WHAT IS A BRIGHTSIGN DEVICE
AND HOW DO I USE IT?

In this guide, we're going to cover everything you need to know about BrightSign. From hardware, what it can be used for, what it's great at and when to use it.

WHAT IS A BRIGHTSIGN PLAYER?

A BrightSign player is a purple, small form factor device that's used across the globe to power digital signage projects. BrightSign was founded in 2002 and is located in Los Gatos, California. Since then, they have built and sold over 2 million affordable and (importantly) reliable hardware devices for a range of digital signage projects.

BrightSign has a range of devices available to choose from. In this article, we're going to cover each of them and the features they include, plus, when you should be using them.

XT   XD   HD   LS   AU (audio only)

BSN.CLOUD SOFTWARE FOR DIGITAL SIGNAGE MANAGEMENT

As well as hardware, BrightSign features BSN.Cloud software for free with each box. BSN.Cloud allows you to connect to your players via the cloud, manage your devices network and content management and configure your settings to your preference. BSN.Cloud also allows you to select your CMS of choice (content management system) so you can still use the right content management tool for your requirements, whist relying on their hardware. Previously, BrightSign had offered a local player management tool called "Bright Author" which has since been superseded by BSN.Cloud.

With your BSN.Cloud software and BrightSign devices, you'll then be free to choose the CMS that suits your needs. BrightSign even has it's more reputable software options included within the BSN. Cloud application for you to select and install within the user interface.

WHEN TO USE BRIGHTSIGN?

We've been working with BrightSign for many years and by far the most impressive aspect of their devices is the extremely low failure rate. As BrightSign are custom designed digital signage players, their custom casing and SSD drives are perfect for the life cycle and intensive use of a digital signage player. We've received many reports of users having little to no players failing (however there will always be one or two as not every hardware device is treated the same).

BrightSign players are suitable for nearly every environment including Retail, QSR, Stadiums, Corporate workspaces, and The Automotive industry, but to name a few, you should MOST IMPORTANTLY consider the content you wish to display before selecting your player.

NEW INSTALLATIONS AND UPGRADING YOUR DIGITAL SIGNAGE

BrightSigns players can easily be slotted behind an existing screen which makes them perfect for upgrading your digital signage environment. If you've already installed screens on site and you are tired of costs and disruption of existing hardware failure, BrightSign players are ideally suited.. with BrightSign Player pricing from $250.00 to $340.00 USD for one device) you'll end up saving money over replacing non-signage focused hardware such as Raspberry Pi devices.

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WHICH BRIGHTSIGN DEVICE IS RIGHT FOR ME?

POE, HDMI, GPIO... There are a lot of acronyms in digital signage to get your head around. We've put together a list of features for each BrightSign player and broken down the jargon to explain what hardware does what and when to use it.

LS424 PLAYER (STARTING AT $275)

H.264 compatible

1080p60 single decoder

Entry level HTML5

IP streaming

Multi-zone support

B-deploy

Remote snap

JARGON BUSTED

The LS range are the smallest form-factor BrightSign players that, as always, come with commercial grade suitability. Being H.264 compatible means that it can play most video and image files you're probably familiar with. Featuring the ability to run 1080p60 (60 being frames per second) video means it's not designed to display 4K content, however, you'd also need a 4K screen and the 4K content to make the most out of that feature.

Entry level HTML5 support means it will work with displaying simple web-pages, however, as it's entry level, some more sophisticated websites may be slow and sluggish, especially if the site is poorly optimised or features a huge amount of motion. IP streaming allows you to display live content via the player. This player doesn't feature HDMI input so your IP stream will need to be **delivered via a URL.**

Multi-zone support will almost certainly be a want for many digital signage displays being used today. This gives you the ability to split your screen into multiple zones of content that run at the same time in a myriad of designs. Do bear in mind that this player doesn't support multi-video playback so if you're looking to display 2 video files AT THE SAME TIME this isn't the player for you. BrightSigns handy B-Deploy feature is a huge time saver and allows you to set up hundreds of players at a time rather than one-by-one. Something to consider if you're looking to set these devices up yourself.

