What's the cost to add message boards to signs?

Adding a changeable message board to your existing main identification sign kills two birds with one stone. You effectively brand your business while advertising your products and services at the same time, a winning combination! To get to the cost to add message boards to signs, you must first understand your options. There are basically 3 types of changeable message boards businesses use for promotions:

1) Banners
2) Manual Change Boards
3) Electronic Message Centers

Let's take a closer look at options two and three.

Manual-Change (or "Static"), Message Boards:

These are message systems made of box-type metal sign cabinets using internal fluorescent lighting and plastic sign faces with tracks spaced horizontally across that hold changeable plastic letters. Since these signs lights up from within, the faces are typically translucent white or off-white in color with clear letter tracks. Letters are factory-produced in black or red printed on clear flat plastic, but could be customized in any color. Special symbols like the blue Facebook and Twitter logos are now available in changeable letter sets. Specialty letters that are clear with black backgrounds called "MoonGlo Reverse Copy" are also a choice, but you have to use solid black letter tracks and block-out squares to block the light to maintain a solid black background, so these are not very popular.

The median cost range to add a 32 square foot manual reader board to the average existing two-sided sign is around $4,500-$8,500 depending on the number of letters, height above ground, and existing structural conditions, which could add cost. If just changeable letter faces are needed for an existing box sign that's functionally working, the cost for that averages in the $1,800-$2,400 range, depending on the size and number of changeable letters.

Adding a manual change reader board to an existing sign makes good sense, because it's a way to get customers and prospects passing your business or church each day to engage with your products and services by providing excellent calls to action. But there are limitations and drawbacks when compared with digital message boards:

1) Digital Messaging provides multiple, customized messages to reach diverse demographic groups with a variety of goods and services;
2) The movement and brightness of digital gets more attention;
3) 50-60% of consumers make last minute purchase decisions and digital ups the chances to reach them with the right message at the right time;
4) Digital Messaging creates new advertisements quickly and inexpensively;
5) Viewers can understand an image much more quickly than words;
6) With digital you don't have to worry about employee safety as copy is updated in parking lot traffic or bad weather;
7) Digital software is equipped with spell check features so no embarrassing misspelled words in public;
8) No worries about not having enough letters for the messages you want;
9) With digital the wind won't blow letters off your message;
10) Ability to pre-schedule messages and not worry about who's going to change the sign.

"Adding a ***changeable*** *message sign to an existing sign* **kills 2 birds with 1 stone."**

Digital Message Boards (or Electronic Message Centers):

These are outdoor digital message signs that have black plastic faces with LED pixels arranged across the faces, lighting up to form graphics that are readable from a distance. In monochrome message boards, a pixel is one LED, in RGB message boards there are 3 LED's per pixel. Spacing between pixels is called "pixel pitch". The closer the distance between each pixel, the more LED's are needed for the sign; therefore a message board with a 16MM pixel pitch uses more LED's than a 20MM version, and the pricing of digital signs increases as the LED spacing narrows.

U.S. Manufacturers of Digital Message Centers include Daktronics, Watchfire, Optec, and Formetco. Cost factors include overall equipment size, who's the manufacturer, monochrome or full-color, pixel pitch, wireless or hardwire communications, and design of structure, but the average cost range to add a 2-sided 8' H X 4' W electronic sign to an existing structure would be somewhere around the $18,000-$35,000 range.

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