



# The Secret to Telling Your Brand's Story With Immersive Retail Design



## Special Report

## The Secret to Telling Your Brand's Story With Immersive Retail Design

Immersive retail experiences encourage shoppers to interact with your products — to provide them with a creative experience and an informational display. It gives them lots of details about your products in an engrossing way. Immersive retail experiences aren't just programs full of elaborate technology. They are all about providing experiences that invoke all five senses — and this is where your creativity is crucial.

Use smells, sounds and sights to send them to a whole new world. Experiential, immersive retail is one of the fastest growing segments in retail and is really all about telling a story.

There are a lot of creative methods of delivering this immersive experience to the retail customer. Many retailers today are opening what is being called the “Pop Up Shop.”



Pop-up shops are a new type of experiential retail that is now a \$10 billion dollar industry. Theme-oriented shopping experiences, Pop-ups can appear unexpectedly and are marketed as special events. The pop-up store is a fantastic marketing strategy for retailers looking to expand their brand and introduce new products.

Often set up in empty storefronts, as stand-alone kiosks, or in trucks, they can appear within regular brick-and-mortar stores as a “store-within-a-store.” Nordstrom, for example, hosts a recurring group of what they call “Pop-in@Nordstrom”, featuring products not typically found in a Nordstrom store.

Here are some other examples of immersive retail:

## 1. LOWES

U.S. home improvement retailer, Lowe's, has been on the forefront of immersive retail marketing for quite some time. The store introduced a number of features years ago to streamline the physical shopping experience, including a mobile app that allows users to access real-time store inventory, and equipping staff with iPhones to help with inquiries.

In February 2018, Lowe's was named #1 in the *Top 10 Most Innovative Companies in AR/VR* by Fast Company. Fast Company is a monthly American business magazine that focuses on technology, business, and design. Augmented reality (AR) adds digital elements to a live view by using the camera on a smartphone. Virtual reality (VR) is a complete immersion experience that shuts out the physical world.

As a leader in innovation, Lowe's determined to solve certain challenges by developing powerful new augmented, mixed and virtual reality experiences. Research found that \$70 billion dollars' worth of home improvement projects stall out every year. Why? Despite people's desire to renovate, they are often unable to visualize a completed project and they lack confidence and know-how.

In order to solve these problems, in 2017, Lowe's released applications that assist customers with designing and visualizing their projects, learning DIY skills, and even navigating the Lowe's store using AR/VR technology. "Our innovation story connects back to the company's

purpose of helping people love where they live, now and in the future," said Josh Shabtai, director of Lowe's Innovation Labs. "As a company, we've laid the groundwork for AR and VR experiences that help our customers and employees visualize



their spaces, learn new skills and even better navigate the store. In 2018, we'll aim to expand these experiences and develop compelling new ones for all of our customers."

Working with Google's Tango AR technology, the Lowe's solution provides indoor mapping which shows customers how to search and quickly find items in the store. Lowe's also released their *Lowe's Vision* app. It allows customers to easily

measure any room in their home with a touch of a finger, and style it with virtual Lowe's products in real-time through augmented reality.

Recently, Lowe's introduced a remarkable product, the *Holoroom How To*. Customers put on a VR headset and hold a controller. They can then learn how to tile a shower seeing themselves doing it in the headset. With this VR technology, customers were shown to have approximately 40% greater memory retention of steps to complete a DIY project.

## 2. HUNTER

Hoping to define its brand, HUNTER, the simple wellington boot company, worked with music experts Music Concierge and Kaleidovision, to create an immersive retail experience. To heighten their customers' shopping experience, they unveiled a five-meter high LED videowall covering their 3 story building in one location and a store to evoke the feeling of the Scottish Highlands in Scotland.



In addition to their London store, Hunter has also opened a new store in Japan, designed to appeal to both the visual and auditory senses with huge digital displays to keep customers engaged. In Tokyo, shoppers enter the store through an imaginary forest with life-size tree trunks. The ceiling is a digital lightbox that looks like a cloudy sky. Digital screens throughout the store display scenes and live events from all over the world. The sounds of rainstorms and thunder make



shoppers truly feel like they are right in the middle of the landscapes being shown on the display.

### 3. ADOBE

Marrying a physical retail location and the Internet of Things (IOT), Adobe's Store of the Future in Las Vegas provides excitement for all of its shoppers. The cloud platform features RFID (radio frequency identification) chip-enabled shopping bags that provide all sorts of information in a relatively new technology.

Customers shop online and then, visit the retail store where the items they selected online are already in their "Smart Bag." Then, every time the shopper puts something else in the bag, the item is automatically recorded for them onto their shopping "log" and that information is also



transmitted to the retailer to keep the information for the future of selling to that particular customer. Once the customer goes to the fitting room to try on the jeans they selected (for example), they are able to check out before ever leaving the room. Making the most of the shopping experience is both more profitable and more productive in the new age of retail, Adobe believes.

Software giant Adobe's prototype store in Las Vegas demonstrates that brick and mortar retailers can use the same kind of data that powers ecommerce while providing customers with an exciting and joyful shopping trip. The "Internet of Things (IOT) is a network of devices, appliances and other items that are embedded with electronics and software that allow them to integrate the physical world into computer systems. The economic benefits to retailers are huge.

### 4. SAMSUNG

Understanding that customers want interactions, instead of just transactions, Samsung created a digital playground at its store in New York City, Samsung 837. Customers at the store are encouraged to interact with Samsung in a whole new variety of ways.



The living lab and digital playground features numerous installations and touchpoints on 3 floors and include, a

one-of-a-kind digital screen, auditorium seating for live performances and special events, a Gallery, a broadcast studio, and much more. The state-of-the-art building delivers fascinating experiences for customers.

