



EnGage Delivers: Measureable Revenue and Strong ROI at Retail

Digital signage can do many things for retailers, but what really matters is how screens can enhance the shopping experience while driving increased sales.

Roughly 60 per cent of all purchasing decisions are made once people are in the store, and brands are increasingly seeing the power of getting the rich media they've used in broadcast and online right into the aisles of stores and influencing what shoppers put in their carts and baskets.

Positioned carefully, and using engaging content and calls to action, digital screens in retail can have a dramatic impact on store numbers, with at least 15 per cent boosts on promoted items now the accepted rule of thumb. Coupled with a tangible improvement in message compliance across a retail chain, it is now relatively easy to build a business argument showing the net sales contribution of screen networks in retail outweigh the costs and effectively add to the bottom line.

But making those numbers happen is far from automatic. Developing a screen network for retail that delivers a return on the capital and operating investment takes solid planning and careful selection of the supporting technology.

It's a complicated mix of factors, but the core elements of an in-store digital media plan break down to location, context, engagement, integrity and measurement.

Location

The positions of screens in retail environments – from big box to fast food – are critical to driving sales and getting a return on the objectives and the investment.

To have impact, the displays:

- Must be fixed at or near eye-level, within normal sightlines and not high above;
- Positioned where shoppers are naturally looking, and not on walls that shoppers whiz past;
- Be large enough to get noticed in what can be busy visual environments.

There is considerable research available on shopping behaviour, and the retailers who are using digital screens effectively have applied that information to optimize their networks and results. Their screens are not just suspended from ceilings so no one tamper with them, or hung on wall space that was available. Smart retailers are putting the screens at the ends of aisles and at key decision points in their stores, and making them integral to the retail design, not just add-ons.

Context

Programming should always be contextually relevant to the immediate surroundings, and in retail, that means content and marketing messages that address the mindset of the consumer at that moment. When a soccer mom is in the health and beauty section of a large department store, she is not thinking about cooking tips or frozen food ... she's thinking about hair care and cosmetics.

The context gets even more granular, in that the profile of that soccer mom, and the other people coming into that retailer's health and beauty section, change by time of day and week, and by things such as geography and demographics. Hair care products that sell in stores where the shopper profile is predominantly African-American may differ wildly from a store that has Asians as its dominant shopper base. The kinds of products that resonate with shoppers who are in the store during workdays may vary considerably from the interests of shoppers who come in on evenings and weekends.

Targeting media with that level of granularity across large retail chains – where the content mix could be different in each store - could prove massively complicated and time-consuming.

EnQii's EnGage software platform deals with this real world complexity by using data to make intricate scheduling dynamic and precise, and highly efficient. Everything that factors into the mix of a retail network can be profiled with data attributes, including demographics, locations, goods sold, sales and inventory data, opening hours and external factors.

In practical terms, that could make for staggeringly complicated requests. For example, try scheduling an ad spot for a new hair care product aimed at professional African-American women only in the health and beauty sections of stores that have 30 per cent or higher African-American shoppers, in cities with greater than 100,000 population, in the US southwest, and only after 6 PM. With most software platforms, that's a nightmarish, almost impossible task. With EnQii EnGage, it's a few mouse clicks.

Engagement

Effective retail networks engage consumers, using calls to action in their messaging to influence purchases. That can be as simple as "Buy Yours Now!" or as complex as interactive screens and displays that respond to external triggers like readers and sensors that entertain and educate shoppers.

When screens are down at or near eye level, retailers and brands have an opportunity to engage shoppers directly and do much more than simply push brands and offers. Existing technologies like bar code readers and touch screen overlays allow users to look up information and drill down in the messaging system for deeper information, or bridge the gap between the screen and mobile devices.

Emerging technologies such as augmented reality let shoppers visualize what interests them, like holding up a sealed box, such as a toy, to a screen and seeing a dynamic visual overlay that shows what's inside and what the toy looks like fully assembled.

None of that works unless the underlying technology can support such interactivity. EnQii's EnGage platform fully supports building interactive applications and handling real-time triggers. EnGage also has the necessarily open architecture and support for external data sources and devices.

Integrity

Screen networks in retail are as important as all the other systems that support store operations. As retailers replace printed material with digital screens, there is an expectation that screens and underlying playback and server technology operate with extremely high levels of reliability and integrity.

If a fast-food restaurant converts its menu boards – which show what's on offer and pricing – to digital screens, they can't ever go down, or show error messages.

That requires a platform with rock-solid reliability at the server and player level, and device management that automates monitoring and provides full visibility and access to what's going on with a deployed network. Retailers expect a platform, such as EnQii Engage, can identify and remedy problems quickly and with minimal disruption.

The EnGage platform use the robust Linux operating system, and has wide and deep set of tools and underlying technologies that ensure extraordinarily high uptime levels.

Measurement

EnGage has a powerful reporting engine that gives clients a full understanding of what's happening with a network, and data that can be extracted and mapped against other store analytics.

It's that combined data that allows retailers to begin to truly optimize the opportunity that in-store media offers. When sales start to drop off on a promoted item, that's telling store operators the content might need to be refreshed. When the same spot in the same department in different regions generates very different sales results, those are clues the content may need to be tweaked for different demographics. An interactive station may be generating more activity for certain content elements, such as product explainers. That might trigger different thoughts about how to better market the product or service.

It is powerful stuff, but only if the chosen platform is logging it and making it available. The EnQii EnGage solution has an open API that makes possible integration with other systems, such as retail back office solutions.

EnGage for Retail

EnQii's EnGage platform for digital signage represents a decade of development work focused heavily on addressing the core needs of retailers. The platform is widely used, globally, by retailers as diverse as travel agencies and apparel. Our many retail clients include McDonald's, Toys R Us, Dillards, Fred Meyers, Fry's, and Mark's Work Wearhouse, and we have been working in the sector for several years, providing not only a technology platform but strategy and rollout guidance that optimizes the opportunity and the return.

Workflow efficiency and accuracy needed to precisely target sales and brand promotions are fundamental to the platform. EnGage lets users build their own pre-determined playlists or have complex, granular playlists for large retail networks built on the fly, using the platform's sophisticated database capabilities.

EnGage is easy to learn, use, and manage on an ongoing basis. The Web 2.0-driven user experience includes a customizable dashboard, rich interactive charts and reports, and drag-and-drop convenience. Users can create custom views of their network, and produce content to suit business needs and preferences.

The platform represents years of careful attention to network operational needs, with very substantive tools for monitoring and device management that maximize up-time and drive on-site servicing and repair needs down to bare minimums. Operators have both macro and micro views of how things stand minute to minute.

OnSite Messenger lets approved users at local stores instantly, and securely, create custom messages and change structured data to support such things as Manager's Specials that are specific to that store, or menu board items customized to locations. The platform has also been designed and steadily refined to be open and flexible for the many needs of clients, and the broad types of systems and data that may plug into or influence a network.

"EnGage gives our clients an incredible amount of flexibility in the way they can integrate signage within their retail locations," says Stuart Armstrong, President of EnQii North America. "Whether you are in fast casual dining, traditional or specialty retailing, we can definitely help enhance sales, service and supply chain through well designed in-store digital signage, at the lowest total cost of ownership."