

## Small-Screen Displays in a Retail Environment

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As digital signage evolves, more retailers are using the technology to make an impact. Small screens can be an inexpensive way to influence customers at the point of purchase.

When a customer is looking for a golf ball to cure his slice, has more dimples or a soft compression core, an interactive LCD display can help him make the decision. Even a small, 7-inch display with a touchscreen can guide the customer to make a purchase — a sign of emerging trend in digital signage. Digital signage is moving from brand-building content to educational interaction directly with the consumer.

prohibitively expensive. Many large-scale retail digital signage installations required investments in large flat-panel screens, networked servers and expensive updating and maintenance.

The falling prices of LCD screens and flash memory led to development of small, inexpensive digital signage products that help marketers get more information closer to the customer.

Marketers know customers love to buy things. But marketers are learning that customers don't like to feel as if they're on the receiving end of a sales pitch. Fueled by the explosion of consumer-rating Web sites, blogs and other media, customers want to feel like they're in control, navigating the flow of information and receiving it in an empowering manner.

The need for effective digital signage at the point of purchase or the shelf level was clear.

"We want monitors as close as possible to the product the consumer will buy," said Jason Goldberg, vice president of marketing for MTI, a retail merchandising firm.

Until recently, installing interactive digital signage at the point of purchase was



With an interactive touchscreen, like the one from Industrial Image (seen above), manufacturers can reach out directly to customers and help them make purchasing decisions.

For retailers and marketers, controlling the message that directly reaches the customer is a bonus. Rather than relying on sales staff to help a customer select the proper golf ball, the interactive display can ensure the customer has a positive experience.

“You don’t have to worry about training sales clerks because your message is exactly what you want to say to your customer at the point-of-purchase decision,” said Ken Menchio, director of business development for Cumming, Ga.-based Industrial Image Inc., a company specializing in digital signage hardware.

### Retail digital signage gets smaller

To fill an open niche in the digital signage landscape, Industrial Image developed its line of FlashView Ad Player stand-alone displays, available with 7- or 10-inch screens. These stand-alone, Flash-based players use industrial-quality LCD screens with push button or touchscreen interactivity. Marketers can use these sub-\$200 screens in a wide variety of retail locations.

“A marketer can place more screens at a lower cost, bringing digital signage as a marketing option in places where it hasn’t been available before,” Menchio said.

This new generation of digital signage players stands in contrast to the server-driven complexity of major retailers’ in-store networks. MTT’s Goldberg estimated a traditional networked digital signage installation would cost about \$6,000 per screen for hardware, software, installation and project management; \$100,000 to \$150,000 a year for content development and content management and \$600 to \$1,200 a year for on-site service contracts and proactive maintenance.

### Successful marketing campaigns

Ken Menchio, director of business development for Cumming, Ga.-based Industrial Image Inc., cites a few examples of successful marketing campaigns based on the FlashView Ad Player:

- A youth-oriented shoemaker launched a pilot program that returned a significant sales lift. This campaign featured another aspect of the FlashView Ad Player: a customized bezel. “We made a bezel in the shape of a shoe for them,” Menchio said.
- A carpet manufacturer installed the small screens in a display for flooring. Sales representatives install Flash-media-based data to update the content on a regular basis.
- An auto manufacturer demoed a decision-tree application that helped the consumer choose the type of car he wanted. The interactivity led to videos and data for each model.

By contrast, the FlashView Ad Player represents a reduction of more than 60 percent in the cost of touchscreen ad players.

“These numbers suggest that networked digital signage is extremely expensive to set up and manage, making it a tough proposition for most companies to even consider,” Menchio said.

Of course, even cheaper options are available. Consumer-level digital photo frames are showing up as digital signage displays, but the consumer-level display is not designed to operate around the clock for weeks on end.

“These digital photo frames have a short screen life and lack interactive controls,” Menchio said. “Also, the cases are not

rugged or secure so they're susceptible to vandalism.”

### Breaking out of the box

Development of high-quality yet affordable stand-alone touchscreen devices offers greater flexibility and impact to marketers. After studying the impact of dynamic media that incorporates audio and visual components, JC Williams Group, a retail research consultant concluded that shoppers are five to 10 times more likely to notice and recall dynamic media than static media. The research indicates that the greater level of interactivity leads to a more integrated and effective marketing campaign. Also, with stand-alone digital signage, brands can control the interaction for greater credibility with the customer.

More engaging digital signage at the point of sale plays into the impulsive nature of many customers. Several research studies point out that in-store media have a strong

influence on purchase decisions — customers may choose different coffee brands or a TV set from what they would normally buy, based on influence at the point of purchase. In-store media can also boost sales on a per-basket basis.

The availability of interactive displays in such a small, affordable package opens up new horizons for marketers. Previously, at this price point, the choices were of a static nature — a light box with a translucent graphic panel or traditional graphic signage. Affordable video displays were limited to showing video loops, with no option for customer engagement.

But all that has changed.

“Now we have the option of interacting with a potential customer,” Menchio said. “Retailers see the value of interactivity; we’ve just made it easier and less expensive.”

**About the sponsor:** Industrial Image Inc., based in Cumming, Ga., provides high-quality visual products and accessories for industrial, retail, hospitality and other markets. Industrial Image offers the highest-quality LCD screens and the most durable enclosures. The staff has more than 45 years of experience in the fields of automation, computer hardware, design and fabrication. All products come with a one-year warranty and factory support.



A small digital signage player, like the Flashview Ad Player, can help retailers reach customers.