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In a conversation with DPAA's Barry Frey, we explore the tech transforming digital OOH, from programmatic growth and AI to more immersive experiences. Discover what's next for this rapidly evolving space.

SIGNmedia
CANADA

SEPTEMBER 2026
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Last Impression



ON THE COVER

This cover celebrates 20 years of the magazine that has connected the signage, printing, and OOH industries with trusted news, insights, and stories. Several covers have been brought together to honour two decades of an industry that continues to evolve and inspire.

Image created by Steve Maver



Yesterday, today, tomorrow

They say you can't know where you're going unless you understand where you've been. And after 20 years of *Sign Media Canada*, we have quite the story to tell.

This issue is about celebrating the history of a publication and an industry that has adapted, reinvented itself, embraced new technology, and continued doing what it has always done best: helping us find our way and telling us where we are.

Because signs are everywhere.

They are the familiar café sign that has become part of a neighbourhood's identity. The landmark you use to give directions. The digital displays that light up city streets. The graphics moving through cities and highways.

Different sizes. Same purpose.

We begin on page five by exploring the momentum behind out-of-home (OOH) advertising. PATTISON representative William Dixon shares how OOH growth is being driven by the coming together of two trends: Canadians looking for more real-world experiences and brands searching for more meaningful ways to connect. Then, on page 10, we take a trip through our own history. (Yes, we went digging through the archives!) This retrospective looks back at the signs, tech, trends, and moments that defined the past 20 years.

On page 24, Susan Sotelis of PLASKOLITE explores an essential piece of the industry, highlighting the versatility and possibilities of thermoplastics in retail signage.

Of course, every great story needs a strong foundation. On page 30, *The Compliance Guide: Part 3* explores the standards, training, and certifications that keep the industry safe. A huge thank you to Dale Maron and Devin Froese for sharing their expertise throughout this outstanding three-part series.

On page 34, M2 Graphix showcases how storytelling and intricate design can transform a vehicle into a moving work of expression. On page 38, a recent Osmow's campaign reveals how data, timing, and location are moulding the relationship between digital OOH and audiences.

Finally, on page 41, my conversation with DPAA's Barry Frey looks toward the future, exploring the OOH tech—from AI to programmatic—redefining what's possible.

I used to wonder why we call our final article a "Last Impression." Putting together this issue gave me the answer. Signs are often our first impression of a place, but they are also what stays with us after we leave. They create recognition and remembrance.

Twenty years of *Sign Media Canada* is a milestone worth celebrating. Consider this note my way of thanking every team member, contributor, and industry professional who has helped bring these pages to life.

Onwards and upwards. ●

Signed, sealed, delivered,

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OOH's measurement tools produce clear and effective results that are not disrupted by AI tools and other distractions.

Photos courtesy PATTISON Outdoor

2026 is the year for out-of-home

By William Dixon

Out-of-home (OOH) advertising is continuing to experience increased relevance in the media landscape. Here at home in Canada and across the globe, OOH has grown year-over-year, and that growth does not appear to be relenting anytime soon. Audiences are constantly on the move and are measurably using key touchpoints like public transit at an increased pace. The convergence of audience with real-world OOH placements and installations is making an impact at a time when digital fatigue is commonplace.

Canadians have been chasing in-person experiences such as live sporting events, visiting amusement parks, and more. Attractions like Canada's Wonderland (up 66 per cent) and the Rogers Centre (up 55 per cent) have seen consistent increases in visitors over 2024,¹ demonstrating that

Canadians are seeking more exciting in-person moments. Likewise, ticket sales at cinemas and the theatre have significantly increased in the same timeline by 149 per cent and 153 per cent, respectively,¹ making the case that Canadians crave cultural enrichment and ways to spend time with friends and family outside the home, where OOH and digital OOH placements engage and influence audiences by building trust and authenticity.

The Canadian OOH Marketing and Measurement Bureau (COMMB) released its first revenue benchmarking report on the Canadian OOH industry, aggregating revenue for 2024 and 2025 with some remarkable results. Between 2024 and 2025, the Canadian OOH industry performed well above projections, growing 30 per cent more than analysts had projected. In 2025, OOH in Canada grew 5.8 per cent



Audiences are constantly on the move and are measurably using key touchpoints like public transit at an increased pace.



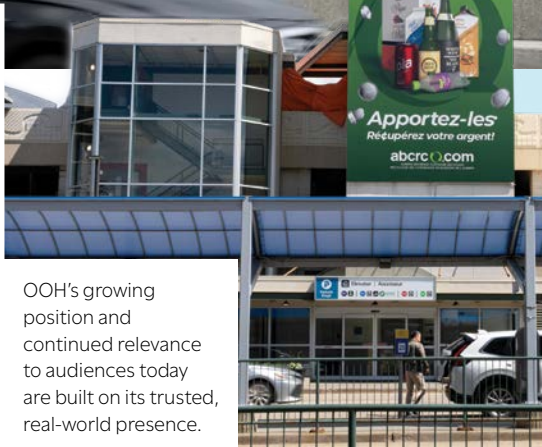
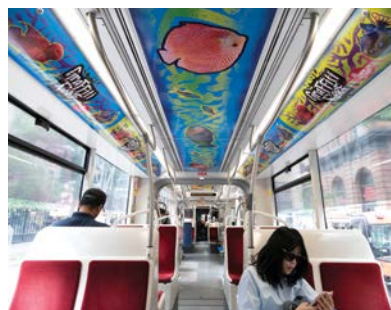
year-over-year, with digital OOH growing by 11.5 per cent and being a driving force in our industry.² The combined total spend on OOH advertising in Canada for 2025 was \$842 million, which is a 6.5 per cent increase over the previous year's \$790 million.²

With more people on the move for work or recreation, there's been a dramatic rise in the use of public transit. In Ontario, ridership on various Greater Toronto Area (GTA) transit networks, the TTC and GO, has seen big increases. GO Bus and GO Train ridership spiked by 223 per cent and 165 per cent, respectively.¹ Alberta has also seen an increase

of more than three times its ridership for the Calgary LRT, and Edmonton Transit has experienced a 63 per cent increase in ridership since 2024.³

Couple that with the effectiveness of transit advertising in Canada; 63 per cent of Canadians have noticed an ad on transit vehicles or billboards this spring, marking a 33 per cent increase in attention since 2024.⁴

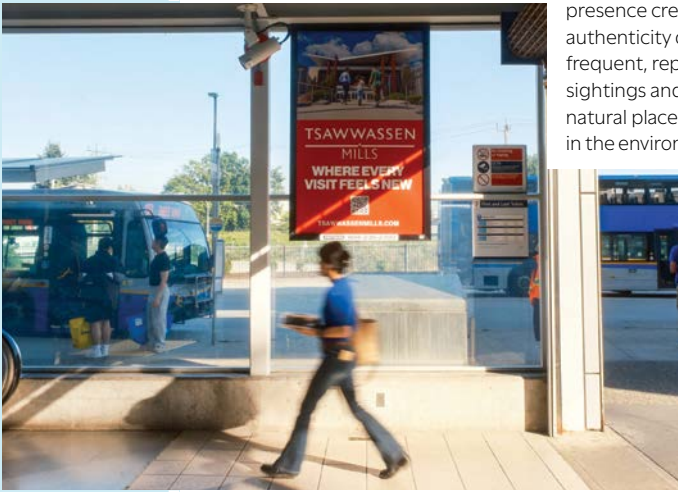
OOH's growing position and continued relevance to audiences today are built on its trusted, real-world presence that creates authenticity due to frequent, repeated sightings and natural placement in the environment. Thirty-one



OOH's growing position and continued relevance to audiences today are built on its trusted, real-world presence.



The convergence of audience with real-world OOH placements and installations is making an impact at a time when digital fatigue is commonplace.



OOH's real-world presence creates authenticity due to frequent, repeated sightings and natural placement in the environment.



Studies have shown that 31 per cent of consumers trust OOH advertising—higher than social media.

per cent of consumers trust OOH advertising—higher than social media.⁵ Whereas online channels are experiencing unique challenges, such as generative AI appearing at the top of web searches, reducing the click-through rate by giving users the answers they are looking for.

Agentic AI is also contributing to the growing issue of invalid traffic for online social media platforms like TikTok, LinkedIn, and X. Invalid traffic is when bots interact with online ads, creating clicks that are not generated by a human user, blurring the effectiveness and the results of online campaigns. Meanwhile, OOH's measurement tools produce clear and effective results that are not disrupted by AI tools and other distractions.

OOH advertising is uniquely positioned to provide brand-safe, impactful, and measurable return on investment for brands in an increasingly oversaturated and inefficient online landscape, making it an essential component to any marketing strategy for today and tomorrow. ●

Notes

¹Learn more: Vividata Spring 2023-2026 trending Toronto CMA: <https://vividata.ca/our-data/study-of-the-canadian-consumer/>

