

# Emerging Trends

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## Shining a Light on the Future

### Exploring the latest LED trends

Over the past few decades, technological advancements have revolutionized exterior and interior lighting and signage. Restaurant lighting accounts for up to 20 percent of total energy consumed and is one of the easiest and least expensive ways to save valuable utility and maintenance dollars. LEDs have become the primary source for lighting when it comes to interior, exterior and signage needs, and with good reason. Switching to LEDs can reduce energy consumption up to 75 percent and lower HVAC costs by reducing the heat build-up within stores. Lower maintenance is another benefit, due to the long life of the bulbs.

Continued advancements in lenses and color renditions make LED lighting the best way to go. They can be used for cans, pendants, coolers, freezers, menu boards, digital signage, emergency exits, exterior signage, wall packs, parking lots and other general lighting needs.

So, what is the latest emerging trend for LEDs? I had a great conversation with Vixxo's Director of Business Development, Julie Lapacka. We discussed trends for lighting and signage, noting two areas where LED lighting is gaining traction due to its economical and labor-saving potential.

### Digital Signage

Lapacka notes that digital signage is quickly taking over the restaurant industry, especially the quick-serve restaurant sector. Today, digital signage includes everything from menu and reader boards to a roadside monument or pylon signs to other advertising methods that attract and engage the customer. According to Lapacka, digital signage spend is in the billions and is expected to double in five years.

The benefits of digital signage are easy to spot:

- Control of messaging: For interior and exterior menu boards, restaurants can achieve labor savings due to ease of updating/ changing food items and prices.
- Anytime updates: Menu board updates can be programmed offsite at the corporate or regional offices or from an operator's home office, ensuring proper messaging. It's easy to create promotions for certain products, which can be changed throughout the day. Each message can be tailored to specific types of customers and to promote new items.
- Real-time promotions: For most customers, QSRs are not "destination" decision driven. Most customers make up their mind as they are driving by a location. Digital signage encourages customers to stop and eat at their establishment by promoting various food deals and other attractions that may wait inside.

- Eye-catching displays: Digital signage far outweighs the traditional reader board messaging, because its advanced technology easily catches the eye of potential customers travelling by the restaurant. Its color and motion-driven advertising has become one of the cheapest primary methods of advertising in the restaurant industry.

On the negative side, local codes are not keeping up with the explosion of digital signage. Many codes do not allow electronic signage or limit the amount of time the message can be changed. Some only allow a certain square footage of signs, so the addition of digital signage may require removal of other sign elements. The International Sign Association is working with local municipalities to update codes to allow for more digital use.

Of course, the upfront costs on digital signage are higher, but the technology should provide a very good ROI, so it's likely worth the effort to understand your local codes. Facility professionals can obtain current sign code information by visiting their local municipal offices or investigating on the city's main website.

### General LED Lighting

There simply is no reason not to choose LEDs. While LED costs have leveled off, advances in lens design continue to reduce the overall fixture and module count required in lighting applications. The ideal viewing angle of light has increased dramatically over the past few years from 120 to 170 degrees. This additional light disbursement allows significantly more coverage of light within a fixture or sign. The increase of light levels means fewer modules or fixtures are needed and that wattage is reduced, which provides added savings on maintenance and energy costs. This helps minimize the prices of exterior and interior signage, menu boards, digital signs and lighting fixtures throughout a restaurant.

Every restaurant lighting application can be taken care of by LEDs. To learn more about energy and labor-saving opportunities for digital signage and lighting, feel free to consult with one of RFMA's many lighting/signage companies. They can meet your restaurant's needs by conducting a facility survey, providing local code information on digital signage availability and even help with obtaining code variances if needed. All LED applications will provide a strong ROI, which will make your internal finance department happy.

The future is here for digital signage. Don't be left behind. Special thanks to Julie Lapacka from Vixxo for providing valuable input and insight for this article.

Always looking for feedback. Feel free to contact me at (972) 805-0905, ext. 3, or email [jeff@rfmaonline.com](mailto:jeff@rfmaonline.com). Dover and out.

Jeff Dover's facilities career started in 1985. He has been employed by several major chains (Ponderosa, Steak & Ale, Bennigan's, TGI Friday's, Fuddruckers and recently Five Guys Burgers and Fries). His technical education enabled him to take the lead as energy manager, facilities manager and director of facilities at the various brands.