



Understanding the Mindsets of **Sign and Display Graphic Buyers**

7 SURVEY FINDINGS THAT PROVIDE
CUSTOMER INSIGHT TO SUPPORT SALES
AND MARKETING EFFORTS



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INTRODUCTION

Selling sign and display graphics starts with understanding what influences buyers' purchasing decisions, methods for finding providers, and how they discover application trends. These insights, along with general buyer characteristics, are key tools in guiding sales and marketing strategies.

This report highlights seven key findings from NAPCO Research surveys of sign and display graphic buyers and influencers and provides insights, tips, and recommendations for enhancing marketing and sales efforts.

1. Buyers and purchasing influencers represent various functional areas across organizations.

NAPCO Research's "Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics" indicates that people who buy or influence purchasing represent various job titles. When asked to identify their role in their organizations, nearly half (47%) of the 148 respondents that purchase or influence purchasing signage describe themselves as the CEO, president, owner, or a director at their organization, and the rest represent a mix of job titles and functional areas, distributed as follows:

- CEO/President/Owner/Director **47%**
- Marketing Executive **13%**
- Manager **8%**
- Marketing Program Manager/Marketing Manager **7%**
- Management Executive **3%**
- Designer **3%**
- Chief Experience Officer **2%**
- Customer Relationship Manager **2%**
- Event Manager **2%**
- Brand Manager **1%**
- Facilities Manager **1%**
- Print Buyer/Specifier **1%**
- Product Manager **1%**
- Purchasing **1%**

Because buyers of sign and display graphics represent various functional areas in an organization, it is important to target multiple job titles and pursue many points of contact for selling sign and display graphics.

Another important point to keep in mind is that sign and display graphic purchasers come from all industries including media/entertainment, retail, manufacturing, non-profit, healthcare, education, government, travel/hospitality, and others. This emphasizes the importance of understanding a client's/prospect's industry and its unique terminology.

2. Purchasing decision makers have many job responsibilities beyond buying sign and display graphics.

A NAPCO Research survey of communication buyers and influencers¹ who purchase sign and display graphics found that in addition to creating, influencing, specifying, or purchasing printed materials, other job responsibilities include:

- Investing in workplace technologies **85%**
- Selecting vendors/suppliers/external partners **85%**
- Hiring job candidates **84%**
- Budget preparation **80%**
- Marketing strategy **73%**
- Developing products or services **71%**
- Internal policy and process development **67%**

Because customers have many responsibilities, it is important for sign and display graphic providers to make their organizations easy to work with. This point was reflected in a different NAPCO Research study “Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics”², in which 73% of sign and display graphic purchasers or purchase influencers indicated that being easy to work with was very important in provider selections (**Figure 1**). In the same study, 70% of buyers of graphics indicate that offering excellent customer service is very important in provider selection. Both of these factors ranked higher than price, which was deemed very important by 67% of respondents.

¹Buyers and Influencer of Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research Annual Commercial Print Industry Trends and Strategies Service, 2023

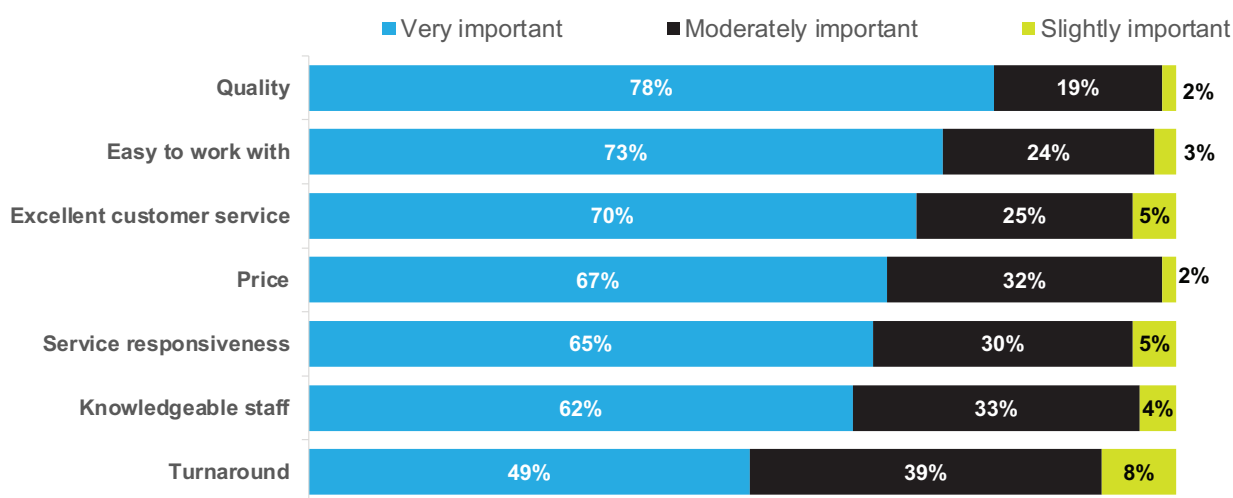
²Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research 2023

