



Reinforcing Safety with an Electronic Message Board Program

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BEST PRACTICES FOR WORKER COMMUNICATIONS in the sanitation industry.

SANITATION WORKERS CONSISTENTLY MAKE IT ONTO

the list of the top 10 most dangerous occupations as tracked by The Bureau of Labor Statistics. It's no wonder since they are often working in the dark, carrying heavy loads, working in traffic, handling hazardous materials, maneuvering large trucks in tight spaces and battling fatigue. Communication is a key factor in reinforcing safe behavior, yet reaching workers can be challenging when they spend most of their time on the road.

Increasingly, solid waste companies are installing electronic message boards at their facilities as a way to improve communication. The need for a mobile communications option is also becoming critical with the rapid growth of smart phone and tablet use. Most companies underestimate what's involved in developing an effective program. There are three components to a successful deployment: identifying your business goals, developing a content strategy and sourcing the right technology for your unique needs.



Photos courtesy of The Marlin Company.

Pictures like this reinforce safety precautions such as wearing safety gear and reflective clothing and being mindful of vehicles entering the danger zone.

#1: Your Business Objectives Define the Framework

Before you start thinking about screens, media players and network options, you need to get clear on your business objectives. Screens are merely tools to deliver your messages to employees. Think of your digital signage system as a way to market your messages to your workers in a way that will influence their behavior. So ask yourself, what are you trying to change, improve or measure? In the sanitation industry, making safety top of mind for everyone is the most common objective. Using electronic message boards that display colorful, dynamic content is a great way to grab your workers' attention

and influence their behavior. Other objectives might include employee recognition, reducing turnover, improving health and wellness or customer service, reaching workers on all shifts, reducing print communication and delivering consistent messages to everyone.

Consider Your Audience

If safety is your primary focus and you are targeting drivers and crew members, you face some unique challenges:

- Most of their time is spent on the road.
- They're in the drivers' room or breakroom for only a few minutes each day.
- At the beginning and end of each shift, they're likely to be in a rush, distracted or tired.
- A large percentage of sanitation workers are Spanish-speaking.

#2: Content Strategy Made Simple

Content can make or break your digital communication program. With a little bit of advance planning you can ensure that you have both the quality and quantity of content required for a robust program that will engage your employees. Given your target audience, what do your workers need to know? Once you've answered that you can incorporate these proven best practices.

Best Practices for Creating Effective Content

Keep it Visual

The advertising industry has proven that visual communication is a powerful technique for influencing our behavior. Use photos, video or cartoons to engage employees and give your message sticking power. Keep your messages short. Think headline and sub-head.

Make it Personal

Your workers will focus on what's important to them. Recognition is a universal motivator. Use your electronic message boards to celebrate achievement. Whether it's recognizing individuals or departments for achieving company goals, acknowledging milestones, anniversaries and birthdays, or welcoming new employees, everyone is sure to notice.

Mix it Up

Serving up a steady diet of safety messages is a sure way to lose your readers. Even though you can add great graphics to illustrate critical safety measures, such as fall protection, wearing PPE and safe backing, you'll need to mix it up with universal topics such as health and wellness, teamwork, morale and inspirational quotes. Consider posting some content in Spanish to increase engagement with Latino workers.

Get Them Involved

Increase employee engagement by asking for feedback. Create virtual suggestion boxes, quizzes and games posted on PowerPoint slides with a QR code added. Employees can use their smart phones to scan the code and e-mail their answers and suggestions.

Avoid "Blank Screen Syndrome"

If your screens are running 24/7, you'll need plenty of content. In order for your messages to sink in, employees need to see them between four and five times. If the same messages cycle through for weeks at a time, (or even worse, if your screens are blank) employees will ignore them. Plan on adding some fresh content twice a week at a minimum. (And don't forget to remove the older content.)

