

# The Marriage of Technology and Retail Design



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**E**veryone, and I mean, everyone, is talking about technology and retail.

It seems you can't read an article that doesn't connect one with the other, and for good reason: We live in a technological age and yet we still want to go shopping. Recent events, i.e., COVID-19, have pushed this flirtatious engagement right into a full-fledged marriage.

So how do these two sectors look together in a retail environment? Well, it depends on the digital item in question. Here are five computer-aided shopping tools currently available to any store owner, and ways to integrate them into your showroom.

## STORE APP

OK, this is a mobile phone thing, so it doesn't really affect a store's ambiance. But you do want to alert customers that you have one, so signage becomes the important visual component here. Post a notice in your windows and at all checkout counters. The app can provide sales and event notices, product information, and practical tips. If you can dream it, there is probably an app for it, or you can develop one to meet your needs

## TOUCHLESS CHECKOUT

Service counters aren't going away, but the typical checkout counter is changing. To keep people from waiting in lines, small, portable checkout stations that simply hold a mobile tablet are becoming popular. These can be rolled to different locations throughout your store, where the tablet processes the transaction with a quick touch of a credit card and emails the receipt to the customer. If you choose to put one or two on your sales floor, create a fun, branded, movable kiosk that is weighted so it won't tip. Keep the design simple but recognizable and attach a tall flag in your brand color so customers can readily locate them.

## MOTION OR TOUCH-ACTIVATED A/V

Customers are still drawn to video displays that provide attention-getting and entertaining content. Whether interactive or not, a well-designed digital program can keep customers engaged. If a new product has just arrived on the sales floor or there is a new trend in outdoor cooking, promote it! Monitors can be motion activated so the video begins playing when someone walks past the new

product or by the entrance to a department. And during busy periods, videos on display screens can help reduce the perceived wait time for service, as the customer's attention is diverted from waiting to watching.

Here's the catch, though: Don't just plop a display panel on a wall. Brand it! Create a unique frame around all your screens so customers know to look for those promotional videos. And never leave a monitor turned off. If you have no content to share, then at least put your logo up there, and switch it out with a tagline, your website address and a humorous quote.

BrandSource members in particular have a perfect content solution with the KIOSQ and AVB-TV. If you have it, use it. If you don't, get it! You can also source a variety of A/V systems from the Promotion Technology Group (PTG).

### MIRRORS THAT MESSAGE

Every showroom should have a couple of mirrors, whether or not the business sells apparel. It's human nature for people to want to check their appearance, especially when entering and exiting a store. ("What did the wind just do to my hair?") And just watch how often a customer will look into a nearby mirror while waiting for sales assistance.

But today's mirrors can do more than just reflect an image — they can also display messaging that appears when someone approaches it. Whether it's your company's tagline, a funny quote, or an inspirational message, it's sure to spark conversation! MDI Worldwide is one suggested source for high-tech reflections.

### DIGITAL SIGNAGE

It seems digital signage is now ubiquitous in the retail world. It's little wonder, as these electronic signs make it super easy to change out messaging and the graphic options are endless. But with the growth of digital messaging comes the increase in "sign pollution," and "Everyone's Signs Look Alike" syndrome. Be selective and find the ones that work with your brand and the look of your store's exterior, window display or interior.

Also, be thoughtful about your content, and change it often if you have a lot of repeat customers. And, if you're trend-forward with your product lines, then you want to be trend-forward with your digital signage. Finally, place the signs strategically within your store. Customers will take notice and realize you're not just like everyone else.

In summary, make the tech and retail marriage work! Think about aesthetics and purpose before integrating because when you do, customers will enjoy the harmonious relationship. ●

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