

## OUTDOOR - A NEW MEDIUM FOR NEW AUDIENCES

A Resurgence in One of the Oldest Media Presents New Opportunities

*By Bill Goodwill*

It was written off as a dead industry, particularly with the demise of tobacco advertising. It has been called a blight on the American landscape. It even earned the nickname “pollution on a stick.” But things have changed with outdoor advertising and we’re not talking about your father’s billboards.

Today, the outdoor billboard industry includes not just the small 8-sheet poster along your local rural road; it includes mammoth signs that tower above the tens of thousands of people who pass through Times Square each day.

It includes rolling advertisements on the sides of trucks and buses. It includes a plethora of signage at speedways, and in sports stadiums. And it includes “outdoor furniture” signage comprised of bus shelters, benches and just about anyplace else where people congregate.

Like them or not, outdoor billboards are here to stay and the industry has never looked brighter. Overall spending on outdoor advertising is nearly \$5 billion, a ten percent growth rate and more than double a decade earlier. Moreover, billboards are the place to see some of the most creative work in advertising, in spite of the fact that you have only a few seconds to capture the viewer’s attention.



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## A Mobile Society

Contemporary social trends favor billboards. Americans are spending fewer hours at home, where TV, cable, magazines, newspapers, books, and the Internet all clamor for attention.

People are spending more time than ever in their cars - daily vehicle trips are up 110% since 1970, and the number of cars on the road is up by 147%. For most people stuck in traffic, the only media options are radio and billboards.

Anyone who is old enough to remember the old Burma Shave signs along the highway knows that outdoor billboards can be very engaging and today's outdoor billboard industry contributes millions of dollars of space to various public service causes.



The new computer-painting technology used by the industry is making outdoor billboards brighter, more exciting, and upbeat. Their messages are typically more clever, humorous and artistic - there's even a significant awards programs called the "Obie" to recognize outstanding outdoor creative, including a category for PSAs.

The new single-column structures have cleaner lines than the old telephone pole or I-beam structures, and are supporting and complementing today's crisp, new, bright, architecturally-designed stores, buildings and malls.

Like other rising stars of the information age, billboards have gone high tech. Digital technology developed at MIT has transformed the way billboards are made.

Until the 1990s, most billboards were hand-painted on plywood. Quality was inconsistent and when paint faded and wood chipped, billboards became eyesores.

Today, computer-painting technology has all but eliminated the old-fashioned sign painter, and plywood has given way to durable vinyl that can be cut to

any size, then rolled into tubes for easy shipping. Huge graphics can be produced more quickly and at lower cost, and digital printing ensures faithful reproduction--so that an ad for Levi's blue jeans looks precisely the same everywhere.



Billionaire John W. Kluge, a major force in the billboard business for four decades, brought computer painting to the market via his company, Metromedia Technologies. From 1959 to 1986, Kluge owned Foster & Kleiser, then the nation's biggest billboard operator, and Metromedia is now the world leader in large-scale imaging. Other innovators are adding three-dimensional structures, digital tickers, and continuous motion to outdoor ads.

Even though outdoor is only two percent of overall ad spending, its effect is growing, particularly in one-of-a-kind locations such as Times Square. Signs there can pop up on the news, in movies and in magazines, reaching the 50,000 people who walk through the area every day.

### Outdoor Goes Green

The newest addition to the plethora of outdoor signage in Times Square is the country's first environmentally friendly billboard. Powered entirely by wind and sun - 16 wind turbines and 64 solar panels - the sign is expected to save \$12,000 to \$15,000 per month in electricity costs. Multiply this by all the other cities in the country using electrical power for outdoor illumination, and it amounts to a significant cost savings and eco-friendly outdoor.



A wide range of advertisers such as Coca Cola, General Motors' Cadillac, Samsung, Prudential, NBC, Budweiser, New York State Lottery, even the New York Times pay six-figure monthly rates to hold space for 10 years, a far cry from the days when the signs used to turn over every six months.

Times Square is so much in demand that Inter City built a 50 story hotel and 300 foot tower at Broadway and 47th Street with a total of 75,000 square feet of outdoor advertising. "The tower is the largest structure ever built exclusively for advertising," says Bob Nyland, president of Inter City Premiere. Advertisers include American Express, Apple, AT&T, HBO, Hachette Filipacchi, Levi's, Morgan Stanley, Nokia and the U.S. Postal Service.

### **The Morphing of Outdoor**

"Outdoor used to be known as the beer, butts, and babes medium," says Andrea MacDonald, president of MacDonald Media, a New York agency that specializes in out-of-home advertising. Now, she says, "everything's changed. New technology has made us more creative, and advertisers are seeing billboards in a new light."

To make sure they stand out in the crowd, modern billboards are taking even new forms. In Chicago, Transit Display International (TDI), wrapped a two car, 96-foot-long commuter train with an ad. And in some areas, no space is left uncovered. For example, in New York's World Trade Center, TDI helped Dodge take over every possible space of the rail station floors, walls, posters, banners, escalators to create a single exhibit.