All BrightSign players have B-Deploy and Signagelive is capable of running this service also. Remote snap allows you to view a screenshot of what this player has displayed via your CMS or via the BSN. Cloud system, giving you the peace of mind that your content looks the way it should, even when you're away from the player's location.

HD224 PLAYER (STARTING AT $375)

H.264 compatible

Mainstream HTML5

IP streaming

Multi-zone support

B-deploy

Remote snap

True 4K

Extended thermal

We're not going to rehash the above description as the HD series does have some of the same features as the LS model, however, the HD product is split into 4 options:

HD244 Standard I/O Player

HD1024 Expanded I/O Player

Built in SoC

OPS Product Line

THE STANDARD PLAYER

As well as the LS features, the standard player comes with an improved Mainstream HTML5 player. This means it will be able to display full screen or modular HTML5 assets alongside Full HD or 4K videos without a problem. It could still struggle with some of the more complex HTML5 like pinch, zoom, swipe effects. The biggest leap in technology from the LS player is the 4K playback, allowing you to display 4K and full HD single video decoding. You still can't display multiple videos at the same time though; for that you're going to need an XD BrightSign. Extended thermal means that your BrightSign can live in a warmer environment comfortably. BrightSign notes this max temperature to be 70 degrees so it's perfect for those warmer working environments like restaurants and kitchens.

BUILT IN SOC

You're probably not going to need the HS124 or HS144 versions of this hardware unless you're building out 100's of devices and want your BrightSign hardware INSIDE your screen, however, if you are looking at building a fully custom screen with inbuilt hardware, BrightSign can accommodate.

HD1024 EXPANDED I/O PLAYER

The Expanded player features all of the above, however, it also comes with an additional USB2.0 option (type A) and serial to fully engage your audience. This feature is going to be important if you're looking to include a device for interactivity **like Nexmosphere**.

XD234 PLAYER (STARTING AT $475)

H.264 compatible

Advanced HTML5

IP streaming

Multi-zone support

B-deploy

Remote snap

True 4K

Extended thermal

Mosaic mode

As well as all of the features the HD brings to the table, the XD range adds Mosaic mode and Advanced HTML5. This gives you the freedom to display multiple video files concurrently. The Advanced HTML5 feature means that even more complex HTML5 sites can be played, including those with more animation. The XD range also has an optional WiFi module (sold separately) and supports gigabit ethernet networking for the fastest content download possible.

There are two versions of the XD range. The XD234 Standard I/O Player and the XD1034 Expanded I/O player, which like the HD range, features USB options. In this case, Dual USB (Type A and type C) and serial control for engaging interactive options.

These players are perfect for those that need versatility. The dual ability to play video is especially useful if you're going to be displaying a myriad of content across a broad range of locations.

XT244 PLAYER (STARTING AT $575)

H.264 compatible

Enterprise HTML5

IP streaming

Multi-zone support

B-deploy

Remote snap

True 4K (dual)

Extended thermal

Mosaic mode
POE (power over ethernet)

Bear in mind that most screens are 4K today, this means that you could run two 4K screens from one device (with some kind of matrix in between. The XT players also feature POE (Power Over Ethernet) which means the entire device can be powered by ethernet which removes one more cable you need to manage.

The XT line is the most powerful range available. The Enterprise HTML5 means it can tackle even the most complex animation and designs while the True 4K dual video feature will allow you to display 2 x 4K pieces of content at the same time.

The XT range also includes XT1144 Expanded devices which feature Dual USB (like the XD devices and (importantly) an HDMI Input port, meaning that you can import anything via HDMI. These devices are often used to push live TV in a zone of your screen while utilising the other zones for promotional content.

Finally, the XT1144-T Expanded I/O player is almost identical but has been approved and applies to the Trade Agreement Act (TAA) so can be used by the Federal Government in the USA.