3. Customer experience is more important than price when selecting providers.

Though an affordable price is an important consideration, purchasers of sign and display graphics are looking for more when selecting a provider. Given the role graphics play in branding an organization, 78% of survey respondents ranked quality as the most important consideration when selecting a provider (Figure 1). Rounding out the top three very important considerations when selecting a provider are ease of working with the provider (73%) and excellent customer service (70%), both higher than price (67%).

Figure 1: Top Criteria for Selecting Providers

Q. Rate the importance of the following considerations when selecting a sign and display graphics provider?



n=120 Purchasers or purchase influencers of sign and display graphics
Source: Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research 2023

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When asked in an open-ended survey question how their sign and display providers could serve them better, respondents offered the following:

- “Continue with good service. Fast turnaround. Educate me on new products, services.”
- “Turnaround time is always an issue so quicker product in hand is a huge priority.”

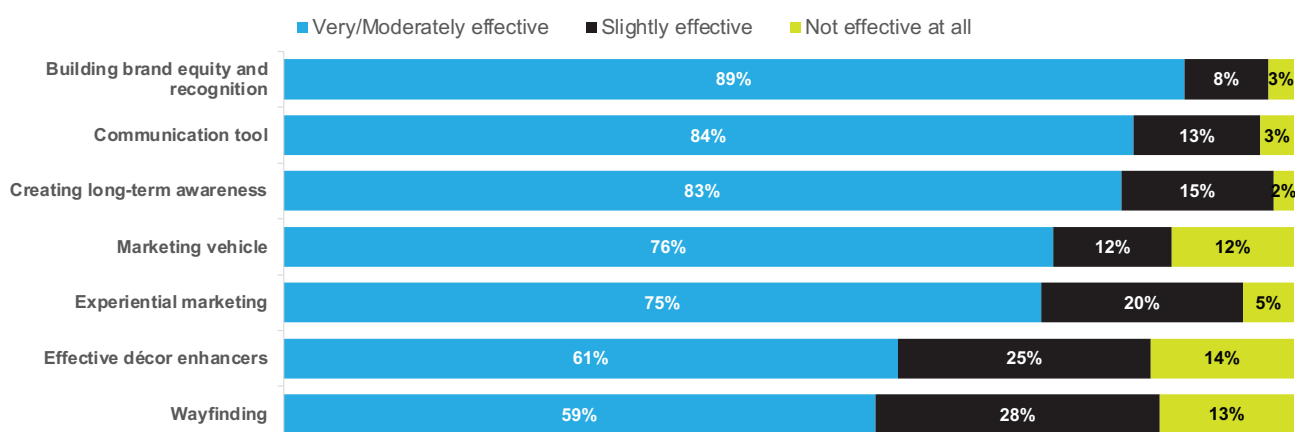
4. Organizations use sign and display graphics for many reasons.

Organizations use sign and display graphics for many purposes, as shown in **Figure 2**. “Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics” survey participants report using printed signage to support their organizations in brand building, communication, creating long-term awareness, marketing, experience creation, décor, and providing directional information to customers and staff.

Signage plays an important and essential role in organizations. Because it is a highly visible representation of an organization, buyers expect providers to offer consistent quality, color, and creativity. Regarding color, 68% of “Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics” buyer respondents identify G7 certification as a good reason to work with a sign and display graphic provider.

