

Communicating to the Public:

Train and orient your team to speak in one consistent voice

Wayfinding occurs every day, by anyone who has contact with the public.

Think about how many people in your organization have contact with the public on a daily basis. A key encounter could happen anywhere: in a hallway, on the street, on the phone or online.

If you're a parent, you know about teachable moments, right? Each of these encounters is an opportunity to create awareness for the visitor and make sure they know what to expect. The best brand experiences start with a friendly person, after all—someone who can help them decipher the environment, then use the wayfinding tools provided as they complete their journey. It's the whole "teach a man to fish" thing.

Okay, but who has time for all of this? We know that everyone is swamped with day-to-day responsibilities, and few people are reasonably able to take the time to assure this diligence with the public (unless, of course, it's their job). How to make it easier, more consistent for everyone else?

- > It starts with terminology. A visitor will be confused if there are several names for a given destination. Make sure there's agreement on what to call it—one single, intuitive, succinct name.*
- > Next, decide which routes are most advantageous for the majority of visitors. Refer to main roadways first, bringing people in along wide, inviting "streets." Remember, for a first-time visitor, the shortest distance between two points may not be a straight line!
- > Third, agree on key landmarks for visual reference.
- > Now that you've developed the infrastructure that will inform your wayfinding system, it's time to train EVERYONE, from the CEO to the valet, about this simplified system of direction-giving.
- > Use several examples, showing a progression of decisions that a visitor will make.
- > Communicate what NOT to say, which directions NOT to use, and why. Always use the perspective of the first-time visitor as your point of reference.
- > Finally, develop a network of wayfinding tools that reflect that simplified logic, meeting your visitor where they need information the most. Your training and orientation will enable everyone to speak in the same voice for a seamless visitor experience.

Educate the educators first, and everything else will fall into place!

* *Wayfinding changes are as much cultural as physical; see our white paper on the topic.*