

CORPORATE BACKGROUNDER

nParallel Captures Clients' Visions in Merchandising Systems, Store Fixtures and Tradeshow Displays that Energize and Propel Brands

MINNEAPOLIS – August 2006 – Consumer spending drives the economy. The U.S. retail industry generates some \$3.8 trillion in sales annually. As they compete for their share of consumers' dollars, brand marketers and retailers confront tough challenges. Shoppers have more demands on their time today. Consumers' time and attention are now scarce resources. Yet, while they are hassled and hurried and expect shopping to be convenient and efficient, consumers also crave engagement and emotional connection in the retail experience. Faced with a proliferation of product choices and too little time, consumers today increasingly seek – and rely on – the authenticity, credibility and consistency of brands.

Brand marketers and retailers alike know that store designs, merchandising systems and product displays can build and enhance the brand experience, engage and inform customers, and drive sales. According to Kathryn Koegel, director of research and industry development for DoubleClick, Inc. (www.doubleclick.com), a leading provider of market research and marketing tools, when consumers enter stores, they are ready to actively seek information. Thus, in-store advertising and point-of-purchase merchandising systems are primary communication tools for capturing consumer attention, generating brand awareness, and communicating brand and product attributes.

To work effectively, store designs and displays must be planned with imagination and then skillfully crafted. But, too often, unfocused planning, uneven execution, unexpected costs and multiple vendor mark-ups squeeze the creative spark out of the most promising brand marketing communication concepts. In the process of taking great ideas through design, prototype development, production, and on to program roll-out, the creative essence gets lost in translation. Marianne Wilson, senior editor of Chain Store Age, captured this frustration and disappointment in a November 2003 article: "Elements, some big, some small, are watered down or abandoned, and a format that seemed so fresh and invigorating seems but a pale imitation."

Effectively communicating brands in the tradeshow venue also requires top-notch design and execution. Differentiating brands on a crowded tradeshow floor, in the brief moments a company has to capture attention, is challenging. Moreover, many tradeshow managers are raising red flags about deteriorating service levels as vendors consolidate and cut back staff. To compound the problems, marketing executives are under intense pressure to control costs and face the demand to do more with less. Today, they must deliver results with fewer resources.

The Alternative? nParallel

Enter nParallel, the brand communication, merchandising strategy and display agency. nParallel's retail and tradeshow professionals have decades of experience supporting premier brands and leading retailers –

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including Cambria, Best Buy, Hearth & Home Technologies, The Home Depot and Under Armour. Whether the venue is a retail store or a tradeshow, nParallel's merchandising systems and displays build the brand experience and enhance product presentation to engage customers and boost sales. From brand and strategic planning, to creative development, to fully coordinated manufacturing and fulfillment, to program management – nParallel supports clients every step of the way. And nParallel ensures brand consistency in tradeshow displays. Whether the solution is refurbishing and re-working existing booth components, or a fresh design and new build, nParallel delivers.

What makes nParallel's talented team of strategists, designers and program directors unparalleled? "We capture clients' big-picture visions while keeping a sharp eye focused on the details of disciplined execution, and the budget bottom line," explained Megan Diamond, president, nParallel. "We strive to bring world-class strategic expertise, unmatched design creativity and uncompromised excellence to every client's project."

The outcome? Unbounded creativity plus on-budget management of project resources yields substantial cost savings compared to prevailing pricing and delivers results – stronger consumer commitment to brands and increased sales.

Who Says? nParallel Clients

Hearth & Home Technologies is the world's leading manufacturer of fireplaces and hearth products. They wanted a comprehensive point-of-sale system for its Heat & Glo™ and Quadra-Fire® brands that would communicate brand attributes and highlight product features. "We envisioned a solution that would promote awareness of our product brands and help dealers boost sales," said Alan Trulser, senior vice president, Hearth & Home. "nParallel delivered a brilliant and cost-effective solution." The modular system nParallel designed has 40 individual elements – featuring window cling signs, exterior and interior banners, design kiosks, fixtures and light boxes. Defined retail fixture and signage packages maximize the impact on consumers and give dealers options that fit their individual store environments and promotion budgets.

nParallel also designed and constructed a tradeshow property to consolidate presentation of all seven Hearth & Home brands. "We sought a fresh start and selected nParallel to take over our existing booth properties and then create an entirely new design," explained Tim Courteau, tradeshow coordinator, