

Scenarios in retail kiosk planning

Intelligent Kiosk Profile Design for Vertical Applications

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Integrating computer systems into functional kiosks can often lead one down a path where parts and components are duplicated, missing, or don't quite fit together. This kind of "integration"

adds expense and frustration to a project. The good news is that through careful planning and intelligent selection of kiosk hardware and computer systems, these frustrations can largely be mitigated.

When planning a kiosk setup, there are many issues to be faced, including hardware configuration, choice of location, and functionality. Kiosk design requires a deep understanding of usability—how consumers interact with the devices—so that the end result adds convenience to their overall experience.

One problem faced at the onset comes with planning entire chassis enclosures for kiosk systems. The issue is how to define the right solution with the right peripherals at installation time, and arrange it all in a single box. Post-installation additions and changes are difficult because there is considerably less flexibility for adding or deleting parts after the systems have gone live.

At one time, it was considered sufficient that a

self-service kiosk computer carry out whatever function it was tasked to do. Little thought was paid to appearance or profile; simply delivering information was enough.

Today, however, kiosk chassis customizations are almost always demanded because most kiosk owners are trying to add to the value proposition of their goods or services. "Standard" configuration is passé; hardware, software and aesthetics must be balanced and brought together in successful kiosk deployments.

"We see clients selecting the form factor based on necessity," said a spokesperson for Olea, an industry leading company in kiosk design. "It might be that floor space is at a premium in their facility, so placing a self-service kiosk on a small space or on a wall that can still have product around or below it might be best."



For a kiosk system to have the flexibility to handle a variety of processes, it is best to find a mix of floor-standing solutions with diversified components. For retail applications, a suitable turnkey solution that is flexible and modular in design may be a better answer than a more rigidly fixed kiosk display.

The planning process can be broken down into a few simple steps from concept to installation, and that lead to productive use in a retail environment. The steps, as outlined in this document, can save retailers time and money in building kiosk systems for their specific applications.

Key Decision Points

Usable Aesthetics

In the ongoing battle between form and function, a balance must be struck. Systems must work, and they must look great. Customers are no longer willing to accept one or the other.

Olea Kiosk's CEO, Frank Olea, points to a concept called "usable aesthetics," in which visual elements are turned into functional ones, and vice versa.

Unlike the typical ATM-style self-service kiosk, everything should flow together visually and functionally in customizing a floor stand design. A feature such as a modular shelf designed into the kiosk to make the user experience easier is an example of usable aesthetics. A balance must be made between

aspects of design, cost and usability. A traditional chassis in a standard kiosk system may not be particularly attractive. In some cases this may not matter. But in other cases, where appearance is more important, the kiosk provider is better off looking at floor stand profiles that use modular components, which offer more flexibility in arrangement. Cost should be considered in both cases.

Easy to Use as Building Blocks

Everyone has seen building block construction sets which allow kids to build almost anything, limited only by their imaginations. Using this same building block concept in kiosk design, Advantech has taken its UTC family of products down to the building block level, allowing component reuse and combinations in the design of application-specific kiosk functions. This can simplify the design and construction of a floor stand kiosk. The flexibility extends beyond the kiosk to the peripheral attachments offered for specific application needs. UTC kiosks can be built to satisfy a broad range of customer needs – for instance, the adding of a smart card reader, RFID reader, or NFC (Near Field Communication) technology. A unique kiosk design profile can be constructed which will ensure an upgraded service experience for the end customer.



Keep in mind that size and price aren't always related. In much the same way that industrial panel PCs are more expensive than consumer, all-in-one PCs, mini-kiosks can be pricier than floor-standing models since everything has to be put into a limited space.

And users will invariably be drawn to the nice-looking, stylish design found in a modular system as opposed to that of a standard looking model.

A highly flexible system optimizes self-service processes and enables different scenario designs. But there are cost tradeoffs and these should be factored into ROI calculations when considering investment costs vs. customization. When first starting out with kiosks, retailers might be better advised to start on a small scale as they discover what does and doesn't work in their specific application or environment.

"Why invest the money in a custom design now when you don't yet know what's going to work for you?" asks Olea. "Standard kiosks are always better to use in a beta-test rollout or trial run beyond large-scale project," he continued. Advantech's UTC responds to the issue this way: Start with a small-scale application, a single retail focus, or a single self-service function. Assemble the system using flexible components into a turnkey solution, and forgo the expense of the bulky enclosures found in traditional kiosks. Learn what works, and add components to fit the need.

Benefits of a UTC Turnkey Approach

Lower TCO while providing a functional kiosk:

Whatever kiosk design is ultimately chosen, with exception of electronic components the highest investment cost is on enclosure and materials. Instead of spending money to build everything into an expensive chassis that may only deliver one or two functions and is difficult to expand, use the building block concept and create each function as needed, piece by piece. These components will

work together to deliver a complete solution for a fraction of the cost. And as business needs change, the system can easily be changed to accommodate.

Any scenario design, any possibility: Offering a

sleek profile of frames, peripherals, brackets and systems, UTC's family of products provides quick configuration for any application—very important in meeting demand



from different vertical markets. The reality is that retailers won't consider investing a lot of money for systems that don't provide a reasonable payback. UTC systems offer a good ROI with different profiles and modular designs that can flex with changing business trends; and off-the-shelf models that are extremely simple to use, and easy to customize and deploy.



Final Thoughts

It is well known that "the customer is king!" If kiosks don't attract the attention of customers and allow them added convenience through self-service, they might as well not be deployed. To work, the devices



must be attractive, with good ergonomics, deliver information quickly and effectively, and be beneficial to the end-user. A single-function, modular kiosk intelligently deployed may serve those needs much better than its full-blown, multi-function counterpart.

If the self-service kiosk does the job it's supposed to do, while creating satisfying customer experiences, it becomes a huge asset to a business. Using exactly the right technology, in the right place to deliver this experience, saves money, increases customer service, and represents a winning strategy for the business.

The intelligent modularity of UTC systems ensure kiosk designs that win every time.