

Progressive Field Wayfinding

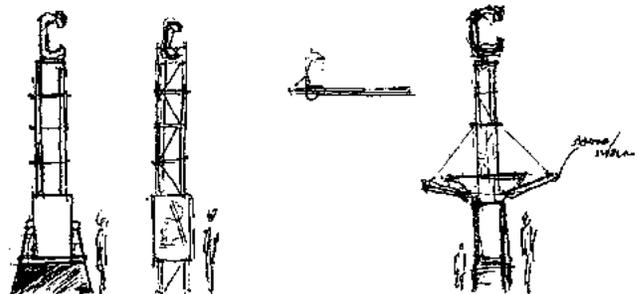
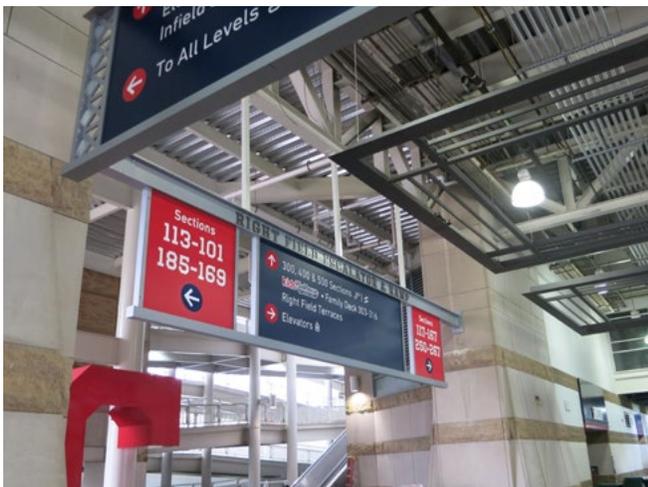
Cleveland, Ohio

Wayfinding
Placemaking
Initiatives

Progressive Field is a major league baseball ballpark located in downtown Cleveland, Ohio. Home of the Cleveland Indians for over 20 years, the ballpark has seen its fair share of glory and heartbreak. And while the stadium has withstood the test of time and Cleveland weather, Progressive Field is championing a series of renovations that are making game-day a one-of-a-kind, can't-miss experience for fans.

Objective

Develop a comprehensive, stadium-wide, wayfinding strategy that connects Progressive Field's newly renovated Right Field Neighborhood to the rest of the ballpark, creating a unique and consistent fan experience.



“The new design has much more depth and structure. It really freshened up our lower concourse, giving our spaces more personality.”

Dennis Lehman, Executive Vice President, Business, at the Cleveland Indians

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First off, most professional sports venues are inherently challenging to navigate. Think about it: they are circular in shape, and walking around the concourses can cause people to get disoriented when looking for their seats.

Background

There's nothing quite like seeing a baseball game live. The smells, sights and sounds just can't be replicated – stadium hotdogs, the crunching of peanuts and crackerjacks, the crack of the bat, and people root, root, rooting for their home team.

Cleveland's Progressive Field has delivered these traditions and nostalgia to millions of loyal fans. And while most would agree that the stadium has aged gracefully, the Indians wanted to reimagine their in-game experience to attract a new generation of fans and compete with the convenience of high-definition television for live sports games.

The Indians hired Weber Murphy Fox Architects for the ballpark renovations. The first phase of the project focused on multiple areas – updated entrances and bullpens, new screens and more social gathering spaces – but the Right Field District became a focal point for the project. The area, now known as “The Neighborhoods,” was to be redeveloped into a standing-room only space (no seats) that housed local restaurants in support of Cleveland's emerging food movement.

It would also provide fans with the opportunity to socialize with friends and watch the game at the same time, with bar stands and high top tables.

Given the extraordinary changes fans would experience upon the project's completion, Weber Murphy Fox contacted Guide Studio to manage wayfinding for the revamped district.

Challenges

Fan comfort and engagement were top objectives for the wayfinding strategy. The client wanted people to find their seats easily, but also be drawn to other revenue-generating amenities, including shops and restaurants throughout the ballpark. However, once Guide Studio got started, they uncovered big challenges that could not only impede the success of the new Right Field District, but the entire ballpark.

The section and seating numbers increase in sequential order and then suddenly start all over again. On top of that, it's difficult for ushers and other game day staff to direct people where to go when there are no right or left turns – your options are to go straight or turn around.

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Next, the existing signs throughout the stadium convoluted the process by providing too much information and pointing fans to every possible amenity. In some cases, information had to be split between two signs because the amount of directional messaging could not fit on a single sign. Furthermore, the stadium's massive crowds add additional anxiety to the experience, causing people to get frazzled and frustrated, leaving them with a bad experience even before the first pitch.



To help alleviate some of these stadium-wide issues and maximize the opportunities for the new Right Field District, Guide Studio explained the value of a cohesive wayfinding strategy for the entire stadium and received buy-in to create a new system that could be leveraged throughout all of Progressive Field.

Solutions

The project kicked off with an aggressive timeline in place (the new Phase

1 renovations needed to be complete in under five months, before the start of the season), so Guide Studio wasted no time getting started. Keeping the ultimate goal in mind – enhancing the fan experience – Guide Studio delivered the following solutions to the team.

Wayfinding Hierarchy: Districting

The fan journey was at the heart of Guide Studio's wayfinding and messaging recommendations. Before considering signage design and messaging, the team explored fans' experience throughout various stages of their visit.

- **Arrival/Orientation:** Where am I? Where do I enter the ballpark?
- **Critical Information:** Where's my seat?

