**ScreenCloud**

Connecting Your Manufacturing Workforce

A guide to creating a digital signage strategy in your manufacturing business that will engage staff, improve safety compliance and close the communication gaps across your frontline workforce.

Manufacturing is one of the industries most affected by a disconnect in communications between senior leaders, line managers and frontline workers.
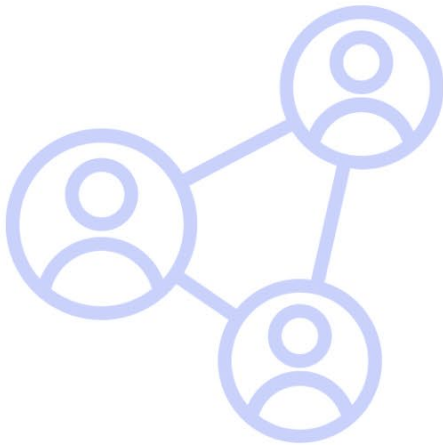
This playbook will walk you through the practical tips and expert guidance needed to achieve greater operational efficiency and ensure every level of your organization stays connected at all times.

Factory floors and warehouses are notoriously tough to reach for those working in head office, particularly Operations, Comms and HR teams. Most frontline employees don't have easy access to a computer during their work hours, which means traditional channels tend to fall short and crucial messages fail to reach their target.

From an employer perspective, bad communication quickly leads to costly mistakes across their on-site locations. Health and safety issues, potential legal action, inefficient workflows and low productivity are all consequences of an inadequate comms ecosystem.

For frontline workers, bad communication usually results in a lack of recognition, low engagement and higher levels of turnover. Gallup research has revealed that manufacturing ranks among the industries with the lowest engagement scores, with only 25% of manufacturing staff actively engaged with their work – 8% lower than the national average.

The problem is clear, and top manufacturers are already turning to alternative channels like digital signage as a way to fix it. It's not just about plugging gaps either; companies are utilizing screens and existing digital hardware in creative ways to transform workplace culture into an interactive, data-driven experience.

[1]Source: State of the American Workforce Report, Gallup

Is digital signage right for your manufacturing plant?

Every manufacturing business has different needs and sits at a different point on the internal comms maturity curve.

Many still rely on legacy systems, manual processes, emails and ad hoc workflows to keep things ticking over, whereas others have no direct channel through which to share engaging content, data insights or encourage feedback from frontline staff.

Digital signage helps to solve all of these limitations while delivering company-wide efficiencies; though it's first up to businesses to plan their investment carefully and get a clear understanding of their budget, logistics and staff requirements.

Industry leaders don't just throw digital signage solutions at the wall and hope they stick. They take a strategic approach to internal comms that enables them to plan and track key objectives, make the most of their existing hardware, automate repetitive tasks and boost operational productivity wherever possible.

54% of frontline managers rely on email to deliver internal comms; even though only **17%** of frontline staff have a company email address

[2]Source: Deskless Report 2022, Nudge

Defining your objectives

Here's a list of common goals that manufacturers aim to achieve by establishing an integrated digital signage solution.

If you can tick more than one box, you should probably be looking to prioritize digital screens as a key communication channel for your organization.

By first establishing your goals, it becomes far easier to start devising KPIs, timelines and other metrics to measure the impact of your future initiatives. This information forms the basis of a well-defined internal communications strategy.

Forklift safety training reminder
02/03/22

My organization aims to:

☐ **Reinforce training messages for frontline staff**

☐ **Communicate production goals and schedule updates**

☐ **Reduce the risk of health and safety accidents**

☐ **Accelerate emergency alerts whenever they happen**

☐ **Strengthen frontline staff recognition and engagement**

☐ **Save time on paper-based admin, manual scheduling and noticeboard updates**

How mature is your internal comms strategy?

Understanding the current maturity of your internal comms system usually proves to be a major factor in delivering long-term cost savings and maximum ROI.

As you'd expect, some organizations are more prepared than others when it comes to installing a digital signage system.

Conducting a comprehensive audit is the best way to evaluate resources and pinpoint exactly where your communications strategy is lacking. It's a good idea to keep the following questions in mind:

Which comms channels aren't reaching frontline staff?

Is the right content being targeted to the right areas of the organization?

How well are senior leaders and line managers connected with frontline employees?

Do frontline staff have an easy route to complete surveys so you can benchmark metrics and KPIs?

Ways to use cutting-edge digital signage in factories

Let's take a look at three common scenarios in which manufacturers can use digital signage to support key objectives on the factory floor.

1. Getting new staff up to speed

Manufacturing has one of highest rates of annual staff turnover as an industry. **The average manufacturer loses a third (31%) of their employees every year[3] – 8% more than the national average in the US.**

High turnover means that new staff are joining all the time, especially during busy seasonal periods. New recruits need to get up to speed quickly, and whereas inductions tend to cover the basics, frequent nudges and reminders are needed to cement skills quickly.

