THE ENGAGE 360 GUIDE TO SOURCING A DIGITAL DIRECTORY

"Help! I Need a Digital Directory!"

Honestly, this is about as far as many companies ever get in the process of finding a digital directory kiosk -- knowing that they need some sort of solution, and having no idea where to start. So, they Google, click around, and ultimately end up overwhelmed by all of the information that's out there -- and there's a LOT. That's because digital directories and wayfinding kiosks have become enormously popular over the last five years and for good reason. They are useful to both the organizations deploying them, and their guests or visitors, making them an excellent investment. And compared with the costs of completely remodeling a large space, the modern look of many digital directories can even serve as a cost-efficient and relatively easy way to upgrade a lobby or enhance the visual aesthetic of other public areas of an office building.

So, where should someone begin when searching for the right company with which to partner to build the perfect digital directory or wayfinding kiosk?

RULE #1: ONE CALL SHOULD DO IT ALL

The greatest value lies with digital directory kiosk providers that put an emphasis on vertical integration, meaning that most services -- from design and fabrication to software development and servicing -- are provided by in-house employees. However, the majority of companies selling directories are far from full-service organizations. Our recommendation is to retain a healthy dose of skepticism and do your research on digital directory providers before making a decision. But if you simply don't have that kind of time, then this cheat sheet should get you started:

Directory Pretenders

These companies offer the least variety of products and services of any digital directory provider. They can be difficult to spot, as they often look and sound like a digital directory, but when you dig a little deeper, you'll learn that they don't actually make anything at all. They close sales because they offer what appears to be a good deal on the surface, at what is actually an unrealistically low price, to buyers who don't have enough information to know better.

How do they do this? By using reseller agreements to market what are often low-quality enclosures, at prices that are cheaper than what the general public can normally buy directly themselves. With no "skin in the game" -- and no control over any of the manufacturing or sourcing processes that go along with actually building a directory -- all "Pretenders" need to do is advertise to bring customers in, get them to sign a contract and then wash their hands of the entire thing.

Value-Added Resellers (VARs)

As the name states, digital directory VARs (Value Added Resellers) make their money by adding some sort of value to the sales chain and/or directory manufacturing solution. They make up the majority of companies who market self-service kiosks and directories, and while they can serve a purpose, rarely do they design, fabricate and service enclosures themselves. They instead rely on a broad network of outside providers to fill various needs; this adds to their bottom lines, and therefore to their products' costs. VARs generally include:

- Industrial design firms: Design products that are to be manufactured through techniques of mass production; in this case, directory enclosures
- Digital directory installation and maintenance providers: Contract with directory manufacturers or directly with

customers to install and often continue to service directories post installation
- Advertising agencies: Work with the customer to create marketing campaigns based on the directory's design and purpose
- Software providers: Create programs that run on directory kiosk hardware to enable it to perform the required tasks and functions
- Mechanical engineering firms: Design the internal structure of the directory kiosk -- the moving parts -- ensuring all components work together as needed based on the customer's requirements

Additionally, the quality of service VARs offer and the value that service provides can vary widely. And if something goes wrong with a digital directory? It can be extremely difficult to get the necessary help with so many different providers in the equation. Keep in mind that just because the word "value" is in the name, it doesn't mean that's where the real value lies.

Directory Kiosk General Contractors

General contractors are in most cases a significant step up; they provide a service in the same way a VAR does, while also acting as a general contractor for the project as a whole. They are both a part of the directory manufacturing process, and responsible for managing the project overall, including all of the players involved.

GCs can be any of the firms or providers listed above, under VARs. However, much like a residential general contractor, they don't actually perform most of the services themselves -- they simply contract the work out to independent operators. So again, while GCs do ultimately take more responsibility for the process of building a digital directory kiosk than VARs or Pretenders, they still aren't doing most of the actual work themselves.

Turn-Key Directory Providers

These providers have integrated as many processes as possible into the manufacturing solution they offer. In this way, they are able to control most, if not all, aspects of directory production, from design and engineering, through fabrication and even maintenance, keeping as much as possible under one roof.

Software	Displays	Manufacturing	Service & Solutions
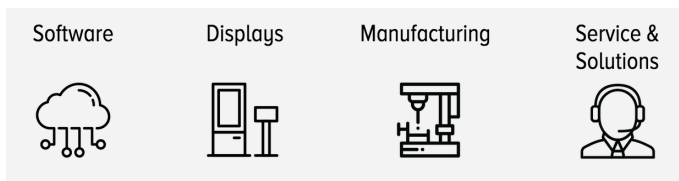
RedyRef, understanding that a turn-key solution provides the best quality, value and service, has worked tirelessly over the last 100 years to build a company that is able to provide just this type of cost-effective, cohesive solution to our customers, with capabilities including:

- Industrial Design
- Mechanical Design
- Electrical Engineering
- Fabrication and all processes, i.e. Powder Coating
- Cabinet Assembly
- Electronic Integration
- Burn-In Testing
- Packaging
- Logistics
- Shipping
- Installation
- Warranty
- After-Sell Maintenance
- Software Design and Implementation

And this is just one aspect of RedyRef that sets us apart. Because...

RULE #2: PRETTY IS NICE, BUT IT'S WHAT'S ON THE INSIDE THAT COUNTS

One of the most complicated facets of self-service kiosk and building directory design actually has very little to do with the structure of the physical enclosure, and everything to do with how it will ultimately be used, including the overall end user's experience. While some of this is addressed in the engineering -- issues such as ADA compliance, or the average user's ability to access all of the important aspects of the kiosk or directory -- it's the customization of software that makes the directory fundamentally effective.

