Flat monthly pricing vs per-screen billing for signage management

When agencies and resellers first enter the digital signage market, one of the early decisions involves how to charge clients for the ongoing management of their screens. The pricing model you choose affects how clients perceive value, how predictable your own revenue becomes, and how easily you can scale your business. Two common approaches dominate the conversation: flat monthly pricing and per-screen billing. Each has its own logic, and each suits different types of client relationships and service scopes.

What flat monthly pricing looks like

With a flat monthly fee, the client pays a single fixed amount each month regardless of how many screens they operate. The fee typically covers software access, basic support, and sometimes hardware maintenance or content management. For the client, it is simple to budget: one line item, no surprises. For the reseller, the model rewards efficiency because adding more screens to the same client does not increase revenue unless you renegotiate the contract.

Flat pricing works well when the client has a stable number of screens and the value you deliver is tied more to the service package than to the screen count. A retail chain with ten screens at each of twenty locations might prefer a flat fee that covers all two hundred screens, because they do not want to track per-screen costs across every store. The reseller benefits from a predictable monthly profit that does not fluctuate with small changes in screen count.

However, flat pricing can become unprofitable if the client adds many screens without a corresponding fee increase. To protect your service margin, you need clear contract terms that define a screen limit or allow for tiered flat fees. Some resellers include a clause that triggers a review when the screen count exceeds a certain threshold. This keeps the arrangement fair without switching to per-screen billing entirely.

How per-screen billing works

Per-screen billing charges the client a set rate for each screen they manage. If they have fifty screens, they pay fifty times the per-screen rate. If they add ten screens next quarter, the fee scales automatically. This model directly ties revenue to the hardware cost and the support cost you incur, so your markup stays consistent as the network grows.

This approach appeals to clients who want to start small and expand gradually. A restaurant group testing digital menus in three locations might prefer to pay only for those three screens,

knowing they can add more later without renegotiating the entire contract. For the reseller, per-screen billing makes the break even point easier to calculate: once the client passes a certain number of screens, the monthly profit from that account covers your fixed costs and then some.

The downside is that clients with many screens may resist the cumulative fee, especially if they perceive the per-screen rate as high. A large deployment can produce a monthly invoice that looks intimidating, even if the per-screen cost is modest. In those cases, the client might push for a cap or a discount at higher volumes, which essentially moves the agreement back toward a flat model.

Hybrid approaches and tiered plans

Many resellers find that a pure version of either model does not fit every client. A hybrid approach offers a base flat fee that covers a certain number of screens, then charges a lower per-screen rate for any screens beyond that. This gives the client a predictable floor while letting you capture revenue from growth. Another variation is a tiered plan where the per-screen rate drops as the client moves into a higher volume bracket. The client sees a lower unit cost as they scale, and you still increase your total revenue.

These structures require careful planning during the installation fee and initial contract phase. You need to estimate the client's likely growth path and set the tiers so that both sides benefit. If the tiers are too aggressive, you could end up with a thin service margin on a large account. If they are too conservative, the client may feel penalised for growing.

When each model suits the client best

Flat monthly pricing tends to suit clients who value simplicity and have a relatively fixed screen count. Think of a corporate headquarters with a handful of lobby screens and conference room displays. They do not plan to add many more, and they want one predictable invoice. The reseller can bundle support and content updates into the flat fee and maintain a healthy monthly profit without complex tracking.

Per-screen billing suits clients who are growing or who have a variable number of screens. A franchise network that opens new locations every few months will naturally add screens over time. Per-screen billing lets you grow your revenue alongside theirs without renegotiating. It also gives the client visibility into exactly what each screen costs, which can help them decide where to invest in additional displays.

Some clients, especially those new to digital signage, prefer the lower entry cost of per-screen billing because they can start with a small pilot. Once they see results, they expand, and your

revenue expands with them. This can reduce the initial sales friction because the client does not need to commit to a large flat fee before proving the concept works.

What to watch for in each model

Flat monthly pricing

- Monitor the client's screen count regularly so you can adjust the fee when it exceeds the agreed limit.
- Define what the flat fee includes: software, support, content updates, hardware replacement. Scope creep can erode your service margin.
- Build in a periodic review clause so the fee can be adjusted for inflation or changes in your own costs.

Per-screen billing

- Track the per-screen rate against your support cost per screen. If the rate is too low, adding clients only increases your workload without improving profitability.
- Be transparent about how you count screens: does a dual-screen setup count as one or two? Clear definitions prevent disputes.
- Consider a minimum monthly fee so that very small accounts still cover your administrative overhead.

Aligning pricing with your business model

Your choice between flat monthly pricing and per-screen billing should reflect how you want to grow your signage business. If you aim for a small number of high-value accounts where you provide a full-service package, flat pricing simplifies your billing and lets you focus on service quality. If you want to acquire many clients who will scale over time, per-screen billing aligns your revenue with your clients' growth and makes it easier to forecast monthly profit.

Some resellers start with per-screen billing to attract a broad base of clients, then transition larger accounts to flat pricing once the relationship is established and the screen count stabilises. This hybrid lifecycle approach can capture the best of both worlds: the early flexibility that wins clients, and the later predictability that smooths your cash flow.

When evaluating which model to offer, consider your own hardware cost and support cost structure. If your hardware markup is thin, you need a healthy service margin from the monthly fee. Flat pricing gives you room to bundle hardware and service into one compelling number. Per-screen billing lets you keep the hardware and service lines separate, which some procurement departments prefer for accounting reasons.

Agencies that resell digital signage as part of a broader marketing or technology offering often find that a simple, transparent pricing model helps them close deals. The team at D-Addicts works with resellers who appreciate clarity in their own cost analysis, and the same principle applies when you present pricing to your clients. Whether you choose flat or per-screen, explain what the fee covers and what it does not, so there are no surprises on either side.

Making your decision

There is no universal right answer. The best pricing model depends on your target market, your cost structure, and the type of client relationships you want to build. Talk to a few existing clients about what they value most in a service agreement. Some will trade a higher fee for simplicity; others will want granular control over what they pay for each screen. Let their preferences guide the model you lead with, but keep the alternative model in your back pocket for prospects who react negatively to your default offer.

Ultimately, the goal is to create a pricing structure that feels fair to the client and sustainable for you. A well-chosen model reduces churn, makes your monthly profit predictable, and supports your long-term growth. If you are just starting out, test both approaches with a small set of clients and see which one produces better retention and fewer billing questions. Over time, you will develop a sense for which model fits which segment of your market.

Resellers who partner with D-Addicts often find that the platform's flexibility supports either pricing model without extra administrative work. Whether you bill flat or per screen, the key is to align your pricing with the value you deliver and the expectations you set from the first conversation. Keep the evaluation simple, communicate clearly, and adjust as your client base evolves.