

My personal in-store shopper

As most of us know, when we shop on Amazon.com they have some clever software that provides us with recommendations based on what other members are buying when we log on to the site; that remembers what we have bought and suggests other similar products that we might like and even has our 'own' store.

This is relatively easy to do online and the interesting challenge is how does one do this in the bricks and mortar world? Loyalty cards are one options and companies like Tesco and DunnHumby have shown how to do this extremely effectively.

Another interesting way forward is to create more interactivity within digital signage systems within the store. At EnQii we are exploring this in several ways. These include :

- i) Mobile phone based interactivity. Under this situation a client within a retail environment would see an offer on the screen which would allow them to get money off products in the store if they respond to a phone number on the screen. For example, a customer in a hair dressing salon could be watching an MTV video on a TV screen. After the video they see an ad for L'Oreal shampoo and get offered 50p off the shampoo if they respond to a short code. On responding to the short code, they get sent an SMS coupon that they can redeem in the store. The salon captures their mobile phone number. If they have opted in they can then be sent offers at a later time and slowly a profile of the customer is built up. This allows them to be sent other relevant offers that they may be interested in and creates value for the retailer.
- ii) Triggers that dynamically change the messaging on the screen. Linking the content management software that runs a signage system into the IT infrastructure of the store allows the retailer to create a dynamically changing signage system based on triggers. For instance, linking the system to the store's EPOS system allows the retailer to immediately see the impact of promotions that are being run on the screens. If the promotion is not working it allows other promotions to be substituted on the fly. Similarly, linking the signage software into the inventory control system allows the system to dynamically promote products that may be in overstock and pull ads for products that are running low. Another interesting application in this arena is a client of ours who is interested in linking the software to their security camera system. The security system 'counts' the number of people entering the store and when a lot of people are in the store could dynamically reduce the loop length of ads being played to provide maximum exposure.
- iii) So far so here and now. If one gets more fanciful there are some interesting ideas to do with putting RFID chips onto store loyalty cards. This would allow the store to automatically know when a customer with a card has entered the store, lock into their profile and then, based on their demographics, serve them appropriate ads and content as they move through the store either on the signage system in the store or on their mobile phone. Clearly there are many issues here regarding privacy and consumer acceptance but it is already happening in other industries so

perhaps it's a question of when rather than when? Some hotel chains already have RFID tags in their platinum cards so as a customer enters the lobby a message flashes up on the screen behind the front desk and the customer is greeted by name as soon as they approach.

So the virtual personalised shopper is closer than we think. The technology is already here, it's a question of finding the right business model and getting consumer buy-in.