

UPDATED FOR 2009

10 THINGS TO KNOW BEFORE BUYING AN LED SIGN



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SUMMARY

Selecting an LED sign should be driven by the business or organizational objectives you hope to meet by purchasing an LED sign. An informed buyer knows the right questions to ask and what features to consider. You might think this process is complex. Not to worry. There are a few basic guidelines, some good questions to ask and a few things to look for that can help you make the decision with confidence.

“10 Things” OVERVIEW

1. What is an LED sign?
2. How does an LED sign work?
3. Who should consider investing in an LED sign?
4. How do LED signs compare to other forms of advertising?
5. How do I choose the right LED sign?
6. How much should I budget for an LED sign?
7. How do I choose a local sign partner?
8. What are the steps once I decide whom I want to work with?
9. Why should I consider Watchfire LED signs?
10. If I'm interested, how do I move forward?

1) WHAT IS AN LED SIGN?

An LED (light emitting diode) is an efficient, effective and ultrabright alternative to incandescent light bulbs. Unlike traditional light bulbs, LEDs do not burn out because there is no filament. Rather, they just slowly dim over a long period of time (about 100,000 hours or 11+ years).

An LED sign is made up of individual modules (about 12" square each) with LEDs mounted on them. The modular design allows the signs to be configured to almost any size. LED signs are typically double-sided and are available as monochrome or full color. A common size for commercial LED signs is 37" high x 8' wide.

LED signs are usually part of a larger system, as in the example shown here. Messages can be programmed and scheduled easily using software installed on the computer that controls the sign.



2) HOW DOES AN LED SIGN WORK?

It works through a standard PC that connects to the sign via one of these four methods:

- Broadband Wireless
- Radio Frequency (RF) connection
- Phone modem (similar to a dial-up Internet connection)
- Fiber optics
- Corporate network (LAN or other)

The software allows the user to program and change messages on the sign. The marketing department often manages programming. The programmer chooses from a menu of text and animation options and creates a schedule of messages, sometimes setting a schedule weeks or even months in advance. Prepackaged graphics, web graphics and original graphics can all be part of the messaging mix.

3) WHO SHOULD CONSIDER INVESTING IN AN LED SIGN?

Anyone who relies on business from passersby should consider LED. If your business or organization is visible from the highway or a busy street – whether it's vehicular traffic, pedestrian traffic or both – you should consider advertising with an LED sign. In addition, if you've already invested in more expensive advertising to reach your audience, you should consider an LED sign. What's more expensive, you ask? Read on.

4) HOW DO LED SIGNS COMPARE TO OTHER FORMS OF ADVERTISING?

Just look at how LED signs stack up. Compare an LED sign in terms of the number of impressions, cost per impression and how much it costs on a per-day basis. It beats newspaper, yellow pages and radio hands down. And only with an LED sign can you change your message instantaneously. LED signs can be used to quickly reduce inventory or boost site-specific and time-specific sales – perfect for a restaurant that wants to clear out perishable food items by offering a limited-time special, for instance.

Yellow Directory	Radio	Newspaper	Watchfire Sign
Full-Page Ad 4,000[†]	Average Daily Audience 11,600	Sunday Readership 17,000	Passing Motorists 34,600
\$2.25 per 100 impressions	\$2.09 per 100 impressions	\$4.14 per 100 impressions	\$0.03-\$0.06 per 100 impressions
\$90* A day	\$243* A day	\$704* A day	\$10 to \$20 A day

*Typical or average prices shown

†Based on 1/10th of population accessing daily

"Since we installed our Watchfire LED Sign, we've been able to cut our advertising budget by an astounding 60%! We've really enjoyed successful fundraising efforts, particularly our annual spring raffle. I believe this is due in large part to the strategic placement of the LED sign on the school grounds."

- Jeanne Mulvaney, Director of Development at Schlarman High School

5) HOW DO I CHOOSE THE RIGHT LED SIGN?

You'll want to consult with a sign professional, but here are a few items to consider right away:

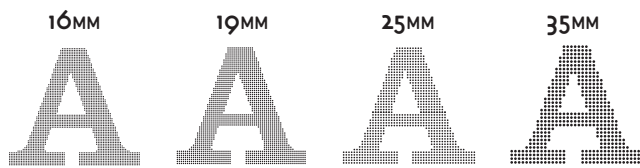
Display size

- What will the typical viewing distance be?
- Will your LED sign fit into an existing sign?