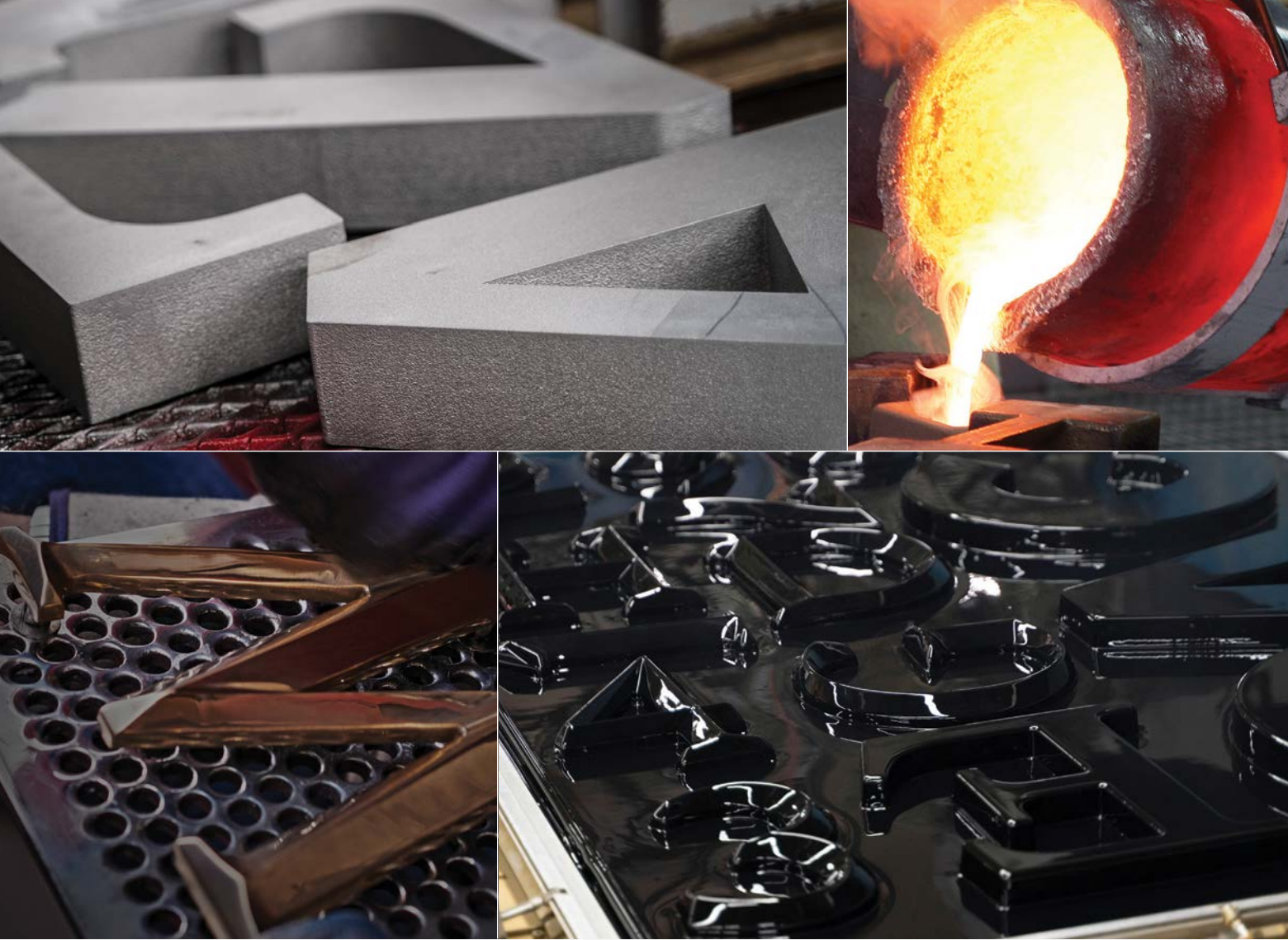
²Read COMMB's first OOH revenue benchmarking report: <https://commb.ca/en-CA/annual-reports/> and <https://mediaincanada.com/2026/02/24/commb-first-ooh-benchmarkreport/>

³Discover Vividata Spring SCC 2024 vs. 2026: <https://vividata.ca/our-data/study-of-the-canadian-consumer/>

⁴Study the impacts of OOH in Vividata Spring 2024-2026, trending Toronto/Vancouver CMA

⁵See Marketers Media: What Is OOH Advertising and Why It Still Works

William Dixon is a marketing content specialist with PATTISON Outdoor. He creates and writes for client-facing materials to promote the company's catalogue of products.



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A history of Sign Media Canada





20

IN PHOTOS

By Marika Gabriel

It didn't start as a journey of rediscovery.

It started with me sitting in a room I had filled with physical archives of a magazine I've been editing for the past few years. As I turned page after page, year after year, I realized (later than I care to admit) that I was stepping into a time capsule—a record of a country charging into a new millennium, embracing innovations that feel commonplace today but were absolutely groundbreaking at the time.

Rediscovering the excitement surrounding this whole new world reminded me of the quiet power of signage. That's really the story here.

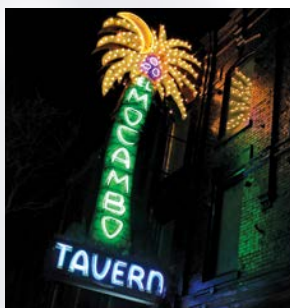
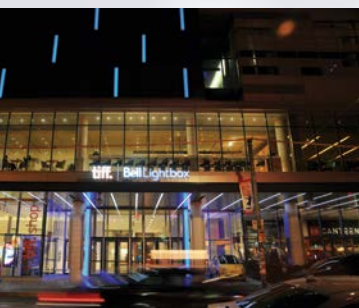
Then came the impossible part: choosing just one photo from each year. So, I'll add the disclaimer now—these aren't *the* 20 best photos. They are simply the 20 I ultimately *had* to choose after wrestling with my mind for hours.

Slowly, a search through magazines and digital archives turned into a treasure hunt. Every image brought back a story, a challenge, or a moment when the impossible became reality. Except it wasn't like finding a needle in a haystack. It was more like trying to pick the best blade of hay from a haystack made entirely of excellent hay.

These photos tell the story of signs that became landmarks, projects woven into the identity of their cities, and installations that celebrated music, art, history, and community. They remind us that Canada's built environment is filled with work most people pass every day without ever wondering how it got there—or what it took to make it happen.

And let's be real: in Canada, making it happen is no small feat. A sign here has to stand tall against prairie winds, Atlantic salt air, mountain snow, Arctic cold, and humid summers. It has to be engineered to last while still capturing attention.

So here they are: my picks. Twenty years. Twenty photos of the signs that shape the places we live.



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August

2006

Vroom vroom.



This photo had to be my first pick. What has become a staple of out-of-home (OOH) advertising—eye-catching wraps on city buses—was once a novel idea. In Sharon Laidlaw's August 2006 article, *All Wrapped Up*, the industry was at the cusp of embracing the potential of turning transit vehicles into moving billboards.

As commute times grew and more Canadians spent longer getting to and from work, advertisers were looking for new ways to get their message outdoors. Advances in pressure-sensitive adhesives also meant wraps were becoming easier to install and durable enough to withstand Canada's notoriously harsh weather.

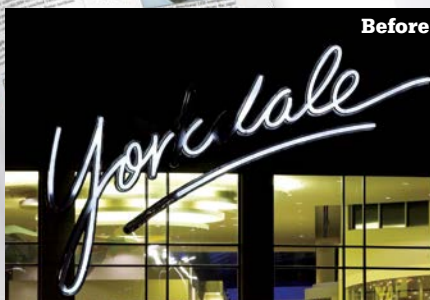
Today, bus wraps are everywhere—and they've only gotten better. The print quality is sharper, the installations are more seamless, and let's be honest, the creative has gotten a whole lot cheekier, too.

Photos courtesy Lamar Transit Advertising

February

2007

This sign LED me to the mall!



What shocked me most about this story? Both the sign and the mall are landmarks in Ontario.

Yorkdale opened in 1964, and when it came time for an upgrade decades later, it did what all great landmarks do—it evolved. The iconic sign made the quiet move from neon to LED, bringing a familiar beacon into a new era of signage.

One fun fact I picked up from Laura Fuller's article: not only was Yorkdale already one of the province's premier shopping destinations, but it was also described as "a mecca of signage." The mall's streetscape concept allowed retailers to install larger storefront signs.

Today, LED is the standard. So when we look back through these archives, we get to revisit the moments when the next big thing was *still becoming* the next big thing.

And yes, Yorkdale is still a monument. Still wildly popular. And still home to a sign that knows how to make an entrance.

Photos courtesy Osram Sylvania

April

2008

The centre square!



Peter Saunders' *A Metropolis Comes to Life* is one of those stories where I could happily disappear into the details for hours. The digital revolution unfolding in what is now Sankofa Square is fascinating, but instead of trying to summarize it all here, I'd encourage you to dive into the digital archives yourself. There are so many moving parts, so many screens, and so many people who helped bring this ambitious vision to life.

Here's a fun fact: this square has worn many names over the years. From Metropolis to Toronto Life Square to Dundas Square and, today, Sankofa Square, every name reflects a different chapter in its story. What intrigued me most was learning that it became Toronto Life Square after St. Joseph Communications acquired the naming rights, choosing to spotlight one of its flagship publications, *Toronto Life*, while creating opportunities for the publication's editorial presence within the space.

The way I see it: Here were two iconic spaces in different realms of the media world coming together in a way that feels surprisingly familiar today.

As social media continues to blur the lines between publishing, advertising, and public spaces, this partnership feels less like a relic of the past and more like proof that these worlds have always been connected. Maybe everything really is cyclical.

A huge shoutout to the designers, fabricators, engineers, installers, and countless partners who brought this behemoth to life. Nearly two decades and a few renditions later, it still draws hundreds of thousands of visitors and remains one of Canada's most recognizable digital canvases.

Photo by Peter Saunders

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April

2009

Girl, put your records on

I feel like this was a childhood game for a lot of us: how quickly could we recognize a brand without seeing the name? The golden arches of McDonald's. The Nike swoosh. The inverted red triangle of Canadian Tire. Later, the bitten apple silhouette. We knew them instantly. They were everywhere. And somewhere along the way, these signs and symbols became part of public memory. For Torontonians, one unmistakable sight was the glow of Sam the Record Man.

That's the wonderful thing about signs. They are identifiers, but over time, they become landmarks... and then memories.

So when Sam the Record Man closed its doors, preserving its famous sign felt like preserving a piece of Toronto itself. Toronto Metropolitan University (then Ryerson), which acquired the site of the former store, stepped in to save it, first storing it at Gregory Signs. In 2018, Sunset Neon carefully re-mounted the signs at 277 Victoria Street, giving this piece of the city's cultural history a new home.

Because places hold memories. And signs? They preserve them.

Nearly every city has a sign that tells a story, and this one reminds us that preservation isn't just about saving an object. It's about holding on to the moments, places, and feelings attached to it. That's the lesson in Peter Saunders' *Preserving a Famous Sign*.

Photo courtesy Gregory Signs & Engravings



May

2010

Ready. Set. Go!



Blue, green, and two cities in between.

Vancouver and Whistler, B.C., became giant canvases of pride for a huge moment: the 2010 Winter Olympic and Paralympic Games. Cities have always found ways to show up for moments that matter, but how do you actually transform an entire landscape? How do you take buildings, vehicles, streets, and everyday objects and make them all speak the same language?

You wrap them. You cover them. You paint the city in a story. And for these Games, signage was everywhere.

Outdoor grandstands. Vehicles. Tiles. Cars. SUVs. Even the machines responsible for resurfacing the ice. Graphics, vinyls, banners—every surface became an opportunity to carry the Olympic spirit.

The thing that fascinates me most is that this keeps happening. The scale changes, the technology evolves, but the idea stays.

And what does that tell us?

This medium works.

The message works.

For Vancouver and Whistler in 2010, every graphic, banner, and wrap became part of the memory of the Games. And *How the West Coast Was Wrapped* captured it.

Photo courtesy 3M Canada

May

2011

Depth perception



In an article with the wonderfully fitting title *The World Is Not Flat*, Dan Sawatzky reminds us that great signage can, quite literally, leap off the wall.

Beyond making the case for dimensional signage, the article explores how advances in equipment and software were making even the wildest ideas possible. As Sawatzky writes, these tools could help ensure "wild designs make it from the idea stage to the finished product stage."

What I loved most was the level of detail.

Through both photos and step-by-step explanations, the article follows the creation of a sign featuring a dimensional bull's head and intricate lettering, giving readers a behind-the-scenes look at the craft involved.

