

Building Broadcast-Quality Digital Signage

Smart templates can assist digital signage owners in getting high-quality content online quickly and to the right target viewers.

By Wallace Jackson
Contributing writer,
DigitalSignageToday.com

Sponsored by:

X2O | media

The primary challenge in today's rapidly evolving digital signage marketplace is securing the mind share of the viewing public. To accomplish this, digital signage operators must create high-impact, broadcast-quality digital signage content, and must additionally deliver it to the right target demographic at the right time of day. This might sound easy on the surface, but in reality, it is an extremely challenging endeavor, involving computer graphics, graphic design, user experience design and advertising and editorial content mix, all under a unified brand look and feel.

The challenge is that, in general, digital signage network owners and operators do not typically employ well-heeled Hollywood producers and directors, but they still need to produce compelling content at a reasonable cost. One way to achieve this end result is by using extremely high-quality templates, which consist of predesigned layouts, graphical components, animation and seamless overlays. The template components allow digital signage laymen to create professional broadcast graphics without decades of content production experience. X2O Media, for example, offers a library of

Creating content

With high-definition broadcasts now standard fare worldwide, the bar has been raised for visual content in general. Film and HDTV content is now exceptionally cinematic and virtually flawless due to mounting network and studio competition. If digital signage content does not keep up with this trend, the viewing public will quickly become bored with digital signage content, and will tune it out completely.



Broadcast-quality digital signage catches the attention of consumers, but it doesn't have to be expensive to make.

professionally designed “smart” templates that provide digital signage users with the ability to create high-quality content easily and inexpensively.

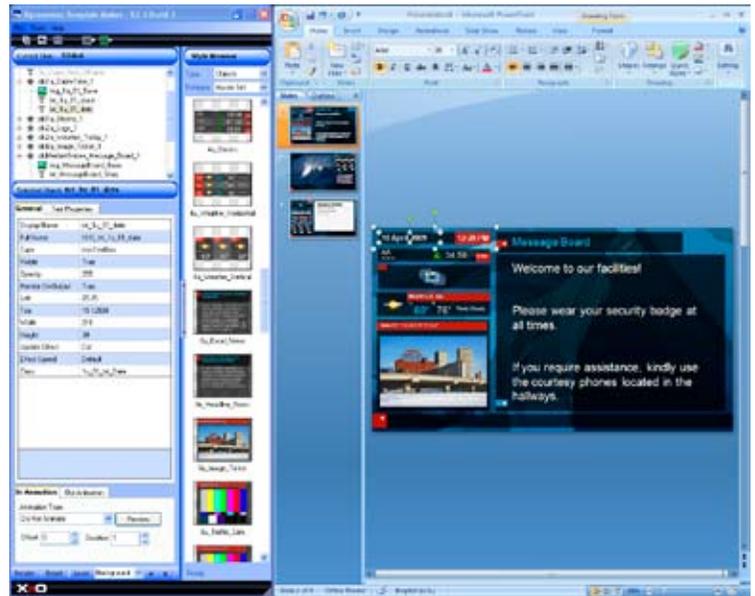
The benefits of smart templates

X2O Media has more than a decade of production experience in creating broadcast media, and put that knowledge into developing libraries of templates, objects and workflow processes that mimic the broadcast creative environment, so that digital signage operators can make their content look professional.

For those who choose to use the already-created templates, all of the important user experience design decisions, like where on the screen the content should be placed, links to live data sources and any business rules, are part of the template. Guidance as to the different types of content that can be presented, be it video, still images or PowerPoint slides, also are included in the development environment, which conveniently runs inside the industry-standard PowerPoint software from Microsoft.

For users who want a more customized experience, templates can be built by dragging and dropping from a list of pre-built objects onto a PowerPoint slide.

“The first step to effective digital signage is having visually appealing content,” said David Wilkins, president and chief executive officer of X2O Media. “Any screen that looks unprofessional will quickly be discounted by an increasingly



A template, like the one seen above, takes away much of the complexity involved in creating video-rich, data-driven digital signage.

sophisticated viewing audience. Smart templates help operators cut down on content-creation time, while providing a very polished, professional look without having to hire an expensive agency.”

Besides allowing a professional looking end result to be achieved, smart templates reduce content cost by cutting down on the number of templates needed. Built-in business rules and production logic make template changes depending on incoming information, meaning fewer templates need to be created. For example, a retail operator could have digital signs show umbrellas every time it rained, without having to create a different template.

Content can easily be updated. The templates can include modern RSS

It's important to make sure that the content gets to the proper screens at the proper time of day, and that the displayed content can be tracked and reported to those advertisers who are paying for the brand exposure.

information feeds containing real-time data, such as weather forecasts, breaking news or stock prices. When content is regularly refreshed in real time, it keeps viewers coming back and ensures that content remains relevant to the audience.

Reaching the audience

Once the visual design is created via smart templates, and the viewing public is watching the content with interest, it's important to make sure that the content gets to the proper screens at the proper time of day, and that the displayed content can be tracked and reported to those advertisers who are paying for the brand exposure via the digital signage network. Some platforms, such as X2O Media's, can provide powerful and flexible content scheduling that targets specific DMAs and segments within DMAs.

Scheduling is a crucial part of effective digital signage. The right message must get to the right audience at the right time. For example, if a hair salon has a clientele consisting mostly of mothers with young children in the morning, family-friendly content would probably be best. But if the clientele of the salon changes to young professionals after 5 p.m., the content also should change, perhaps to play the latest

music videos. An automated scheduling tool in a template-based platform can make sure those content changes happen without the user having to manually switch programs.

Monitoring, tracking and reporting tools ensure that the proper content and advertising mix has been distributed to the target sign locations and timeslots, and that the signage is in full working condition at all times. Because of this reporting capability, the digital signage owner can know instantly if a problem has occurred, when and why.

Creating high-quality digital signage doesn't have to be expensive or time consuming. Instead, with the use of smart templates with advanced functionality, digital signage owners can offer clients a broadcast-quality experience at a low cost.

***About the sponsor:** X2O Media is a full-service provider of technology and services for digital signage, as well as creative design services for all types of digital content. The company offers content design, management, distribution, monitoring integration and support services for digital signage providers. X2O's award-winning Xpresenter provides unprecedented ease of use coupled with the highest-quality output at a fraction of the time and cost of other approaches.*