

by Andrew Candler, Managing Director, The Creative Engine

At the start of this year, **Deloitte** predicted a series of changes to the way consumers shop, both online and in person. Highlighting the need for retailers to act more like media companies, its post, Retail Trends 2016 , foresaw the continued blurring of real-world and digital shopping, and an expectation from customers that the process of making a purchase should be an 'event', rather than just a transaction.

They were prescient words. It's a long time since high street stores have only had to compete with their neighbours. Consumers are changing the way they shop, increasingly treating bricks-and-mortar outlets as showrooms before heading home to spend online. This isn't a new phenomenon, and it even has a name – showrooming – but shops are wising up to it, and employing cutting-edge digital equipment to encourage those hesitant shoppers to buy.

What's changing?

Big-name retail is playing a game of 'if you can't beat them, join them'. **The Creative Engine** is working with premier high street names like

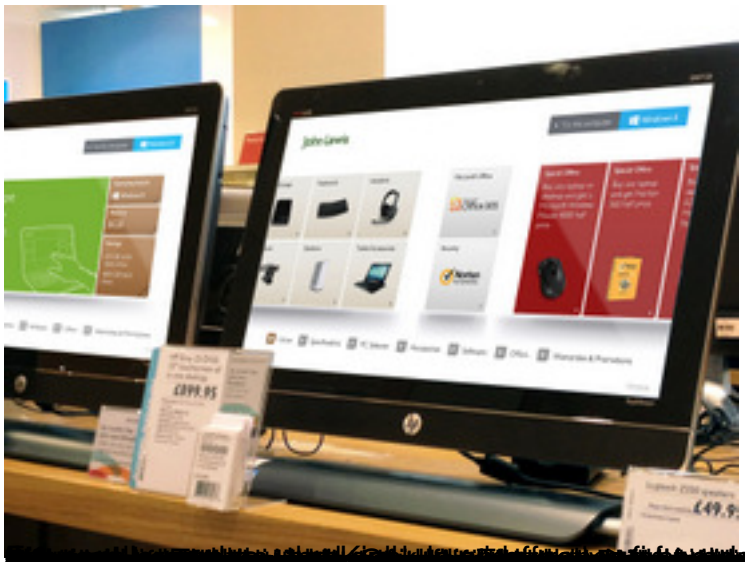
John Lewis
and
Currys PC World
to deploy interactive displays that directly target tech-savvy shoppers with their hero products. The idea is to give them a tactile experience that only ‘real’ shops can provide, married to the rich, screen-based content they’re used to when browsing online. We call it Retail Theatre, but it goes far beyond simply wowing the customer’s wallet out of their pocket.

Done right, Retail Theatre helps the customer understand what they’re buying, builds their trust in the retailer and lets them experience a product before they take it home. There are many ways to achieve this, from simple tablet-based catalogues on a store shelf, to interactive gondolas that simulate a product’s day-to-day use.

Retail Theatre on the shop floor

So, how does it work? Every implementation will be unique, as it’s tailored to the store, the product and its customers, but two of the most successful approaches are Interactive Kiosks and what we like to call Lift and Learn.

The Kiosk can be as simple as a locked-down tablet, running through sales messages and animations while offering intuitive interaction for the shopper. It’s perfectly suited to information you’d otherwise print in a catalogue and is quick and easy to implement thanks to its low footprint and hardware overheads. The retailer can be involved in its implementation as little or as much as they like, either providing their own content or tasking The Creative Engine with the designing and delivery of retail-effective media.



The Creative Engine