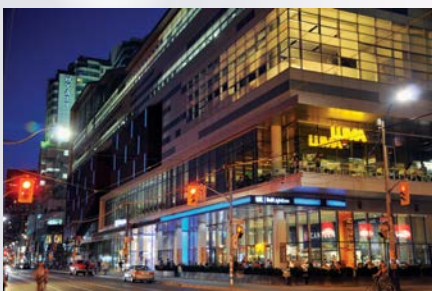
It also shines a spotlight on a technology that has become indispensable to the industry: computer numerical control (CNC) routers. Looking back, it's a reminder that creativity and innovation work together to make this industry both advanced and very, very cool.

Photo courtesy Imagination Corporation

April

2012

Lights, camera, action!



In an article on wayfinding, *Showtime for TIFF Bell Lightbox*, Udo Schliemann highlights the Toronto International Film Festival's (TIFF's) evolution into an institution that helped establish the city as a destination for world-class cinema.

Founded in 1976, TIFF spent decades growing its identity before finding its year-round home in 2010 with the opening of TIFF Bell Lightbox. And signage played a major role in welcoming visitors into that experience.

Its facade features LED bars that shift colours, creating movement before visitors even step inside. Once indoors, each cinema room is identified with channel numbers and a donor recognition wall uses a "searchlight" effect to create another layer of interaction.

This is a template that, once completely novel, has now become the way brands present themselves and help people navigate their spaces. Signage has evolved, creating a feeling, building recognition, and becoming part of the experience.

Photos by Gerald Querubin

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February

2013

They shoot, they score!

There are signs we look at for information. There are signs we look at because they become part of a moment.

Stadium scoreboards are both.

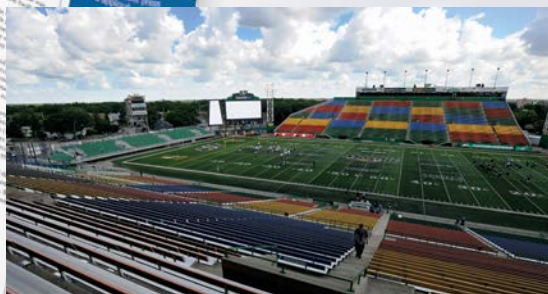
In Anthony Kilgallen's *Building Stadium Scoreboards*, the article explores three case studies—Mosaic Stadium in Regina, Ottawa's Scotiabank Place, and Michigan's Spartan Stadium—to look at the evolving role of one of the largest signs found in any community.

These structures are at the centre of the fan experience, delivering instant replays, announcements, sponsorship messages, and the energy that connects thousands of people sharing the same moment.

These projects also sit at the intersection of technology and architecture. A scoreboard has to be engineered for visibility and built for scale.

It's a reminder that signage exists everywhere—even in the moments when we aren't thinking about it. Sometimes it's a storefront. Sometimes it's a landmark. And sometimes it's the giant screen above the field that brings an entire stadium to life.

Photos courtesy Signs.ca



Glow as we grow!

Not every story in *Sign Media Canada* is about a single landmark. Some stories are about the people. The Sign Shop Profile has been a continued feature of the magazine because the industry is built on the expertise, creativity, and persistence of the people behind the signs.

The 2014 profile on Hope Neon is a perfect example. Founded by Rudy Hope in 1958, the shop became part of Toronto's neon story, and under Grant Farrell's leadership, it found a way to preserve that history while carving out a new place for neon in a changing industry.

At a time when LEDs were changing the way signs were illuminated, Hope Neon leaned into what made neon special. The shop is known not only for restoration work, including the iconic El Mocambo palm tree sign, but also for creating new exposed neon pieces for restaurants, bars, and creative spaces that were embracing the medium.

And that's what makes these profiles so important. Because when we look back 20 years, we aren't just looking at what was built. We're looking at who built it and the passion that keeps the industry glowing.

Photo courtesy Hope Neon



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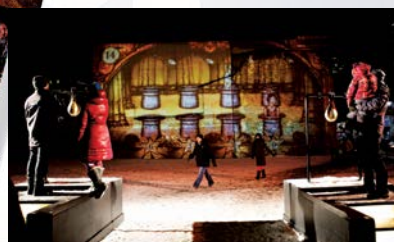


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February

2015 Dancing in the moonlight



Winter in Montreal, like much of Canada, can be long and cold. But leave it to the city to make this the perfect canvas for light.

The Luminothérapie festival in Quartier des Spectacles showed how illumination could transform public spaces into places of interaction, play, and discovery. The 2014 edition featured *Prismatica* by Toronto's RAW Design and *Fascinoscope* by Montreal's Lüz Studio, two installations that invited people to participate.

With 50 giant rotating prisms, *Prismatica* turned movement into colour and light, while *Fascinoscope* brought a carnival-inspired experience to life through interactive games and projections. It also speaks to the evolution of visual communication. These weren't signs telling people where to go or what to buy. They were experiences designed to bring people together. And that's... the magic of light.

Photos by Cindy Boyce/Courtesy Quartier des Spectacles

May

2016 A flexible future

The growth of textile printing reflected a shift in the sign industry: signage was no longer limited to rigid materials.

They could stretch, fold, move, and transform spaces in new ways.

The news section captured this shift through coverage of McRae Imaging in Mississauga, Ont., purchasing its second Reggiani ReNOIR 340 press from EFI.

When you stop to think about it, fabric opened the door to a different kind of signage—one that could be lightweight, versatile, and adaptable. Graphics could travel. Displays could change. All this to say, the future of signs was meant to be flexible.

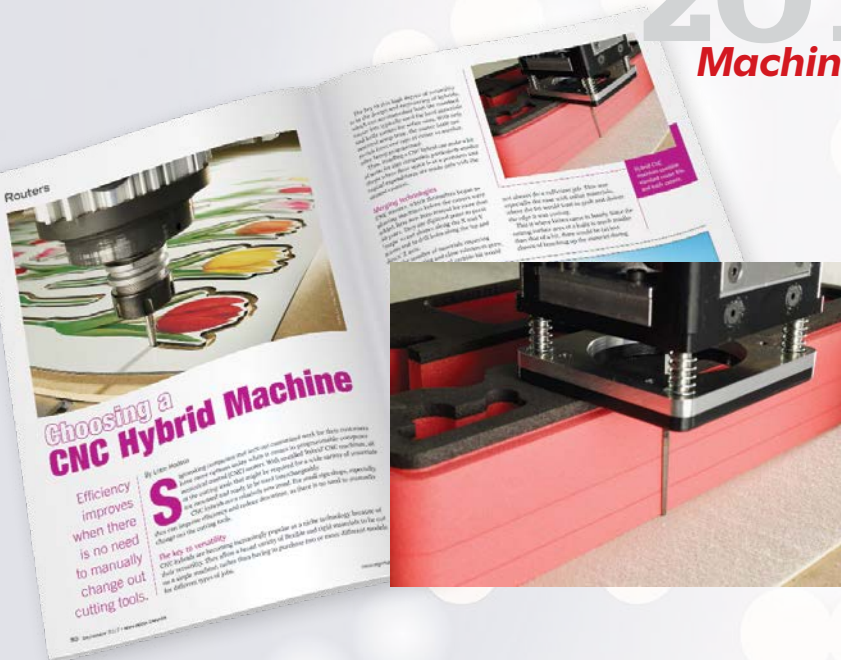
Photos courtesy Robert Young



September

2017

Machine magic



In Liam Hodson's article, *Routers: Choosing a CNC Hybrid Machine*, the author explored how these machines were helping sign shops take on more complex work by combining cutting capabilities and giving designers and fabricators more freedom to bring ideas to life.

The modern-day sign shop is part creative studio, part manufacturing facility. Ideas that once required hours of manual labour could now move from a digital file to a finished piece with incredible precision.

CNC technology didn't replace craftsmanship—it gave it another tool to get better.

Behind every dimensional letter, carved detail, and custom shape is a person with an idea. The machine simply helps bring that idea to life.

Photos courtesy Axyz International

June

2018

First impressions

The entrance. The first impression. The moment a visitor knows they have arrived.

The giant postcard welcome sign in Niagara Falls was a great example of this. This 'Gateway to Canada' installation was designed as a visual expression of what visitors could expect and a place where they could stop, take a photo, and connect with the destination.

Inspired by the look of a vintage postcard, the sign is an example of how cities present themselves, and why how they do so matters.

A welcome sign may be one of the first things people see. But increasingly, cities understand that it can also be one of the things they remember.

Photos courtesy Signature Sign & Image



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September

2019

You CAN always get what you want



The Rolling Stones' lips and tongue logo is one of those rare symbols that needs no introduction. It carries decades of rich music history, attitude, and recognition.

In *Signage Satisfaction: Recreating One of the Most Famous Band Identities on the Planet*, Hallie Gordon and Kenneth Tschernow explored how North Marketing Solutions brought the famous logo to life through a series of larger-than-life installations.

This story caught my attention because it was the product of a fascinating guerrilla marketing plan—where the giant lip statues were dropped overnight in multiple locations across Ontario. The fabrication process included CNC-cut components, custom shaping, finishing, and detailed colour matching to replicate the famous mark at a much larger scale.

It speaks to an interesting part of the sign industry: the challenge isn't always creating a new idea. Sometimes, the challenge is honouring an idea that millions of people already know.

A careful balance between fabrication and familiarity—taking something instantly recognizable and giving it a new life in the physical world.

Photo courtesy North Marketing Solutions

April

2020

Oceans of opportunity

There was a time when a movie promotion meant a poster and a trailer.

Then came projects like this.

The *Aquaman* installation at Yorkdale Shopping Centre captured a moment when large-format graphics, fabrication, lighting, and immersive design came together to create something much bigger than an advertisement. Visitors walked into the display. They sat on the throne of Atlantis, posed with Aquaman's trident, and became part of the film's campaign.

It feels like a turning point. Today, brands are constantly chasing "Instagrammable moments" and immersive activations. Back then, this project was showing what lots of blockbuster films would continue to do. It's about getting people to see a movie and sharing their experience by giving them a snapshot worth sharing.

Stop, stare, make a *splash*.

Photo courtesy Global Printing Enterprises



May

2021

Picture this

Today, companies talk about brand experiences, customer journeys, environmental graphics, and immersive spaces. The boundaries between signage, print, design, and marketing have blurred, and many businesses have evolved from producing products to delivering complete visual solutions.

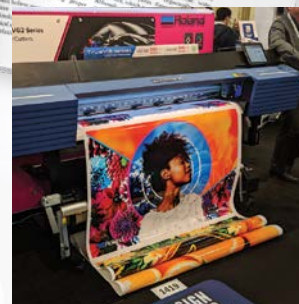
But was this always the case? No. Branding and marketing have exploded over the years, and so has the role of the sign industry.

