

WHITE PAPER



Getting in the Zone:  
Self-Adhesive Films are the Building Blocks  
for Branded Zone In-Store Campaigns

Let's face it, most people love to shop, but even if you don't, it's safe to say you have spent countless hours in malls, supermarkets, department stores and pharmacies.

Brand owners and retailers surely welcome the traffic, realizing that many of the consumers who are perusing aisles, checking out products on shelves, and taking in the at-retail landscape are perhaps less likely to be impulse buyers and more apt to be selective with their purchases. This kind of shift is a direct result of an economy that is starting to show some signs of recovery, despite the recession, but has had a significant effect on the retail industry.

As a result, brand owners and retailers have made adjustments in the ongoing battle to retain and attract consumer mindshare as well as increase basket size. Brand owners are investing more resources in shopper marketing and implementation of consumer insights within the store. Retailers are redesigning stores with a "customer-centric" focus and collaborating with brands on ways to connect with their shoppers and create a memorable experience that has a positive impact on sales.

To do this, brand owners and retailers must embrace and invest in the branded zone concept by using the aisles, walls, shelves, windows, outdoor facades and product packaging as canvases for evocative graphics. Along with digital media, branded zones come to life with imaginative point-of-purchase (POP) displays, wall graphics and murals, two-way window graphics, and graphic advertising on floors, indoor carpets, and outdoor walkways.

A branded zone typically uses several of these components to make an ideal, shopper experience, if not destination. Ultimately, the goal is to create a store-within-a store environment that sparks an instant connection with consumers that engages them, gains their trust, and thus, builds loyalty. By bringing a brand experience fashioned with relevant lifestyle content right to the shopper—willing or unenthusiastic—an affinity for the merchandise is forged, driving purchasing behaviors.

## Suite of Dreams

An effective example of the branded zone concept is exemplified in arena or stadium luxury suites. These spaces provide 20 to 40 fans elegant and luxurious surroundings with an unparalleled view of the game, concert or special event. The interiors of these environs are typically understated, non-descript and cookie-cut, yet provide the perfect



**Before**



**After**

opportunity for branded zones. The management of the Cincinnati Reds recognized this and transformed one of its suites at the team's home, the Great American Ball Park.

The cozy confines of this particular suite certainly provide an enhanced Cincinnati Reds experience, from the lounge area to the kitchenette to the box seats on a private veranda. From this environment, America's favorite pastime is amplified with colorful Reds' logos and close-up images of a baseball's snow-white leather and bright red stitching. Bringing that experience home, however, are the life-size wall graphics depicting a game in black and white from yesteryear on one side and colorfully-vibrant, thought-provoking images of a large American Flag in the shape of the United States unfurled by servicemen in a present-day field.

## Market Trends and What is Working

The opportunities to stir up emotions, engage consumers, gain their trust and build loyalty can be lost if any type of in-store marketing campaign doesn't live up to shopper needs and expectations.

Their fiscal prudence is a symptom of the economic downturn. With the all too familiar and increasing gas and food prices, tightening credit and a slumping housing market, they have less money, and that means consumers have been forced from their comfort zones by market conditions; their attitudes shifting from "must have" to a "what's needed."

For retailers and brand owners, it's more than just a shopper looking for better values. It means that consumers are keeping tabs on the actions of brand owners and retailers rather than just listening to their talk. Careful spending among shoppers, believe it or not, spurs deliberate purchase decisions.

That is why a branded zone is so critical. A retailer or brand that is serious about earning trust must understand the needs and expectations of the shopper for a particular store or category in order to ensure that the in-store experience is a hit. The brand only stands to benefit for the long term when a brand owner or retailer harnesses the power of shopper demographics.

At the same time, the concept of a branded zone is subject to great interpretation. Many brand owners and retailers have rolled out graphic advertising for floors and shelving under the auspice that they had, in fact, established a branded zone. The notion of a branded zone goes beyond these effective in-store marketing strategies by dedicating a whole area of the retail environment to a brand and its products, just like the Cincinnati Reds did with the suite at the Great American Ball Park.

Alternative advertising utilizing self-adhesive films within a store environment has become essential for successful new product launches and for sustaining and growing sales of existing products. The use of traditional small format floor advertising in front of a product can yield a 7 to 16 percent increase in lift rates, according to News America Marketing, a Wilton, CT, based provider of consumer marketing services and information.



