



Navigating Wayfinding Systems

How to create an effective signage system that your clients will love



Charity Jackson is co-owner of Visual Horizons Custom Signs based in Modesto, Calif. She has been in business since 1995, and has worked in the sign industry

for over 15 years. You can visit her website at www.vbdesign.com

ONE WAY TO THINK about interior wayfinding signs is to classify them by their basic types: suspended, free-standing, projecting and wall-mounted. But helping a customer choose which type is best for their needs also means looking at design choices, placement, legal requirements and the client's budget.

Let's look at some strategies for creating the most effective wayfinding system possible, but also fits your client's needs.

DESIGN

The purpose of wayfinding signage is to direct a person along a path that leads them to a destination. With the large selection of sign systems on the market, you can offer your clients both effective and attractive signs.

I think of the design of the sign as the colors, materials and overall look of the signs. These sign systems often incorporate a clear lens that can be customized with printed graphics. Other systems can accept engraved slats. This flexibility

allows any sign company the ability to offer a wholesale product at a profit.

Curved and flat sign systems are common choices from suppliers. Multiple system types that offer the same curved or flat look, makes it easier to mix signage types to create an overall wayfinding system that works for your client.

There are many great companies specializing in wayfinding signs and signage systems, which are sold wholesale to the sign industry. Their job is to create an attractive product at an affordable price, with a quick turnaround time. Companies such as Vista System will provide signage systems for you to insert your own produced graphics. Meanwhile, signmojo.com will allow you or your customers to order pre-made, ADA-compliant signs directly off your own company's website.

Another company is SignPro Systems, a division of Orbus Exhibit & Display Group. The company recently launched a new website designed to make it easier for sign professionals to offer wayfinding signs.

I spoke with Julien Aiglon, Sales Manager for SignPro Systems, about what they are trying to accomplish with the new website. "The evolution of the website is more than a facelift, it is an improved resource we provide to the trade that makes it easier for them to offer superior wayfinding signage to their customers," says Aiglon.

Signage system companies offer an impressive number of sign systems on their websites. This great selection makes it easier for sign companies to offer a product that will work with the design and architecture of a client's building.

A potential client will usually look to the sign professional for ideas on creating effective wayfinding signage as well as choosing a design that blends with their



Clear lenses make it easy and cost effective to change out information.

office. Take note of colors already used in the building, types of metal finishes, and curved or squared elements and use these design basics as a foundation to build on. The customer will be impressed with the uniform results.

PLACEMENT

The placement of the sign also lends a hand in the overall design. Keeping in mind the purpose of the signs, you must physically walk the route the signs will navigate to select the best position for the signs.

Suspended or overhead signs work well in crowded locations to direct a person at a distance. Sign system manufacturers offer suspended signs in a variety of sizes and formats. A clear non-glare lens on the systems makes it easy to create printed graphics in a uniform color scheme.

Free standing signs offer the flexibility to conveniently move them as needed. They can be used to identify a space or direct foot traffic. Curved and flat features, as well as different available finishes, allow these signs to be used in conjunction with other types of wayfinding signs for a uniform design.

The free-standing towers and pylons offer protective non-glare lenses for quickly changing out graphics. For example, SignPro's Tower Series of products feature an aluminum frame with top and bottom plates that accept a six-foot substrate. An optional Tower Lighting Kit turns the sign into a large freestanding light box. SignPro's Pylon products come in either double-sided or three-sided options. When dividing strips are added, the signs can also be used as freestanding directories.

Projecting signs are wall mounted, but rather than being flush to a wall they mark a space by protruding away from the wall. Like suspended signs, projecting signs should be easy to read from a distance.

Arris Signs is another trade-only supplier with a wide range of identification signs. They feature a projecting sign made up of two low-profile frames mounted back to back on a modular mounting bracket. These signs have a sleek aluminum frame and non-glare removable lens.



