



7 COSTLY MISTAKES TO AVOID WHEN BUYING AN LED SIGN

A practical buyer's guide to visibility, reliability
and long-term return on investment



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The purchase price is only the beginning

An LED display is a long-term communication asset. The right system can improve visibility, promote offers and events, support emergency messaging and make information easier to update. The wrong system can create permit delays, unreadable content, repeated service calls and avoidable downtime.

This guide gives you seven practical checkpoints to use before approving a quote. It applies whether you are buying for a business, school, church, bank, dealership, healthcare facility, community organization or public venue.

SEVEN CHECKPOINTS BEFORE YOU APPROVE A QUOTE	
1	Choose visibility before physical size.
2	Investigate zoning and permitting requirements early.
3	Evaluate brightness, placement, traffic speed and sun exposure.
4	Examine cabinet protection and thermal engineering.
5	Compare software usability, access and recurring costs.
6	Plan for the content you may need in the future.
7	Confirm serviceability, remote diagnostics and parts support.

Use the questions in this guide with every supplier. Clear answers make quotes easier to compare and expose important differences before they become expensive.

Get the fundamentals before fabrication

1

Choosing physical size before visibility

A large cabinet can still deliver a poor image if pixel pitch, viewing distance and content requirements are mismatched. Resolution should be selected around how far away viewers are, how quickly they pass and what you plan to display.

Ask: What viewing distance and content type is this pixel pitch designed to support? Ask to see comparable installed projects.

2

Waiting too long to investigate zoning

Local codes may regulate display area, setbacks, brightness, dwell time, animation and automatic dimming. Discovering a conflict after ordering can force redesigns, delay installation or prevent the display from operating as intended.

Ask: Who will confirm the code requirements, prepare permit drawings and address reviewer questions before production begins?

A useful rule: permitting is part of project design - not paperwork to handle after the sign is purchased.



BEFORE - The original display was too small to command attention from passing traffic.



AFTER - A properly scaled display provides more visible message area and stronger roadside impact.

Specify for the actual environment

3

Choosing brightness without considering placement

Outdoor displays must remain readable through changing sun angles and ambient light while dimming appropriately at night. Traffic speed, line of sight, glare and message contrast affect performance just as much as peak brightness.

Ask: How does the display automatically adjust brightness, and has the proposed location been evaluated for sun exposure, viewing angle and traffic speed?

4

Underestimating cabinet and thermal engineering

The LEDs are only one part of the system. Moisture intrusion, dust, insects, corrosion and excess heat can damage power supplies and electronics. Cabinet sealing, drainage, gasketing and thermal management directly affect reliability.

Ask: Is the cabinet sealed or ventilated? How are heat, water and condensation managed? What components or moving parts require routine service?

Solid-state design can reduce maintenance exposure by eliminating mechanical cooling components that eventually wear out. Ask vendors to explain the complete heat path, not simply quote an operating-temperature range.



BACK OF A STAX TILE - Sealed solid-state electronics and simplified connections help protect critical components while supporting straightforward service access.

Plan for the years after installation

5

Assuming all control software is the same

A display only creates value when staff can update it confidently. Difficult software leads to stale content. Confirm remote access, scheduling, user permissions, training, security and whether future licensing fees apply.

Ask: Can authorized users update and schedule content from any browser? What training, support, security and recurring fees are included?

6

Buying only for today's content

A display selected for short text may disappoint when the organization later wants logos, photography, video, sponsor messages or more detailed creative. Future use affects pixel pitch, matrix and processing requirements.

Ask: What content will this display handle now, and what will it still handle if our communication needs expand in three to five years?

7

Overlooking serviceability and post-sale support

Downtime becomes expensive when nobody can diagnose the issue or replacement parts are unavailable. Remote diagnostics can prevent an exploratory truck roll: the provider identifies the likely problem first, then the technician arrives prepared to complete the repair in one visit.

Ask: Who answers support calls, what can be diagnosed remotely, where are parts stocked, and how long will compatible modules and power supplies remain available?



FRONT SERVICEABILITY - Technicians can access and replace display modules from the face of the sign without requiring rear cabinet access.



QUOTE COMPARISON

Compare the complete project - not just the display

Use this worksheet when reviewing proposals. If an item is missing, ask whether it is excluded, handled by another contractor or still unknown.

QUESTION	QUOTE A	QUOTE B	QUOTE C
Display model, physical size, matrix and pixel pitch			
Brightness control and ambient-light sensing			
Cabinet sealing and thermal-management method			
Structural engineering, mounting and wind load			
Electrical service and data connectivity			
Permit drawings, fees and code coordination			
Installation equipment, labor and site restoration			
Software, training and recurring license costs			
Warranty labor, parts location and remote diagnostics			
Estimated schedule and responsibilities			
Total installed cost			

MAKE THE QUOTE PROVE THE VALUE

A better buying conversation starts with better questions

The goal is not to buy the most expensive display or the highest resolution available. It is to select the right system for your location, content, staff and long-term operating expectations.

Before you approve a purchase, make sure the proposal explains:

- What viewers will be able to see, and from where
- What the jurisdiction will permit
- How the system handles heat, moisture and outdoor exposure
- How staff will create, schedule and control content
- How service, diagnostics and replacement parts will be handled
- What the complete installed and long-term ownership cost includes

**READY TO
REVIEW YOUR
OPTIONS?**

Bring this checklist to your local sign partner, or contact NEXT LED Signs for help evaluating display specifications and long-term value.

888-359-9558 | nextledsigns.com/contact

Educational source: NEXT LED Signs, "7 Mistakes People Make When Buying an LED Sign," nextledsigns.com/2025/12/07/buying-mistakes/. Local codes and project requirements vary; confirm them with the applicable jurisdiction and qualified project professionals.