A branded zone at Klem's, an eclectic department store in Spencer, MA, worked for Carhartt, a manufacturer of premium work clothes; including jeans, work pants, and woven shirts. Floor-based murals of workers in Carhartt clothing, printed on a self-adhesive film system made up of vinyls, delivered a bold visual attraction that shoppers could not ignore. In fact, the general manager noted that many customers were asking department store staffers for the "coat in the picture on the floor."



Along with stretching their hard-earned dollars, consumers are also looking for relevant information or "way finding," which promotes lingering and elevates shopping experiences to out-of-the ordinary trips to the supermarket or department store from necessary errands.

"These advancements aim to enhance the shopping experience, lifting it to more than just a trip to a store, but rather a theatrical experience where purchasing merchandise is only part of the journey," Craig Hubbell, executive vice

president of media services for PlayNetwork Inc., recently wrote in "The theater of the brand: Building entertainment experiences at retail," for [www.retailcustomerexperience.com](http://www.retailcustomerexperience.com).

Carhartt and Klem's also saw a 31 percent increase in sales of clothing, and many brand owners and retailers are following suit, dramatically increasing their reliance on branding with self-adhesive films to reach and influence target audiences in places where they can more easily stand out from the crowd. P&G, for example, spent approximately \$3.5 billion in 2008 on trade promotion and shopper marketing in the U.S. and Canada.

That spending seems to fall in line with a forecast by PQ Media. The Stamford, Connecticut-based provider of alternative media and econometrics for media stakeholders predicts that, by 2012, one dollar in every four will be spent on alternative media as advertising strategies change along with consumer habits. This comes on the heels of a projection made by Veronis Suhler Stevenson, a New York-based private equity firm specializing in media and communication companies. Veronis Suhler Stevenson said 2009 saw an 8.5 percent growth in alternative media spending and nearly an 11 percent drop in traditional advertising spending for 2009.

Additionally, a recent Retail Systems Research report, "Walking the Razor's Edge: Managing the Store Experience in an Economic Singularity," indicates that 70 percent of retailers surveyed said they use in-store technologies to maintain or improve the customer experience and extend that experience past the lease line.

P&G recently told *AdvertisingAge* magazine that they stress to their creative ad agencies that if it no longer works at the store, it's no longer a good marketing idea for the maker of such iconic brands as Gillette, Crest, and Charmin. Shopper marketing at the store level, says P&G Spokeswoman Martha Depenbrock, is meant to be a "mind-set," not just another process in a company that already has plenty. P&G, she says, realizes that the in-store branding approach could have substantial influence on process, elevating shopper marketing, to also being a creative gatekeeper. "It means you have to have the end in

mind when you're coming up with the [marketing] idea," Depenbrock says. "If it doesn't work at the store, it's a miss."

Essentially, in-store marketing through branded zones is a practical idea, an economic stimulus package during a recession when many brand owners and retailers are vying for consumers at the shelf.



## At-Retail Trends

The total shopping experience continues to be the hot button for consumers, with 69 percent of shoppers indicating it is the most important factor when deciding where to shop, according to the In-Store Marketing Institute's (ISMI) Shopper Marketing Trends.

The ISMI's findings are quite compelling, noting that 65 percent of shoppers make lists before leaving home and 60 percent make a brand decision once they are in-store.

In-store branding does influence a brand decision, the ISMI says, with 60 percent of mass merchant shoppers making unplanned purchases and 66 percent of drug store shoppers making unplanned purchases. Additionally, the ISMI findings indicate that 70 percent are attracted to aisle displays, 63 percent to merchandising displays, 58 percent to department signage, and 52 percent to shelf strips.

In-store communication, the ISMI reports, is considered more effective for brand awareness and product benefits than out-of-home advertising. Furthermore, the institute says brands will be using in-store communications with a laser focus in the future to connect with the shopper. That represents an overall reconditioning of the shopper, who will seek deals or in-store branded zones, which will also bring them to more parts of the store. The ease of navigation component not only entices shoppers, it also reinforces their positive experience and influences repeat business, increases revenues and the overall success of the campaign for both the brand and retailer.