To announce a new magazine reaching younger readers, the headquarters of AARP was draped in fabric, and



similarly the World Bank draped its building in fabric to support , transit kiosks, posters and other forms of outdoor can be strategically placed around Washington, DC Metro stops at the Pentagon or an executive branch agency such as the Department of Transportation to make a statement about a campaign or issue.

"We've had requests for moving, smoking and smelling boards," says Pat Punch, who is a co-owner of Minneapolis-based Atomic Props, a company that specializes in unique spectacles. For Poland Springs, Atomic Props created a 30-foot water bottle and an outdoor poster for Jell-O in Times Square serves up a giant spoon with 4,000 smaller spoons.

In Minneapolis, home base for Target, people look forward to a new three dimensional billboard object every month, such as Old Faithful, complete with spray every 10 minutes, which symbolizes Target's donation to the nation's parks.

Minneapolis retailer Dayton-Hudson once had three dimensional boxes of candy that emanated a mint scent. Says Punch: "Over the last 10 years, our business has tripled as people see the possibilities."

Since 1996, the Big Four of billboards--Outdoor Systems, Eller, Clear Channel and Lamar--have spent more than \$5 billion to gobble up dozens of mom-and-pop operators, as well as the outdoor divisions of big companies like Gannett and 3M. Together they control about 40% of the revenues generated by the 400,000 or so billboards across America. As industry giants, they can operate efficiently and provide one-stop shopping to national advertisers. Goodwill Communication's outdoor database has been reduced from over 600 outdoor companies two years ago to just over 400 today, due to consolidations and buy-outs.

### PSA Communications Advantages

Outdoor is perhaps the most overlooked medium of all when it comes to launching PSA campaigns. Admittedly, the cost of printing billboard paper can be expensive, but given the typical results we have experienced for clients, we believe that outdoor provides excellent exposure opportunities. When used to inform the public about public causes, outdoor billboards provide many different communications advantages, and the total universe of outdoor opportunities is almost unlimited, as shown by the following table provided by the Outdoor Advertising Association of America.

Number of Out of Home Displays (2017)			
Billboards	Street Furniture	Transit	Place-Based OOH
<b>Bulletins</b> 152,367	<b>Bus Shelters</b> 60,897	<b>Airports</b> 68,560	<b>Arena &amp; Stadiums</b> 1,352
<b>Digital Billboards</b> 7,300	<b>Urban Furniture, i.e.</b> 32,122	<b>Buses</b> 1.01 million	<b>Cinema</b> 34,350
<b>Posters</b> 154,291	Bus Benches Newsracks Newsstands Phone Kiosks	<b>Commuter Rail &amp; Subway</b> 364,785	<b>Digital Place-Based/ Video</b> 1.25 million screens
<b>Junior Posters</b> 23,422	<b>Digital Urban Furniture</b> 3,641	<b>Digital Transit</b> 3,760	<b>Interior Place-Based</b> Convenience Stores Health Clubs Restaurants/Bars
<b>Spectaculars/Wall Murals</b> 4,029		<b>Mobile Billboards</b> 1,200	<b>Exterior Place-Based, i.e.</b> Airborne Marine Resorts & Leisure
		<b>Taxis/ Wrapped Vehicles</b> 46,194	
		<b>Truckside</b> 2,732	<b>Shopping Malls</b> 30,532

First, outdoor is typically available even in towns that are too small to have a radio station or a local newspaper.

Second, billboards can provide communications reach right down to the neighborhood level. This may be useful if your campaign is concentrating on inner city residents or high school students and you can convince the outdoor billboard company to post your PSA messages nearby. One media buyer for a major advertising agency demonstrates the flexibility of outdoor: "I'm running Russian copy in a New York neighborhood, Filipino in San Francisco, Arabic in Detroit."

Third, when used in conjunction with other forms of outdoor - sports stadium signage, transit and place-based media - they can provide the communications effectiveness of a local network, giving you reach and frequency throughout the community.



Fourth, public service messages on outdoor posters are often available because outdoor companies don't want to have an ugly sign with blank paper staring out at the public for an extended period of time.

The Foundation for a Better Life, (FBL) in partnership with the Outdoor Advertising Association of America (OAAA), launched a nationwide PSA billboard campaign with a dramatic kickoff on the NASDAQ electronic billboard



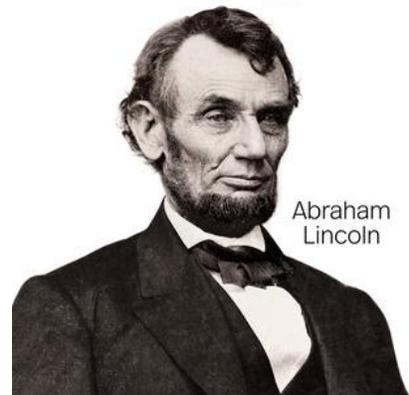
in Times Square. With a theme of "Pass It On," the billboards are part of a continuing PSA campaign to promote positive values via viral techniques.