In Eve Padula's *Navigating the Visual Communication Space*, the article challenged the traditional idea of what a sign company could do, pushing those boundaries and leading the narrative that sign companies investing in print technology could stay ahead in the increasingly competitive worlds of marketing, promotions, and merchandising.

The article argued that the industry was becoming something much bigger in the world of visual communications. Signs, graphics, displays, experiential environments, retail branding, and wayfinding all belonged to the same conversation. The message was clear too—clients were no longer looking for a printer or a signmaker. They were looking for a partner who could understand their brand.

A new way of thinking that is now the norm? Absolutely.

Photo by Jason Cramp



February

2022

Quintessentially Canadian

Let's not forget that signage is always linked to place. To space. To the community it's part of. You rarely find a sign that doesn't take its surroundings into account. When clients ask for signs, they consider where they are. It's plain and simple community building.

Yes, distinctiveness and individuality matter... but they exist alongside place. Alongside community. And community is everything in Canada.

When Canadians think of Molson, they don't just think of beer. They think of history. And Holly Douglass' *Honouring an Iconic Canadian Brand* captures that essence. The feature speaks about Molson Coors' move to a new home in Longueuil after more than 200 years at its Montreal brewery. It marked the end of one chapter and the beginning of another. The challenge was bringing centuries of Canadian heritage along for the journey.

Through more than 650 m² (7,000 sf) of large-format graphics, vinyl lettering, archival photography, and privacy films, the space was transformed into a timeline of one of Canada's oldest and most recognizable brands—an ode to its own history.

In this case, signage became the bridge between past and present, where every wall had a story to tell.

We say this a lot in our stories, but signs really do capture and preserve the past. And isn't that wonderful?

Photo courtesy Motive Media



June

2023

The little things



Most people will never hear the term silvering. They'll never notice the tiny pockets of air trapped beneath a laminate or appreciate the precision required to produce a flawless graphic.

But signmakers will.

In Jay Kroll's *Preventing Silvering of Overlaminates*, the focus is on the best practices behind decal applications, ensuring overlaminate films protect graphics, extend their lifespan, and enhance their overall look and feel. The feature also highlights how the invisible details determine whether a finished graphic looks exceptional or falls short. From pressure and tension to speed and surface texture, every step of the lamination process plays a role in the final result.

Plus, how cool is this wrap? Seriously—10/10. No notes.

Photo courtesy General Formulations



June

2024

A whole new world



If there's one story that feels like a glimpse into the future, it's this one. William Dixon's *Breaking the Fourth Wall with 3D Technology*.

The focus shifts to the next generation of out-of-home (OOH) advertising. As digital billboards become increasingly sophisticated, flat screens don't always cut it. Through techniques like forced perspective, anamorphic design, and carefully calculated viewing angles, advertisements appear to leap into the real world, creating the illusion of depth and movement.

It feels fitting that this is where we are now. We've gone from painted signs to neon, we have LEDs and digital displays, we see wraps and immersive brand experiences. Today, the physical and the digital have come together.

And somehow, I don't think we've seen anything yet.

Photo courtesy PATTISON Outdoor



June

2025

Ooh, that's smart!

The sign industry is always chasing bigger, brighter, and bolder. However, there has also been a quieter wave of innovation—one that considers its relationship with the environment.

Tony Da Silva and Sidney Brownell speak to that in *A Green Glow-up on the Gardiner*. The article highlights a Toronto display that reimagined what a billboard could be in a dense urban environment. Using technologies that reduce power consumption and virtually eliminate light spill into nearby homes, the project balanced visibility with environmental responsibility.

The common thread between this and all the other throwbacks? The industry is continually reinventing itself. That reinvention goes beyond the glamour and spectacle; it also includes sustainability, energy efficiency, and designing with the surrounding community in mind.

The future of signage is smarter.

Photo courtesy Media Resources



June

2026

Team Canada!

And here we are—the final stop in this 20-year journey through *Sign Media Canada*.

Not every sign was made to be read.

Some were made to be felt. This sure is.

During the Winter Olympic season this year, a Tim Hortons mural in Peterborough, Ont., caught my attention. This wall became a gathering point.

Behind the artwork was Ontario mural artist Lindsay Allison C, who tells us in *Brushstrokes of Belonging* that her work in murals and artistic graphics is increasingly becoming a tool for brands and communities to create memorable spaces. Again, thank social media for ushering this shift.

And I thought to myself, this is the perfect way to end this retrospective.

Because after 20 years of looking back at wraps, landmarks, digital displays, public art, city signage, and everything in between, one thing remains clear: signage is about what we remember.

And they have the power to bring an entire country together.

Photo courtesy Lindsay Allison C





CANADIAN

The right material for the right application

The fundamentals of plastics in today's immersive branded environments

By Susan Svtelis

Walk through almost any modern retail space, and you will notice the lighting, architecture, colours, and carefully curated displays. What you probably won't notice are the materials quietly working behind the scenes to make those environments possible.

Whether you're shopping at Canadian Tire, grabbing a coffee at Tim Hortons, browsing the latest products at Apple, or exploring IKEA, you're surrounded by thermoplastics.

They have become one of the most important material families used in the sign and graphics industry, shaping everything from illuminated storefront signage and dimensional logos to wayfinding systems, merchandising displays, kiosks, and featured architectural elements.

After nearly 40 years in this industry, I have developed a habit that my family finds amusing (or annoying...). I can't walk through a retail space without stopping to figure out how something was built, or drive by a sign installation



The most successful retail programs rarely rely on a single material. Instead, they combine multiple thermoplastics throughout a project, selecting each one according to its strengths.
Photos courtesy PLASKOLITE

without critiquing the execution. More than once, I've found myself tapping on a display or examining a beautifully fabricated sign, trying to determine whether it was made with acrylic, polycarbonate, polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyethylene terephthalate glycol (PETG), or acrylonitrile butadiene styrene (ABS). An occupational hazard I am sure you all can relate to!

During my career, I have watched our industry evolve from hand-painted graphics and fluorescent lighting to

digital design, automated fabrication, and LED illumination, creating sophisticated branded environments. Yet for years, one of the most significant and consistent baseline materials used in these spaces has been thermoplastics, and for some credible reasons.

More than just a pretty face

Retail spaces have evolved dramatically over the past several decades. Stores are no longer simply places to



Good specifications are not about choosing the least expensive material. They are about creating the greatest long-term value.



purchase products. They have become immersive brand experiences designed to engage customers from the moment they walk through the door.

That evolution has transformed the role of signage.

Today's sign professionals contribute far more than storefront identification. They help create complete branded environments where signage, displays, fixtures, and architectural elements work together to tell a consistent brand story.

Thermoplastics technology has also advanced, converging customer experience expectations with the retailers' sustainability and reliability goals to create designs that invite and inspire shoppers to spend more time in-store than online.

Acrylic continues to set the standard for illuminated signage because of its outstanding optical clarity, light diffusion, and weatherability. Polycarbonate provides exceptional impact resistance for demanding public environments such as transit systems, drive-thru menu boards, and transportation facilities. Expanded PVC has become a dependable solution for interior wayfinding, promotional graphics, and dimensional signage because it

is lightweight, economical, and easy to fabricate. PETG excels in thermoformed retail displays, food service applications, and protective components, while ABS enables fabricators to create durable three-dimensional architectural features, kiosks, and custom fixtures.

Each material offers distinct performance characteristics, allowing designers and fabricators to select the right solution for each application rather than searching for a single material that does everything.

That distinction is important because there is no perfect plastic product, yet there may be the perfect plastic product for the application.

Material selection is about more than price

One of the most valuable lessons I have learned throughout my career is that successful projects rarely begin by asking, "What is the least expensive material?"

They begin by asking, "What is the right material for the application?"

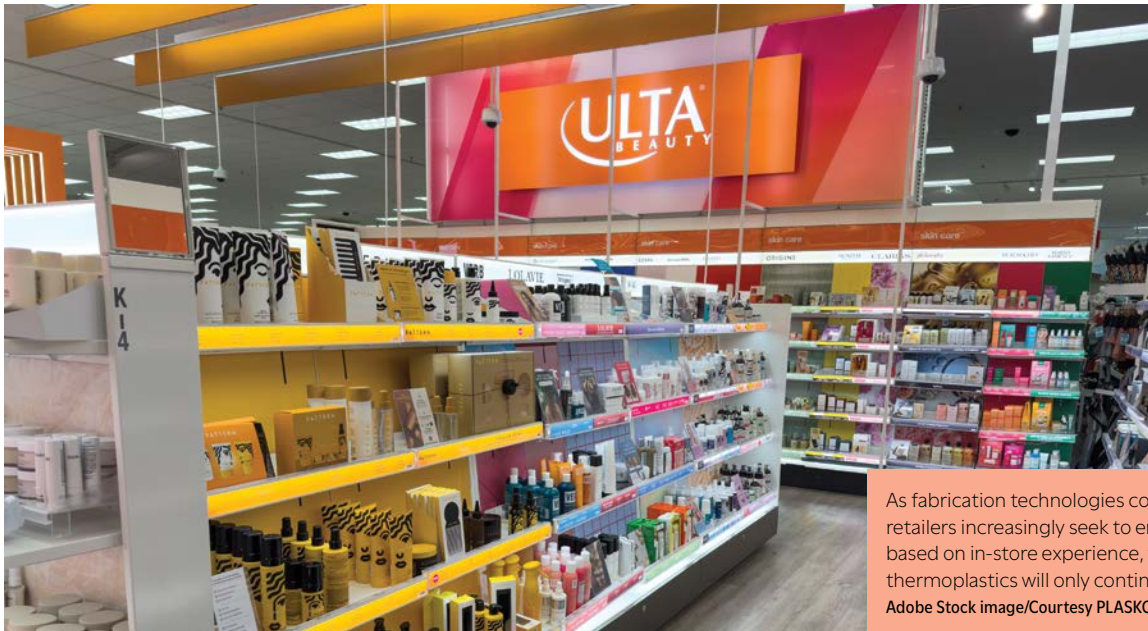
Material selection influences far more than the purchase price of a sheet. It affects fabrication efficiency, machining time, shipping costs, installation, maintenance, product longevity, and, ultimately, the customer's perception of quality.

The least expensive material option does not always represent the lowest overall cost.

I have seen projects where modest savings in material costs resulted in increased fabrication time, additional service calls, and premature product replacement, frustrating brands and retail owners. Conversely, I have also seen projects where investing slightly more in the appropriate, higher-quality material solution ended up reducing fabrication challenges, improving durability, and extending the life of the finished product for years.

Experienced fabricators understand that every application presents a unique set of requirements.

Will the sign be illuminated?



As fabrication technologies continue advancing and retailers increasingly seek to engage with the customer based on in-store experience, the opportunities for thermoplastics will only continue to grow.

