

Now Playing: Interactive Retail Marketing 2.0, *which actually works*

By Michael A. Curran

As varieties of digital marketing and interactive kiosks gain momentum, retailers struggle to keep the new technology up and running. Vendors haven't provided simple or easy-to-use solutions. Most retailers use stitched-together Frankensteins of wires, computers, software, and peripherals. The burden typically falls on retailers to keep it all running. This digital signage or kiosk 1.0 experience provides marginal returns, at best. Retailers are naturally weary of the burden of investing, deploying, and maintaining new technology.

Retailers will get significant relief with the Interactive Retail Marketing 2.0 solutions. These "next-generation" solutions use a more sophisticated feature set and empower retailers to inform, educate, and help consumers to purchase the right product for their requirements, quickly and efficiently. Integrated hardware and software provide digital, interactive information to consumers at multiple or individual touch points throughout stores. Soon, retailers won't consider this just one more thing that can go wrong. It will be an integral part of the store experience, expected by consumers and embraced by retailers.

Interactive Retail Marketing 2.0 provides an ROI advantage by eliminating printed signage. It combines standalone, kiosk point solutions into single systems and incorporates the advantages of digital signage. It can easily generate double-digit sales increases when strategically planned into store operations. It's also another way of expressing care and concern for customers by providing self-service, time-saving information and services. Plus, it solves problems associated with reduced staff levels and high personnel turnover, while significantly improving consumer satisfaction.

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10 issues to consider:

1. It really is all about the customers.

Plan interactive retailing around them. They appreciate techniques to make their limited time in the store more valuable. Increasing valuable browse time results in increased sales.

2. Keep it simple.

Customers appreciate quality information presented efficiently. Information about products and services at the point of relevance increases sales. Use techniques such as "ads at a glance" to feature them. A message doesn't have to be complicated.

3. People love interesting content.

Use digital signage that incorporates animation and special effects. Animation attracts attention over static presentation. Multiple video feeds can easily be integrated into playlists.

4. Content isn't a big deal.

Retailers have content all over the place, from TV to Web sites to print promotions, public-service campaigns, and advertisements. Repurposing existing content doesn't require a huge investment.

5. Provide individual store messaging.

Use a solution that offers the greatest flexibility to address the needs of each store with little added cost.

6. It's also about store design.

Integrating the new technology into store merchandising is key. Promotion, design, and placement of time-saving, interactive solutions in highly visible areas must be attractive and consumer-friendly.

7. Remote content management makes it all work.

The days of "sneaker-ware" are gone forever. Remotely managing and operating interactive touch points is mandatory for good overall ROI.

8. The computers really do matter.

What message do you send to a consumer when a touch point is out of order?

9. Customers have very little time.

Use technology to create time-saving ways for customers to purchase what they want, even if it isn't on the shelf.

10. Be creative and experiment.

Programs are only constrained by your imagination. Make your retail environment unique by showing the personality of your organization. Use fun, surprising, and engaging techniques to enhance your customers' experience.