

Signs of the times...

John Stanley

Signs are promoted as the silent salesperson. A well thought out signage strategy can save you at least one librarian on the floor, but the real challenge is finding a library with a signage strategy that really works.

Signs are needed to promote the library brand, direct patrons in the right direction, inform people of your policies, identify book categories and promote books. Getting the right message across is a real challenge.

One of the most effective businesses at dealing with signage are the airports. At any one time they have new arrivals to their premises who speak and read different languages, and are often under stress. Their role is to use signage to get their patrons from the carpark to a seat on the plane quickly, efficiently and with the minimum of human contact. Something they do very well.

Many libraries fail to direct their patrons effectively through their library and it may be time to look at your library signage strategy.

The following tips may help you in reassessing your signage strategy and help your patrons to borrow more books.

Tip one:

Remove all the irrelevant signs, especially those around your transition zone (the first three meters as one enters your establishment). In this zone consumers want to take in the whole experience and ambience and do not concentrate on individual signs, unless they say 'welcome' or are of a directional nature.

Tip two:

The guru on signage is Sonja Larsen of Michigan University. According to her research, product promotional signage should be kept simple. Tell the customer what it is, give them three benefits in bullet format and then the price. If they require other information they will request it. The key is to identify what are the three key benefits for the majority of your patrons.

Tip three:

Research carried out by the Ministry of Transport in the United Kingdom identified that people are more likely to read serif



lower case rather than capitals. If you want people to read your signs, place them in lower case, it is easier for people to read.

Tip four:

Don't put up negative signs. A sign saying 'Do not eat food' or 'Do not touch' often results in more common instances of the occurrence. We subconsciously latch onto the key word of food or touch and miss the negative word. If you must relay a command to patrons, do it in an amusing way and it will get more attention.

Do not eat
your own
food in this
restaurant

Tip five:

Always check your signs to make sure the reader can understand what you are saying. 'Keep it simple sells', is the key message, but keep it simple to ensure the customer understands is also the key message. In my global travels as a consultant I have come across some great signs. I hope they put a smile on your face, as they did mine.

Tip six:

Accept that people do not read signs and they register pictures more easily. Can you say it in pictures rather than in words. Albert Heyn, the leading Dutch supermarket chain are now

using large pictures of product and produce to identify categories rather than words. The same can apply in this industry. Think outside the box on how you can get the message across more easily using graphics.

In the follow up article, I'll provide another six tips to improve the signage in your library. It's one of the keys to getting your message across.

John Stanley is a conference speaker and retail consultant with more than twenty years experience in fifteen countries. John works with libraries around the world assisting them with their merchandising, staff and management training, customer flow, customer service and image. John Stanley Associates produce an e-newsletter specific to library retail. This includes innovative ideas and advice to help you grow your library. If you would like to receive a regular copy please visit <http://www.johnstanley.cc> or e-mail us on newsletter@johnstanley.cc.

Planning ahead...

Ingrid Parent, chair of the IFLA Conference planning committee, announced during the closing ceremony of the IFLA Conference held in Glasgow, 18-24 August 2002, that the 2007 conference would be held in Durban, South Africa.

The IFLA Governing Board had decided earlier in the week to confirm its earlier decision to hold the 2004 conference in Buenos Aires, Argentina.

The complete list of conferences from 2003 to 2007 is:

2003: Berlin

2004: Buenos Aires

2005: Oslo

2006: Seoul

2007: Durban

Expressions of interest to host the 2008 conference are invited. The closing date for initial expressions of interest is 1 November 2002. The criteria are set out on IFLANET at <http://www.ifla.org/IV/tohost-gen.htm> together with the address to which they should be sent.

Ross Shimmon, Secretary General, IFLA