

Sign Design

How to brighten your brand and illuminate your image.

In today's increasingly competitive business environment, companies are searching for exciting new innovative marketing campaigns to increase their competitive advantage. U.S. companies are collectively spending over \$240 billion annually on advertising and marketing to develop that vibrant personality that will create that traffic stopping brand. Companies are spending millions of dollars on corporate identity programs to effectively communicate their brand message in an effort to distinguish themselves from the competition, drive customer preference, increase consumer loyalty and generate significant long term financial returns for stockholders and stakeholders. Your brand is the foundation of your corporate marketing, your messenger, your corporate identity, your essence and should be revered as one of your most valued assets.

It is critical that your brand be carefully managed and maintained to ensure that you receive the maximum return on your investment. It is imperative that your brand strategy be seamlessly integrated throughout your entire company and implemented at every single point of public contact, including the first element that a customer views when passing your location: your main identity signage. You literally have seconds to create that lasting first impression that wins the hearts and minds of your customers and keeps them coming back.

What does your company's main identity signage say about your company? Love at first sight or unsightly?

What emotions does your signage trigger? Does your signage scream and shout fun, fresh, exciting, safe and friendly or does it whisper experienced, innovative, professional, reliable and high quality? Does it create a memorable experience, a moment to remember, a lasting impression? Will it enhance your customer's experience and influence your customer's preferences?

Unfortunately for the brand, research has shown that the story of a bad impression circulates five times farther than a good one. According to well known author Scott McKain, in his book, *What Customers Really Want*, "91% of dissatisfied customers will never buy again." As we all know, it is far more expensive to gain a new customer than it is to retain one. Scott claims that "a mere 5% increase in customer retention could increase profitability by 25% to 100%." The good news? "It's never too late to make a good first impression!"

HOW TO MAKE A GOOD FIRST IMPRESSION

So how do you make a good first impression that will last in the hearts and minds of your customers? "You brighten your brand by illuminating your image!"

In order to maintain a consistent and vibrant brand image that continues to create a lasting positive impression in the hearts and minds of your customers, companies are placing a heavier emphasis on proactively maintaining their signage and lighting as an integral part of their facilities maintenance programs.

The deterioration of signage is inevitable and begins the moment the sign is installed. Such elements as the sun's UV rays, wind, rain and pollution further accelerate problems associated with normal usage.

TYPICAL SIGNAGE PROBLEMS

- Burnt out, flickering and fading lighting
- Material discoloration
- Paint chipping
- Transformer and ballast failure
- Socket and wiring malfunctions
- Vinyl cracking
- Metal rust
- LLF – Lost Light Factor

The aforementioned problems are generally the most common signage problems; however, there are also many problems that arise that are unique to an individual sign element. Most signage problems typically do not get better over time and often lead to larger, more expensive damage that will require additional repairs or possible sign restoration and/or replacement. For example, neglecting to replace broken or flickering bulbs, in the long run, causes a great deal of stress on the other electrical components of the sign, including the transformer or ballast which, in time, will decrease the overall useful life of the sign. LLF (Lost Light Factor) occurs over time and is not easily noticeable until it reaches a critical level. Either your sign doesn't shine or your lights don't illuminate. LLF can be caused by ballast malfunction, voltage variation, surface depreciation or bulb


tenance program. A photo library of your signage also serves as an excellent tool for managing your brand image and corporate identity.

SUMMARY

Preventative maintenance programs are designed to protect your signage and lighting investment by maintaining a consistently fresh appearance and by preventing small problems from escalating, extending the useful life of your fixtures. More importantly, it can also prevent any potential problems from occurring so that your signage provides 24/7 advertising as it was originally designed. A scheduled routine maintenance program enhances your brand image by presenting a fresh, like-new appearance; extends the life expectancy of your fixtures; minimizes the number of outages; increases the mean time between failures; and decreases the overall cost associated with unnecessary service calls. Preventative maintenance

programs should be extremely flexible and easily modified to reflect the growing requirements of your organization. Preventative maintenance programs are designed to be easily shaped to match your service requirements while providing a predictable fixed monthly cost that fits well within your budget. A well designed and managed preventative maintenance program should provide you with a complete site inventory and photo library of all of your fixtures. These data points are essential for conducting statistical analysis for strategic planning and budgeting. Establishing a preventative maintenance program with a professional sign and lighting service company can avoid the tedious and costly task associated with managing a variable cost, break-fix maintenance program.

