

Let the Music – and Video – Play

Eddie Bauer uses both to boost awareness of expedition brand



Eddie Bauer created its expedition-based First Ascent clothing line with input from some of the world's most renowned mountain and ski guides. The line, which launched in fall 2009, is merchandised in 183 stores across the United States and Canada.

To market First Ascent, Eddie Bauer relied on video, photographic and musical imagery to excite the shopper. Since music is considered an “emotional tool,” all of the elements work together to create an impact. Piped-in music wouldn't do the trick, however: Eddie Bauer was eager to tell a bigger story regarding its new line.

So the outdoor apparel and gear company tapped long-time partner PlayNetwork, a provider of sound and visual media experiences, to develop a solution. Each store added LCD monitors ranging from 60 inches to 107 inches that display synchronized video and musical content.

“The line is often merchandised toward the back of the store, and the idea was to draw customers toward the product,” says Kirsten Kinkead, multimedia producer for the 349-store retailer. “It allows shoppers to get exposure to our entire assortment as they make their way to the First Ascent line.”

Savvy retailers continue to leverage the power of digital signage options, including newer versions that combine audio and video. According to “Customer-Centric Retailing 101: Customer Intelligence and Engagement Strategies,” an October 2011 study from Aberdeen Group, 64 percent of best-in-class retailers (or the top 20 percent of retail companies) are successfully engaging shoppers through digital signage.

More opportunities

As the brand continues to evolve and business continues to grow, Eddie Bauer wanted to expand its related media messages. “Business is increasing and we need to change related content,” Kinkead says. “As a result, we also needed to transition to promotions synchronized with music.”

Currently, music and promotions are not synchronized and run on a looped cycle. Eager to stay relevant and refresh the experience, Eddie Bauer and PlayNetwork are working on a pilot program that will synchronize content. “For example, if a mountaineer is discussing his experiences or how a product works in the field,” Kinkead explains, “we will be able to refresh content and show the merchandise, rather than just a montage of images.”

The chain’s in-house video editor works with PlayNetwork’s team to create footage and blend it with music from emerging local artists. The combined Eddie Bauer-PlayNetwork team collaborates on a monthly basis to analyze shopper behavior information to understand consumer demographics, emotional cues and other factors that can impact the music profile.

Those details are encoded and content is saved to a PlayNetwork database. The music playlist is published to cloud-based programming software and delivered to an in-store media player controlled by a workflow of scheduling and programming objectives. This playlist is combined with visual elements and can be revised at any time based on artist, merchandise style or time of the day.

“We can refresh the order daily or hourly if we choose, so we can deliver a new in-store experience every time the shopper enters the store,” Kinkead says.

The new concept is being tested in the chain’s Bellevue and Redmond, Wash., stores; three additional stores have installed a 2 x 2 ft. or 3 x 3 ft. video wall on their exteriors.

The new software/signage/customized content combination is “increasing shopper dwell time and curiosity surrounding the line,” Kinkead says. “The content is prompting shoppers to ask more questions, and allowing our associates to engage and interact with consumers. It is definitely improving the experience.”

If these positive results continue through the critical holiday shopping season, Eddie Bauer will begin rolling out the solution chainwide.

Dynamic media

Eddie Bauer is also testing the next phase of dynamic media, an effort that includes the integration of live media, incorporating live real-time promotions and Twitter streams. PlayNetwork urges retailers to leverage analytics to track campaign success; the company reported that social media-based campaigns can generate between 16 and 35 percent sales spikes.

“The content is creating an emotional relationship with shoppers,” says John Croke, PlayNetwork’s vice president of creative. “Whether they add mobile-activated check-ins, QR codes or social media-generated campaigns, retailers can use content to drive heart and mindshare, which ultimately translates into wallet share.”

Eddie Bauer’s real-time customized content is only one example of the chain’s commitment to using new media to engage shoppers. Among the other elements it is incorporating into its marketing and selling strategies is social media, including Facebook, Twitter and YouTube.

“As we continue our approach to capture the attention of our shoppers, we are looking at forward-thinking media,” Kinkead says. “Customers are more savvy than ever, and we need to pull out all the stops to appeal to a broader group and sell our brands and products as a lifestyle.”

Read more at:

<http://www.stores.org/STORES%20Magazine%20December%202011/let-music-%E2%80%93-and-video-%E2%80%93-play>

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