

The Writing is on the...Sky?

Posted on Jul 28, Posted by [Ashley Bray](#) Category

Signage has to go to great heights to capture the attention of the consumer. I came across an article in the *Wall Street Journal*

this morning on skywriting and banner ads pulled by planes. It got me thinking about just what it takes to get our attention these days.

According to the article, skywriting has been around for almost 100 years, which means we managed to find a way to use airplanes to advertise only about 10 years after the Wright Brothers' first flight. (So what's next? I say we take advantage of those segways the mall cops use and tie a banner to the back of one of those.)

In addition to skywriting, companies can also pay to have a plane or helicopter pull a large banner with their advertisement across the skies. Skywriting and banner ads are most often seen at beaches, outdoor festivals, and large events so that the ads are sure to reach a large amount of people.

In fact, I was on a local beach two weeks ago when I spotted some skywriting advertising for Mohegan Sun Casino. Working for SBI has taught me to seek out interesting signage, but this was different. I wasn't the only one gawking at this cloud signage in the sky—the entire beach was gawking right along with me.

The *WSJ* even quotes a beachgoer as saying that she can't ignore skywriting because there's a desire to see just what will be spelled out. And I think that's part of the success of this type of signage:

1. It's unique—it's not something you see all the time, so you're more likely to look.
2. It piques your curiosity. We like to see things completed. And skywriting plays on this desire and has us all craning our necks to see just what secret message will be spelled out (and hopefully it's more interesting than "Drink Your Ovaltine").

Skywriting, more so even than plane banners, succeeds in breaking through the noise and the

saturation of signage to grab our attention.

And lately, that seems to be the goal of most signage creators—to be different and to break through the daily clutter of signs that we see without *really* seeing.

Interactive storefront displays featuring touchscreens and videos that immerse us in the action seem to have succeeded.

Ads that offer us rewards for checking into a location, using a QR code, or visiting a particular Web page are also popular (be sure to check out our September Dispatches for more on this).

It seems that signage must do more than ever before to engage the consumer. What do you think? Can a sign just be a sign? Or does it have to become something more to get us to pay attention?

If you're interested in learning just how skywriting works, check out this video from the WSJ: <http://online.wsj.com/video/the-high-tech-magic-behind-skywriting/6E3B1371-B49D-4886-AF89-2C94018CC879.html>

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