



# What's the Cost to Upgrade Message Boards?

## SPONTANEOUS PEOPLE

Have you ever made a spontaneous retail purchase? I recently bought a gift after an electronic message sign told me roses were on sale and it just happened to be our anniversary. Since this kind of thing happens to me alot, I firmly believe that digital messaging works. Academic studies back this up, showing that 50-60% of on-premise purchases are spontaneous. It pays to have a way to trigger spontaneity at the point where most people pass your store, so clearly street-side advertising signs are smart ideas. But the question is, "What's the best way to get my message out there and if I'm using banners or manual reader boards now, what's the cost to upgrade my existing messaging system to digital options?"

## BANNERS COST MORE THAN YOU THINK

The most common barrier to scrapping static messaging systems and going digital is perceived cost. Businesses opting to hang out a banner or two a month to carry their message may be spending more than they realize. The average 32-square foot banner costs \$160-\$320 in Central Virginia, so a typical annual banner budget to promote a mere 12 messages a year could be as much as \$1,920-\$3,840 or more per site. Occasionally add in a few 10' high vertical flag pennants that average another \$400-\$600 each, and the 10-year cost for this changeable messaging system would easily reach the \$20,000-\$40,000 range, more than the cost of an average electronic message system! Also consider the appearance of your message: while banners sag and get torn up in the wind, digital promotions remain crisp and bright.

## MANUAL-CHANGE MESSAGE BOARDS

Businesses that use some form of static message system understand roadside messaging works. It's just that some systems are better than others. Choosing message systems is like choosing any other system. A young couple with a starter home bought three window AC units for \$750 to cool most of their house. Operating cost was high, the units were extremely noisy, it was hard to regulate an even temperature, plus they soon felt the pain of getting them in and out twice a year. Comparatively, a decent central air system for their house cost \$3,500-\$4,500 with a lower annual operating cost. When factoring in electricity, over ten years the cost for the window units turned out to be only slightly less than the central air system, but results measured in comfort level would have greatly exceeded the extra cost.

## GOING DIGITAL

The average 32-square foot manually-changeable sign unit costs \$4,500-\$8,500. The average 32-square foot electronically-changeable sign unit costs \$18,000-\$35,000. Is it worth it? Consider the added value of upgrading to digital:

1. Provides multiple, customized messages to reach diverse demographic groups with a variety of goods and services (not just the same static message for long periods);
2. The movement and brightness of digital gets more attention;
3. Since 50-60% of consumers make last minute purchase decisions, quick-changing digital messages ups the chances to reach them with the right message at the right time;
4. 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 an employee's safety as they update copy in parking lot traffic or bad weather;
7. Digital software is equipped with spell check features so there are 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.

<b>10-YEAR COST OF CHANGEABLE MESSAGING</b> Comparing average cost of average 32-square foot options (not including labor cost to develop messages, or utilities)	
USING MONTHLY BANNERS	\$20,000-\$40,000*
MANUAL-CHANGE BOARDS	\$4,500-\$8,500
DIGITAL MESSAGE BOARDS	\$18,000-\$35,000

\*see article example



photos courtesy of Daktronics

Of all changeable message systems, digital systems are the best value because of their 24-hour visibility, on-going attention, aesthetics, message changeability and adaptability for targeted marketing strategies.

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