

Retailer and Shopping Center Collaboration is Key

Retailers and developers need to work together to utilize their available marketing channels for a win-win scenario for everyone.

Sean Snyder

The Retailer Engagement Report, conducted in 2018, shows a massive disconnect between what is featured on the shopping centers' physical and digital marketing channels and what is actually happening at the stores. The report indicated a shocking 90 percent of retailers are not utilizing marketing channels provided by the malls and in which retailers have already invested.

That means North American retailers are missing out on billions of impressions and huge opportunities for additional traffic and sales by not taking advantage of existing marketing programs that are already paid for by shopping center leases. Both the centers and the stores see less traffic and lighter sales as a result.

"Retailers have access to incredible paid-for marketing opportunities through numerous platforms presented by shopping centers — mobile marketing that reaches consumers on their smartphones, website updates, social media blasts, in-mall physical and digital signage, apps, email subscription lists and events," says renowned author and technology futurist Dr. Tom Keenan, a board member on the Information & Communications Technology Council. "It is a lot of work to manage all of these programs effectively, but it simply doesn't make sense to leave all of these opportunities to drive traffic and sales, and, ultimately, money on the table."

Shopping centers' marketing channels are typically reaching enormous consumer audiences. Many malls are getting more than 250,000 visitors each month to their mobile and websites alone. This represents an untapped opportunity for retailers to reach peo-

ple with timely, targeted messaging, thereby boosting traffic and revenue. The numbers paint a compelling picture:

- 83 percent of shoppers own a smartphone, enabling them to seek out promotions through shopping centers' marketing channels before they visit.
- 79 percent of consumers surveyed said they would be influenced regarding what stores to visit based on a website, yet on average only 10 percent of retailers have their campaigns promoted via their shopping centers' physical and digital marketing channels.
- 89 percent of shoppers said that promotions are the key determinant of what stores they will visit.

"The key is collaboration," says Keenan. "If communication improves between retailers and the centers regarding co-operative marketing channels, both sides win. Individual retailers have important promotional material that can be disseminated by the centers in their high-powered marketing platforms. The shopping centers benefit by having much more compelling and relevant content, which translates to more traffic for the landlord and e-commerce sites of the centers and stores, and increased sales for the retailers."

Store managers are often already running at full capacity, which explains why mall management typically finds getting timely promotional material out of the stores akin to pulling teeth.

"If retailers don't have the capacity to fully leverage existing marketing channels, they should consider looking for outside help," says Keenan. "The return on investment from maxi-

mizing and monetizing these marketing platforms — channels that, again, are already paid for — could be tremendous."

Each retailer pays into the shopping center marketing and has at least one campaign to promote at any given time. The centers want content from the stores, and the more relevant and rich the content, the better it is for all parties. It's about romancing a brand and engaging consumers by showcasing all a store has to offer, including:

- Featured products and services
- New arrivals
- Seasonal campaigns
- Sales and discounts
- Shopping and brand-specific events
- Loyalty and reward programs
- Contests, giveaways, etc.

"When mall management and retailers work together to ensure a steady stream of rich content, the results will always be increased impressions with consumers, more traffic and increased sales," says Rob Driscoll, president of Business Edge Media, which has been covering retail and marketing trends for 18 years. "Taking advantage of these opportunities takes dedicated resources and potentially outside support, but the payoff is huge."

In utilizing existing marketing channels, retailers will need to place an emphasis on the fast-growing mobile realm. In its report *The State of Mobile 2019*, App Annie highlights the obvious: that shopping centers and retailers must stay on top of develop-



Sean Snyder
Engagement Agents



North American retailers are missing out on billions of impressions and huge opportunities for additional traffic and sales by not taking advantage of existing marketing programs.

ing mobile tools in order to maximize sales.

According to the study:

- Global time spent in shopping apps grew to 18 billion hours in 2018, up 45 percent from 2016.
- November 2018 marked the biggest mobile shopping month of all time by total time spent globally.
- Sessions, akin to foot traffic, grew 65 percent globally over two years.
- In the U.S., mobile shopping sessions grew 70 percent over two years.

“Mobile has taken over share of wallet for U.S. consumers,” says the report. “Retailers leveraged mobile to drive both in-store and digital traffic. Digital sales, in particular, saw strong correlation with growing mobile engagement. Brick-and-mortar retailers like Target, Walmart and Nordstrom are leveraging mobile for accessible loyalty programs, point-of-sale payments, in-store efficiencies, product information, in-store mapping and purchase fulfilment.

Engagement also grew for bricks-and-clicks retailers in 2018. The study says:

“Digital-first retail apps saw 1.5 to 3 times more average sessions per user

than apps from bricks-and-clicks retailers. However, bricks-and-clicks retailers made strides to close this gap in 2018. Retailers like Nike leveraged mobile for innovative and engaging in-store experiences such as reserving sizes in-store, accessing rewards and receiving assistance from an employee in-store when desired. The bottom line is digital-first retailers have so far, on average, done a better job catering to mobile shoppers than bricks-and-clicks retailers. However, bricks-and-clicks retailers are beginning to embrace mobile’s transformative power — through m-commerce and enhanced in-store experiences — to grow their top line.”

While mobile technology in theory could save time, working to optimize marketing opportunities takes time and resources. Each shopping center has its own requirements in accepting retailer marketing campaign content. Delivering rich content to the centers’ marketing team can be a complex and time-consuming process. It is therefore imperative that retailers simplify and automate marketing procedures, particularly in the case of larger chains.

The secret is to publish once and promote to many locations. Key objectives for retailers should include:

- simplifying the internal process of gathering the content and the external process of communicating content out to their shopping centers.
- automating the distribution of content to their shopping centers, alleviating the time-consuming, complex process of doing so manually, or being reliant on individual store managers to distribute.
- tracking the success of campaigns within the shopping centers’ physical and digital marketing channels in order to help make better business and marketing decisions.
- ensuring their brand and campaigns are current, consistent, correct and compliant across all of their shopping centers’ marketing channels.

Success on these fronts leads to driving more impressions, traffic and sales to the retailer and shopping center. **AR**

Sean Snyder is president of Engagement Agents, which helps retailers and shopping centers increase traffic and sales. He is an award-winning sales, e-commerce, marketing and technology leader.