Architectural Signage – The Basics

What Is Architectural Signage and Why Is It Important?

Architectural signage is a term that's loosely defined, yet used liberally throughout the signage industry. But for newcomers, asking about the purpose of an architectural sign system can provoke stutters and meandering statements from experts and up-and-comers alike.

After all, simple questions can sometimes elicit complex answers. Ever try to explain why the sky is blue? Arcane references to scientific theories, wavelength, scattering light, etc. are all necessary. The same principle holds true when it comes to visual communications.

And that's because the ideas behind architectural signage are extensive. A single sentence falters at encapsulating the full meaning behind the concept. Still, we'll try to break down the core constituents that make architectural signage unique and important to businesses, municipalities, and more.

Here's the textbook definition, simplified.

Sometimes a single sign isn't enough. And sometimes a company's signage goals go beyond strictly advertising or making an impression at a trade show. That's when architectural signage comes in.

Architectural signage, as the name implies, concerns buildings and manmade structures. The majority of these facilities are campuses, offices, and government organizations, though almost any large building can benefit from custom-designed signage.

Brand identification and wayfinding signage are necessary for a building to maintain a professional appearance and navigability. Every sign should work together under a unified design language, material, typography, and representation of brand.

So, architectural signage is the art of combining the aforementioned elements into an aesthetically pleasing mix, which overall represents the business and complements the environmental décor of the building. While it sounds intricate, the process can be boiled down to bringing the messaging within a structure to life.

So, what goes into fabricating a successful architectural sign system?

1. **Design –** Sure, architectural sign systems need to be visually attractive (who would want to look at an ugly monument sign every day they drive into work?), but they should also enhance their environment. Form should follow function. Famous furniture designer Charles Eames once said, **"Design depends largely on constraints."** Signs serve a purpose, and they are constrained by that purpose – they are not decorations or sculptures.

2. **Quality –** Exterior signage should be robust, while interior signage should look elegant. Materials must be constructed with attention to detail and longevity in mind. Maintenance and sign repair are real possibilities that will require monetary investment down the road.

3. **Code Compliance –** Ensure that the signage company you're partnering with is aware of OSHA and ADA guidelines. Accessibility requirements are of considerable significance, particularly for visually impaired and physically disabled patrons and employees. Without compliant signage, your company runs the risk of being fined.

What types of signs are usually associated with architectural signage?

Nowadays, architectural signage involves almost every indoor and outdoor application you can think of from digital message boards to bathroom signs. Signs By Tomorrow produces wall graphics, dimensional lettering, lightbox signs, ADA safety signs, dynamic LED signs, directional signs, among other display options – all in the service of creating a cohesive architectural sign system.

But why should I care?

Great marketing and branding doesn't stop with media, printing, and digital advertising. When a possible business partner or client visits your headquarters, they form a general impression the moment they set foot on the compound. Unfortunately, decrepit signs and poorly maintained channel lettering are hard to look past.

After their initial judgment, then they must find their way around the building or facility. And if they can't find their destination without a map, they may become frustrated and leave.

Beyond all the doom and gloom, however, is a missed opportunity to brand. As people encounter personalized graphics, they begin to associate your business with a certain set of values, personality, and professionalism.

SAMPLE IDEAS