

Here's Your Sign

How to choose the best signage options to communicate with park visitors

By Samantha Bartram

These days, individuals are constantly assailed by information, whether on our phones, computers or during the daily commute. Marketing professionals work tirelessly to find the most compelling ways to get our attention, and those who serve in the park and recreation industry are no different. One very effective, if traditional, way to capture a demographic's interest is through clever signage. With the start of the New Year — and the unleashing of new operational budgets — this is the perfect time for park staff to re-evaluate existing signage and look for ways to up the ante in 2014.

“A well-designed signage system using universal recreation symbols for parks and trails gives your park guests instant info on where they are, what they can do, where they can (and can't) go and the best way to get there,” says Tim Klaben, marketing manager with infrastructure experts Berntsen International Inc. Klaben's company offers a wide array of signage options, among many other products, designed with clarity and usability in mind. A sign is only as good as the information relayed therein, so Klaben encourages facility managers to use universally understood symbols that can be customized to a particular park. 21st-century enhancements like QR codes — a specially designed matrix barcode that contains detailed information and can be scanned by smartphones — are also smart additions. “With many park guests carrying smartphones, QR codes are becoming popular...to highlight specific fauna or the history of that spot or to keep guests informed on the



latest programs running that day or season at the park. In the future, we see RFID (radio frequency identification) tags being used in the same way to give park guests even more information and interactive experiences outdoors,” Klaben adds.

Klaben offers great suggestions for visitors once inside the park, but what about attracting eyeballs to road or entry-way signage? “Entry signs are incredibly important for nearly every park, especially those that are out of the way and hard to find,” says Jamie Inks, sales manager at Envirosigns Ltd. “If visitors need to slow down on fast roads, a well-proportioned entry sign not only helps the driver find the entrance, but can make travel safer for all drivers.”

Companies like Berntsen International, Envirosigns, Vacker and iZone Imaging all offer in-park and entry signage options, as well as interpretive signs that add value to trails or historic landmarks. “Important or unique landmarks or features can be highlighted with bright, full-color interpretive signs that also help visitors identify native species of flora and fauna in the area,” Inks continues.



Those of us in the park and recreation industry know how vital community input and involvement is in the success of any local park, and signage is a wonderful way to let visitors know about special events or fundraisers that might benefit their favorite green space. “Websites can also be added to link visitors to other parks in the area, as well as to volunteer opportunities,” Inks says.

Both Klaben and Inks recommend considering the available budget, durability of material and local zoning ordinances that may help dictate exactly what kind of sign to purchase. All of the aforementioned companies employ customer-service professionals who are well-versed in responding to the signage needs of park clients and can help direct them to the perfect sign. 

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