

Digital Signage 20 point checklist



1	Does the product or solution fully operate independently from any vendor supplied or 3rd party services?	Yes		
2	Can I configure and manage separate layouts and configurations for separate sets of screens at no additional cost?	Yes		
3	Can I freehand, pixel by pixel, configure my own layouts and layer areas like a web page, rather than having to use pre-set templates?	Yes (TV & Video always on top)		
4	How many zones/panels can I have on a single layout?	Unlimited		
5	Does the solution allow me to easily delegate responsibility for updating individual parts (panels/zones) to other staff?	Yes		
6	Can I schedule completely different layouts to display at different times even with different amounts of zones/panels?	Yes		
7	When an individual zone/panel is changing due to a scheduled event or an update, does it do this without disrupting other panels/zones?	Yes		
8	Can the solution display at 1080 HD or even other larger and odd resolutions for future standards and devices?	Yes		
9	If I want to display live TV, does this have to be streamed internet TV?	No		
10	If I want to display live terrestrial TV, can I say which channel I want & when, and if it's to be muted or not?	Yes		
11	Does the solution have a web interface for configuration/updates?	No		
12	During normal operation, while updates are not being made, what network traffic is created by the solution?	None		
13	Does the solution require any extra ports to be opened on our firewall?	No		
14	Does the solution use netcasting/narrowcasting or multicasting?	No		
15	Does the price permanently give me all the tools I need to modify and update all layouts and schedules in the future?	Yes		
16	What ongoing costs for operational use of the product or solution are there including changing my layouts and so on?	None		
17	If I have a hardware failure, would I need to pay for anything apart from the repair or replacement of my hardware?	No		
18	Does the product or solution come with lifetime UK support?	Yes		
19	If I want a higher level of support, is this supplied on a 'must be' concurrent basis?	No, just pay for a 12 month block.		
20	What happens if I come back later for more units and the version I am using is gone?	Legacy versions are kept available		

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1. Frequently solutions have deliberate operational reliance on services provided by the vendor or their affiliates. This not only presents clear security and privacy concerns, but more importantly, this lack of product autonomy means that your investment may not work or may be held to ransom in the future. Alterations to service delivery and version release platform compatibility are often used by vendors within the digital signage market as a revenue generator.
2. Some solutions charge extra for you to be able to manage different groups of screens even though you have already paid for the quantity concerned.
3. Standard layout templates are often presented to convey simplicity but these usually produce very restrictive results and don't offer the power of layering, leaving you with a 'box like' look to your presentations.
4. Sometimes a solution will only have a small number of panels available, which can make creating and managing layouts very restrictive.
5. How your solution will be managed is really important. If you get this wrong, you end up with the same old stale displays month in, month out, and gain nothing. While you may be capable of micro-managing the lot, this is rarely acceptable or preferable. Having a really simple way for delegated staff to separately update individual items is by far the best approach. Within some solutions the supplier offers to update things for you as a remote service within their standard package, but this is rarely adequate, as their interest level diminishes drastically once the installation has gone in. Do it sensibly and properly in-house, or pay for it to be handled.
6. Most solutions do not allow for the layout itself to be scheduled to change, only the fixed panel areas within the layout can be altered. Solutions that allow the versatility for items to be added, removed and moved around are rare, but these do offer the opportunity for more appropriate designs to be adopted to suit what is being shown at any given time.
7. Frequently solutions 're-draw' the whole screen when scheduled changes happen or items are moved or resized. This has the obvious drawback of interrupting the display, but it also means that all video playlists, scrolling text and slideshows start again from the beginning, which is less than preferable.
8. Products based on a hardware solution like media players or signage players suffer from being tied to the specification of the box. As software has the flexibility of not being tied in this way it can offer support for future formats like resolutions and even integrate with interactive devices and inputs.
9. Be cautious at seeing live TV quoted, always ask if this is 'Internet live TV' only. With streamed Internet TV you will need to be aware that this not only has continuation of service and quality implications, but it will create heavy network traffic.
10. Some solutions that are capable of displaying terrestrial TV are not capable of controlling the channel, volume and mute. Also, it's worth asking if you can re-scan for new or changed local TV channels centrally.
11. Considering the network traffic generated by any digital signage solution can not be underestimated. Very few solutions are specifically designed for use within an existing business network. Usually, they are designed or derived from a solution intended for a completely separate dedicated network, so be careful.
12. Solutions where a web interface is developed and maintained should be approached with caution. Often a web interface uses services or servers belonging to the vendor and so present security and future proofing issues. Others that do provide a direct web interface present drawbacks either by only updating individual screens, or by relying on a permanent 24/7 server. These interfaces also offer very limited functionality by their nature.
13. As most solutions were initially designed for use on a separate dedicated network, they are tied to communication methods that present real headaches when introduced to a secure business WAN. So always question the method of communication used.
14. These are hollow buzzwords of the day. Even where people claim they have the best and latest compression algorithms, quality at the screen will never match the real thing, and the network traffic generated is too much for most business networks to bear. Also, if the network connection is lost or interrupted, you have a problem.
15. It is worth asking if you can change and alter everything with the tools you are being sold. Lots of solutions have facets that the vendor retains exclusivity over.
16. Costs for mere ongoing use of the product and solution are very common in the digital signage market, and initially, these not usually presented to the customer.
17. Sometimes digital signage products supplied as a combination of hardware and software are 'only' supplied this way. This means that if you have a hardware failure, they will also want to charge you for the software again, so it's wise to ask.
18. Support is often limited to 12 months and usually not delivered the same way as any initial pre-sale conversation.
19. If an additional level of support contract is useful to you, it's worth asking if this is only supplied on a 'must be' concurrent basis. Sometimes, if you allow it to lapse and come back later, they will want you to pay for the gap period.
20. If you buy a solution for 12 screens now and come back to buy another 6 in 18 months time, what are the implications? What if the new version is not compatible with your existing 12? If it's a hardware product, what if the model you want is no longer available, and again, the new ones are not compatible with the 12 you have?