

# SIGN RESEARCH FOUNDATION EXECUTIVE SUMMARY

RETAIL SIGNAGE:  
PRACTICES  
TO INCREASE  
RETURN ON  
INVESTMENT



Signs serve important purposes in a business' strategy: reinforcing an established brand, communicating information to customers and

enriching the customer experience. On first glance, these strategies might not be considered "measurable," but organizations can incorporate best practices for these strategies to increase their return on sign investment. For example, following best practices for sign legibility, viewing enjoyment, informational aspects, quality, appropriate scale and uniqueness can impact the success of a sign and therefore a business' bottom line.

*Retail Signage: Practices to Increase Return on Investment*, developed by the Sign Research Foundation (SRF), explores the connection between high-level design practices and business success. For this study, a group of executives, consultants, designers and fabricators were asked to compare these leading sign practices with standards for design excellence. High-level design practices were initially outlined in the *Signs and the Downtown Experience*, which was developed by SFI in 2014.

**The mistake most designers and customers make is looking at sign or building ROI in isolation of the entire customer experience. When seen as a key touchpoint or as a complement to other experiences that support brand, the qualities that make effective signs become more apparent and its value goes up.**

—Leonard Barzsap,  
Senior Associate, Lippincott

## BEST PRACTICES

This report identifies three best practices which highlight the need for signs to be an integrated part of a business' strategy.

### 1 INTEGRATE SIGNS INTO THE OVERALL DESIGN STRATEGY.

- Signs can contribute to a retail layout and location's value, increasing ROI based on sales in dollars per square foot. This metric has become more complex with the development of other technological approaches to finding a location.
- The brand equity of signs has steadily become a major part of a company's overall marketing strategy.
- ROI may be based on experience design analysis. This is still a relatively new management approach and makes use of customer touchpoints to determine the impact on building relationships.

### 2 INTEGRATE SIGNS INTO MANAGEMENT EFFORTS AND VALUE PROPOSITION.

- Make sign excellence a strategy to reward. Staff accountability, executive recognition and rewards based on brand excellence can lead to stronger sign and building development practices.
- Engage the community. Companies that follow a strategy focused on extensive community engagement with local stakeholders develop unique design concepts for store signs, which leads to greater customer loyalty.
- Make signs central to an integrated brand strategy through the use of experience designers. These organizations can conduct consumer research, map complete customer experiences and visualize and implement solutions from management improvements to complete design overhaul.

## INCREASE COLLABORATION BETWEEN DESIGNERS AND CONTRACTORS.

- Signs are increasingly integrated into the architectural development process. This is due, in part, to the premium prices given to mixed-use developments, the rise of architecture firms with the ability to assimilate graphics and signs and the shift of retail from internally focused malls to exterior complexes.
- Leading retailers are balancing quality and value through close relationships with fabricators. Advances in fabrication and project management have raised the value of signs as part of the store development process. Prototype development, value engineering, rollout management and project management are all part of the picture.
- Digital media content continues to need careful management. Successful retailers make dynamic digital signs central to marketing and information strategy, with long-term content strategies and an eye-to-design quality that is equal to physical signs.

# 7 CASE STUDIES

The following case studies were identified and analyzed by through interviews and previous research results. These stores used the following strategies to increase their ROI:

1

### **BUFFALO WILD WINGS:**

Consistent branding and unique environments

2

### **H&M:**

High-quality architectural elements and dynamic displays

3

### **VALLEY GREEN BANK AND KEN'S MARKET/MARKETIME FOODS:**

Environments that complement the local community

4

### **SHOPS AROUND LENOX, CLASSEN CURVE AND NICHOLS HILL PLAZA:**

High-quality, landmark elements

5

### **WAWA CONVENIENCE STORES AND SHEETZ CONVENIENCE STORES:**

Distinct architecture, lighting and legibility

6

### **LARIMER SQUARE AND THE BEALE STREET HISTORIC DISTRICT:**

Aggressive private investment, progressive city codes and infrastructural support

7

### **LIT BROTHERS AND TAPHOUSE 23:**

Sophisticated use of digital signage



Read the Full Report Retail Signage: Practices to Increase Return on Investment:  
[www.signresearch.org/ROIRetailSummary](http://www.signresearch.org/ROIRetailSummary)

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