

Retail:

# Hi-Def LED Coming in from the Cold



*Martin is Head of Advertising & New Media at Sydney Airport, leading an integrated digital strategy which incorporates web, mobile, digital outdoor and an extensive digital signage network across the T1 and T2 terminals.*

Story: Martin Salter

**W**e are constantly fine-tuning the digital signage at Sydney Airport. It's been an interesting journey as we form a broader understanding of the space as the technology evolves.

One thing is for certain: the portfolio needs to offer opportunities to lock step with the rhythm of travel, and that rhythm begins at home as soon as the customer starts researching their holiday or business trip. In other words, we don't consider our signage as simply an animated advertisement on a screen onsite, but rather as part of an integrated digital strategy that allows our customers (the traveller) to plug into a world of relevant, contextual information along with value-add benefits from our marketing partners.

It's a holistic media solution which encapsulates digital signage, mobile and content, that focuses on delivering high-level engagement with our customers throughout their journey.

This strategy is underpinned by our free wi-fi network. The technology is now available to create a *walled garden* content environment which we're planning to integrate with our other digital networks including digital assets, other marketing communications and at gate lounges. All of this happens before the customer even goes online and means that we will be able to send content to customers based on their location and not worry about using beacons. That's right — same result yet no beacons!

When Sydney Airport was featured back in Issue 1 of *DigitalSignage* we were pursuing a strategy of placing multiple screens along the journey the customer takes through the terminal. There were (and are) key touch points where travellers dwell (either through requirement or choice) — such as gate lounges, food courts and other retail areas — and we placed larger-format video walls in these areas.

After signing APN Outdoor in March 2015 as our principal media partner for the next five-and-a-half years, Sydney Airport has commenced an improvement program to deliver a world-class media portfolio, which will deliver a generational change to our digital signage, addressing the position and quantity of our displays. This works into our overall approach of constantly reinvesting in the signage by reviewing our portfolio strategies.

## LED COMES OF AGE

Much has changed since Issue 1, but the biggest changes have been to the screen technology. Notably, LED technology has come on in leaps and bounds. No longer simply the preserve of outdoor billboards or sport stadium scoreboards, LED is now of sufficiently high resolution to be used as a replacement for LCD video walls.

In 2014 we installed an 8m-wide, 2.5mm pixel pitch Screencorp LED display in T1 at the Departures entry. The specifications of the screen needed to deliver exceptional picture quality due to its statement location. It was a strategic investment for Sydney Airport and it's performing exceptionally well as (in my opinion) one of the best indoor displays in Australia.

APN's Screencorp LED installation has made something evident to us. Yes, we need a collection of smaller screens that are effective in departure lounges, but elsewhere a smaller number of larger LED displays can more effectively replace the previous strategy of smaller screens in high-dwell areas. Our strategic approach is to provide less signage, but with better quality and more impact.

**Delivering a smaller number of bigger and brighter LED screens will help reduce visual clutter, heighten the impact of the marketing message and, crucially, enhance the customer experience.**

## IT'S ALL ABOUT HIGH DENSITY WI-FI

And if all this wonderful hardware is like a beautiful sports car idling away, and customer engagement is like the race car driver jumping in and planting their foot on the accelerator, well then, the fuel, the 98 Octane go-juice, is wi-fi. Without solid wi-fi we don't garner strong customer engagement analytics and that beautiful high-performance vehicle remains parked at the kerb. We plan to continue to improve customer engagement by using the insights into customer behaviour on site and this is where our wi-fi solution will be able to deliver analytics previously not available.

Sydney Airport's commitment to our wi-fi network is paramount, hence we have boosted our up/down speeds to 200Mb/s and will continue to build upon the current platform.

Naturally, our wi-fi is free for our customers and, at present, sponsored by Amex. We were the first airport in Australia to launch a free wi-fi service,

which is not only useful for travellers but also has the business benefit of strong customer engagement. In 2014, there were 4.8 million sessions with strong penetration across both T1 and T2. Without question it's our most popular digital offering, so it's got to be performing for our customers.

We're currently looking at other ways of using wi-fi to entice customers into the Sydney Airport ecosystem, either by promoting our free iPhone and Android apps for download or interaction with a screen, management content, retail offers or our website.

For example, we've been providing destination-relevant information in the Departures lounges (such as weather forecasts for destinations) and, in partnership with TripAdvisor, we're now working on destination-appropriate travel guides. These will be available as a digital download from our website or app that will showcase information such as the '10 Best Restaurants in Tokyo' or 'The Most Popular Attractions to See in Vancouver'. The content will also be available on our digital 'walled garden' and on our digital screens at the gate lounges. They won't replace a Lonely Planet guidebook, but will be ideal for time-poor travellers about to hop on a plane seeking specific destination information.

The next phase of Sydney Airport's media strategy will be to deliver more relevant content to customers as they remain mobile, so they may be better informed and enjoy an enhanced experience while they are within the Sydney Airport precinct. ✎