Over the course of a year, AAA member advertising companies around the country donated space on more than 10,000 displays for the Pass It On campaign, with an estimated ad value of more than \$10 Million.

Created by Jay Schulberg, well known for his famous Milk Mustache ads, each billboard in the Pass It On campaign is meant to underscore a simple, yet galvanizing message. According to Gary Dixon, President of The Foundation for a Better Life, "The Pass It On campaign was created to promote positive values and encourage people to pass them on to others. We're thrilled to launch it on the NASDAQ board in the very city where the resilience of the American spirit has shown so brightly for the entire world to see."

A house divided...  
cannot stand.

**CIVILITY** is in you.  
PassItOn.com

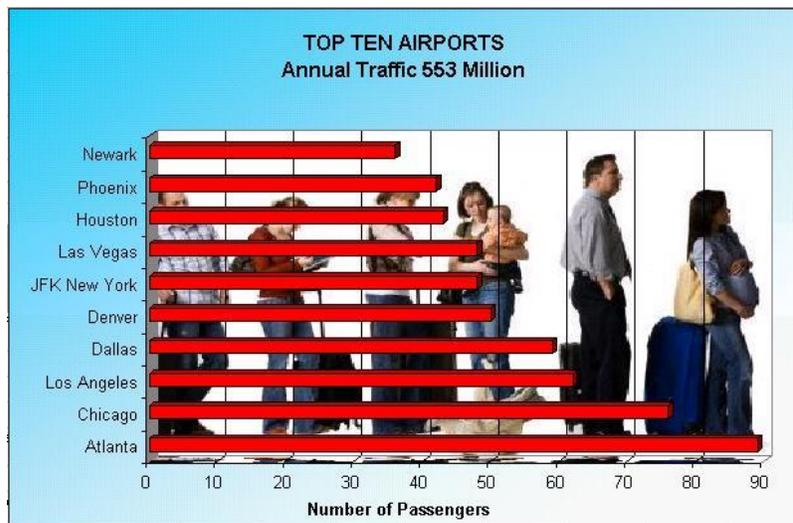


Some of the personalities featured in "include: Wayne Gretzky, Muhammad Ali, the Tianamen Square Protester, Mother Teresa, Albert Einstein Winston Churchill and Abraham Lincoln. Even Kermit the Frog got his own billboard.

### Airport Dioramas & Mall Posters

Perhaps the area where outdoor has seen the greatest growth is at airports. The total number of visitors at the top 44 airports in the U.S. tops 765 million passengers and over a half a billion people pass through just the top 10 airports.

There are message opportunities now aboard the airlines via in-flight videos, on the drop down tables in each seat, the napkins placed on the tables, and even on the bottom of the security bins where passengers place their items before going through security screening. There are dioramas (backlit signs) in the terminals and on video screens while you wait for your luggage. Like it or not, the messages are inescapable.



## Shopping Mall Displays

Mall displays come in a variety of different formats and sizes ranging from overhead banners, to exterior signage. Mall banners are large format, double-sided frames hung in the atrium of a mall offering commanding exposure to virtually every mall shopper.

Faces are printed digitally using high resolution reproduction that vividly recreates each piece of creative. Banners are presented in the vertical “magazine” format so only one piece of artwork is required.

Mall posters, the most dominant mall media, are backlit and located at eye level at major decision points in the mall – usually associated with a directory unit. Specialty mall advertising consists of a range of media formats – trumpet banners, decals, escalator wraps – that enable marketers to dominate the mall environment. Located in in major urban malls, specialty media provide a unique branding opportunity to provide consumers with multiple exposure opportunities.



## Rail/Transit/Bus Stop Signage

Transit advertising – and corresponding PSA availabilities - are the confluence of several factors. Increasingly transit companies and municipalities that control the space, need more revenue and advertising can provide a hassle-free income stream.

Also, due to rising gas prices, the “go green” movement and highway congestion, more people are using mass transit.



To reach busy commuters, transit advertising now takes many forms. These range from subway platform signage, ads on the sides, back and interiors of passenger busses and subways.

Even the columns and floors of waiting areas are being covered. Similar to airport dioramas, the placement of PSAs in these venues requires a customized approach, working with the various companies that control the space such as CBS Outdoor, and then providing customized signage to fit the various availabilities.

In conclusion, a society constantly in motion, more available locations, and the power of outdoor to convey a compelling message, are all trends that have contributed to the success of outdoor. One thing that hasn't changed – those who control access to outdoor signage do not want to see an empty sign or poster – and that is what creates almost unlimited opportunities for PSA placement.

### **Additional Resources**

For additional resources on the outdoor industry, go to [www.oaaa.org](http://www.oaaa.org). Here you will see design tips, outdoor facts and figures, and a glossary of terms.

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