

Pathways to Success

# The Benefits of Campus-Wide Wayfinding

Effective and appropriate wayfinding solutions don't happen by accident but instead require careful planning and forethought. In order to achieve the greatest benefit, campuses must understand their audience and involve the campus community to identify the unique needs to create the most effective program. Fortunately, modern wayfinding solutions – from flexible modular signs to interactive digital displays – excel in meeting just about every need an organization may have, whether it's enhancing a visitor's experience throughout a facility or reinforcing the organizational brand, or both.



## The Benefits of Campus-Wide Wayfinding

You don't need an intimate knowledge of the history and science of **wayfinding** to understand how wayfinding impacts your life. Good signage can get you from Point A to Point B, but without a carefully constructed wayfinding plan, signage without strategy isn't wayfinding – it's visual clutter.

Imagine yourself standing in the middle of a large campus university, with long rows of buildings visible in several directions. You know where you want to be – say, the student center – but not necessarily how to get there. Whether the campus is intimate or large and complex, universities are charged with creating an environment that is welcoming, while promoting their brand identity. The architecture is in constant flux, with staff and building changes, architectural renovations, and construction detours. You realize **that wayfinding isn't simply about signs but about guiding people smoothly and effortlessly through the confusing thicket of change and transition that makes up modern life.**

Kevin Lynch, who is credited with coining the phrase *wayfinding* in 1960, wrote, “[L]et the mishap of disorientation once occur, and the sense of anxiety and even terror that accompanies it reveals to us how closely it is linked to our sense of balance and well-being.”

Entering a campus building – or even trying to locate the proper entrance – can be stressful when time is short without the added tension of a failed wayfinding plan. When most businesses and organizations design and build their facilities, traffic flow is always considered in most architectural planning; however, signage is often an afterthought, a realization towards the end of construction that signs are needed before the facility can open. In fact, in most cases the integration of signage to complement wayfinding is added so late in the project that it's nearly useless or at least of very little assistance to visitors and staff. More thought is placed on the design of the signs themselves rather than on their logical placement. Even less thought is devoted to the directional information and messaging that will allow visitors to navigate their way.

**For wayfinding to truly work, it must be integrated into the architecture of a facility at the beginning of the design and planning process, rather than simply tacked on at the end.** Doing so will also allow the organization to develop signage that not only achieves its wayfinding goals but also extends its brand campus-wide. Wayfinding can thus be thought of as not only a means to an end – literally – but a way in which an organization can leave a favorable impression in the mind long after he or she has left the premises. In addition, an appropriate and properly implemented wayfinding solution can also improve employee productivity and efficiency and even reduce maintenance and administrative costs.



## Challenges Of Modern Wayfinding

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Wayfinding is partly about signs, but signs aren't necessarily about wayfinding. We've all had the experience of being confused by too many signs – the very opposite goal of wayfinding. However, for many organizations without a proper wayfinding plan, that's exactly what the immediate thought is when a layout is clearly not working: "We need more signs!"

The problem is exacerbated by the reality of much of modern facility construction and maintenance. Some of the wayfinding challenges that facility managers, builders, developers, and public officials face include:

**Rapid changes in architecture:** Facility managers at university campuses must oversee the maintenance of existing buildings and plan for the construction of new ones. In addition, universities must be able to handle the large influx of students each fall that are new to the campus and continue to provide direction for those who are established.

**Complexity of modern architecture:** Occasionally a facility may inadvertently place more emphasis on the design of its interior and not enough on the actual logic of the space. Chances are, you've been in the all-too-common situation where your search for the nearest restroom leads you in circles around an expansive, attractive, but not too visitor-friendly environment. A good wayfinding plan, however, can accommodate even the most esoteric design, but it must be incorporated as early in the planning stages as possible.

**Lack of time in creating a wayfinding plan:** Despite a builder's or project manager's best intentions, all too often wayfinding gets little attention or remains low on the priority list during construction, renovations and expansion. The resulting signage thus lacks the proper messaging and may not meet the facility's wayfinding needs. Conversely, allocating the time and resources necessary to fully address a comprehensive wayfinding system can and will produce flexible and strategically placed signage solutions that can grow along with the facility itself.

**Variety of choices:** Nowadays, organizations can choose from a number of signage options, depending on the goals they want to achieve with their signage plans. They may want signage that's not only directional but also informational, or they may want signage with a color scheme that distinguishes one building from another on the same campus. In fact, signage may not be necessary at all or may be a part of a larger, more comprehensive wayfinding solution. Successful wayfinding can be achieved using both signage and natural identification and/or architectural elements, e.g., designing a building to create an obvious main entry point. The larger and more complex a facility, the more complex the signage system may be and the more planning that's required in order to conceptualize and create it.

**Expense of replacement:** Many facility managers, facing tightening budgets, want to replace outdated or inaccurate signs but fear the financial consequences of doing so. Even though they may understand the immediate and long-term benefits to the company, they may find it difficult to convey them to management and executives who still believe that wayfinding is merely about signs and do not often realize the "hidden value" behind a comprehensive wayfinding program.

**Maintenance of a current wayfinding program:** With many institutions undergoing changes on a regular basis (i.e., hospitals, colleges and universities, and other large facilities), maintaining a consistent brand as aging or outdated signs are replaced can be a challenge. How do you make sure that your staff has the most up-to-date branding information when they re-order signage? How do you ensure that as your facility expands or takes over a new building, your brand remains consistent throughout the campus?

