

BrightSign players catch new customers for Harry Ramsden's

When food service luminary Joe Teixeira took the helm at fish restaurant chain Harry Ramsden's in 2011, his brief was to modernise and revitalise a brand that had faded somewhat since its 1990s heyday. An extensive programme of updating ensued, including, in 2013, the installation of digital menus across the business' 18 outlets in the UK and Republic of Ireland.



“Joe wanted to do it right,” said Andrew Simister, Sales Director of Anyplace Media Group, who oversaw the project while working as a consultant at SIS Digital, and who still manages the licensing and maintenance of the system. “He wanted a cloud-based system that could be centrally managed, to give him the brand governance he needed and the flexibility to upsell. And, above all, given the media players are situated behind the ceiling tiles directly above the fat fryers, it needed to be robust!” It was the strength of the relationship between Simister and Teixeira that enabled the project to happen in the first place. “Joe came to me and asked me to install digital menus in every one of Harry Ramsden's estate,” recalls Simister.

Only BrightSign media players were considered to power the four to six NEC 42-inch LEC display screens that replaced the old light boxes in each location. Each screen has a standard BrightSign HD220 behind it. The installations took place over a six-month period, working late at night when the shops had closed, and the fryers had cooled enough to work above them.

“BrightSign is the best on the market,” Simister observes. “All the signage platform companies try to work on BrightSign because they recognise the quality. Their players are fantastic, and I recommend them in any environment. They’re fanless and they don’t fail. With Harry Ramsden’s, the proof is in the pudding, because they’re still using them after nearly a decade!”

In the nine years since the 90 BrightSign players were installed, there have been only three instances where they stopped working. In each case, this was because of the effect of the heat from the fryers, not any malfunction within the devices themselves. The screens, meanwhile, have been refreshed and/or replaced on a three-yearly cycle, with some of the original ones still operating and some LG models now included in the mix.

The digital menus enabled Harry Ramsden’s to target its demographics more accurately, reaching new markets with the introduction of more specialist fish and catches of the day, grilled meats, salads and vegetarian options. Content can be scheduled to promote different items at specific times such as kids’ meals or breakfasts, to enhance the seasonality of its offering, and to upsell additional items such as side dishes and condiments. Says Simister, “If you have a thousand customers in a day and they all spend an extra £1, that’s a lot of money! Plus, you no longer have to print menus. It’s greener and more efficient. The return on investment is quite quick.”

Modernizing the business and growing the brand has paid off. By 2016, the company was showing 28% growth and, when it was sold to Deep Blue in 2019, it had 34 restaurants in the UK, Republic of Ireland and Malaysia.

