WHITE PAPER | RETAIL

Managing Brand Consistency—From the Warehouse to the Window Display

Maintaining brand consistency across all departments—whether procurement or marketing—is a growing challenge for retailers. They must cater to unique demographics and consumer preferences while staying on brand with messaging and design across the widening array of shopping channels, whether online, through a mobile application or in a physical store. A customer may start shopping online but then reserve to pick up an item at the physical store—and they expect a seamless experience.

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Introduction:

Retailers have an opportunity to improve consumers' shopping experience by leveraging cutting-edge technology to complement messaging and design, resulting in an integrated brand experience. This means carefully and thoughtfully managing branding from the warehouse to the window display.

Here are four best practices retailers should follow to achieve a more seamless brand experience. Implementing these practices may produce several benefits, including leaner inventory management, greater efficiency, increased sales, improved consistency of brand message, engaged consumers, and reduced costs.

1: Consolidate suppliers to minimize disruption in the supply chain.

Many retailers take a decentralized approach to the creation and distribution of in-store marketing collateral, working with multiple print and logistics vendors as they seek to support 500 or even 14,000 store locations. This presents many challenges including standardization of messaging, accurately forecasting each store's needs and managing the large volume of shipments. For one large retailer with 14,000 locations worldwide, these challenges stemming from working with multiple vendors – cost $30 million annually—a cost that could be significantly reduced or eliminated.[1]

Retailers have an opportunity to improve consumers' shopping experience by leveraging cutting-edge technology to complement messaging and design, resulting in an integrated brand experience.

Consolidating print, distribution, and logistics suppliers allows companies to address and mitigate these challenges. Consolidation minimizes the risks associated with collateral changing hands when working with multiple vendors and eliminates any potential confusion at the store level—meaning store managers and associates can more easily identify materials, ensure they are displayed at the right time and place, and know who to contact to replenish them. Additionally a more centralized approach provides a scalable national platform for distribution and fulfillment while eliminating waste, improving speed to market, and reducing freight costs.

2: Leverage store profiling and analytics to better understand customers' needs and deliver the most relevant brand experience at each store location.

Employees working in a retailer's headquarters often struggle to keep track of the distinct needs of each store location. Because individual stores have unique footprints, promotional or branded materials sent to stores must be relevant and sometimes even customized for each location. Retailers may take the shortcut of shipping the same signage to every store, but this leads to inevitable waste in production time and cost, waste in shipping, and confusion among store employees about what signage to display. Ultimately, it prevents stores from delivering a seamless brand experience.

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By leveraging store-profiling technology, suppliers can identify each location's specific needs, such as the number and type of display fixtures, windows, and doors—and even the unique merchandise offered at each location. It's important a partner providing the store-profiling technology know which locations are piloting a new promotional program and other unique attributes of each location. For example, a fashion retailer with stores across multiple geographies may need to sell different products at the same time of year based on local market demands, translating to different promotional needs. Signage promoting down jackets in January in colder climates won't necessarily be the right promotion for those stores located in warmer climates, which may not even sell down jackets.

Implementing an online-based graphics ordering and management tool that enables replenishment of orders at the store level is critical.

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Additionally, it is important to tap into forecasting data that identifies key insights around production runs. Understanding production needs allows national retailers to identify the right manufacturing mix—the production capability to handle small- to large-scale runs with store signage and supporting materials—needed to more easily support their footprint nationally, regionally, and by market while ensuring integrity of the brand communications and providing operational efficiencies.

3: Understand the omnichannel experience and shopper mindset.

Shoppers today want "experiences," whether that's ordering from their iPad from a café or shopping at a physical store to inspect an item for fit and feel. Retailers must fully understand how their various channels work together to complement each other and create the most positive customer experience. A satisfied customer will be a loyal one, whereas a negative experience will result in lower sales. In fact, one survey found that nine out of 10 U.S. adults "will likely switch brands after a bad customer service experience."[2]

A retail and graphics partner should offer data solutions that manage and aggregate customer data to provide centralized and pertinent customer insights that can be used across the retailer's many departments.

Creating a true omnichannel experience—essentially a holistic shopping experience across the multiple channels—means retailers must be consistent in their branding. That entails having minimal or no variation in the retailer's promotional imagery, offers, or customer support practices, regardless of whether a shopper encounters it at a physical store, on its website or on its mobile app. A retail and graphics partner should offer data solutions that manage and aggregate customer data to provide centralized and pertinent customer insights that can be used across the retailer's many departments. Someone in the marketing department, for example, could use the data to determine that one customer—Suzi—often shops from the catalog mailed to her home, while another customer—Joe—prefers to receive new product offers through email and social media.

Retailers need to implement both online and in-store experiences. Leveraging shopper data and technology is critical for creating vibrant store spaces. Compelling visuals at a store will draw shoppers in. But once a shopper enters, in-store visuals and fixtures contribute to the overall atmosphere and can influence the shopper's decision of whether to make a purchase from that store. Retailers should strengthen their online expertise and resources supporting cross-channel communications, including mobile engagement, since it is projected to comprise 60 percent of total ecommerce by the end of 2017.[3]

4: React quickly to changing industry dynamics.

In today's fast-paced world, retailers must ensure that their branded content, promotional messages and signage are relevant and respond to current events and often fast-changing market dynamics. For example, if a brand's celebrity spokesperson suddenly falls from grace, the retailer will need the capability to swiftly replace any signage featuring that celebrity.

A more common scenario: Retailers often take stock of inventory on Sunday to determine the following weekend's promotions. It's imperative they have the capability to quickly create, produce, and distribute signage that reflects their desired new promotions—at each store location, if needed. An experienced supplier who understands the nuances of the retail business is critical to a brand in today's market.

Conclusion:

It's essential that retailers work with a partner who understands their unique brand and customer experience across the multiple shopping channels. Having a relationship with a graphics and retail vendor who can manage brand integrity from the warehouse to the window display is a competitive advantage as shoppers increasingly care about the total experience they receive from a retailer—and it can determine where they spend their money.

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About Taylor Communications

Taylor Communications is a go-to-market subsidiary of Taylor Corporation. For more than a century, we've been providing outstanding service and developing innovative products that leverage the technology of our time. By providing market-specific insights and a compelling portfolio of solutions to the healthcare, financial services, commercial and industrial markets, we have become the recognized leader in the management and execution of mission-critical communications.

Sources:

1 Taylor Communications Internal Customer Case Study.

2 "The Role of the Contact Center in the Customer Journey." the 2015 InContact Consumer Research. Web. January 2017. <http://response.incontact.com/harris-study-2015>.

3 Mobile Shopping Focus Report. Demandware 2016. Web. January 2017. <http://solutions.demandware.com/Global/FileLib/PDFs/Demandware_Mobile_Shopping_Whitepaper_FINAL.pdf>.

877.733.3552 | 600 Albany Street, Dayton, OH 45417 | taylorcommunications.com

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