

Case Study: Signage

London Bridge Station Redevelopment

Recommendations for future projects to improve the planning, management and delivery of temporary and permanent signage

Merson Group delivered the temporary and permanent signs for London Bridge station from the end of 2014 to completion in 2019. Their experience of signage for passenger wayfinding spans major projects such as Crossrail, Heathrow Airport and St Pancras Station and includes brand placing for Tesco amongst others.

What was Merson Group's role in the new London Bridge station?

The signage for the new London Bridge station was designed largely by Hyder WSP and the wayfinding strategy was done by Maynards. Merson's responsibility was to manufacture, deliver and install the design to align with the wayfinding strategy in both temporary and permanent stages of the station redevelopment. This included, but was not limited to, signage on platforms, gate-line, external facades, retail facilities and so on. Merson were responsible for following the rail industry standards and Network Rail's national signage guidelines.



These photos show the range of permanent signage produced by Merson for the gate-lines, the ticket office, the ceiling-hanging wayfinding for passengers.

What were the challenges they faced?

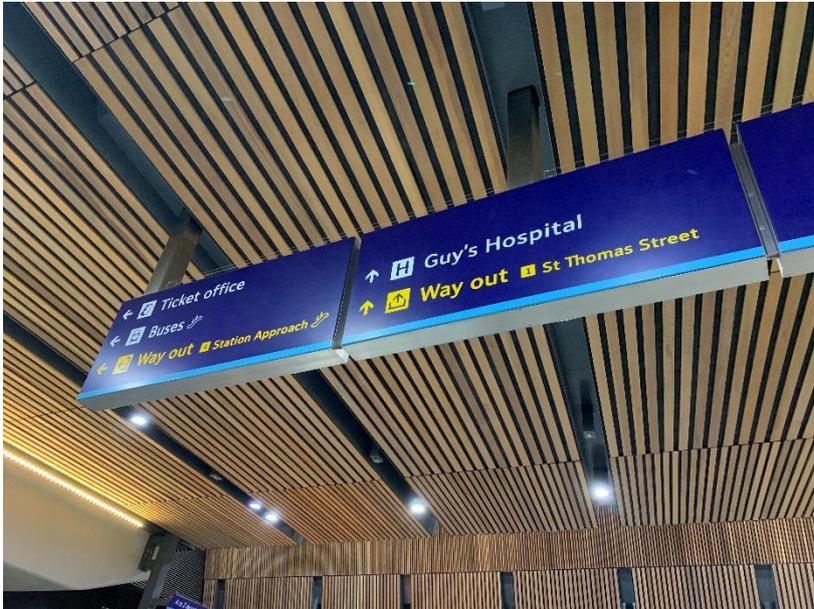
The construction sequence of the work required responsive signage and subsequently, there were many unplanned changes throughout the programme. As the station remained open to passengers and trains during construction, the passenger flow routes regularly changed to accommodate the work, and this required constant evaluation.

In addition, Merson were working in a live passenger environment for nearly every sign and so every removal changed signage implementation proved costly and time-sensitive. Merson worked to achieve the best passenger experience throughout any periods of upheaval.

What lessons can be learned?

1. Collaboration from an early stage.

Early involvement of key contractors with Merson Group would have allowed earlier resolution of any problems they saw arising based on previous experience. For example, if there was a sign planned for an open concourse area, the weight of that sign may need to be adapted to consider wind loading. Site visits, discussions with partners and other suppliers at the very early planning stages may have helped predict these challenges earlier such as the A-line, which had no fixing points for signage.



A typical hanging sign that needs to have wind-loading in its design specification.

2. Aligning customer experience needs with construction plans.

The focus needs to shift from a typical, new construction project to an 'operational project'. Signage is central to improving the passenger experience in a station during a transformation. Having someone from Merson regularly audit the site would have incurred a small cost but helped mitigate any last-minute panics and any passenger complaints.

3. Temporary signage is valuable.

Understanding the benefits of using temporary signs in a project such as this, takes the stress out of the programme and addresses the wayfinding issues more generally.

Even the temporary signs are often large though and there are major interface and installation issues that need to be considered well in advance.

Temporary signage is very valuable while awaiting installation of the more robust permanent signage. Using temporary signs means that ongoing construction works can happen around signs without worrying so much about damage.



The above sign is a temporary example that looked and felt permanent during the construction stage but was replaced later.



A permanent sign installation required careful passenger management.

Recommendations

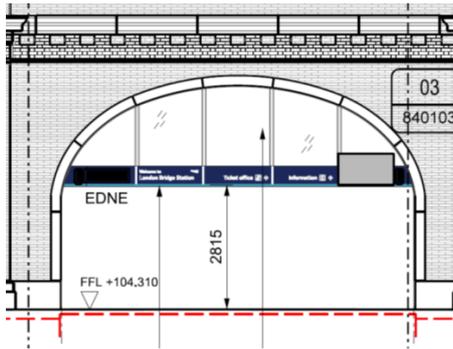
1. Consider the weight of administrative processes on smaller suppliers like Merson Group.

We need to find a system for sign suppliers and other small contractors which is leaner. Merson had to follow the same assurance and documentation process as suppliers that had a much larger contract and so were better equipped and are more able to swallow those administration costs.

Merson would have benefited from there being a more streamlined variation or change process at the lower tiers. For example, every time there was a variation to a sign, the same STQ (subcontractor technical query) process would have to be followed that the huge construction contractors were using for their design changes. This made it very costly for smaller suppliers.

St. Thomas and Tooley Street Entrance Fascias

Design Intent



1. Design intent did not work.
2. Access request for maintenance.
3. Fascia height was too shallow.
4. Artwork alterations.
5. 8 no. interfaces.
6. STQs.
7. Merson developed solution.
8. SDRs (More drawings).
9. Mock-up built.
10. SQRs (Glass and mock-up).
11. More drawings.
12. Installation now on nights.
13. Commercials.
14. Paperwork.

As shown above, a permanent sign installation that needed changes often had a large administrative burden.

2. Consider where offsite fabrication would save a huge amount of time, cost and effort.

The overhead signs on the gate-lines could have been installed offsite without disruption to passengers or station operations. The entire units could have been manufactured outside the station and installed in a single operation.



These gate-line gantries could have been assembled offsite

Author

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Further information

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