



**NUCLEUS**  
RESEARCH

# PRINT AND DIGITAL SIGNAGE SYSTEMS: DON'T BUY TWICE

ANALYST

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## THE BOTTOM LINE

With tightening economic conditions, retailers are under more pressure than ever to cut costs and protect their margins. Nucleus identified unifying print and digital signage management systems as a potential cost-saving opportunity for retail and public-facing organizations. Organizations that eliminate or avoid disparate signage systems stand to reduce software subscription costs, accelerate time-to-value, and reduce their IT burden and headcount. ECS Global consolidates all signage management under its ECS<sup>5</sup> platform with proven use cases for print and digital communications alignment for SMBs and enterprises.

## STATE OF THE MARKET

As we saw with the pandemic and a looming recession, retailers are under more pressure than ever. Unlike Amazon, retail organizations must manage brick-and-mortar locations and contend with various digital and physical signage challenges, adding to the costs of already slimming margins. Organizations typically address signage through disparate physical and digital signage management systems, where they will buy separate and siloed software systems to manage their physical and digital marketing assets, respectively.

There are key differences between software systems that manage physical or digital signage. Physical signage systems manage the digital storage of posters, price tags, and banners and the printing of these assets, which necessitates connections to printing machinery. Digital signage systems manage the storage of digital assets, including videos, images, and interactive components, and the scheduling and distribution of digital signage to displays or online channels.

While best-of-breed functionality is important in any technology sourcing decision, Nucleus has found that users often pay for overlapping functionality between physical and digital signage systems. In contrast, modern signage systems unify all signage channels. For example, ECS Global is a signage management solutions vendor whose ECS<sup>5</sup> platform can manage both print and digital media, with capabilities for the storage, version control, design, scheduling, and distribution of all signage assets.

## DON'T BUY TWICE

Given the functional overlap between print and digital signage management platforms, there is a prime opportunity for retailers or publicly-facing organizations to manage all signage channels with a single system.

The most immediate benefit realized by consolidating one's signage technology ecosystem is cost savings. Traditionally, companies must purchase multiple licenses for marketing team members who manage both print and digital signage or retail managers who manage digital and printed price tags and promotional materials. Organizations can save on these software subscription or licensing costs by eliminating disparate systems.

By consolidating the tech stack, IT also experiences administrative time savings and reduced personnel costs. Separate systems require different knowledge bases that often necessitate multiple IT administrators, especially if the solutions are built on separate code bases. With separate signage systems, IT must administer two systems, the respective databases, and integrations between the various systems, doubling the IT workload.

Organizations further benefit by selecting a single signage system during deployment by avoiding implementing different solutions. SaaS system implementations typically cost 0.6 to 1.2 times the annual subscription costs, accounting for consultant usage, vendor support services, and employee time spent. Deploying two systems would ostensibly double the implementation costs as the integration work for one system must be replicated for the other. For example, both systems would still need to be integrated with a content management system (CMS) and an ERP for up-to-date pricing, product information, and marketing materials.

## ECS

ECS Global is a marketing solutions provider that supports the distribution of images, video, and messages across print, digital, and online communication channels through its flagship ECS<sup>5</sup> platform. Serving a range of industries, including retail, manufacturing, healthcare, non-profit, government, academia, sport and leisure, tourism, and hotel services, ECS's customers include both SMBs and enterprise-scale organizations. While the concept of unified communications is typical of most marketing solutions, ECS has taken the unique approach of consolidating both physical and digital channel management onto a single platform. ECS provides a host of integrations to enterprise systems, such as industrial printers, hand-held and mobile Zebra Technology devices, and digital display systems for kiosks, digital displays, email, and website embed.

**ECS unifies  
communications to  
save retailers IT and  
employee costs**

## WHY IT MATTERS

Nucleus interviewed multiple ECS customers and found that organizations increased employee productivity, reduced operational costs, and aligned communication channels. (Nucleus Research U132 – *The value of unified communications with ECS<sup>5</sup>* – October 2020) Retail users have noted that a unified print and digital signage system helped avoid displaying out-of-date or conflicting messaging and pricing information across various mediums. This led to over \$300,000 in avoided discounting per year for one retailer. ECS enabled head offices of retail organizations to centralize control of all signage, freeing up

employee time previously spent deliberating what to display and when at each retail location. The bottom line value of a comprehensive signage management system is evident in the benefits ECS customers have achieved. As the retail market tightens, Nucleus believes the consolidation of companies' signage tech stack represents a quick win with cost and time-saving implications.