• Experience Enhancers/Decision points:

What's Around Me? What information and tools are needed at each of these phases to understand where they need or want to go next?

Given fans' challenges associated with orienting themselves outside and inside of the stadium, Guide Studio made the concept of "districting" (zoning) a center point within the wayfinding strategy.

Districting, inspired by "The Neighborhoods," establishes a hierarchy for wayfinding, allowing fans to identify their location by looking inward at the baseball field (Right Field, Left Field, Center Field, Home Plate), rather than relying on the traditional street signs and section numbers. The specific names for the districts were chosen to orient people's attention to the field, instead of streets outside the ballpark. This approach supports quick and intuitive interpretation of signage when fans arrive at the stadium and are trying to locate their seats. They don't need signs telling them where the bathrooms are or where to buy a hot dog just yet – they need to find their home for the game.

Once they get to their district, fans will encounter directional signage that includes section numbers that point them toward their seats. Additionally, there will be signage that helps fans access nearby amenities, including restrooms, shops and concession stands to help them take advantage of everything the stadium has to offer.

Signage System

Originally, the signs at Progressive Field pointed to everything – sections and seating, escalators, elevators and food. At any point in your visit, you would have to stop and read a large sign overloaded with messages and arrows listing a variety of amenities, causing confusion and crowds of people bumping into each other as they try to read and walk at the same time. The signage didn't map out a clear path for a positive experience.

To resolve the issue, Guide Studio developed a signage system that supports fans' needs at

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With an improved and intuitive wayfinding strategy, fans are able to focus on enjoying their experience, rather than navigating a complex environment.

various stages of their stadium journey, from approaching the stadium (before they get there) to when they leave, and all of the stops they make along the way. The signage system lays out what types of signs are needed at each stage (directional, gate identification, gate/zone, etc.), as well as what information is important to include on the signs. For example, as fans approach the outside of the stadium (by foot, car or bike), they need identification signage that calls out the ballpark's name, where to buy tickets and the team shop. Within the stadium, fans need directional signs that include zone/district and section numbers.

Sign Family



Not only does the systematic approach allow the Indians to simplify the content on their 800 signs throughout the stadium (less is more!), but it helps the Progressive Field staff define key destinations throughout the stadium based on relevance to fans and revenue. For example, while a beer stand may not need to be present on every sign (because of how frequently a fan runs into them), the Indians Team Shop definitely should be.

If fans, particularly season ticket holders, return to the stadium again and again, they will feel a sense of place and tradition, allowing them to recall where they need to go, further enhancing the experience.

Content & Design

Guide Studio's philosophy on sign content is that it needs to be simple and consistent. In the case

of Progressive Field, content needed to reinforce the relationship between the baseball field and the Districts/zones in the stadium, which not only changed content on the actual signs, but information on printed tickets and how stadium staff communicate directions to visitors. If sign messaging and design in one area is not consistent with the signs of another location, people will feel lost and confused.

In addition to updating content, the signage called for a new look and feel that evoked a mix of Cleveland's past and present. Guide Studio developed three design concepts, Cleveland Tradition (pride, heritage, history, ballpark), Cleveland Grit (perseverance, passion, blue collar) and Contemporary Cleveland (innovation, efficiency, accessibility), that played on the city's most important and iconic character traits. The team also supplied the client with mock-ups that illustrated how the signs would look throughout the stadium.

The Indians chose a blend of Tradition and Grit, combining the team's rich history with steel beams and galvanized metals that evoke the city's industrial roots. The signs also incorporated the team's recognizable navy, red and grey color palette.

Message Schedule & Location Plan

The last thing to do was prioritize the signage messaging schedule. Because the Indians rolled out their renovations in stages, the plan had to account for the fact that only some changes would be complete in Phase 1, including the Right Field District, and others later in Phase 2.

With consistency being key to a smooth navigation experience, Guide Studio had to ensure their wayfinding strategy could be replicated throughout the stadium, as new renovations were unveiled. They developed a comprehensive plan for more than 800 signs throughout the stadium, including those in the Main Concourse, Family Deck (Club/Suite Level), Terraces, Upper Concourse and Gate Plazas.

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Once a new renovation was rolled out, all of the signs could be updated to ensure that reliable wayfinding remained intact.

While wayfinding was one component of the Progressive Field renovation project, it has impacted much more than signage.

Results

Making game-changing enhancements to the stadium is crucial when trying to increase attendance and engagement, but what's the point if your fans cannot figure out how to access all of the cool new amenities and areas you have to offer? Wayfinding solves that problem, and the Cleveland Indians are experiencing no shortage of benefits.

Beyond utilizing the wayfinding strategy to connect new District areas to the rest of the

stadium, the team has updated website content, photography, ticket design, commercials, game attendants' language, social media communications and more to reflect the ballpark's new personality and tie the entire experience together throughout all stages of the fan journey. More engaged fan experiences will continue to yield better returns for the team – more ticket, gear and food sales – and fans will stay at games longer and share their memories with friends and family in-person and over social media. Most importantly, these positive experiences are amplifying the culture of dedicated fans who rally together behind the team – in good times and in bad – today and in the years to come.

“The new signs share the same color scheme as the old ones, which is good since we didn’t update everything at once. This way everything is consistent throughout the renovation” said Lehman. “We’ve refreshed the main concourse, and our next challenge is the upper deck; it hasn’t been refreshed yet and you can see the difference!”

Dennis Lehman, Executive Vice President, Business, at the Cleveland Indians