By matching the vinyl colors on the ADA wayfinding signs to the vinyl directional signs we were able to create cost effective signs for our local theater.



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A quick visit to signmojo.com will give you an easy way to order your customized ADA and wayfinding signs. The sign on top is most commonly used at simple intersections with one or two directions. The sign above is a common area sign used to identify permanent rooms within a facility. Photos courtesy signmojo.com.

Wall-mounted signs feature a wide variety of choices. Multi-slat directories, room identification signs and directional signs are just a few uses. These signs can be used to mark a path as well as to identify a destination.

Many wall-mount systems can be easily updated with removable graphics or slide-in slats. When working with your client, ask how often they expect the signs to change to determine the most convenient method.

For directory signs research the number of departments, offices or individuals that will need to be included on the sign. Many suppliers offer a large selection of directory frames, allowing the flexibility to choose a system with multiple slats or the ability to add-on additional slats or frames as needed.



SignPro Systems has updated its website to feature an easy to use format for offering wayfinding signage.



These Slatz Directories from Clarke Systems helped us create professional wayfinding signs for our customer.

LEGAL

Certain types of signs must be in compliance with the Americans with Disabilities Act (ADA). These include wall-mounted Braille wayfinding signs. Temporary signs, advertising signs and marketing signs do not need to comply with this act. The regulations governed by the ADA ensure that public facilities have wayfinding signs that allow persons with disabilities can efficiently move themselves around a public space.

Raised tactile characters and Braille should be used on signs identifying a permanent room but are not required on all building signs. It is very important that ADA-compliant signs be properly placed according to the regulations of the Act.

A high-contrast of light and dark letters and substrate for easy readability should be used on all wayfinding and directional signs. Check ADA regulations

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Curved-face sign products have saturated the market for years as essentially the only viable solution for displaying a wide range of sign materials, notably digitally printed graphics. Arris provides a well-designed, low-profile alternative that does everything a curved product does and more! Able to accommodate a wide range of sign display materials, Arris is designer-friendly yet offers all the functional benefits of a true modular product.

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Arris Signs is a trade-only supplier of overhead, directional and freestanding signs.

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Mary Tohill
Publisher
Toll Free: 800-669-0424 x217
Local: 303-469-0424 x217
e-mail: mary@nbm.com



Chris Taraskiewicz
Advertising Account Executive
Toll Free: 800-669-0424 x209
Local: 303-469-0424 x209
e-mail: ctaraski@nbm.com



James "Ruggs" Kochevar
Advertising Account Executive
Toll Free: 800-669-0424 x237
Local: 303-469-0424 x237
e-mail: jkochevar@nbm.com



Diane Gilbert
Advertising Account Executive
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Clarke Systems offers a selection of interior wayfinding signs as well as ADA and Braille signs.

to be sure that the identification, architectural, directional and informational signs your client may need are designed to be compliant.

Many of the wall frames with clear lenses can be customized with high contrast graphics and/or Braille and tactile letters to meet Act requirements. The removable lenses also allow the background graphics to be customized for your client and their design style.

If you are not equipped to do Braille signs in-house, many companies offer wholesale ADA and Braille signage in addition to their other wayfinding sign systems. They use ADA-approved fonts, colors and materials. Their systems utilize lenses, slats, changeable inserts and frames.

Of course, signage requirements are just one part of the American with Disabilities Act. Check www.ada.gov for publications and additional information.

BUDGET

Wayfinding signs are necessary in any public building. Helping your clients choose an effective wayfinding system within their budget is your goal.

Research wholesale sign system suppliers and compare their products, pricing, shipping costs and customer service. Choose a supplier you feel confident can be a partner in the growth of your company and work closely with them to understand their products.

Use this knowledge to establish a pricing guide to confidently sell a range of products to your customers. Talk with your client about the number of signs they need, the locations, colors, amount of information and incorporation of ADA compliant signs. Once you know their needs, talk with them about their budget so you can offer cost effective signs that meet their needs. **SDG**

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