Bitesize training content displayed through digital signage is a great way to reinforce best practices, update changes on the production line and keep everyone working towards the same shared goal.

Analysts also predict the manufacturing sector will have a shortage of over 2 million workers by the end of 2030.[4] When we view that alongside research that reveals 91% of Gen Z workers say the provision of technology impacts their choice between employers[5], it's easy to see the importance of providing an engaging digital experience for long-term talent attraction and retention.
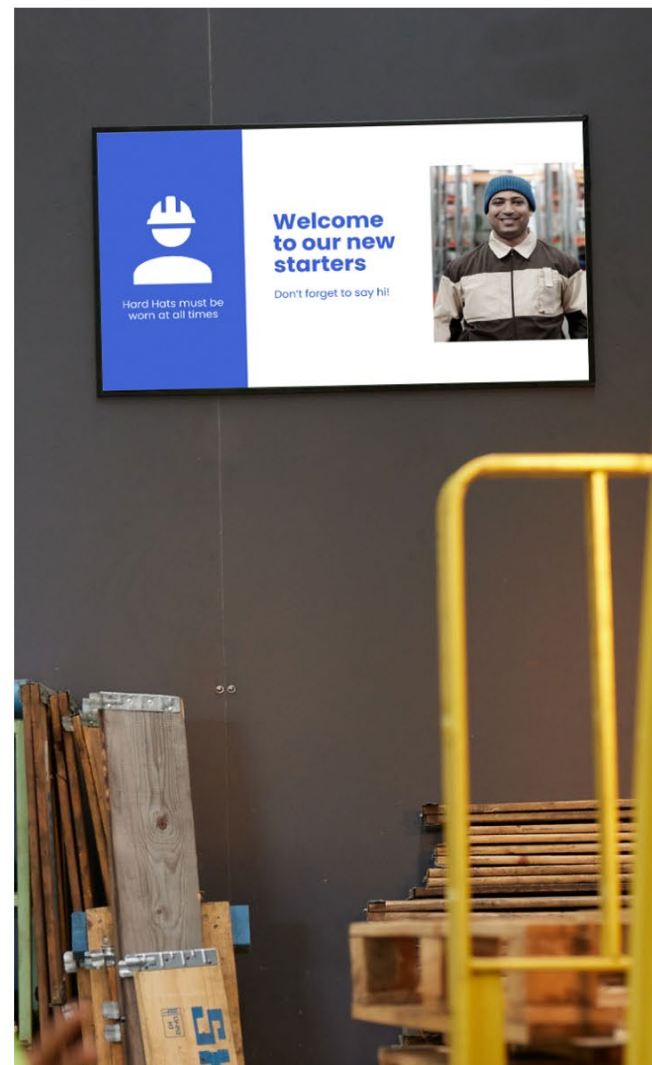
[3]Source: Struggling with High Turnover in Manufacturing, Horton
[4]Source: Manufacturing Skills Gap Report, Deloitte
[5]Source: Companies Need to Digitally Grow Up, World Economic Forum
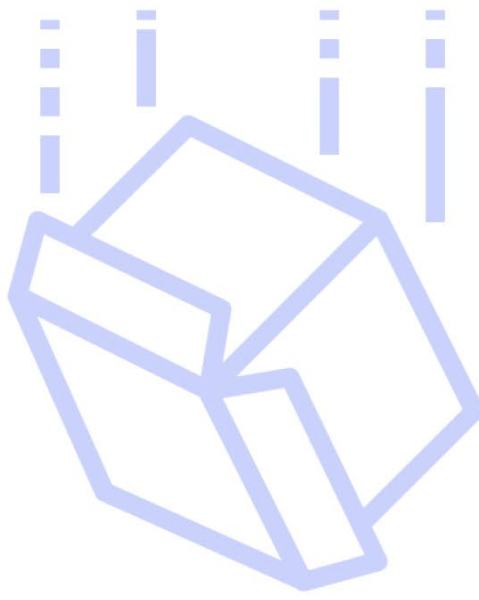
2. Managing frontline safety

The latest stats published by OSHA show that poor hazard communication ranks as the second most common cause of workplace safety incidents – with just under 2,500 citations issued in 2022 alone.[6] **Safety incidents are particularly prevalent in the manufacturing industry, accounting for 5% of all injuries and 8% of all fatalities in the US**.[7]

Prevention is always better than a cure when it comes to safety, and there's clearly a lot on the line for companies that fail to get it right. The first thing a safety auditor will want to see in the event of an incident is clear evidence of preventative steps taken to minimize issues and ensure safety communications are understood by all.