Adobe Stock image/Courtesy PLASKOLITE

Will it be installed indoors or outdoors?
Is impact or UV resistance critical?
Does the design require thermoforming?
Will the product be exposed to harsh weather or heavy public use?
What type of material will be used for the graphics application?

Answering these questions determines which thermoplastic will deliver the best overall performance.

The most successful retail programs rarely rely on a single material. Instead, they combine multiple thermoplastics throughout a project, selecting each one according to its strengths. An illuminated storefront may feature a sign using acrylic for optimal light diffusion,

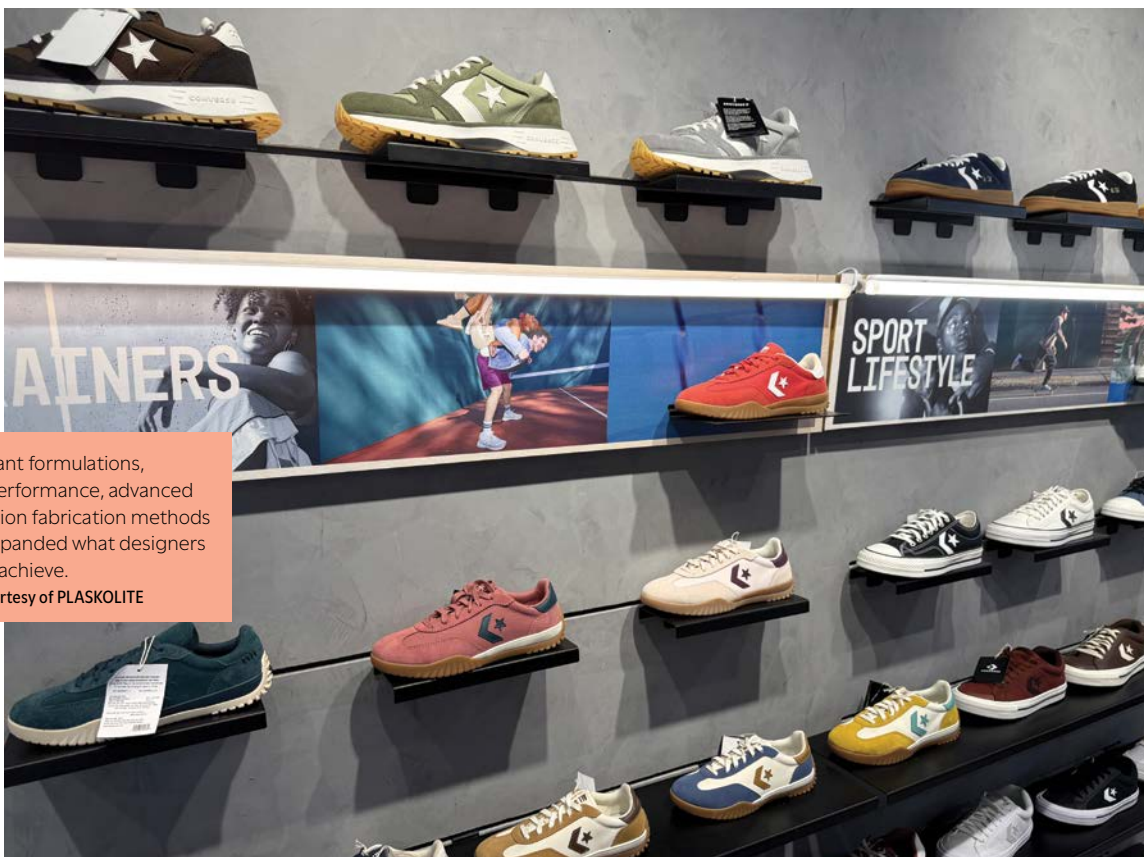
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Improved UV-resistant formulations, enhanced impact performance, advanced coatings, and precision fabrication methods have significantly expanded what designers and fabricators can achieve.

Shutterstock image/Courtesy of PLASKOLITE

polycarbonate in the drive-thru sign where impact resistance is required, PVC is specified for interior graphics, PETG was the material used for custom displays, and ABS for thermoformed architectural components.

Good specifications are not about choosing the least expensive material. They are about creating the greatest long-term value.

Canadian conditions demand Canadian thinking

Canada presents unique challenges for sign professionals. From coastal humidity and prairie winds to intense summer UV exposure and harsh winter freeze-thaw cycles, signage must perform reliably in some of the world's most demanding climates.

Retailers investing in national branding programs expect customers to experience the same quality and visual identity whether they visit a location in Vancouver, Calgary, Winnipeg, Toronto, Montréal, or Halifax. Achieving that consistency requires careful consideration of both design and material performance long before fabrication begins.

Fortunately, today's thermoplastics continue to evolve alongside manufacturing technologies. Improved UV-resistant formulations, enhanced impact performance, advanced coatings, and precision fabrication methods have significantly expanded what designers and fabricators can achieve.

What continues to impress me most, however, is not simply the materials themselves. It is the ingenuity of the people who work with them.

I have been privileged to visit fabrication facilities across Canada, each with its own equipment, specialties, and unique approach to manufacturing. Time and again, I have watched talented fabricators transform concepts that seemed impossible on paper into beautifully executed finished products.

Technology continues to evolve, but innovation has never been driven by machinery alone. It is driven by people who understand materials and know how to use them.

Sustainability through better design

Sustainability has become one of the most important conversations in manufacturing, and the sign industry is no exception.

While recycled content often receives the most attention, sustainability begins with thoughtful material selection and intelligent design.

In many cases, the most sustainable sign is simply the one that lasts.

Selecting thermoplastics that deliver long service life reduces maintenance, minimizes replacement, and conserves the resources required to manufacture, transport, and install new products. Increasingly, retailers are also designing signage systems that allow graphics or individual components to be updated without replacing the entire structure.

Manufacturers continue investing in improved production efficiency, using materials with recycled content where appropriate, and planning purchases and processes that reduce waste. Fabricators are maximizing material

utilization through precision computer numerical control (CNC) machining and digital nesting software, ensuring that sustainability extends well beyond the finished product.

Sustainability is not achieved through one material alone; it results from thoughtful decisions made throughout design, specification, manufacturing, and installation.

Looking ahead

When I entered the sign industry nearly four decades ago, thermoplastics were often viewed simply as materials used for sign faces and display panels.

Today, they have become the foundation of modern branded environments.

As fabrication technologies continue advancing and retailers increasingly seek to engage with the customer based on in-store experience, the opportunities for thermoplastics will only continue to grow. Designers will imagine new possibilities, manufacturers will develop even more capable materials, and fabricators will continue transforming those ideas into remarkable finished products.

Despite these advances, one thing has remained constant. Great signage has never been about materials alone. It has always been about the people who understand how to use them.

The Canadian sign community is home to some of the most talented professionals in our industry. Their creativity, craftsmanship, and determination to find innovative solutions to even the most complex challenges continue to inspire me every day.

Customers may never stop to think about the materials used in the signs that guide them, and perhaps that is the greatest compliment those materials can receive. When they perform exactly as intended, they quietly support the architecture, reinforce the brand, and allow the customer experience to take centre stage. If there is one lesson I hope readers take away, it is this:

There is no perfect thermoplastic. There is only the right thermoplastic for the application. Understanding that distinction is what transforms materials into solutions and good signage into exceptional branded environments. ●

Susan Svtelis is general manager, Canada for PLASKOLITE and vice-president of the Sign Association of Canada (SAC). With nearly 40 years of experience in the Canadian sign industry, she has held leadership roles spanning fabrication, project management, business development, and executive sales management. Throughout her career, she has worked closely with sign companies, distributors, designers, and manufacturers across North America, developing a deep appreciation for the innovation, craftsmanship, and collaboration that drive the industry forward.

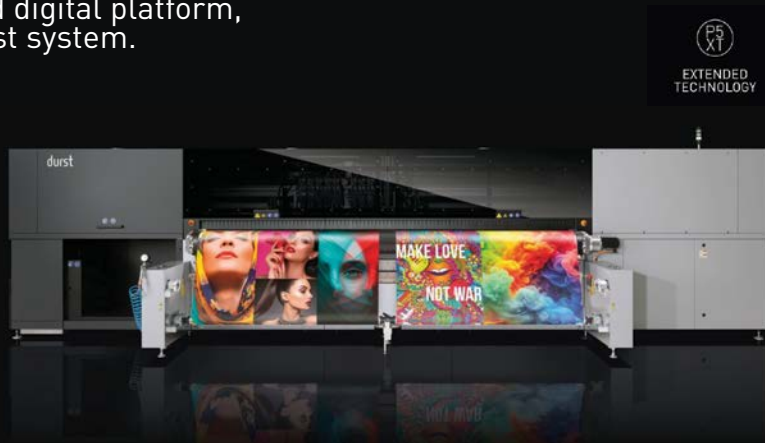
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What standard are today's industry leaders setting for a safe and professional industry—both now and for the next generation?

Puzzle image © almagami/ Courtesy Bigstockphoto.com; Background image generated by Gemini

The compliance guide: Part 3 of 3

The foundation of a quality sign

A sign that is not built, wired, marked, permitted, and installed to the applicable standards is not simply an inferior product. It is a compliance and safety problem.

By Dale Maron and Devin Froese

How are some sign companies still getting away with building bad signs?

That question has been asked in professional sign shops for as long as electric signs have been installed over doorways and along roadways. Reputable companies invest in training, certification, proper components, permits, and inspections. They then find themselves competing against signs that may cost less because some or all of those requirements have been avoided.

For this discussion, a bad sign is not one with poor design, weak illumination, or an unattractive finish. A bad sign is an electrical sign that has not been built, wired, marked, permitted, installed, or inspected to the applicable standards.

The customer may never see the difference. The sign may illuminate and appear to work. But the certification marking may be missing. The required disconnecting means may not have been installed. A permit may not have been obtained. Components may have been used outside the conditions of their approval.

A functioning sign is not necessarily a compliant sign.

Whether the customer is a national corporation or a small independent business, the electrical safety standard should be the same.

Why does non-compliance continue?

There is no single answer.

Many customers do not know what electrical compliance looks like. They may compare two quotations and see only the final price. One company has included approved construction, certification, proper components, permits, disconnecting means, and inspection. Another has not. Unless the customer understands the difference, both quotations may appear to describe the same product.

Some sign shops may also believe that certification is too complicated for a smaller company. They may assume the process is beyond their reach or that it is easier to complete the work without approval and hope nobody notices.

The path to compliance does require time, patience, education, and a working relationship with a certification body. That does not make it an unreasonable effort.

Certification, inspection, and proper construction are part of the cost of doing business when manufacturing electrical signs. They are not optional features to be removed from the quotation.

