



Wayfinding is a professional service designed to assist you in selecting the best sign system to guide traffic efficiently through your facility. Wayfinding has to be planned. It involves more than just placing signs on each and every door on a blueprint. A well-planned sign system not only conveys a favorable impression, it also saves you money.

Could Wayfinding Make a Difference at Your Facility?

It could, if you can answer "yes" to any of these questions:

- Has your facility grown physically?
- Have departments/names changed quicker than the signs?
- Is a brand new facility being planned in the future?
- Has your campus grown with many buildings but no consistency?
- Are people constantly losing their way?
- Does your sign program need to be updated to comply with the ADA?

If any of these questions apply to your facility, you could benefit from a well-planned wayfinding system.

A reliable and attractive sign system should convey a positive image of your facility, guide traffic efficiently through your facility with a minimum of verbal cues, and most importantly, save you money.

How does a good wayfinding system save you money? Beyond the obvious aesthetic criteria applicable to signs, another important consideration is the life cycle cost of the system. A good system is modular in design, allowing it to meet the ever-changing needs resulting from changes or expansion within a facility. In addition to fulfilling initial requirements, a modular sign system allows for prompt updates and additions with a minimum of financial investment.

What Elements Play a Role in Wayfinding?

Wayfinding is affected by three interrelated variables:

Architecture: physical or structural building elements such as stairs, atriums, columns, and corridors.

Interior Design: ornamental or decorative elements within a facility such as wall-coverings, lighting, floors, and artwork.

Environmental Graphics: informational design elements such as room and area identification, directories, graphic elements, and regulatory signage.

When people enter unfamiliar settings, there are basically three things they need. First, they need information to help them make decisions -- how the setting is organized, where they are in it, and where their destination lies. Maps, floor plans, and building directories fulfill this function.

Second, they need information in order to execute their decisions, data directing them to their destination. For example, signs with arrows, copy using descriptions of building features, and floor directories.

Third, they need information to end the decision and executing processes. Signs with names and/or pictographs at the entrance to their destination would indicate that their journey is over.

Poor vs. Good Wayfinding Design

Improper signage can have many adverse effects on a facility's visitors, as well as on its occupants. One of these is a reduction in profits due to lost time. Studies show that improper signage can result in lower productivity of staff due to repeated interruptions by visitors asking for directions.

In addition, improper signage can affect one's emotions negatively by heightening stress levels, as well as causing frustration, resentment, and even anger.

Lastly, improper signage can actually threaten an individual's safety. In cases of an emergency evacuation, wayfinding can become a matter of life or death.

A wayfinding system that incorporates good design, on the other hand, addresses the above concerns by starting with a careful study of your particular facility's needs and traffic flow. To be considered a well-designed sign system, the following characteristics should be present:

- Signs are big enough to see
- Messages are understandable
- Signs are well located
- Information is up-to-date
- Consistency in design of signs
- Exterior and Interior systems work in unison
- Signs comply with requirements of the ADA
- Sign system offers flexibility for future updates and additions