What to check on your menu boards before launch

Start with the right screen content

Digital signage in a retail location or lobby display works only as well as the content on it. A menu board that shows outdated items, blurry images, or a cluttered layout will lose audience attention fast. For small businesses that rely on these screens to guide customer choices, the difference between a useful display and a forgettable one often comes down to a few checks made before the system goes live.

The term managed signage content refers to the practice of keeping that material fresh, accurate, and purposeful across every screen. Instead of loading files once and hoping for the best, you plan updates, review performance, and remove anything that no longer serves the customer. The checklist below covers the main items to review so your screens stay effective from day one.

Check the readability from every viewing distance

A screen mounted above a counter may look crisp from three feet away but become unreadable from the queue at the door. Walk the path a customer takes. Stop at the farthest point where someone would glance at the board, and check whether the smallest text is still legible. If the font size forces a squint, enlarge it. The same applies to contrast: light grey text on a white background disappears under bright ceiling lights. Dark text on a light background or white text on a dark background usually works best.

Remember that glare from windows or overhead fixtures changes across the day. Visit the screen at different hours to confirm that reflections do not wash out the information. A quick fix is to adjust the screen angle or add an anti-glare overlay, but the simpler approach is to choose a layout that keeps critical details in the high-contrast zone of the display.

Confirm the content matches the physical menu

Nothing confuses a customer faster than a digital board showing a promotion that the register does not recognise. Before launch, compare every item on the screen with what is actually sold at that location. Prices, portion sizes, and availability must match. If a seasonal item runs out, the board should show it as unavailable or remove it entirely. A stale listing erodes trust and slows down the line when customers ask for something you cannot serve.

This alignment becomes especially important when a business runs multiple locations. A central content calendar helps coordinate updates, but each store still needs a final check that

its local offers and limited-time specials are correct. A single mismatch on a lobby display can undo the credibility that the rest of the signage builds.

Verify the call to action is visible and current

Many menu boards include a call to action: “Download our app for a free drink” or “Join the loyalty program today.” That line may sit at the bottom of the screen where people rarely look. Test whether the call to action stands out from the surrounding items. If it blends into a wall of prices and descriptions, increase its size or place it near the top of the rotation.

Also check the expiry date. A promotion that ended last week should not still cycle on the display. Managed signage content includes a process for retiring old calls to action so the board always points customers toward something they can actually use. A stale offer frustrates people and makes the business look disorganised.

Assess the pace of the content rotation

Some screens cycle through multiple slides or videos. If the rotation is too fast, customers cannot read a full slide before it changes. If it is too slow, they lose interest and look away. Time each slide while standing at a typical viewing spot. A safe rhythm is roughly five to eight seconds for a simple item list and ten to twelve seconds for a slide that includes a promotion or wayfinding detail. Adjust based on the amount of text and the typical wait time in that area.

For a retail location where people stand in line for a minute or two, a single slide that contains all the information often works better than a rotating carousel. A loop that takes thirty seconds to complete means most customers see only the first few frames before they reach the counter. Keep the cycle short enough that everyone gets the key message.

Review the image and video quality

Low-resolution photos or stretched graphics make the entire board look unprofessional. Pull up the actual files on the screen and look for pixelation, colour banding, or awkward cropping. Photos of food or products should appear appetising and accurate. A dull picture of a sandwich can make it less appealing than a well-lit real version sitting in the display case.

If the screen runs video, check that the audio (if any) is not distorted and that the clip loops without a visible gap. A black frame between loops can be jarring. Most media players allow a seamless loop setting; confirm that it is enabled. This is also a good moment to verify that the file format matches what the player supports. A mismatched codec causes stuttering or a blank screen.

Test the fallback and offline behaviour

Digital signage relies on a network connection. If the internet drops, what does the screen show? Some systems default to a black screen, others to the last cached content. A black screen looks broken and invites customers to ignore the display even after the connection returns. Make sure the fallback shows the most recent content or a simple placeholder message such as “Please check back shortly.”

If the screen runs from a local media player, test what happens when the player loses power and reboots. Does it start playing automatically, or does it sit on a setup menu until someone presses a button? For a small business that cannot staff a technician every hour, auto-start is essential.

Include a clear wayfinding layer when needed

In a lobby display or a larger retail location, customers use the screen to orient themselves. A map or directory should use simple labels and a consistent colour code. Test the wayfinding by asking someone unfamiliar with the layout to find a specific department. If they hesitate, the labels need work. Avoid cluttering the map with marketing messages; keep the directional information prominent and update it whenever a department moves or a new section opens.

Wayfinding content is a form of content for customer facing displays that directly affects the customer’s experience. A clear, easy-to-read directory reduces the number of times staff have to stop what they are doing to point someone in the right direction.

Set a schedule for ongoing checks

A single pre-launch review is not enough. Screens drift: a cable loosens, a file corrupts, a lighting change makes a previously readable layout hard to see. Build a simple weekly check into the routine. Walk past each screen, glance at the content, and note anything that looks off. A five-minute walkthrough can catch problems before a customer complains.

This is where a content calendar becomes useful. It reminds you when to update seasonal promotions, remove expired items, and refresh the overall look. Without a schedule, content for customer facing displays gradually becomes stale, and the screens turn into background noise that customers learn to ignore.

Keep the board focused on what matters

A menu board that tries to show everything ends up showing nothing. Too many items, too many decorative graphics, and too many promotions compete for the same small space. The result is a visual mess that customers scan quickly and then give up on. Prioritise the items

that drive the most revenue or that need the most explanation. Leave room for white space and a single call to action. A clean layout respects the customer’s time and makes the decision easier.

Managed signage content works best when it follows a clear hierarchy: the most important information sits at the top or in the centre, the secondary details go below, and decorative elements stay minimal. Stick to that hierarchy and resist the urge to fill every pixel.