Don't Go it Alone

Enlist other subject matter experts to contribute content. By including messages from the CEO, corporate communications, operations or HR, your electronic boards become a central hub of communication for the whole company. Invite drivers and crew to submit photos from the road that can help to illustrate safety dos and don'ts.

Bring Your Metrics to Life

No more manual updates to whiteboards for days without accidents. Post your metrics on your screens. Use automatic counters to display the daily count. By creating simple, colorful charts for performance metrics, everyone stays informed.

Have Some Fun

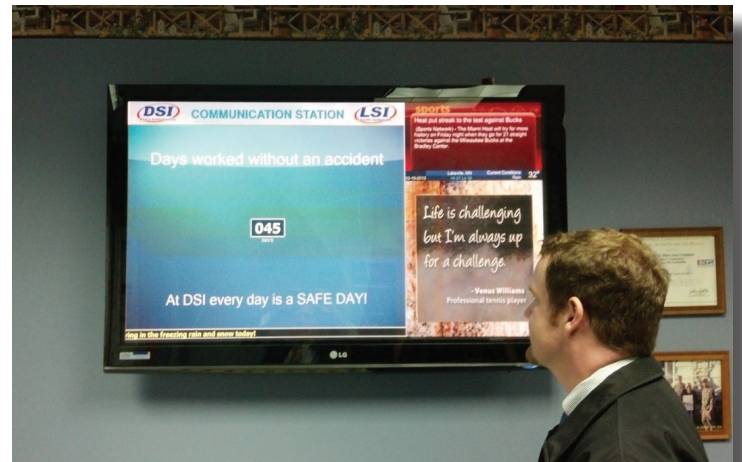
To make sure that workers are reading your critical safety messages, mix in some light-hearted content. Pictures of the company picnic, local sports trivia, high school yearbook photos—all of these act as a magnet to draw attention to your more serious messages.

#3: How to Choose a System That's Right for You

Now that you're clear on your objectives, audience and content strategy, you can make an informed decision on the technology solution that best fits your needs. You'll need to consult with your IT staff to determine which network configuration will work in your environment. Most companies do not have the resources or expertise for a homegrown solution, so they look to the outside for a digital signage provider to partner with. Here's what you'll need to consider:

- *Ease of use:* Content management software is a key component to any digital signage program. It enables you to create, post and schedule content, and manage user permissions. You'll want to know that an administrative-level employee can post content easily and quickly, and that it does not require someone with advanced design or technical skills. Ask for a demo.

- *Content:* By now you understand that this is a critical piece of the puzzle. Find out



Dick's Sanitation in Lakeville, MN uses electronic message boards to display safety recordables, post weather alerts and motivational messages.

whether the digital signage provider delivers any content on workplace topics or offers design or editorial services for content creation. You may need this to supplement your efforts, and you'll want to know how it is priced.

- *Reach:* If you require an enterprise solution, be sure to find out how you will be able to manage users and permissions for content creation. From a hardware point of view, if you have many screens playing the same content, explore cost-saving approaches. The best of today's systems incorporate software that adapts for mobile communications as well, fast becoming an essential for contacting your on-the-road team.

- *Support:* Internal stakeholder commitment and involvement will help you determine how much outside support you will need. Does your potential partner offer a turnkey solution if needed? Is technical support and training readily available, and is it included in the price?

- *Security:* Before you go shopping for a partner, be sure to understand your internal security requirements. They will determine whether a wireless, SaaS or internal server-based model will be best for you. That, in turn, will narrow the field of possible providers and help you project costs.

- *Price:* Pricing models vary widely, from turnkey solutions that include hardware, software and licensing fees to a la carte offerings and subscription-based models. Most digital signage products are sold through reseller networks. Within any given network, there are sources for screens, media players, software, consultative services, design and content support. Find out how these services are priced. Beware of hidden costs that may be layered in after the initial purchase.

By following these guidelines you'll have a dynamic communications platform that aligns with your company goals, engages your employees, and keeps them informed and motivated. | **WA**

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