

## Retail Technology

# High-tech retail kiosks drive sales, boost brands

By Gary Evans

**HIGH POINT** — Two companies have partnered to bring the latest in furniture kiosks to retail showrooms designed to drive purchase conversions, allow manufacturers to provide consistent brand management and help dealers take some of the sting out of showrooming.

The companies are Kentucky-based Eyeconic, headed by CEO Jeremy Jacobs, and North Carolina-based GET Interactive, a home furnishings-specific company headed by industry veteran Rick Harrison.

Kiosks serve as computerized way stations that allow consumers to do everything from perusing manufacturers' prod-

uct catalogs to buying product and scheduling delivery.

The kiosks are already in use at Natuzzi. The companies say they plan to announce other users at the winter Las Vegas Market.

Among the capabilities of the kiosk, the companies say, are driving sales by giving consumers more product choices via a kiosk catalog, incorporating third party technology such as room planners and fabric drapery capabilities to allow consumers to customize products, taking credit applications and telling consumers (and the store) how much credit they have to spend. Kiosks also allow consumers to swipe a card, make a purchase and schedule delivery.

Since it can do several things a sales associate traditionally does, it can also be a tool for reducing staff costs and training, the companies say.

"This is a broad-based integrated solution," said Harrison, maintaining that less enlightened equipment can be nothing more than "a glorified catalog. This provides the opportunity to take every single one of the retailer's goals from a marketing and/or commerce perspective and couple them with manufacturers' goals, and push them forward into an engaged retail environment that allows consumers to accomplish their goals right at the point of contact.

"The brand can tell the story, the retailer can tell his story,



Consumers can use these computerized kiosks from Eyeconic and GET Interactive in Natuzzi stores. The companies plan to announce other users early next year.

it can take place there on the screen," he added. "Consumers can design their own products and schedule delivery and a transaction can take place right there on the screen."

Since the kiosk program is an integrated solution, manufacturers aren't required to reinvent the wheel and can use systems they already have, he said.

The companies recently added MicroD video catalog capabilities, and have incorporated other solutions to allow a kiosk program to be friendly to programs already used by the industry.

"This can be customized. At the top of your macro level, it's an instantaneous global tool. Push a button and everybody gets the same thing everywhere. Conversely, this can be customized down to a single store," Harrison said.

Specifically, if a retailer has stores in both high-end and modest neighborhoods, it can tailor sales accordingly, using higher-end product in more

ritzy areas. Other information also can be targeted to locations, such as a specific sofa "available at this store only."

"It's a one-stop technology shopping center," said Jacobs.

Kiosks can also push products that a manufacturer aggressively wants to promote.

The system also provides analytics and tracking "to know which buttons people are touching so you can say, 'Hey, this isn't working'," said Jacobs. "Maybe you thought something was important to your customers but it doesn't seem to be. You can make the real estate on the kiosk work for you."

For consumers who "showroom" — shop at stores and then buy online if they find a better price — the kiosk is an if-you-can't-beat-them, join-them tool, the companies say. A dealer can include Internet access at a kiosk so consumers can compare prices on-site, giving the retailer an opportunity to match the price or offer offsetting incentives to go for the sale.

## Jordan's using Coda Financials

By Gary Evans

**TAUNTON, Mass.** — Twenty years ago, Jordan's Furniture here purchased an enterprise resource planning system that has grown with its merchandising, inventory and operational needs.

But when the time came to modernize the budgeting module, Jordan's ultimately decided to select a financial management solution that its leaders felt has the right ingredients to spur innovation well into the future.

That system is Coda Financials, a suite of financial management and accounting software designed to integrate with industry and company-specific applications, from Unit4 Coda.

"We have a great IT department that has been able to customize our ERP system over the years as we have grown," said Steve Wholley, vice president of finance for Jordan's. "But the financial module was no longer keeping up, and the temporary fixes had reached a point where they were expensive to maintain.

"While we initially thought we'd replace just the budgeting and planning module, it became clear through the RFP

process that a best-of-class solution that coexists well with our current system was the way to go."

Jordan's evaluated several financial solutions on the market, including those from ERP vendors.

With five high volume stores in Massachusetts, New Hampshire and Rhode Island, the management at Jordan's wanted to have real-time tracking and reporting capabilities across all locations, with the ability to drill down to a granular level by multiple variables. The single ledger and flexible chart of accounts that Coda Financials offers will enable management to perform more accurate and detailed analysis than other solutions it examined, the company said.

"Ultimately, the budget and planning modules of Coda Financials, coupled with the ease of integration and deep functionality won the day," said Wholley. "As an added bonus, the Unit4 Coda team has been very easy to work with, and this bodes well for our partnership in the future."

According to Steve Pugh, CEO of Unit4 Coda, part of a \$603 million global software company, "Jordan's Furniture's business is one of constant

change, constant innovation, and customer focus. Every decision and purchase it makes has to show clear benefits and add significant value in how it operates in the high pressure world of retail. Jordan's has a clear vision of the future, and sees Coda Financials as a strategic system that will help it realize that vision."

Coda Financials, based in Manchester, N.H., says it provides real-time financial visibility and control across people, processes and systems.

## RedPrairie adds Vortex mobile features

**ATLANTA** — The recent acquisition of mobile management solutions company Vortex Connect by supply chain and retail technology provider RedPrairie creates the industry's first single provider of mobile-enabled solutions that manage the workforce across operational disciplines including stores, warehouses and distribution centers, the companies said.

The Vortex acquisition gives RedPrairie's Enterprise Workforce Management new capabilities such as mobile shift management and bidding, mobile communications and operations management, and employee self-service.

According to RedPrairie, a software supplier to the furniture industry, the combination of features enables companies to streamline

operational processes, maximize employee productivity, reduce costs and enhance efficiencies by communicating data in real-time through multi-channel touch points.

Additionally, RedPrairie said it will leverage the Vortex acquisition to establish a Mobility Center of Excellence in Toronto, where Vortex is based. The center will focus on utilizing mobility effectively throughout the extended supply chain as well as the application of mobility across RedPrairie's solution footprint.

"As the consumerization of technology pushes further into the business world, RedPrairie believes that the adoption of a mobile platform is increasingly vital to our customers' success," said John Kopcke, RedPrairie's chief technology officer.