress, customer service setting. One of the biggest surprises they have is that it's not difficult to train staff to use the printers. Many printers are designed as much for ease of use as for they are for high performance and print quality.



But retailers actually using in-house printers for signage have a different story to tell. Those with misperceptions about the use of in-house printers may be forfeiting sales opportunities and a more cost-effective, personal and faster way to produce signage.



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- **Cost savings:** Contrary to popular myth, in-house printers are not expensive to set up and maintain at the store, and they do not come with hidden, high consumables costs. Because the store determines quantity, it does not have to pay for overages or for signage that arrives too late or is lost at the warehouse. Many retailers will see a return on their printer investment in a short time, especially after switching from the high cost of outsourcing.
- **Go even bigger:** Some wide-format printer models can print even bigger than the standard large poster size of 24 x 36 inches. Shoppers can see bigger signs or banners, up to 64 inches wide, from even greater distances, in step with the retail trend to create big in-store signs. From across the floor, large, brilliant blow-ups of fresh fruits and vegetables draw customers to the produce section. Customers shopping at a garden nursery may purchase the sunflower after seeing a big, colorful poster showing how large it will grow.
- **Durability of inks:** Wide-format printers with scratch-, fade-, and water-resistant inks make sense in the retail setting. Staff can post signs immediately because prints are instantly dry the moment they are out of the printer. These inks also eliminate the need laminate signage which shortens the production process and expedites signage to the floor much faster.
- **Print more than just signage:** Stores can use the large format for more than just store signage, including facility signage, fire escape route maps, instructions, safety signs, blueprints, renderings, PowerPoint presentations and large spreadsheets.

Part IV

■ Illustrative example



- Most people think perfect summer weather is year round in California, but that's not true, according to the managing director of a neighborhood grocer that is a west coast supermarket chain known for its healthy products and friendly service. Each of the chain's 10 stores is subject to the whims of its particular eco-region, whether ocean, valley, mountain or desert.
- Whether a change in weather, holiday season, sudden bumper crop of avocados, local music festival, or large inventory that needs to be cleared off the shelf – this business has found a way to stay tuned locally to new sales opportunities.
- Each outlet is equipped with an easy-to-use, wide-format color printer to produce signage on the spot. Using a popular publishing platform for retail, staff can quickly create colorful large or small poster signs, shelf-edge signs and labels, and more. "The faster a promotion is personalized and posted at the point of sale, the more customers will buy," said the managing director.

- The grocer has the flexibility to produce in-store signage both ways – either at the central office or at the store’s location. Headquarters may print signs and ship them to each store, but often the individual store prefers to personalize the process in-house with its own printer.
- The retailer noticed that it was saving on printing costs, especially for the fast turnaround of signs for seasonal sales, daily promotions, or quick response to the competition. “We find it more profitable to give each store the freedom to handle the process in its own way to meet or surpass its sales objectives,” he said.
- While a store up north heard forecasts for a rainy weekend, another store down south faced an oncoming heat wave. Getting ready for a hot weekend, the store quickly created large poster signs and labels using templates to promote “All you need for a great barbecue” throughout the store in every department. As a result, the store nearly doubled its sales that sweltering weekend. “Without its own large-format printer onsite,” said the managing director, “we could never have produced the signs as quickly and easily for our creative, last-minute promotion.”

Part V

■ Conclusion



With competition from online shopping and other brick-and-mortar stores, retailers must continue to reach out and influence customers at the store level.

Using the right process to create in-store signage, stores may be empowered to create even more influential, creative signage, translating into a meaningful connection with customers, paving the road toward greater profit.

Using in-house wide-format print technology to produce in-store signage could greatly benefit retailers of all sizes. Moving beyond dependence on outside vendors, they have the opportunity to take control of the whole process for more immediate, personalized, and cost-effective signage.

Technology to consider for printing retail signage in-house are the Epson SureColor® T-Series large-format color printers.

- Simple to Use, the T-Series creates large-format signage with vivid color and bold graphics using Epson UltraChrome® XD archival, fast-drying pigment ink with extreme smudge, fade and water resistance.
- Produces precise drawings, graphic posters, and other signage at high speeds using Epson’s PrecisionCore® TFP® print head across a wide variety of media types and sizes, from standard paper to specialty photographic papers to poster boards up to 1.5 mm thick.
- Saves retailers money with no waiting for prints, virtually zero maintenance, high print durability, and world-class service and support.

• Available in single – and dual-roll models, there is a choice of five printer models, ranging from 24-inch to 44-inch wide formats – the T3270, T5270, T7270, T5270D and T7270D.

For more information, visit epson.com/tseries

About Epson

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