

Concurrent Session J
Wednesday 2 September
11.10am – 12.00noon



Session 1

How “SMART” Is Your Signage? Enhancing the Student Experience through Physical and Digital Wayfinding Technologies

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Bryce Hutchinson, has led a varied career kicking off with 23 years in the Power Industry as a mechanical design draftsman specialising in materials handling for coal fired power stations in Australia and Asia plus worked on the Northside Storage Tunnel Alliance project. The past 14 years have seen Bryce in the roles of CAD Manager and Project Manager with the Facilities Management at the University of Technology Sydney, working on a broad spectrum of projects including Space Utilisation, Refurbishment and Construction works.

Away from the office, Bryce loves a surf.

As Founder and Managing Director of BrandCulture, an award-winning design consultancy, Stephen services client relationships and leads all projects personally. With many years of experience in branding Stephen has created branded environments and pioneered new concepts in wayfinding systems for more than a decade with the team at BrandCulture. His experience and strategic thinking brings value by uncovering the communications potential in any environment. Working closely with some of Australia’s leading brands, interior designers and architectural firms, brands are brought to life and experienced through the built environment, creating emotional connections with the people who live, work and visit them. Stephen is on the SEGD board of directors and travels regularly to the USA to advise on educational and organisational development and also serves on the NSW Council for AGDA. He contributes regularly to online forums and provides offline advice to members of both organisations.

Moving people to where they need to be is no easy task in a precinct or on a vast campus. Interactive digital wayfinding offers powerful solutions for navigation, connectivity, familiarising of locations and routes, assistance in mental mapping and building confidence walking to destinations.

The UTS Campus required something unique, beyond traditional Wayfinding signage, the solution had to allow for management of ever changing destinations that spans across multiple devices and screens for a wide range of user groups. New students and visitors, will experience ease of movement at a timely pace to all lectures and seminars. The new signage will also assist in locating local retailers and other points of interest or simply find a place for a quiet study break or the location of a computer between tutorials.

Wayfinding challenges experienced at UTS campuses included: numerous buildings and neighborhoods, a maze of streets and busy road traffic, making it difficult for pedestrians to find their way around. Physical wayfinding systems have been the traditional backbone of our student navigation, but all too often legacy signs can leave students lost mid-journey, or finding that a destination has moved but the signage hasn’t been updated. Unmanaged digital directories and mobile outlets can easily double or triple costs, and imposing maintenance tasks with limited staff

resources, can be a burden. Like the physical systems themselves, the results are often contradictory and out of date. Students have even taken it upon themselves to add content to websites to assist, however this information is often flawed and based on the interpretation of the individual adding the content.

UTS has addressed these issues through the development and implementation of a new signage program, delivering a 'smart' signage system that leverages from the creation of a comprehensive location database and the ubiquity of smart phones in the student population. This presentation will demonstrate how the creation of a 'live' cloud based database of the physical signage has been used to create the cornerstone of an integrated student digital wayfinding experience. The system has the flexibility to control maintenance programs and the introduction of new buildings, identifying legacy items and maintaining consistency through a centralized dictionary, all managed from the desk via email and web browser and landing directly into the palm of your hand. This 'live' data will then be used to assist students in seamless navigation while enhancing their daily experience on Campus. Working with Meld Strategies the totem signs have been future proofed by modifying the internals to include data and the technology infrastructure to connect WAP devices, security cameras, safety points, screens, projectors and other items that are often retro-fitted to the exterior of buildings creating an eyesore.

The 'SMART' signage system is planned to create benefits for accessibility and movement around UTS Campuses, displaying the correct information at the right time, to the correct audience, furthermore encouraging shorter walking distances to save time. The interactive wayfinding technology includes text to voice and multi-lingual translations, increasing accessibility for students and visitors, thus enabling them to quickly and effectively find locations they are looking for. The investment of digital signage plinths allow signage messaging to dynamically change the listings and also send emergency messaging and other media to those the screens. This has proven to be invaluable as sections of the building are opened up. The possibilities are now limitless when it comes to the contextual messaging, that can now be provided to students and visitors throughout the Campus simultaneously and when the digital displays are not in use, the wayfinding moves into a digital activation with the ability to play video, animation, images, community events and seasonal messages in a highly visual and attractive format.

The interactive digital wayfinding system has been designed to make it easy for everyone to understand. The 'live' data is always current, consistent, destinations are always highlighted, mapping is graphically demonstrated with clarity and room numbers are accurately matched to the student timetable. All of this information can be obtained from the 'Palm of Your Hand'. The end result is the delivery of a world-class interactive digital wayfinding mapping system, that's easy for any new student or visitor and provides huge benefits for the entire UTS Campus.