

CASE STUDY



Soofa Creates a Neighborhood News Feed for the 21st Century.

The Challenge: Lack of Easy Information Sharing with Citizens Was a Sign of the Times.

A city skyline is shown in the background, with a network of white nodes and lines overlaid on a blue-tinted image of the city and water. The network consists of numerous small white circles connected by thin white lines, creating a complex web that spans across the city and water. The city skyline includes several tall buildings, and the water in the foreground is dark blue. The overall image has a futuristic, digital feel.

One of the central tenets of today's smart cities is the need to give citizens easy access to a wide range of information in real time — from 311/customer service announcements, to updates on neighborhood services, to department of transportation notices, to critical emergency management messages.

Adding to the challenge is the fact that in most city governments there are different departments in charge of sharing different types of announcements, with no centralized way to get the word out to neighborhoods with relevant information.

Social media feeds that ask citizens to “like” their city government have limited effectiveness. Most people may actually like their city, but not enough to follow them on Facebook or Instagram as if they were buddies.

The result is a status quo that stymies governmental efforts to truly connect with citizens, and for citizens to connect with each other.

The Solution: Democratize Information Sharing at the Community Level.

The founders of Soofa saw this challenge as a major opportunity to change how citizens, governmental agencies and businesses share information with each other to make life better in cities. This was the genesis of the Soofa Sign, the neighborhood news feed that connects a community with screens everyone can see and anyone can use.

“Soofa Signs are the neighborhood news feed that let you know what’s happening in the moment.”

Ed Krafcik, Soofa VP of City Development

The Solar Powered Plug and Play Communications Solution That’s Provided at No Cost to Municipalities.

The Soofa Sign displays content that’s most relevant to each neighborhood it’s placed in, with rotating content created by citizens, community groups, local advertisers and governmental agencies. At the heart of the Soofa Sign is a 42" black and white display made with E Ink® digital paper. Known by most people as the screen that’s in their eReader, the digital paper screen uses so little power that all the Sign needs to run continuously is a small solar PV panel on the top of the unit.

The sustainable nature of digital paper is made possible by ink-like black and white particles within microcapsules or microcups that are coated onto a thin film layer. Each time the sign receives a new signal, the particles are recycled to form new words and images which, to the viewer, look and feel like they’re printed on paper. Viewers of Soofa Signs are often surprised when the screen changes because they assume it was printed.

Soofa Signs require no digging for installation, and no connection to electrical grids. Locally targeted ad sponsorships mean cities pay nothing for Soofa Signs, making them highly attractive to cities looking to control spending.

Emergency Management Communications That Will Keep Working Even in a Catastrophe.

Just like print, the E Ink screen content will stay viewable indefinitely. When a new Wi-Fi signal is received, it’s the 21st century equivalent of turning the page, and new content appears. This is important because in the case of an emergency, a notice from the city (such as evacuation routes) will stay on the Soofa Sign even during an extended power outage, and even when there’s no sunlight to power the PV panel. Theoretically, an E Ink screen can continue to show a page of content for decades with zero power required.

Everyone Contributes Content. Everyone Benefits.

Setting up a Soofa Talk account is fast and easy, and everyone is welcome to share content. The top 75 percent of the Soofa Sign shows rotating content. The bottom 25 percent is devoted to applets that display real-time transit arrival information, or local events calendars.

City Governments: Soofa Signs give cities one centralized system for sharing vital information that's relevant to neighborhoods.

The People: Any citizen can create content to appear on their local Soofa Sign, just as they would pin a flyer on a community bulletin board.

Businesses: Local businesses can open an account and post content to raise awareness for their brand or drive customers to their stores at no cost. Businesses also have the option of paying for sponsored content that allows for more advanced targeting and increases the number of people who see their Soofa Sign content. Many businesses are finding success with job postings, helping them compete to find the best and brightest employees living in their city.

Black and White: The Difference Between Crisp Focus and Annoying (or Deadly) Distraction.

The Soofa Sign's E Ink display brings credibility to messages, in contrast to flashy LCD screens that create light pollution and dangerous distraction. In fact, a study in the Journal of Consumer Research found that "Black-and-white images can lead consumers to focus on the abstract, essential, and defining components of a product."

E Ink displays are fully compliant with the Vision Zero initiative to reduce traffic fatalities and injuries caused by distraction.

Success, One Neighborhood at a Time.

Soofa is finding that cities and communities are highly receptive to Soofa Signs. Currently, Soofa Signs are in lively neighborhoods across Boston and Atlanta and will soon be in Miami-Dade County through a partnership with Ford and their City of Tomorrow Challenge. Soofa estimates there are over 100,000 neighborhoods in the United States alone where Soofa Signs can find a home — and make life better for everyone who lives and works there.

When you build E Ink into your product,
you're building in the future.

Contact us to learn more.

eink.com

