



Signage Shouldn't Be An Afterthought



Pictured Above:

Top: Here's an example of a bank building without a brand. Although there's a very small monument sign on the street, the entrance is totally blank and uninviting.

Middle & Bottom: Compare the blank bank with the retailers across the street. Although the code is restrictive, these buildings are well-branded. Someone must have done their homework!

**“Better
branding & wayfinding
systems
await those who plan early.”**

IDENTITY CRISIS

It's funny you never hear, “Oops, I forgot the elevator,” or, “We can wait on designing the HVAC system.” So, how come sign buyers frequently make sign project managers feel like last-minute Joe's when coming up with signage for new building projects?

I guess it depends on the project. On larger jobs like airports, schools, or shopping centers, owners usually incorporate the services of sign consultants early on. It's just that sometimes on less extensive projects---like new bank branches, movie theaters, or renovated office spaces---clients logically focus on the building and parking lots but forget about the signs.

Much better branding and wayfinding systems await those who plan out their signs early on. Instead there's often delay.

WHAT'S THE PLAN STAN?

Perhaps delays stem from the way early budgeting is carried out. Preliminary budgets are based on previous projects or industry averages, so if a sign package is even included, it's just an average cost melded in with everything else. Somehow there's a disconnect between the preliminary and more final detailed budgets and the signage gets lost as owners get caught up in all the other aspects of the new building design. But worrying about the mechanical equipment and finish schedules and skimping on the sign details can leave the owners to settle for just average or below-average building signs if they're not careful.

Maybe the marketing value of adequately branding a location should be the focus for discussing a building's signage much earlier in the process? So many key factors of an adequate sign system take time to work through, and cost money. If signage becomes a topic too late in the game then code research and planning negotiations that achieve favorable size allowances have to be nixed, and meetings for prototype and design development may have to be scrapped.

Recommended Signage Plan for New Construction:

- *Site Selection Stage- Select a sign consultant to assess the advertising potential of site.*
- *Planning & Design Stages- Collaborate with sign consultant, A&E firm, marketing & facilities managers on preparing preliminary sign designs and prototypes as needed.*
- *Early Construction Stages- Commit to Sign Contract & allocate dollars needed for sign package.*
- *Final Stage- Signs that do their job are in place at completion of the project, avoiding possible delays in occupancy and spreading the word about your new location to the curious public.*

The worst case scenario is when building owners forget about signs altogether and realize they have a naked building with no more money left in the construction budget. Oops!

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