

The Signage SOURCEBOOK

A Signage Handbook



U.S. Small Business Administration
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FORWARD

This resource handbook is the compilation and product of a broad-based effort made possible through the endeavors of the U.S. Small Business Administration, the Signage Foundation for Communication Excellence, Inc., and other contributing organizations, including the University of Nevada at Las Vegas College of Business, the Nevada Small Business Development Centers and the International Sign Association.

The basic mission of the **U.S. Small Business Administration (SBA)** is to maintain and strengthen the nation's economy by aiding, counseling, assisting, and protecting the interests of small business. Two SBA strategies help accomplish this mission: 1) Increase opportunities for small business success; and 2) Serve as a voice for America's small businesses.

The Signage Foundation for Communication Excellence, Inc. is a non-profit organization dedicated to providing education and insight into one of the most important tools available for increasing success probabilities for small businesses – on-premise business signage.

The University of Nevada at Las Vegas College of Business (UNLV) is a critical component of regional economic development through teaching, research,

and service activities. With the commitment of a dedicated Dean, faculty and staff, the College is becoming a premier business school in the Western United States. In addition to serving over 3,000 undergraduate students in nine majors, the college offers six graduate degrees: Master of Accounting, Master of Business Administration, Executive Master of Business Administration, Dual MBA and Master of Science in Hotel Administration, Master of Science in Management Information Systems. Through the programs of the Center for Business and Economic Research, the Lied Institute for Real Estate Studies, and the Nevada Small Business Development Center, the College of Business brings the resources of the University to the community.

Across the country, the **Small Business Development Centers (SBDC)** like Nevada's provide ongoing education, counseling and outreach to small businesses. SBDCs are part of SBA's network of management counseling and training. Each year, hundreds of thousands of individuals across the U.S., both established business owners as well as potential entrepreneurs, seek advice and guidance from the SBA. This advice and guidance is provided by SBDC as

well as SBA's other major counseling resources – SCORE (formerly the Service Corps of Retired Executives), and the SBA's Business Information Centers (BIC). Through free management counseling and low-cost training programs, SCORE, SBDCs and BICs assist entrepreneurs in nearly every aspect of starting and managing a successful business.

As one of its major commitments to the sign industry and its end users – the business community – the **International Sign Association (ISA)** has adopted a policy to develop a public affairs program that will engage legislators and public officials in a dialogue concerning the role of signage in today's mobile, consumer-oriented society and how to enhance that role to achieve community safety, aesthetic and economic vitality goals.

In April, 2003, the SBA and the Signage Foundation cosponsored a distinguished panel of experts for the first annual National Signage Research Symposium, which explored many issues associated with signage, including promoting safe wayfinding, economic health, and attractive streetscapes, and took the first steps toward the full acceptance of signage as a land use partner. Other symposium organizers included the

***NOTICE:** This resource handbook is a compilation of many ideas and a variety of viewpoints. Several legal, economic, marketing, transportation, land use planning, and other issues are discussed throughout this publication. The information is offered strictly for educational and informational purposes only and is not to be construed as giving specific legal or professional advice to any given user. Competent professional advice/advisors should be sought and obtained by the user.*

UNLV College of Business, and the Nevada SBDC, and ISA.

The distinguished panel of professionals included the following people (in alpha order), whose individual expertise and contributions to the finished product far exceed what can be expressed here:

James E. Bailey, M.Opt., Ph.D., Southern California College of Optometry, Fullerton, California

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Roger Stough, PhD., NOVA Endowed Chair, Eminent Scholar and Professor of Public Policy; Associate Dean for Research, Development and External Relations, School of Public Policy, George Mason University; Director, Mason Enterprise Center; and Director, National Center for ITS Deployment Research (USDOT), Fairfax, Virginia

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Noel H. Yarger, MBA, Chairman of the Board, North American Signs; President, The Signage Foundation for Communication Excellence, Inc., South Bend, Indiana

These experts assembled the variety of material that has become this resource handbook, which is intended to serve as a best practices manual and resource guide for the variety of

stakeholders involved with on-premise business signage at various levels.

In a society that so relies on communication in order to function, and which ascribes so great a value to freedom of speech, regulators must exercise profound care in their approach to government control of speech mechanisms. Speech is in its essence fundamentally different from activity, therefore, traditional methods for developing land use regulation have proved inadequate.

For many years, the university system and professional associations have attempted to develop model regulations and descriptive information about signage in our mobile consumer-oriented society. For a variety of reasons, the scope of the work product has been limited, not always considering the many stakeholders in the process, and not always basing the work product upon fundamental First, Fifth and Fourteenth Amendment constraints. Thus, the necessity for compiling a best practices manual about on-premise signage issues has increasingly manifest itself over the past three decades.

The intent of those who have contributed to the writing and compilation of this resource handbook is to develop an interactive dialogue between sign makers, sign owners, public officials, legislators and regulators in aid of achieving fair regulatory treatment that recognizes the needs of all community stakeholders, by addressing commercial communication via

signage in all its complexities, with particular attention paid to evolving legal protections and standards, traffic safety issues, economic contribution, and emerging regulatory trends that impact a sign's effectiveness and safety, and a community's ability to attract new businesses and extend a welcome to newcomers and visitors.

Of primary concern to the participants was ensuring that the underlying basis for any proposed regulation meets the standard of care demanded by the Supreme Court and the Federal Constitution, being factually based and not based on the assertion of some rational nexus to a desired outcome, resulting in an undue burden on any person seeking to challenge the regulation.

The graphics depicted in this resource book are for demonstration purposes only. Extensive effort has been made to eliminate and/or alter identifiable personal information, including phone numbers, names, and license plates.

Periodically, this resource book will be updated and revised. Your comments are encouraged. This educational outreach process encompasses a variety of viewpoints and is designed to accommodate an ongoing, interactive dialogue among all stakeholders. Please send your comments to:

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Walter G. Hardwick, Ph.D. Professor Emeritus, University of Vancouver, British Columbia, Science and Technology, member, Retired. Dr. Hardwick recognized thirty years ago that business signage functions not only as an advertising and informational device, but also as an important wayfinding, or directional device. He also recognized the contributions of business signage in creating attractive, convenient and comfortable urban environments. His signage theories can be viewed in practice in Vancouver, B.C., where private signage is an integral part of the pleasing aesthetic ambience of central business districts. Dr. Hardwick contributed substantially to the

knowledge contained in the Valuation and Evaluation section of this book.

John Lamb, Owner and President, Cincinnati Sign Supplies, Inc. Mr. Lamb has more than 50 years of business experience in the sign industry. In addition to his successful career, Mr. Lamb has a long and distinguished record of public service. For years he has supported efforts to explain what business signs are, what they do, and what constitutes a fair appraisal (or analysis) of their cumulative value. As both a respected member of the American Planning Association (APA) and the world of sign makers and sign users, Mr. Lamb's credentials as an objective reviewer and advisor are impeccable, as were his participation and gentle guidance throughout the compilation of the Valuation and Evaluation section of this book

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