Resellers are never involved with software development. Period. User experience testing is limited to the functionality of the unit's hardware and other physical integrations, if they bother at all. Therefore, it's important to find a company that creates both directory hardware, and software, because without the right digital directory software in place, the kiosk will be at best frustrating and at worst just plain useless to the end user -- not exactly the impression most businesses want to make.

This is another way in which RedyRef sets itself apart from other kiosk, digital signage and building directory companies. We've developed an in-house wayfinding software suite -- enGAGE.Touch -- that offers clients the opportunity to integrate custom directory elements into a pre-configured but still highly-sophisticated and user-friendly interface. Going further than just helping visitors to quickly locate companies, departments or personnel, it includes cutting-edge technology such as Mobile Handover, allowing guests to transfer maps and directions from the directory right to their smartphone. And to ensure accuracy, our digital directories feature Google Maps integration, so that wayfinding information is always accurate and up-to-date, not just within the facility, but for those requiring assistance with the surrounding area.

RULE #3: DON'T KICK YOUR BRAND-NEW KIOSK OUT THE DOOR AND INTO THE WORLD ALONE

Next time you're out and about, make a mental note of the number of digital directories and kiosks you see, and how many are out of order. Once you start paying attention, you'll notice it's a positively ridiculous number. There are various reasons why this happens, but often it's because the directory was purchased from a vendor that did not offer post-installation servicing. It is a huge mistake to deploy a directory kiosk without a service contract from the company that manufactured, deployed and best understands its needs.

RedyRef is dedicated to servicing every product we design, manufacture, and deploy, and our enGAGE360 digital directories are no exception. We offer a comprehensive range of post-installation services, including:

- Store Concierge Service: A dedicated contact line/help desk for personnel who are servicing kiosk systems
- Staff Training: Onsite training on directory utilization is available at the time of installation, or can be scheduled for a later date; it can even be done remotely via webinar

- Online Service Library: A web and phone-based library of user manuals and service videos
- Field Service Manuals/User Guide Service: Ongoing development and refinement of user guides and service manuals, both hard copy (in-facility) and digital (online).

RULE #4: KEEP IT IN THE CLOUD

Most directory software from reputable vendors -- like enGAGE.Touch by RedyRef -- can now be updated and maintained remotely, no on-site tech visits required. That means building tenants can also be given access to update their own information -- no back and forth with building management required. Make sure that software updates and upgrades can be deployed via cloud-based services and that multiple users may be granted administrative rights if the situation calls for it.

RULE #5: QUESTION EVERYTHING

So you've narrowed it down to a few different digital directory providers and started the RFQ process. However, there are important questions that should be asked of any company with which you are considering partnering before you make a final decision. Often inquiring directly is the way to go, but at times, asking around your industry to find out more about companies' reputations can be just as helpful. Here are a few suggested questions to get you started:

- **Does the provider have unpaid suppliers?**
  - If the answer is yes, then the directory manufacturer a) is horrible with money or b) has cash flow issues. Most of the time, it's a combination of both, with heavy emphasis on the latter. Unless the company is just starting out, inconsistent cash flow generally means a lack of customers, and a lack of customers usually means a lack of quality product and/or service.

- **Has the company been excessively late in the past or seem to require extended windows in order to complete projects?**
  - More than once, we've had customers come to us who have paid all of their project costs up front, only to find themselves waiting six months to a year to receive their finished directories from their chosen manufacturer. If a company has a reputation for not hitting their promised delivery dates, buyer beware.

- **Is 100% payment required by the business at project inception?**
  - A common customer horror story we've heard concerns directory manufacturers taking money from one customer to buy materials for another for a project that's already running behind, creating a cycle that goes unbroken until they finally run out of companies who are willing to take a chance on them. In that case, the last company in will be the first one out -- of luck, that is. With no other accounts to dip into, it's highly likely that eventually a company will not just be stuck with a late delivery, but rather, no delivery at all.

"SO WHERE DO I GO FROM HERE?"

Choosing the right digital directory provider will depend enormously upon taking the time to fully understand and therefore clearly articulate your company's or organization's needs. Only then you can feel confident that the manufacturer with which you contract will ultimately be able to meet those requirements. While defining these parameters may not be easy, the amount of work and detail you put into it will make or break your directory project every single time.

It is our hope that this guide has done its intended job of breaking down the digital directory development and sourcing process in a way that makes it easier to understand what really matters. After all, choosing to make an investment in digital wayfinding technology may be a big step, but it shouldn't be a painful one.

ABOUT ENGAGE.TOUCH:

With multiple opportunities for customization, the enGAGE.Touch directory software platform is an excellent choice for multiple deployment environments. From digital mall directories to educational campus signage, our easy-to-use, interactive directory interface enhances visitor satisfaction by reducing the stress of wayfinding, and tenant satisfaction by allowing anyone with access to manage their own data.

ENGAGE 360:

Digital Directory Solutions Designed, Manufactured, Deployed and Serviced by RedyRef

enGAGE.Touch electronic building directory software was developed to be integrated with any of RedyRef's kiosk enclosures, all of which are designed and manufactured in house. From custom, built-to-order digital building directories, to modular self-service kiosks from the semi-custom enGAGE line, RedyRef's directory enclosures can be tailored to the exact use case and environment.

enGAGE 360 directories allow guests are able to navigate a single office building or a large multi-facility campus via detailed floor and campus maps, ensuring they are able to reach their intended destinations on-time and without unnecessary stress or frustration.

Contact RedyRef today at (800) 628-3603 to request more information, a quote, or a demo, and we'll be with you every step of the way to ensure that each of your company's unique digital directory requirements are met.