“We set out to build a marketing center of excellence,” said Gregory Lee, President and CEO of Samsung Electronics America. “We immediately thought of New York City, where the best marketing happens and where people have a finger on the pulse of culture. As a result, we have and will continue to attract top talent from around the world. Reimagining the traditional store experience, 837 is a fully immersive cultural center, featuring programming which will tap into people’s passions such art, music, entertainment, sports, wellness, culinary, technology and fashion, all powered and enriched by technology.”



One super unique experience is a virtual reality tunnel that allows visitors to meet their digital alter ego by displaying their Instagram account.

## 5. JOHNNIE-O



Los Angeles-based online retailer Johnnie-O wanted to introduce their brand to new markets and decided to open a pop-up shop in New York City. They knew they wanted to familiarize people with the West Coast lifestyle, so they literally brought the beach to Manhattan.

Real sand, beach chairs, and buckets of beer

encouraged visitors to experience Johnnie-O's West Coast" lifestyle, with an air of summer weekend getaways to the beach or golf course.

The Johnnie-O pop-ups were a huge success when they introduced their new



moisture-wicking polo shirts at the same time as summer’s arrival and the approach of Father’s Day.

**6. WARBY PARKER**

Warby Parker, the famous sunglass retailer, introduced their “Seesummerbetter Campaign” by showing customers how to enjoy the season through the use of their upscale sunglasses. The campaign helped shoppers download a map of must-see destinations throughout the U.S., together with a Spotify playlist and samples of some of the hottest new sunglass styles.



Destinations on the map included Cadillac Ranch in Amarillo, Texas; Stax Museum of American Soul Music in Memphis; and the world’s largest ketchup bottle in Collinsville, Ill., among others (including where the company’s stores are located).

By the way, Warby Parker was named Fast Company’s *Most Innovative Company of 2015* and applauded for being the first great “made on the Internet” brand. They continue to develop their bricks-and-mortar presence with great success — and their exciting marketing techniques are a major part of this success.

**7. FAIR FOLKS & A GOAT**

With a \$25 monthly subscription, customers of Greenwich Village’s Fair Folks & A Goat get as many coffees, teas and lemonades as they desire. The shop also features clothing, art, home design items and other goods that shoppers don’t have to be members to purchase. Members do receive discounts on select stock, in addition to invitations to special events and access to a home away from home community. A second location has been added and the retailer continues to expand. Friends that are referred receive a free month’s membership.



## 8. HOME DEPOT CANADA

Retail design company Holman created an interactive decor guide for Home Depot Canada locations. The company's experiential retail concept featured an immersive display set-up that gave visitors decor tips and step-by-step instructions on making their next home improvement project a success.



In addition to informative signage, the interactive decor guide also featured a digital display component and was equipped with 'Dream Design Build' stations that allowed visitors to bring their home improvement or design concept to life digitally.

Using touchscreen-equipped design stations, visitors were given a chance to get creative while having access to helpful advice from Home Depot's in-store home improvement experts. Building a smaller vignette inside of a larger retail space, Holman created a niche area that featured decor tips and an immersive, digital retail display component.

## 9. IHEARTRADIO

Hoping to reach a young demographic, IHeartRadio's social media vending machine offers free items in exchange for visitors' Instagram posts. Their pop-up kiosks have toured American universities and colleges and offered free t-shirts to anyone who shared their love for IHeartRadio via their social networks.

These social media vending machines are not the first time they've ever been used. They are similar to other retail models that rely on technology. Appealing to millennials, this retail concept promotes a brand while giving visitors an experience they won't forget too soon. This immersive strategy gained IHeartRadio over 5 million online impressions and was



very successful with students and young millennials who were able to have fun joining in on the brand's social media “trick.”

## Conclusion

Keep in mind that once a potential customer crosses the threshold into your space, the environment needs to meet or exceed his or her expectations by immersing them in an experience. It doesn't have to be a realistic experience or a practical one, but it needs to evoke an emotional connection to your brand. How can you create the sights, sounds, smells and even a touch, that will tell a story to your customer and help them to remember you, and most importantly, want to do business with you. Immerse them in a fascinating experience!

## About the Author

Elias Amash, President of GRIP, is an industry veteran with more than 20 years of experience in global sourcing, manufacturing, distribution, retail merchandising, fulfillment, marketing, technology, and operations. He is a trusted partner to hundreds of retailers and has “leveled up” the industry with GRIP’s undying commitment to offering only the highest levels of service to its customers. Amash has recently published his fourth business book, Retail Survival, Who Lives, Who Dies and Why, which is available on Amazon. He is also the author of The Future of Retail, Importing from China: The Good, The Bad, and The Ugly, and 101 Bright Ideas: Winning Tactics to Increase Retail Sales. You can download these other books at [www.whygrip.com](http://www.whygrip.com).

## About GRIP

GRIP was incorporated by Charles Amash in 1980 and has grown into one of the nation’s top suppliers retail industry. Located Michigan, GRIP of the art warehouse product showroom.



of innovative products to the just south of Grand Rapids, features a 200,000 sq ft state facility including a 2,000 sq ft GRIP carries a product line of over 1,000 specialty hand tools, automotive, cargo control, Goodyear Air hose, LED lighting, Magnetics, outdoors, household items, and general merchandise. GRIP has a proven track record of excellence in supplying retail clients with innovative products, timely fulfillment, and world-class customer support. At GRIP, everything is about

earning your business...one customer at a time. It's about building relationships and fostering business partnerships that will last long into the future. Our goal is to have Customers for Life. The future at GRIP is exciting and we're hoping that you can be a part of it as one of our many Customers for Life. Learn more at [www.whygrip.com](http://www.whygrip.com) and [www.gripontools.net](http://www.gripontools.net).