To see a full list of the hardware device differences, you can always check out our handy comparison.

If you're still not sure which hardware device is for you, BrightSign has built a **handy configurator.**

FEATURES YOU NEED AND THE HARDWARE YOU REQUIRE

The above hardware breakdown is great to understand the nuts and bolts, but let's take some of our usual customer requirements and break down how to validate the hardware required to achieve this.

CUSTOMER EXAMPLE 1

Kevin is responsible for the corporate communications across a range of sites. He's been tasked to set up digital signage with the reception areas (to feature live TV) and in several locations on each floor that will deliver key metrics for the company such as dashboards, statistics, new company information and content. Kevin has considered the assets that will need to be managed and has agreed with the team that their required content items are....

IMAGE FILES

VIDEO FILES

HDMI INPUT
(for live TV)

WIDGETS
(Items such as weather, clock and news widgets from the Marketplace)

After review, Kevin notices that only 10 of the total 100 devices require the HDMI output.

DECISION

Kevin is going to need at least ten XT244 devices as these have the HDMI input functionality they are looking for to create this live TV combination, however, they can opt to go for LS424 devices for the rest of their roll-out as these devices require less robust usage. It should be considered that for future-proofing, they may opt for an XD or HD model, just in case they require further features at a later date from their devices.

CUSTOMER EXAMPLE 2

Linda is looking to create a super engaging product experience in her retail store. She wants the clients to be able to come and interact with products on display and learn more about the product when they lift the item from the shelf. This can be achieved using a Nexmosphere device, however, she's going to need a way of connecting this to her player of choice and a robust player that can tackle a range of different content types.

DECISION

Linda can opt for anything from the HD, XD or XT range, however, it's important that she chooses the "extended" model as this features the USB input that will be imperative to creating this engaging experience. **You can read about how Dermalogica created something similar here.**

CONCLUSION

Both customer examples have their own challenges, however, the key to finding the answer always starts with the content requirements. Once you know what you're looking to display, you can start to split your digital signage requirements and pick the hardware that's suitable for requirements.

ADDITIONAL HARDWARE ITEMS TO CONSIDER AROUND BRIGHTSIGN

MICRO SD CARD

Your BrightSign player (regardless of the one you choose) will require an SD card to store the content you're looking to display. Most opt for a 32GB card that has ample storage for most projects but consider this when you're discussing your content structure.

WIFI/BLUETOOTH MODULES

BrightSign does offer an additional module to allow for WiFi or Bluetooth on the Series 3 and 4 devices at an additional cost of $55 per device. This will also require installation by yourself or the reseller you are purchasing from.

GPIO TERMINAL

The GPIO terminal (general purpose In/Out) is an available option for the HD4, XD4, XT4, HD3, XD3, XT3 models and will allow you to trigger content with GPIO devices. This is something you should consider, depending on the external hardware you're looking to use to trigger your content.

ALL IN ONE OPTIONS

Both **Mimo monitors** and **Bluefin** create custom monitors from 8" screens for corporate workspaces (perfect for room booking) and larger screens. They have created a range of screens with BrightSign running inside the device. This is ideal if you're looking for an all-in-one device, more similar to an SoC (System on Chip) screen.

CONCLUSION

If you're looking for a bullet-proof media player for existing or new screens, look no further than a BrightSign device. Although they aren't the cheapest hardware in the market, they are by far, the most robust and reliable for serious commercial use. BrightSign's extensive range of players will enable you to select the device that works best for you, without over-delivering on features and keeping the cost down. Feel free to mix and match the devices you need to create the most cost effective digital signage network possible.

BrightSign also supports a range of trigger items and a whole host of beneficial features to allow you to manage your network remotely. Signagelive is also capable of displaying screenshot functionality and utilising the power B-deploy function that allows you to configure, deploy, activate and manage hundreds of devices quickly and efficiently.