Companies that are not yet operating under an ongoing manufacturer certification program can begin by contacting a recognized certification or field evaluation body. For certain individual or custom signs, field evaluation under CSA SPE-1000 (see page 32) may provide an approval pathway while the company learns the applicable requirements and considers the longer-term path toward manufacturer certification.

The important thing is to begin.

Certification bodies work with manufacturers to explain construction requirements, approved components, markings, testing, documentation, and production controls. The process is intended to bring companies into compliance, not to keep them out of the industry.

Small details reveal larger problems

One of the most common compliance issues is the marking on the sign that identifies the manufacturer and provides evidence of electrical approval.

The excuse that the label blew off while the sign was being transported to the site is not one that should be accepted. The marking needs to be suitable, properly applied, and present when the sign is installed and inspected.

That label may appear to be a small detail, but it provides important information to the installer, inspector, owner, and

KEY TAKEAWAY:

Sign companies provide a professional service that includes design, manufacturing, electrical safety, permitting, installation, inspection co-ordination, and long-term maintenance. That professional standing is strengthened every time a company builds to the standard, trains its people, obtains the required permits, and supports consistent inspection.

future service technician. When it is missing, the larger question is whether the sign was ever properly approved.

Another common issue is the disconnecting means required by Section 34 of the Canadian Electrical Code (CEC).

Why would a company omit a box, cover, and switch when those items are intended to protect the person who will service the sign in the future? The cost is not staggering. The purpose is clear. The argument that a disconnect is unnecessary because the sign uses low-voltage LEDs also misses the larger electrical system. The LED modules may operate at low voltage, but the power supplies remain connected to primary power—commonly 120 volts and, in some installations, 347 volts.

Those circuits should not be treated casually or worked on while live simply because the light source on the other side of the power supply is low-voltage. The consequences of serious injury and death are possible.

A label, switch, permit, or inspection can seem like a small item. But small deficiencies often point to larger weaknesses.

Was the sign built within a recognized certification program?
Did the installer understand the applicable rules?

Was an electrical permit obtained?

Were the workers trained?

Did anyone confirm that the sign was approved before it was energized?

If the little things are managed properly, many larger problems are prevented.

Knowledge changes the customer conversation

Training employees on the applicable standards does more than improve shop and field practices. It also gives them the ability to explain compliance to customers.

Salespeople and project managers do not need to become electrical inspectors. They should, however, be able to explain why an electrical sign requires proper approval, markings, permits, installation, and inspection.

What is SPE-1000?

CSA SPE-1000 provides a field-evaluation pathway for certain electrical equipment that does not already carry regular product certification. For a sign company, it may provide a route for a specific custom or one-off electrical sign to be evaluated by a recognized field-evaluation body. If the equipment complies with the applicable requirements, a recognized field-evaluation mark may be applied. A field evaluation applies to the specific equipment inspected. It is not the same as an ongoing manufacturer-certification program. Companies should speak with a recognized certification or field-evaluation body and the applicable authority having jurisdiction to determine the correct approval path for a particular sign. ●



These are not optional upgrades that can be removed to reach a lower selling price.

Installers should know what approval markings to look for before placing a sign on a building. Service technicians should understand the purpose of disconnecting means, bonding, and safe isolation. Designers and fabricators should know that component selection, enclosure construction, wiring methods, and markings all affect whether the finished product can be approved.

The more knowledge a company develops internally, the less likely compliance is to become something added at the end of the project.

It also changes how the company describes its value. Instead of just saying, "This is the price of the sign," the company can explain:

"This price includes a properly constructed and approved product, the required permits, a compliant installation, and the responsibility to service it safely in the future."

That is the difference between being viewed as a supplier of a discretionary product and being recognized as a professional service provider.

Certification is an ongoing relationship

Becoming certified is not simply permission to apply a label. It places the manufacturer inside an ongoing system.

Certification bodies onboard manufacturers by explaining construction, labelling, testing, and documentation requirements associated with the applicable product standard. Follow-up inspections then help confirm that the company continues to manufacture signs in accordance with its certification arrangement.

Those inspections should not be viewed only as audits that a shop must pass. They are opportunities to identify changing requirements, correct practices, and maintain knowledge.

A strong relationship with a certification body helps the company understand what it is permitted to build and mark.

A strong relationship with the authority having jurisdiction helps the company understand permit, installation, and inspection expectations.

Companies known for quality, integrity, and good documentation are easier for authorities and certification bodies to work with. That does not remove the requirements. It makes the process more predictable and professional.

Different systems can achieve the same goal

Permit and inspection systems are organized differently across Canada.

In some municipalities, sign-permit compliance and electrical inspection are closely connected. A sign permit creates awareness of the electrical portion of the project, while the electrical inspection may also expose missing development or sign permit approvals.

That can create useful efficiencies. Compliance concerns reach permit holders more quickly, final approvals are easier to co-ordinate, and inspectors have a clearer view of the complete project.

In other jurisdictions, the municipality administers the sign permit while a separate provincial organization administers the electrical permit and inspection.

That structure can also work. But it raises an important question: does each authority know whether the other required permit exists? Can this aspect of compliance be simplified and improved? Creative co-ordination can improve compliance while also reducing unnecessary red tape.

If an electrical permit is issued for a new sign, is there a practical way to confirm that the municipal sign permit was also obtained? If a municipality approves an illuminated sign, is there a way to confirm that the electrical permit and inspection will follow?

The answer does not need to be a new layer of bureaucracy. There is no requirement for every jurisdiction to use the same organizational model. There is a requirement for the system to work.

Different structures can succeed, but no important compliance requirement should disappear between them.

Responsibility is shared

Sign companies carry a direct responsibility. They decide what to manufacture, how to wire it, which components to



A label, switch, permit, or inspection can seem like a small item. But small deficiencies often point to larger weaknesses.

The path to compliance does require time, patience, education, and a working relationship with a certification body. That does not make it an unreasonable effort. Certification, inspection, and proper construction are part of the cost of doing business when manufacturing electrical signs.

use, whether to obtain approval, and who they send into the field.

But sign companies are not the only participants.

Authorities having jurisdiction administer and enforce adopted requirements. Municipalities and provincial regulators manage permits and inspections. Standards committees develop and maintain technical requirements. Certification bodies assess products and manufacturers. Industry associations provide education and communication. Customers choose which companies they will hire.

Each party sees a different part of the same system.

Standards define expectations. Education develops competence. Certification verifies manufacturing. Permits and inspections support field compliance. Sign companies apply all of it in practice.

The industry performs best when those parties understand their roles, communicate, and are willing to examine where gaps exist.

Consistent monitoring also supports fair competition. Companies that include proper components, certification, permits, inspection, and training should not be disadvantaged against work that avoids those obligations.

Enforcement should not only identify non-compliance after the work is complete. It can also direct companies toward education, field evaluation, certification, and better practices.

The final part of the compliance guide

The purpose of this three-part series has been to improve education and awareness within the sign industry.

Part 1 examined how the Canadian Electrical Code Part I and the applicable Part II product standard perform different but connected functions.

Part 2 examined why structured education is necessary to turn those requirements into safe daily practices.

Part 3, this final article, asks whether the signs being manufactured and installed across Canada consistently reflect that knowledge.

Improving compliance benefits more than one company.

It benefits the installer who goes home safely.

It benefits the service technician who can isolate the electrical supply before beginning work.

It benefits the fabricator who understands why a construction method or component matters.

It benefits the customer who receives a safe and properly approved product.

It benefits authorities that receive complete permit information and inspect work that has been prepared correctly.

It also improves the reputation and performance of everyone employed in the industry.

The sign industry should not be regarded only as a supplier of something a business would like to have. Sign companies provide a professional service that includes design, manufacturing, electrical safety, permitting, installation, inspection co-ordination, and long-term maintenance.

That professional standing is strengthened every time a company builds to the standard, trains its people, obtains the required permits, and supports consistent inspection.

Whether bad signs are viewed as a small issue or a large one is less important than deciding to manage the issue properly. If we manage the details and improve the systems around them, the performance of the entire industry rises.

The questions are straightforward

Do you understand the electrical standards that apply to your work?

Have you invested time in Section 34 and CSA C22.2 No. 207?

Are you manufacturing and installing electrical signs to the applicable standards every time?

Are workers receiving the training they require to perform their work safely and correctly?

Can sign companies, authorities, certification bodies, and associations work together to improve permitting, inspection, education, and compliance?

What standard are today's industry leaders setting for a safe and professional industry—both now and for the next generation? ●

Dale Maron is a journeyman Red Seal electrician and holds a Certified Master Electrician designation in Alberta. He also holds a Safety Codes Officer designation as an electrical inspector in the province. He is vice-chair of the Section 34 Subcommittee, a member of the CSA 22.2 No. 207 Standards Committee, and an Electrical Certificate Training Program (ECTP) instructor. Devin Froese is president of Seventy-Seven Signs, a member of the Section 34 Subcommittee, and a standing member of the Saskatchewan Sign Association.



YouTube star Pioneer Pauly's Toyota RAV4 needed a much-needed facelift and redesign, in tandem with new off-road modifications for Pauly's gold-panning bush rig. Photos courtesy M2 Graphix

The anatomy of an adventure wrap

How topographical mapping and expert installation transformed a Toyota RAV4 into a one-of-a-kind off-road rig

Designed for backcountry trails, gold-panning trips, and off-road adventures, Pioneer Pauly's Toyota RAV4 required a fitting design. *Sign Media Canada* spoke to the team at M2 Graphix, a Victoria-based vehicle wrap and detailing shop, to discover how they transformed this vehicle with a custom topographical print, updated graphics, and a tough, adventure-ready finish.

Tell us about the client and the project.

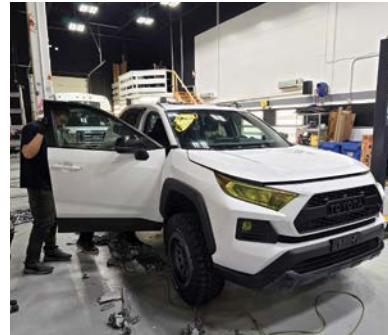
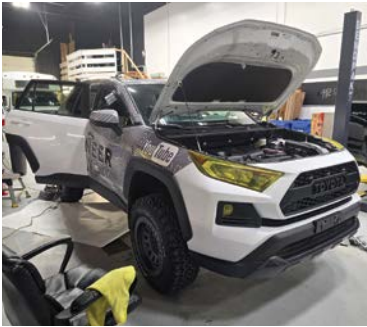
The project was to give YouTube star Pioneer Pauly's Toyota RAV4 a much-needed facelift and redesign, in tandem with new off-road modifications for Pauly's gold-panning bush rig. His existing wrap was nearing the end of its lifespan. The brief was to create a topographical print specifically

using the location of his gold claim. He wanted to improve the design, change his colours, make additions, and get a new wrap installed with added ceramic coating.