Digital signage can display reminders of safety protocols and compulsory procedures, such as wearing PPE or adhering to machinery guidelines. In the event of an incident, screens can be used to issue emergency alerts that notify frontline staff of incidents in real time and direct evacuation when necessary.

[6]Source: Osha's Top 10 Safety Violations, TDI
[7]Source: Health Topics, CDC

3. Increasing productivity

The success of manufacturing workers tends to be measured by their output and ability to hit production targets; though typically these goals are poorly communicated during shifts and aren't actively used to motivate performance.

A digital signage system can solve this by keeping production goals, inventory levels, scheduling changes and project requirements visible throughout each shift. Sharing this data not only keeps employees informed, it motivates them to hit targets and makes it easier for everyone to stay on the same page.

Employee engagement is also sorely lacking in many warehouses and on-site environments, with only 25% of manufacturing staff reporting high levels of engagement.[8] To combat this, line managers can use screens to engage and recognize employees and make sure that great work isn't flying under the radar.

A recent study from Harvard Business Review found that 92% of employers say both work quality and productivity increase as more data-based insights are made available to frontline workers[9]

The straightforward way to set up digital signage

There are many variables when setting up a digital signage system, and careful planning is needed to make sure you don't make any costly mistakes.

The size and spread of your workforce, the nature of your work environment and the existing hardware you have available all play a role in determining the best approach to installation.

Screen placement should be strategic and tailored to the specific needs of each business. Fortunately, LED displays come in all shapes and sizes. They can be freestanding, fixed to a wall or window, hung from a ceiling or even placed on durable mounts outside – it all depends on the structure of individual and collective workflows and where messages are likely to have the greatest impact.

> **Once your communication objectives have been established, the next step is to map out the physical layout of your workspaces in detail. This will give you a blueprint from which to determine factors such as display height, distance, connectivity and visibility, all of which are crucial in maximizing engagement with on-screen content.**
>
> – Maggie Krol, Multimedia Comms Specialist at BASF

Common digital signage pitfalls to avoid

Companies often make mistakes when planning out their digital signage installation, which ultimately impacts the success of their internal comms strategy. Here are a few common pitfalls to avoid:

Overcrowded displays – Less is often more when it comes to digital signage. Our research with Durham University found that better visual engagement can be achieved by using fewer words, larger, simpler fonts and a focused use of numbers.

Not accounting for viewing angles – Ideally, you want screens to be easy to read from a variety of angles, rather than needing to stand directly in front of them to see what they say. It's also important to be wary of moving obstacles that could obstruct the view from time to time.

Resolution and display settings – Every environment has different requirements, which means the same resolution, contrast and brightness settings that work in one environment may not work so well in another.

Poor content planning – Targeting the wrong audience or demographic with the wrong messaging is a surefire way to lose engagement among your workforce and create a situation where internal comms are largely ignored or misunderstood.

Creating your own multi-location content strategy

Once you've marked out the locations across your organization suitable for digital signage, it's time to decide which information you'll be sharing on screen.

That's not always as easy as it sounds. Between video content, dashboards, real-time data, notifications, social feeds and infographics, the task of devising a multi-location content strategy that engages frontline workers can be a daunting prospect.

A good starting point for senior leaders and site managers is to start thinking about the day-to-day experience of their employees.

Which employees will be passing by or working from certain locations, and when?

Is some information better suited to the morning or afternoon, or during break times?

Are you able to keep staff up to date with business-critical production statistics?

Have you identified any aspects of workplace culture that are lacking, such as staff recognition or internal brand?

Answering these questions makes it easier to start creating a schedule for displayed content, along with the best format for different types of messaging.

Curate content for your staff demographic

Remember that you don't need to reinvent the wheel to start benefiting from a digital signage system.

Remember that you don't need to reinvent the wheel to start benefiting from a digital signage system. Many of the messages previously sent via email or posted on a company intranet can be adapted for on-screen displays. Starting with the basics is a good idea before experimenting with different types of content to see what works best for your workforce.

That said, any manufacturing business wishing to engage their frontline workers with superb content needs to keep in mind the range of roles, responsibilities, ages and levels of digital literacy across their organization. We know the industry has an aging workforce, so it might be that additional training is needed to orient staff on brand new technologies.