Pixel pitch

- Another instance to consider the expected viewing distance.
- How important is detail in the images you will display?

Pixel Pitch Comparison



Tighter pixels (e.g., 16mm) are more expensive, but create a more vivid experience when viewers are typically closer to your sign. Pixels that are more spread out are less expensive and work well when viewing from a long distance, such as from the highway.

Color or monochrome

- Will the products or services you want to advertise work best in color?
- What is the environment of your sign?
- How will color or monochrome stand out?

Here's a helpful guide as you consider which LED sign will work best for you:

Color Sign Selection Chart - By Pitch				
My most important feature is:	16MM	19MM	25MM	35MM
PRICE/SQ.FOOT:	👉	👉	👉	👉
DISTANCE VIEWING:	👉	👉	👉	👉
IMAGE QUALITY/COLOR DEPTH:	👉	👉	👉	👉
DISPLAY OF SMALL CHARACTERS:	👉	👉	👉	👉
DISPLAY OF LARGE CHARACTERS:	👉	👉	👉	👉

Monochrome Sign Selection Chart - By Pitch		
My most important feature is:	19MM	35MM
PRICE/SQ.FOOT:	👉	👉
DISTANCE VIEWING:	👉	👉
IMAGE QUALITY/SHADING LEVELS:	👉	👉
DISPLAY OF SMALL CHARACTERS:	👉	👉
DISPLAY OF LARGE CHARACTERS:	👉	👉

LEGEND	
👉	👉
👉	👉
👉	👉
👉	👉
👉	👉
good-----best	

6) HOW MUCH SHOULD I BUDGET FOR AN LED SIGN?

You've learned that there are many options in size, color, depth, detail and more, so obviously it depends. There are some useful guidelines that will help you budget. Remember that price is primarily driven by LED quantity and color—prices range quite a bit, from \$10,000 to \$300,000.

An LED sign purchase can best be considered as an advertising expenditure, rather than a capital investment. Put in these terms, the monthly investment of an LED sign, as pointed out in #4, compares very favorably to other advertising options. Another way to look at it is that the monthly payment for an LED sign is highly comparable to a vehicle or truck lease.

7) HOW DO I CHOOSE A LOCAL SIGN PARTNER?

Before asking "How" you might ask, "Why"? Here's why you should choose a local sign partner:

- They're probably intimately familiar with your local sign ordinances
- In the same spirit, they're probably also familiar with the local political structure
- Your local partner can handle every facet of installation and service!

Just a couple more things to consider when choosing your local sign partner: LED sign installation experience and LED sign service experience. If you find either of these lacking, keep looking.

8) WHAT ARE THE STEPS ONCE I DECIDE WHOM I WANT TO WORK WITH?

A brief overview of the process looks like this:

1. Determine the specifications of your size, color, position and pixels.
2. Coordinate price quotes with your local sign partner.
3. Consider a factory tour. The knowledge you gain can be invaluable.
4. Seek references. Check them.
5. Take job site photos. This will help your internal sell and mock-up.
6. Finalize the sign design.
7. Place your order.
8. 4-6 week turnaround is typical for American companies.
9. Local company installs.
10. LED sign manufacturer provides software-training basics.

9) WHY SHOULD I CONSIDER WATCHFIRE LED SIGNS?

An LED sign is not only a smart advertising investment, it's an investment in your connection with your customers. Watchfire maximizes the return on your investment by making the best-looking signs on "Main Street." Watchfire LED signs make everyone look good. Here's how:

- Vertically integrated manufacturing
- Industry's best 5-year warranty
- Intuitive, easy-to-use software, Ignite®
- In-house art production team
- Longstanding relationships with top local sign dealers

10) IF I'M INTERESTED, HOW DO I MOVE FORWARD?

Call Watchfire at 800.637.2645 or learn more at www.watchfiresigns.com.

Next, we'll:

- Refer you to a trusted local sign dealer
- Offer you initial budget and spec guidance
- Create a Site Analysis report

Your local sign dealer will then:

- Help firm up the project specs
- Provide sign-design expertise
- Finalize pricing and manage installation