How did your company land the contract for this project?

Pauly had previously worked with an American company for his original wrap and a Vancouver company for installation. He wasn't 100 per cent satisfied with the previous design or the installation, so he came to us because of our excellent in-house design team and the quality of installations we pride ourselves on. Also, he is from and lives in Victoria and wanted to work with a local team. He had even attended some of our car shows and spoken with us at

1. Initial wrap removal



The project started with the removal and replacement (re & re) of the old wrap.

the time. He was impressed with our portfolio and knew we were a one-stop shop for wraps.

When did the project begin, and when was it completed?

Initial discussions began in May 2025, and the wrap was installed and completed last summer. We are currently re-wrapping his hood because it sustained damage from being parked under trees (sap and discolouration from acidic pine needles). It's great that when clients have issues, we can simply reprint the files (we keep everything) and replace panels as needed. He was also lucky to have the ceramic coating, or we would have had to replace the

roof as well. We highly recommend adding ceramic not only to protect a printed wrap with an extra layer on top of the laminate, but also for enhanced UV protection to extend the print's longevity.

What was the scope of the project?

The project involved a complete removal and replacement (re & re) of Pioneer Pauly's Toyota RAV4 wrap. We removed the original wrap, including the yellow headlight tint. The vehicle was then handed over to our local off-road specialists, Westshore Spring & 4x4, who made modifications such as lifting the vehicle and installing new, larger tires and gold wheels to match the new wrap. Afterward, the RAV4 was

2. Print and production



The print and production process included the lamination of the topographical background print and the cutting of second-surface logos and social graphics.

3. Wrapped and ready



returned to us, where we applied a new fully printed wrap, replaced the headlight tint, and finished with a ceramic coating to protect and prolong the wrap's lifespan.

Did the client have a design prepared, or was everything done in-house?

Pioneer Pauly had a design done previously that he wasn't totally in love with. He wanted to make the design more accurate, change the logos, sponsors, and placements, and update the colours. Everything was designed in-house by our lead graphic designer, Sydney Morgan.

What was the fabrication process for the project?

The wrap's body was printed on a Roland TruVis VF2 640 using Avery Dennison 60-in. 1105 vehicle wrap vinyl with gloss 1360 laminate. All logos, text, and social media elements were printed with the same printer and materials, then installed on the second surface for precise placement. The final step was applying Xpel Fusion Plus ceramic coating.

Were there any challenges within the project? How did your team overcome them?

The initial design was challenging!

The previous design was intended to be the topographic linework for Pauly's gold claim, but it's believed the original was more of an "artist's interpretation" than an accurate map, which is what the client was interested in.

Our lead designer scoured B.C. government resources, using the ParcelMapBC search service through the Land Title and Survey Authority of British Columbia, and found official topographic vectors for the remote location of the gold claim. The files were very large and cumbersome, with all strokes and no variation in line weight to enhance the design.

There were overlaps and thousands of nodes. Our lead designer had to pinpoint the exact location on a vast map, pull all the linework apart, convert strokes to outlines with contours for varying linework thicknesses, and add golden accents to give visual interest—an initial client request.



M2 Graphix applied a fully printed wrap, replaced the headlight tint, and finished with a ceramic coating to protect and prolong the wrap's lifespan.



Pauly also wasn't happy with the logo placements or angles before and wanted to make sure they stood out on the wrap, while adding some golden effects to tie everything together. Logos, sponsors, and social media icons underwent several rounds of proofing to achieve the look and effect the client was seeking.

Our lead designer, Sydney, also included a fun Easter egg for the client. She had seen Pauly selling a prize gold-nugget specimen online that he had found while gold hunting in New Zealand. She saved images of the specific gold nugget from his photos before it was sold and hid it in the client's fuel filler door to be found later!

Please explain the installation process.

The installation process for this project began with fully stripping the car of its original wrap, including adhesive removal and detailing. The installation team prepped the RAV4 by removing badges, trim, lights, and other components. All vehicle surfaces were degreased and cleaned with isopropyl alcohol.

Once prepped, the printed graphics were applied, starting with the first layer of topographical print. All logos, social media icons, text, and sponsors were applied to the second surface to match the client's placement requests. Knifeless tape was used in areas requiring precise seams, and the wrap was finished with a thorough post-heat process. The headlights were re&re'd with new tint.

The last step, after the vinyl had time to settle, was applying the ceramic coating to the vinyl. After curing overnight, the vehicle was given a final inspection before being returned to a very happy client! He's now a friend of the shop and attends car shows with us, showing off the RAV4!

Is there anything else you would like to add?

We loved working with Pioneer Pauly and look forward to working with him again! We have an upcoming secret project with him that we can't say much about... yet. Let's just say we have the opportunity to work on his childhood dream car. You'll have to wait to see what it is and what we do with it! ●



Pioneer Pauly attended the *Field of Dreams* car show (the largest show on Vancouver Island) with the M2 Graphix team last August.





The secret sauce of DOOH success

A core objective was to drive in-restaurant visits across urban, suburban, and rural markets, while positioning the brand as a value leader during the competitive post-holiday period.

Photos courtesy
Broadsign

How Osmow's achieved a 33.9 per cent lift in restaurant visits with programmatic DOOH

By Kayla Caticchio

To support its next phase of national growth, Osmow's, a leader in the Canadian quick-service restaurant (QSR) space, launched a high-impact programmatic digital out-of-home (pDOOH) campaign to reach its target audience at scale. Specializing in modern Middle Eastern and Mediterranean cuisine, the brand sought to strengthen its position as a category leader

and drive measurable foot traffic to restaurant locations across the country.

Objective

The campaign aimed to increase brand awareness and category share for Osmow's, leveraging three tailored executions to support its diverse product offering. A core



Osmow's partnered with Involved Media and Broadsign to launch a data-driven pDOOH campaign, activating premium inventory across 4,912 screens.





The campaign leveraged a diverse mix of placements, including large-format billboards, transit shelters, and campus screens, to deliver broad reach and sustained frequency.

To maximize relevance and efficiency, ads were programmatically dayparted (i.e., the practice of dividing the broadcast day into several parts) to peak during lunch and dinner consideration windows.



objective was to drive in-restaurant visits across urban, suburban, and rural markets, while positioning the brand as a value leader during the competitive post-holiday period.

Strategy

Osmow's partnered with Involved Media and Broadsign to launch a data-driven pDOOH campaign, activating premium inventory across 4,912 screens. The campaign leveraged a diverse mix of placements, including large-format billboards, transit shelters, and campus screens, to deliver broad reach and sustained frequency.

Using the OutMoove demand-side platform (DSP), the campaign employed programmatic triggers to engage consumers at high-intent moments throughout their daily routines. To maximize relevance and efficiency, ads were programmatically dayparted (i.e., the practice of dividing the broadcast day into several parts) to peak during lunch (11 a.m.–2 p.m.) and dinner (5 p.m.–7 p.m.) consideration windows. By utilizing proximity targeting near restaurant locations across Canada, the campaign ensured that tailored messaging reached audiences at the moment of choice.

Results

- **Foot traffic lift:** Achieved a 33.9 per cent lift in visits across 30 restaurant locations compared to the non-exposed control group



- **Sales impact:** Delivered a five per cent contribution to total sales throughout the campaign period

"With over 240 locations, we are always looking for ways Osmow's can stay top-of-mind while driving traffic to restaurants. Programmatic DOOH gave us the flexibility to do both at once. We were able to maintain a massive presence across the country, but with the additional layer of dayparting and proximity tools needed to reach the right people during the key lunch and dinner windows. It's been a very effective way to bridge our digital strategy with the physical restaurant locations," says Effie Ambida, director of strategy and planning at Involved Media. ●

Kayla Catichio is the content marketing manager at Broadsign. This case study was originally published by Broadsign and is being shared here as an educational resource with permission from the company.



Not only has programmatic become mainstream, but it has also been one of the key drivers of DOOH revenue as it becomes more available on more screens around the world.

Photos courtesy Rethink via IKEA Canada

'A launchpad of innovation': Inside the forces transforming DOOH

By Marika Gabriel

The world around us is becoming more connected, more interactive, and increasingly digital—and digital out-of-home (DOOH) advertising is right at the centre of that transformation.

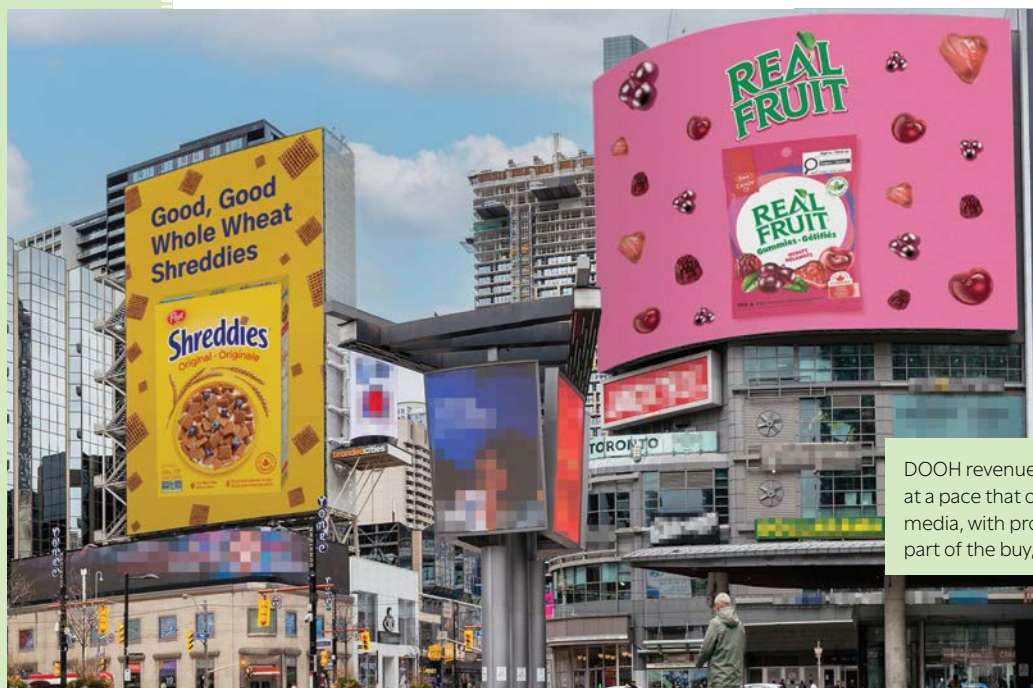
As new technologies continue to push the boundaries of creativity and engagement, DOOH is entering one of its most exciting eras yet.

Sign Media Canada caught up with the president and CEO of DPAA, Barry Frey, after the DPAA Canada Summit

to explore the innovations shaping the future of DOOH—from programmatic growth and AI to the next generation of immersive experiences.