Figure 2: Effective for Many Uses

Q. Please rate the effectiveness of your printed sign and display graphics on the following uses/attributes.



n=120 Purchasers or purchase influencers of sign and display graphics
Source: Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research 2023

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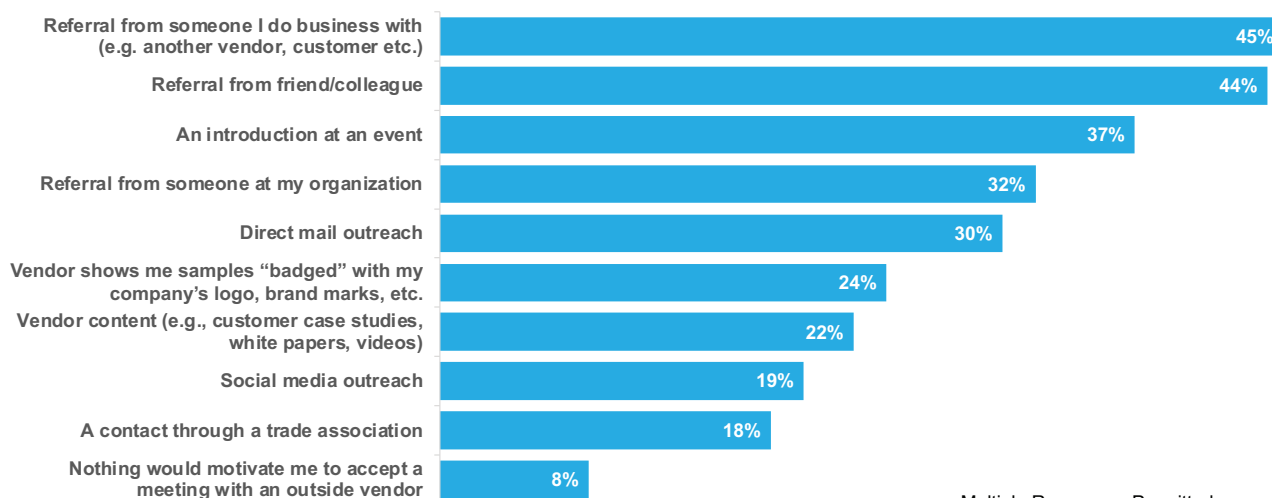
5. Referrals and market outreach are top ways buyers find providers and accept sales meetings.

When asked how they found their current sign and display graphic providers, “Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics” survey respondents’ top two responses were referrals (39%) and Internet searches (32%), while the rest were a mix of digital media (i.e., online ads, social media), print (i.e., direct mail and promotional signage), and networking (i.e., active in community associations, industry associations).

In a different survey question, purchasing decision makers were asked what factors would influence them to accept a sales meeting with a sign and display graphic provider they had not previously done business with. As shown in **Figure 3**, the top reasons buyers said they would take a sales meeting are referrals — from business associates, colleagues, and co-workers. Other sales meeting motivators include customer outreach via direct mail, social media, and content marketing.

Figure 3: Sales Meeting Motivators

Q. What would motivate you to accept a meeting with a sign and display graphics provider you had not previously done business with?



Multiple Responses Permitted

n=114 Purchasers or purchase influencers of sign and display graphics
Source: Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research 2023

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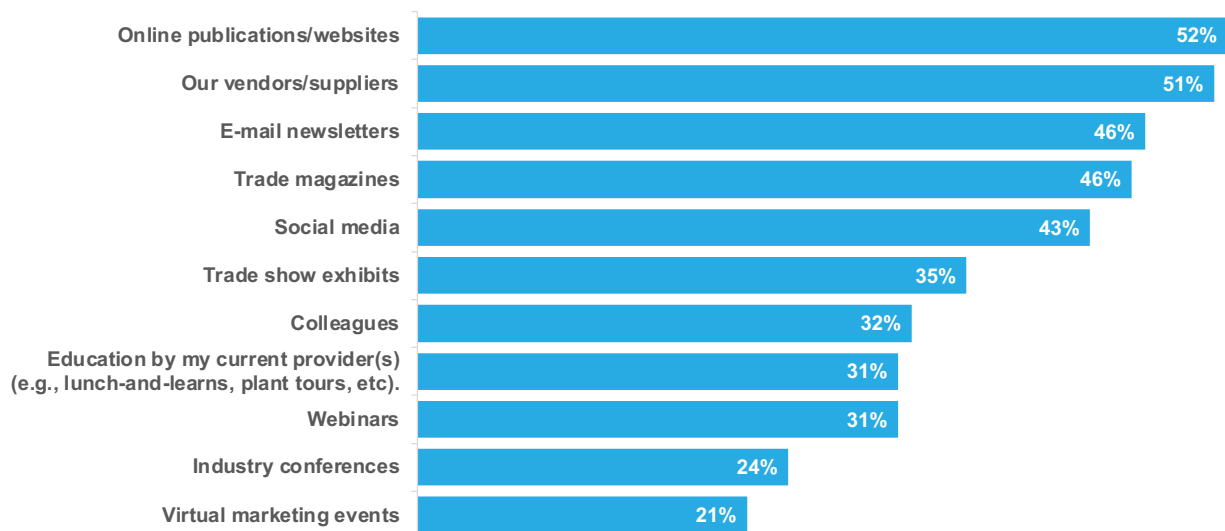
This survey finding underscores the importance of asking for client referrals and introductions to win sales meetings. It also highlights the value in communication outreach, both in printed direct mail and social media.

