



What Can Go Wrong on Sign Projects?

COMMUNICATION

Custom-manufacturing a product for a client takes on many facets, and signage projects can sometimes have their share of challenges. Over the years I found most difficulties, especially encountered in the more challenging sign projects, stem from inadequate communications.



Design and production stages of a Verizon Wireless project. Photos are from our shop in Chester, Virginia. The signs were being made for our client's new Waynesboro, VA retail store.

Here are some tips to avoid problems:

ALLOW TIME & COST TO THOROUGHLY CHECK CODE

If it's an exterior sign project, check the zoning ordinances in the jurisdiction where the signs are to be installed to verify maximum sign area, overall height restrictions, quantity of signs per site, set-back, allowances for certain types of signs, etc. On interior jobs, make sure your signs are ADA compliant. Holiday Signs utilizes a knowledgeable full-time permits manager to help with sign regulations and permits. Sign buyers sometime under-estimate the timing needed for code research prior to design and the permitting process prior to manufacture and installation.

Across our service area of Virginia, North Carolina, Maryland, and Washington, DC, we generally allow 1-2 weeks for localities to approve permits, varying slightly by locality, and the median permit secual fee is around \$400, more or less according to the area and what is required for permits. In rare instances we find out that an Overlay District or some other special circumstance overrides the sign ordinance that we weren't informed about when we initially called for code research. This requires us to go back to the customer with new drawings for approval and then back to the locality for approval. Just make sure to allow enough time and cost up front for permitting.

MAKE DEADLINES KNOWN EARLY

Most custom electric sign projects can take at least 6-8 weeks or more to complete, but if we know of a special deadline, we try to work with clients to make special time-trimming arrangements. It's best to be up front with the sign company with a drop-dead date, and it's best for the sign company to be up front on whether or not it's possible to make the deadline, and to offer acceptable back-up plans if unusual things like weather, power outages, site access delays, epidemics affecting employees, material shortages or damages, etc., crop up.

“Most difficulties stem from inadequate communications.”

Contact:
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Installation stage of the Verizon Wireless project. Photos were taken at the Waynesboro, VA site as new signage was being installed.



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NAIL DOWN AN EFFECTIVE DESIGN BEFORE FINAL PRODUCTION

The question often asked after a divorce is, “Why did this happen?” The question you never want to ask after making a significant sign investment is, “Why can't I read my sign?”

Both questions usually arise from problems in the 2-way communication process. All parties should never assume things are going smoothly on a project; *verify they are* with approved sketches and contracts. If you or your sign consultant believes there may be an issue with visibility, or contrast, or color, go a step further and pay a little extra for special samples, prototypes or demonstrations that prove design effectiveness without a doubt *before* final production.

KNOW WHO'S DOING WHAT

Everyone should understand their responsibilities in completing the sign project. Sometimes the customer will pull their own sign permits; take care of masonry work; remove existing signs; and so on. It's best to make it clear up front who will be doing what on a complex sign project. Addressing questions about small details like: “Do you know there may be an extra engineering fee required by the jurisdiction for sealed drawings?” to “Who will dispose of the old signs after the new signs are installed?” to “How are change orders handled?” are all important types of up-front questions to ask to early on.

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