**Quality of visitor experience:** Great signage that does its job often goes unnoticed. For a wayfinding system to succeed, an organization must know its community, staff, students and visitors. How will they navigate to the campus, through the campus and throughout the facility? From that understanding, the creation of appropriate signage that is designed and branded in a consistent way throughout the campus that reflects proper messaging, language, visibility issues, and placement that will result in a great experience.

**Quality of staff experience:** Many organizations with poor wayfinding plans may not realize how much staff time is wasted because of bad signage. How often are employees interrupted in their work by visitors asking for directions because of lack of signage? How often is faculty themselves lost on their way from one building to another on a sprawling campus? What about time and money wasted when employees at a hospital, for example, must wait on patients who arrive late because they couldn't find the right treatment room or they couldn't figure out where to park?

A good wayfinding solution can go a long way towards meeting these and other challenges head-on and creating a more harmonious and efficient environment for both staff, students and visitors.



Companies and organizations have a number of wayfinding signage solutions to choose from to meet their needs, whether they want a flexible digital solution for a student center or a colorful exterior sign that includes a university's brand identity. Depending on an organization's objectives, a wayfinding signage solution for them may incorporate any or all of these elements:



## Digital Solutions

A university may wish to employ a digital signage system throughout its campus to not only provide directional guidance to visitors, students and staff, but to also convey information, news and campus updates. Companies use digital signage to provide news about current activities, offer meeting schedules and even recognize staff members. Universities can effectively use digital signage to announce conference locations, welcome distinguished guests, recognize donors, convey emergency messages, and even provide the latest updates about critical research currently being undertaken at their facility. Digital signage has a number of advantages, including their flexibility, ease of use and interactive capabilities to further engage your visitors, students and staff.



## Exterior Solutions

The first step in welcoming someone to your facility is to ensure that they actually find your facility. Exterior signage should not only communicate your organization's brand identity but also be appropriately sized and strategically installed to ensure maximum visibility. The exterior signage must also properly guide visitors to the appropriate entrance location to help them start their interior experience in the right place.



## Interior Solution

Building directories, room signs, hallway signs, restroom signs – all of these should be developed and created with care and forethought so that they achieve their objectives of helping staff, students and visitors locate their respective destinations with little or no fuss while also extending your organization's branding and design throughout your facility. In addition, interior wayfinding must also take ADA code requirements into consideration so that the desired solutions are fully compliant.



Saddleback College, one of California's largest community colleges, chose ASI to design an exterior sign system to reinforce SC's brand identity and improve wayfinding across its 214-acre hillside campus. ASI designed vibrant signs based on the modular and resilient Compass™ system, strategically placed to aid in maneuvering the expansive campus - especially vehicular traffic, since most of SC's nearly 25,000 students commute by car.

SC also turned to ASI to program interior signage for the Business & General Studies and Science & Health buildings to attain a uniform look and in-house control. Pleased with the two-building result, SC is now standardizing ASI Infinity™ signage campus-wide. Says SC Director of Facilities, John Ozurovich:

"ASI paid meticulous attention in the upfront planning of our interior & exterior signage, working collaboratively with college management to decide exactly what signs would work best where. The result is not only attractive and functional, but enables us to make changes without having to replace entire signs. This way, our signage system can adapt as the college grows."

John Ozurovich, Director of Facilities, Saddleback College.





## The Benefits Of A Great Wayfinding System

As if helping your visitors find their way to their destination weren't enough of an incentive, here are five benefits to creating and implementing a proper wayfinding solution:

- 1. Increased productivity and efficiency:** Proper signage can quickly and easily direct staff, students and visitors to their respective destinations without having to interrupt faculty for directions, thus freeing up your staffs' time for more productive work.
- 2. Improved quality of visitor and staff experience:** How many times have you heard someone complain that they will never visit a facility again because it was so user-un-friendly? Proper signage will help ensure that your visitors will come back to you again and again as they discover how easy and stress-free it is to navigate your facility.
- 3. Enhanced visibility of your facility:** If people don't know where you are or how to find you, they can't do business with you. Good signage will not only locate where you are in a space, but also direct visitors right to your door.
- 4. Brand visibility and reinforcement:** Organizations spend a lot of money and time developing a unique brand that reflects their values and differentiates them from their competitors. The brand is thus not only a university's calling card but a visual reminder or message to the world of its commitment to its customers. A great wayfinding system will not only direct visitors throughout a facility but also extend the organization's brand through color, font, graphics, or a combination of all three. Visitors will thus have numerous "contact points" with the company's brand, strengthening their experience with it and reinforcing their overall impression of their visit.
- 5. Reduced maintenance and administrative costs:** This is where doing it right the first time, i.e., choosing the proper signage at the beginning of your project rather than at the end, contributes directly to the bottom line. Good signage that reflects your facility's unique needs and layout will take into account not only the current structure but also future contingencies such as expansion, merger, renovation, rebranding, or staffing changes. For many facilities anticipating rapid changes, for example, a modular or digital system will be much easier and more cost-effective to maintain and/or replace than a fixed installation.



If you're interested in developing a wayfinding solution for your company or organization, visit ASI's website at [asisignage.com](http://asisignage.com), email us at [marketing@asisignage.com](mailto:marketing@asisignage.com), or call us at 1-800-274-7732, to request a signage consultation. ASI has 45 years of experience designing

and installing wayfinding solutions to companies and organizations around the world, including hospitals, educational institutions, and nonprofits, and can help you develop the best and most effective wayfinding system that will meet your needs.