6. Buyers consult a variety of sources when researching new trends and advancements in printing technologies.

According to NAPCO Research surveys, the top resources buyers use to learn about trends are online content and information provided by vendors and suppliers (**Figure 4**). E-newsletters, trade magazines, social media, and trade show exhibits also serve as sources for purchasers doing their homework on developments in sign and display graphic applications. Buyers also learn via provider-furnished education in the form of plant tours and lunch-and-learns — activities that can strengthen relationships and increase share-of-customer for providers that offer them.

Figure 4: Ways Buyers Learn About Trends

Q. How do you learn about new trends and advances in sign and display graphics printing technologies?



Multiple Responses Permitted

n=114 Purchasers or purchase influencers of sign and display graphics
Source: Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics, NAPCO Research 2023



This research finding indicates the importance of investing in customer education and outreach programs. It also points to the importance of sign and display graphic providers evaluating current client facing efforts, including their websites, social media channels, and other customer-facing content. Are these efforts effective or are changes required?

7. Sign and graphic customers prefer providers that offer online ordering.

Organizations are looking for ways to streamline the ordering management of their communication products, better monitor budgets/inventory, and control branding. As today's online print ordering platforms enable customers to order all kinds of print products, including promotional/branded products and decorated apparel, organizations prefer to work with providers with such systems. Three-quarters of sign and display graphic buyers participating in NAPCO Research's "Who Buys Sign and Display Graphics" prefer to work with providers that offer online ordering.

As a print buyer respondent noted in an open-ended survey question on how their sign and display providers could serve them better, "offer online business portals for tracking jobs instead of simple email communications."

Online ordering systems are a key to winning bigger customers, growing sales, and improving productivity. The software powering these systems has evolved to meet the fast-paced and complex business needs of today's organizations. Providers of sign and display graphics looking to pursue larger clients, grow share with existing clients, expand product offerings, and build strong customer bonds competitors cannot easily break should consider adding customized web portals or expanding current offerings.

While buyer respondents indicate they prefer working with providers that offer ordering, 58% of print provider respondents report they do not offer sign and display graphic products through online storefronts and portals. Of those 41% of respondents that do sell sign and display graphics via an "online" storefront/portal, 68% enable customers to order a variety of products like promotional items, apparel, signage, and print.

FINAL THOUGHTS

Actively learning about customers and prospects provides a more nuanced understanding of their preferences and needs. Overarching messages from NAPCO Research surveys of sign and display graphic buyers are: be easy to work with, offer stellar and responsive service, ask customers for referrals, and invest in ways to educate customers on trends and technology.

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NAPCO Research crafts custom data-centric solutions that leverage our highly engaged audiences across the markets in which we operate, our industry subject matter experts and in-house research expertise. We partner with our clients to identify their unique business problem and create solutions that enable deeply informed decision-making.

NAPCO Research can help with:

- Business goal prioritization
- Opportunity discovery
- Market segmentation
- Landscape insight
- User needs and wants
- Product features and functionality
- Content marketing strategy
- Sales strategy and tactics
- Market conditions
- Benchmarking
- Industry trends
- Brand awareness

Contact research@napco.com to talk with our analysts to find out how we can help you with your research needs.

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Let's be brilliant. Together.

EFI™ is a global technology company, leading the worldwide transformation from analog to digital imaging. We understand you want breakthrough technologies to lead you through your digital journey. That's why we're passionate about driving your business growth with a scalable portfolio of products, solutions, services, support, and world-class partnerships for the manufacturing of packaging, sign and display graphics, and textiles with a wide range of printers, inks, digital front ends, and software. Our unwavering commitment is to increase your profits, lower costs, improve productivity, and optimize efficiency — job after job, year after year. We're obsessed with your success. And we definitely believe we have the right people, technology and experience to help your business achieve its goals.