



Microsoft tackles technologically neglected cart

by Lisa Angerame (Endeavour Consulting) - February 12, 2008

Web tools and technologies have enabled us to better manage our friends, music, and careers in a way that adds meaning to our daily lives. Yet when it comes to managing our meal planning and food shopping, very little has changed. Most of us jot down our list on scrap paper, grab an ad circular and then wander up and down the store aisles hoping we can find everything we need. The food shopping experience has remained decidedly low-tech.

Microsoft and Texas-based MediaCart have teamed up to change this. For the past four years, Microsoft has been working with MediaCart as an industry solution, part of the next generation store systems strategy. Created 100 percent on the Microsoft platform, MediaCart designs, builds and tests shopping carts fitted with video screens that will deliver tailored ads to the individual shopper. Moms will be able to type up their shopping lists at home on their PCs, swipe their loyalty card on the MediaCart console and then their list -- along with a layout of the store, e-coupons, recipes, and comparison pricing -- will populate on the screen. "The timing is right now for consumers to receive and accept digital advertising right at the point of service, whereas it wasn't three or four years ago," says Paula Paravecchio, Industry Managing Director of Microsoft's Worldwide Retail team.

"From Europe to Southeast Asia, and from Australia to Trinidad and Tobago, everywhere I go consumers of all ages are thrilled to try out the new carts," says David Brice, CEO of MediaCart. "Everyone knows the cart. Your mom pushed you around in it as a kid, and now you use it all the time. We knew we couldn't go drastically change something everyone is so familiar with. Despite the technology, we've kept the cart simple in that we've complemented the cart rather than replaced it."

As an indication of the general public's readiness, MediaCart and Brice have been invited to appear on [Rachel Ray's popular TV cooking show](#) among others. Demonstrating the cart to this targeted audience -- likely the same group of people who would be using it -- will be a rare opportunity. "The ShopRite store where we ran the pilot had about 400 carts total. About half of them were MediaCarts so shoppers had a choice to use them or not. It was very encouraging to see that people were lining up waiting for their turn to use our carts," says Brice in relaying one example of consumer satisfaction. Of course, shoppers' personal data is kept confidential. "Privacy and protecting consumers' information is a top concern to us. Shoppers' purchases are anonymously recorded," says Paravecchio.

In addition to benefitting consumers, advertisers are very excited about MediaCart and the unique possibilities it presents. Advertisers will be able to reach consumers in a very personalized way and will receive near-immediate feedback about ad effectiveness instead of having to depend on data aggregated from consumer pools. "Seventy percent of consumer product decisions are made at point of purchase right there in the store. In the past no one has been able to effectively advertise at that precise moment," says Paravecchio in discussing how the location-based and RFID technologies enable an advertiser to reach consumers at that critical yet elusive decision-making second. "If you think about the challenge an advertiser has in the purchase funnel, the ultimate end point is the impulse buy," adds Scott Ferris, general manager of Microsoft's Advertiser and Publisher Solutions (APS).

"An end-to-end solution built using Windows Server Standard 2003 R2, SQL Server Enterprise 2005, SQL Server Reporting Services, Windows CE 6.0, RFID and Atlas, MediaCart integrates a true multi-channel shopping experience, all the way from the advertiser to the consumer," says Paravecchio in discussing what Microsoft brings to the table.

"We have a pretty impressive list of technology platforms that cover the gamut of emerging media channels," says Ferris. Moreover, the work that has gone into creating MediaCart serves as a significant and highly visible example of the Microsoft WW Retail team and [APS group](#) successfully working together. Employees can take a lot of pride in knowing that this all-around innovative solution is a result of cross-team efforts and a "One Microsoft" approach.

Though employees may want to run out to their local supermarket and give these modern shopping carts a test spin, they will have to wait until 2009. Employees on the East Coast may get a head start as round two of piloting will begin in the second half of 2008 at ShopRite stores in New Jersey.

See also:

- » [MediaCart, Microsoft and Wakefern Team Up to Deliver Next-Generation Digital Grocery Shopping and Ad Experience](#)
- » [Wakefern, MediaCart, Microsoft to Offer Targeted POS Advertising](#)
- » [Shopping trolleys to issue hi-tech 'smart-ads'](#)
- » [CNN: Smart cart helps shoppers \(Video\)](#)

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