QR codes are a good example. Scanning a screen with a mobile device to access interactive content or complete a staff survey can be an engaging method of communication, though it might cause digital friction among some employees. It's a good idea to pre-empt this issue and have additional training available for anyone who needs it.
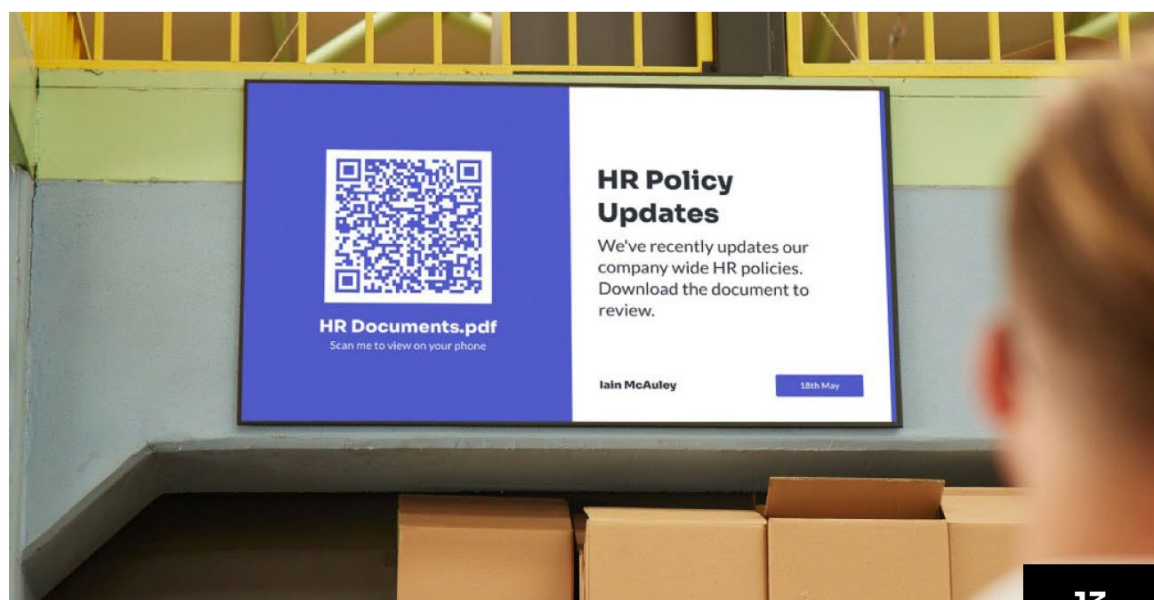
Apps and dashboard integration
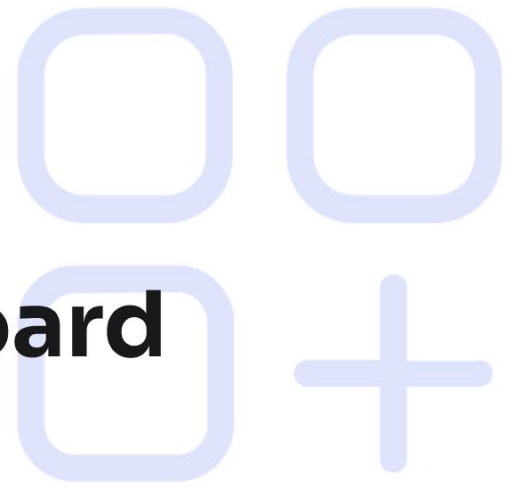
Installing the hardware to facilitate a digital signage strategy is only half the challenge. An intuitive software should sit at the center of that strategy, making it easy to manage an entire network of screens and integrate the wide-ranging systems and applications your business relies on.

Digital screens are a great way to present information from apps like Salesforce, Trello, Slack, Google Analytics and Power BI, to name just a few. Convenience is king when it comes to creating and curating engaging content from different channels, and your choice of software is the biggest factor in ensuring the right feed always reaches the right employees.

For many companies, it's also an ideal way to bring their data to life and make sure staff on the factory floor have complete visibility of KPIs, targets and dashboards every single day.

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Managing multiple apps individually can quickly cause digital friction for manufacturing teams. Site managers often complain about needing multiple sign-ons and the fact that displays and resolutions aren't optimized automatically. A secure, user-friendly software is essential to unite separate programs and streamline a content schedule that showcases a range of engaging information.

– Luke Farrugia, VP of Marketing at ScreenCloud

Ready to connect your manufacturing workforce?

It's not easy for employers in the manufacturing industry to build and sustain connections with a dispersed workforce operating in different locations and shift patterns.

At ScreenCloud, we work closely with manufacturers of all sizes to bridge the gap in communications between head office, site managers and frontline workers. Unlike other software providers, we take time to fully understand the internal challenges facing teams in this industry, particularly safety messaging, harnessing data, reducing turnover and increasing operational efficiency.

By working closely with Operations, HR and Internal Comms teams, we can help build a custom strategy that covers all bases and scales with their growth. Find out more about how we can support your business below!

Take your frontline communications to the next level with ScreenCloud

Get in touch with our friendly team to discuss your challenges and book a quick demo with one of our digital signage experts today. You'll see for yourself how easy ScreenCloud is to use, and the impact it can make across your manufacturing organization.

Book a demo