Sign Media Canada (SMC): What technologies are having the biggest impact on the evolution of DOOH today?

Barry Frey (BF): I like to say that DOOH is the “launchpad of innovation,” and for good reason. As we at DPAA drive the



DOOH revenue in Canada has been growing at a pace that outpaces many other traditional media, with programmatic now a mainstream part of the buy, not an experiment.



digitization of OOH, continued innovation and growth follow. From innovative data, research, and outcomes measurement up and down the funnel to 3D ads of all sizes (large formats in big public squares, or smaller screens in public transit systems); to dynamic content created and served by time, news, audience, weather—or even activated by consumer scanning a QR code and answering prompts from their phone; to the further integration of DOOH and mobile activations with AR and VR; to some of the wilder ideas like branded holograms, wall projections, and drone shows, DOOH is being impacted by technology every day. And I didn't even mention AI yet. More on that to follow.

SMC: Programmatic DOOH has become mainstream. What's driving its growth, and what's still holding it back?

BF: Not only has programmatic become mainstream, but it has also been one of the key drivers of DOOH revenue as it becomes more available on more screens around the world. One big reason for this is the speed at which campaigns can be up and running (or creative swapped out for more up-to-date messaging), as well as the increasing ability to measure, buy, and plan them alongside other digital media. The only thing holding up the continued expansion of programmatic DOOH is the time it takes for all players across a digital network to align and stay in sync. Conversely, the further maturity of AI has helped accelerate the opportunities here.

SMC: Where do you see AI creating the biggest opportunities for DOOH, and where is the industry overestimating its impact?

BF: Measurement. Buying and planning. Efficiencies in systems for the whole workflow, from presentation to scheduling to outcomes. The creation of new tools that help

analyze and strategize around new campaigns and new ideas. The sky is the limit. The industry, like many others, has overestimated the impact of generative AI as a replacement for creative and human ideation. But there's no doubt that those who are using AI tools to deliver more value to brands and agencies are outpacing the rest.

SMC: What's the biggest misconception about DOOH you'd like the industry to leave behind?

BF: DOOH is so much more than "outdoor, but digital." It's cinema advertising pre-shows. It's in-store retail media networks. It's IRL experiential activations around big sporting events like the World Cup. Too often, we paint ourselves into a box and don't give enough credit to how wide a reach our networks have—from large, premium roadside signage, to mobile truck-side billboards; from the train you take to work, shop, or play, to the brand messages transmitted to you in the office elevator, in the store, or in the ballpark.

SMC: If you were giving one piece of advice to someone entering the industry today, what would it be?

BF: Get outside and touch grass, as my Gen Z coworkers and family members might say! AI (again, I know!) has been simultaneously disruptive and inspiring, but it cannot—and has not—changed the human experience, including the desire to be in-person, connected, putting down the phones



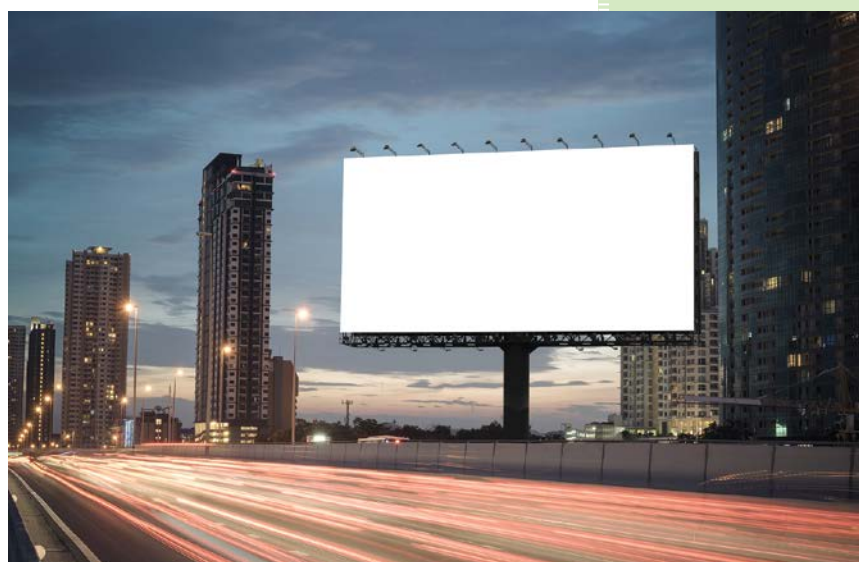
and picking each other up with an inspiring real-world conversation, meeting, or experience. Join industry groups and network at their events. Even if an email or text message is easier, choose to take the meeting over Zoom (camera on!) or face-to-face. Be part of a community.

There's no better way to not only grow as a professional or a person, but also to truly understand what motivates people and how to best connect with them from a business perspective, and to join in as brands connect with consumers in the real world!

SMC: Canada's DOOH market is growing—and fast. What makes it unique, and where do you see the biggest opportunities over the next few years?

BF: Canada punches above its weight because it must. Its advertising audience is concentrated in a handful of dense urban corridors like Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal, but scattered across a massive, bilingual, culturally diverse country. That forces us to be smarter about measurement, creative localization, and audience data than markets with more forgiving geography. And it's working! DOOH revenue in Canada has been growing at a pace that outpaces many other traditional media, with programmatic now a mainstream part of the buy, not an experiment.

The biggest opportunity is convergence. Retail media networks are exploding in Canada right now, and pairing



first-party data with DOOH's in-store and en route physical reach is a huge unlock for brands.

I'd also point to how Canadian brands are using DOOH to show up authentically in cultural moments. Justin Bieber's team synchronized DOOH placements across Toronto, Vancouver, and Montreal for an album launch last year, and fans carried it straight onto social. That's the playbook: don't just buy space, buy into a moment. Add in the momentum

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By the next DPAA Canada Summit, programmatic DOOH in Canada will have closed even more of the gap with the U.S.—the infrastructure and buyer sophistication are catching up fast, and measurement standards will be further along, too.

Photo courtesy DPAA

from hosting FIFA World Cup matches in Toronto and Vancouver this summer, and Canada has real proof points that this medium drives outcomes, not just awareness.

SMC: By the time next year's DPAA Canada Summit arrives, what changes do you expect the industry to go through?

BF: A few things I'd bet on.

First, programmatic DOOH in Canada will have closed even more of the gap with the U.S.—the infrastructure and buyer sophistication are catching up fast, and I expect measurement standards to be further along, too.

Second, I think retail media and DOOH will be talked about less as two channels and more as one connected strategy. Brands are already blending them, and by next summer, that won't be the exception; it'll be the expectation.

I also expect AI to have moved from buzzword to backbone—not replacing creative, but powering the planning, buying, and real-time optimization behind it, the same way we're seeing globally. And I wouldn't be surprised if Canada's success with tentpole cultural and sporting moments this year (the World Cup, major music and entertainment launches) becomes a template other markets start borrowing from, rather than the other way around. Canada's not just growing fast; it's starting to lead.

SMC: You've seen countless DOOH campaigns over the past year. Which ones have stood out to you, and what made them so effective?

BF: The World Cup was a masterclass in OOH. Not only were more than a dozen markets in North America able to connect brands to consumers in creative ways around the biggest sporting event in the world, but brands were also enabled—along with many of our members—to do so by leaning into, not distracting from, their passion and fandom. As part of fan festivals, or by sharing live scores on transit signage, or with projected 3D-looking wallscapes showing soccer balls seemingly breaking through the side of a skyscraper, brands across all categories showed up for the exciting tournament. They captured that excitement in ways that connected them to positive, fun moments.

SMC: What do the best DOOH campaigns have in common?

BF: The best DOOH campaigns are memorable, tie into cultural moments, and are measurable. Aside from being the launchpad of innovation, we like to talk about DOOH as being a rare medium that actually drives outcomes, as several great companies showcase. This allows brands and agencies to succeed across the entire funnel and keeps them coming back for more. ●



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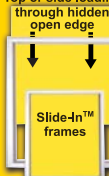


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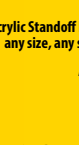


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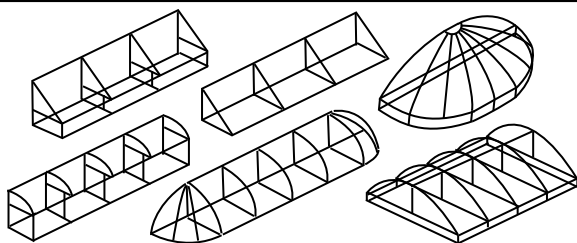


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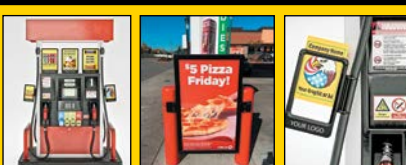
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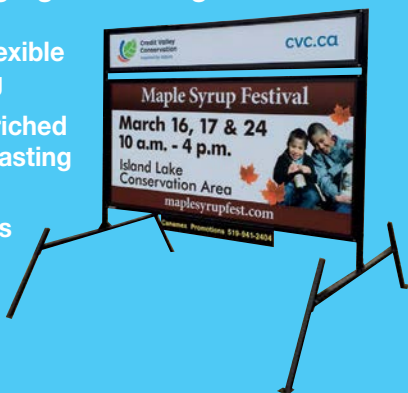
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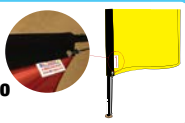
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Scrubbing up attention

Photos courtesy Knight Signs (Pacific Sign Group Inc.)

What makes an illuminated sign stand out? It's the perfect balance of making an impact while making sense. When scale, visibility, brand recognition, and thoughtful design come together, a sign becomes a landmark.

The Express Autowash signage package in Coquitlam, B.C., does exactly that. Designed by Debbie Gibson and Marla, and engineered, fabricated, and installed by Knight Signs (Pacific Sign Group Inc.), the project features two striking 8.5-m (28-ft) tall double-faced pylon signs and a matching illuminated wall sign.

The pylons feature precision-formed aluminum cladding with a silver semi-gloss finish and seven vertically stacked illuminated cabinets spelling "CARWASH" in alternating brand-specific blue tones. Push-through acrylic lettering illuminated with red-green-blue (RGB) LED modules delivers bright, even visibility day and night, while a faux



neon-style "OPEN/CLOSED" LED display offers a familiar touch, a signal that the car wash is ready for business.

Think about the brands you notice every time you drive by. Chances are that you recognize the sign before you read a single word. That's what this project delivers. Its scale, construction, and lighting created such a strong roadside presence in Coquitlam that the design was approved for additional Nationwide Self Storage locations, giving Express Autowash a consistent, recognizable identity wherever it appears. ●

~ Marika Gabriel



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