Walmart is coming out with their "best deals" spot in its stores for product sampling and low price solutions. Product comparisons, or compare and save scenarios are perfect candidates for branded zones as these strategies are becoming even more important to consumers. Private-label products sold by CVS, which has 1,200, as well as Walmart and Target, both of which have more than 2,000, will be the focus for in-store strategies as retailers know that consumers will connect to its brand names once they use these private-label products in the home.

At the same time, due to the pressure from retailer private labels, brand owners will have to differentiate products in performance and packaging. That's why getting the right product performance information in-store and on the product is a critical strategy for both.

## Opportunities and Solutions through Collaboration

Engaging shoppers in the store is more important than ever, but retailers and brand owners must also understand the others perspective when reaching out to consumers.

A report by Retail Systems Research based on a survey of 88 retailers and manufacturers in the spring of 2009 notes that a team approach is vital to a marketing cause, noting that brands “get too promotional and miss the bigger picture of consumer engagement in the store, while retailers lack the more nuanced shopper insights that brands can provide.”

Central to the success of the campaign is collaboration with a self-adhesive film supplier; material application specialist, advertising agency, printer, retailer and brand owner. The retailer and the supplier can help identify the canvases in a retail environment and recommend the right products for each surface. The brand owner and the creative ad agency can then paint the picture that tells the brand’s story. Together, these parties can create memorable shopping experiences.

Finding a self-adhesive supplier that understands the needs of your product and your target demographics, and who can provide custom, creative ways to execute product branding and branded zones are musts for any brand owner, retailer and advertising agencies building a brand. And many brand owners, retailers and advertising agencies are surprised to learn that any surface is game for out-of-home advertising or a branded-zone canvas.

Whether they approach a counter at a convenience store for a candy bar or enter a department store, the influence of vivid graphics at the point-of-purchase and within the at-retail environment enhances the shopping experience.



In fact, one study, by Alexandria, VA-based POPAI, the global association for marketing at-retail, confirmed that self-adhesive ads showing a photo of a beverage placed on cooler doors lifted soft drink sales by nearly 33 percent.

That’s why Klem’s turned to FLEXcon once again, this time to power its lawn and garden center, with vivid floor coverage using FLEXmark® floor art™ to promote products from The Scotts Miracle-Gro Co., following the successful 2008 holiday season, Carhartt campaign.

The Scotts’ promotion consisted of 900 square feet of graphics, depicting the branded zone, “Klem’s Lawn & Garden Center.” Upon walking through the entrance, a visitor first saw images of thick, green grass and the Scotts brand logo. A visitor couldn’t help but go left down an aisle with more images, the first of which were shots of Scotts’ 4-Step lawn care products and perhaps a reminder that it’s that time of year again. Reinforcing that influence were images of bright, colorful flowers, and other Scotts’ products, including Miracle-Gro®, Ortho® and Roundup®. As a result, Scott’s product sales at Klem’s increased by 29 percent.

The successes that Carhartt, Scotts and P&G have had with branded zones are just two examples of how self-adhesive film propelled effective brand building by transforming everyday surfaces into compelling, attention-getting, brand-building marketing.

At a time when consumers have become more selective as they try to stretch their dollars, it is imperative that brand owners and ad agencies incorporate the branded zone concept and other forms of alternative media advertising into their marketing campaign portfolios. Those who can implement strategies with branded content and messaging to create fun, exciting and memorable at-retail experiences for shoppers, wherever they are, will be the most successful at building brands and making meaningful connections with consumers, long after they have left the store.



### **About the Author**

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### **About FLEXcon**

FLEXcon is an ISO 9001:2008 worldwide manufacturer of pressure-sensitive films and adhesives for applications including indoor and outdoor advertising, bonding/mounting, and product identification, safety, hazard, bar-coded, and primary labels. The company's Value-Better-Supreme (VBS) product offering is the most extensive standard product offering in the pressure-sensitive film industry. FLEXcon is also a leader in developing custom solutions to meet unique converting or application needs. FLEXcon's mission is to provide its customers the highest quality products with exceptional service. The company is headquartered in Spencer, Massachusetts, and has operations throughout North America and Europe, with distribution worldwide. For more information on FLEXcon, visit [www.FLEXcon.com](http://www.FLEXcon.com).



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