

How to use wayfinding signage effectively: Six key pointers to use

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Wayfinding signage provides the essential information to guide and direct customers, patients, or visitors through and around a property or building. A well-researched and well-engineered wayfinding signage program will promote an enhanced visitor experience and improve traffic patterns through your location. It's more than creating attractive signs. Wayfinding signage is determined by the dynamics of the visitor experience as people approach and travel through the property or facility and orient themselves to find their destinations.

An effective wayfinding system anticipates directional needs, guides visitors to key destinations, aligns with your building's pathways, and strengthens your brand.

Put yourself in the shoes of a first-time visitor to your property and evaluate what is working or what is not working with your existing wayfinding plan. Here are six key pointers to use in assessing the effectiveness of your existing wayfinding signage:

â€¢ It starts at the beginning

Wayfinding must begin as soon as customers approach your property. Your signs should be clear, concise, and easy to read, and there should be a logical flow of information from the entrance to the parking area or customer destination. Remember that signs on the perimeter of your property are the first impression many people will have of your brand. Make it a positive one.

â€¢ Anticipate pathways, decision points and destinations

Map out every directional challenge a customer might encounter. The trick is doing that with the minimum number of signs possible. Determine a hierarchy of information based around primary and secondary pathways, destinations, and key decision points. The sequence of signs and organization of information you create should be simple, clear, and intuitive.

â€¢ Determine which signs you will need and where they should be located

An overall wayfinding plan will help you to clarify the different types of wayfinding signs you need. More than likely you'll need a combination of directional signs, traffic control and parking signs, pedestrian wayfinding signs, informational signs, and identification signs.

â€¢ Build your brand

Your signs make millions of impressions every day and come to mind when people think of your brand. Wayfinding signs should align with the architecture of your building and reflect your overall brand image. They must be visible, readable and functional. When designing wayfinding signage it is important to take into consideration the materials, colors, sizes, shapes and layouts for each sign to ensure a consistent style that reflects your brand.

â€¢ Pay attention to the warning signs

You should have your radar up for remarks from visitors like, "Sorry I'm late. I had a hard time finding you," or "Where did you say the restrooms were?" They may be telling you that your current

signage isn't working and that it is time to improve your existing plan. This is especially important if your facility has undergone a recent renovation or expansion.

â€¢ Plan ahead

As you address your wayfinding signage plan, make sure to consider future needs including facility upgrades, changes to parking areas or landscaping, and construction plans for any of the access roads or major highways nearby. By anticipating these future challenges today, you can avoid alienating visitors in the future.

Research is an important step to understanding the environment and where information is needed to maximize legibility of your wayfinding system. Through the collection and review of pertinent data, you can discover known and unknown issues that are preventing your customers, patients or visitors from finding you.

When creating a wayfinding signage system for your property or building, consult with a knowledgeable signage professional who can work with you to develop a strategic wayfinding plan that fits your needs and reflects your brand. When selecting a vendor for any project, it's important to factor in not only the immediate needs of a project, but the long term commitment that a company can provide in helping to build your brand.

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