Implementing an effective sign and lighting preventative maintenance service program will create an overwhelming first impression, dramatically

enhance your customers' experience, influence their future buying preferences and create that long term reciprocal customer loyalty that customers demand and companies so desire. In essence, a well managed preventative maintenance program will literally "brighten your brand and illuminate your image!" 

depreciation. By the time it's noticed, it's too late. Customers have already become alarmed and uncomfortable, particularly in parking lots or access areas. It is imperative that a broken sign be serviced at the earliest possible time to minimize the potential for additional component failures that would result in an interruption in service and the need for additional costly service calls. Ideally, end of life components that can be identified and replaced during routine maintenance intervals and prior to failure can dramatically increase the longevity of the sign, increase the mean time between failures and significantly reduce your overall service costs. In addition, the opportunity cost associated with the negative image that is visually communicated with a main identity sign outage or a poorly lit parking lot will far outweigh the cost of keeping your important sign and lighting elements well maintained and looking vibrant and new.

PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAMS

As a proactive approach to preventing sign and lighting outages, a well managed preventative maintenance program can provide a significant number of benefits to your organization. Preventative maintenance programs typically involve regular routine maintenance delivered during predetermined scheduled intervals. They are designed to include the following services:

- Detailed inspection of each sign and lighting fixture.
- Complete inventory, photo library and site location plan.
- Replacement of failed or end of life components.
- Cleaning and touchup to keep these elements looking vibrant and new.

Although preventative maintenance programs may initially appear to be a more expensive service option, in reality, over the extended life of the fixture, they prove to be a much greater value for your company.

BENEFITS OF A WELL MANAGED PREVENTATIVE MAINTENANCE PROGRAM

Fixed Fee Program

Well designed preventative maintenance programs provide routine scheduled maintenance in an all-inclusive, per-site monthly fee schedule. On the whole, the variable costs associated with break-fix maintenance, including parts and labor, are essentially eliminated, which creates a fixed fee schedule that is manageable and predictable. Most fixed fee programs require a certification process that includes a detailed site survey and inspection to determine the condition of each signage and lighting element and a "bring to burn" investment to replace any defective or end of life components. Although the initial capital investment associated with certifying an element may seem expensive, it is far less than the cost to re-lamp and re-ballast each sign and lighting element. This balanced approach offers all the advantages of an extended warranty with a lower initial capital expenditure.

Minimize Potential Problems & Costs

A professional sign and lighting service company begins each routine service call by inspecting each interior and exterior sign and lighting fixture to ensure safety and to make sure that each lighting element meets all current standards and regulations. By inspecting, photographing and inventorying each element, the technician can replace any failed or end of life components, which will increase the mean time between failures and extend the service life of the fixture. Thorough cleaning of the sign's interior surfaces and parts not only prevents potential problems, but can extend the life of the electrical components while keeping the sign looking vibrant and new. Although the effects of UV rays, wind, salt and pollution cannot be stopped, it can be reduced significantly using special treatments. Progressive preventative maintenance programs can literally restore your signage to factory-new condition and keep them looking vibrant and new.

Minimize "Down" Time & Increase the Mean Time Between Failures

Professional sign service companies who deliver quality services, or service level guarantees, typically provide emergency service 24/7 which can be easily accessed via the Web, fax or a toll-free phone number by any individual within your organization. Any outage that occurs between routine service intervals can usually be resolved within 24 to 48 hours, rather than weeks, lessening the negative effects of a sign outage. Routine preventative maintenance programs dramatically increase the mean time between failures and should keep the emergency service calls to a minimum.

Maximize the Sign's Life

No sign can last forever; in fact, the typical sign only lasts 5 to 10 years. However, through a preventative maintenance program, a company can guarantee that it gets the most out of its sign by slowing down the effects of aging and extending the useful life of its signs. Various signs require assorted methods of cleaning in order to restore the original condition. For instance, simply cleaning the sign exterior and the bulbs results in up to a 50% increase in brightness. Painted signs can be touched up to bring out the original colors, restoring the fixture to its new vibrant condition. Proper care and maintenance can often double the life expectancy of your signage.

Maintain Detailed Inventory and Maintenance Records

A professional sign and lighting service company should survey your entire location and prepare a detailed site location plan and inventory listing of all sign and lighting fixtures, including components for warranty and parts replacement. Your service provider should maintain extensive maintenance records and provide a complete service history for budgetary strategic planning. Before and after photos that are available online can be an excellent tool for managing and monitoring the quality and consistency of your main-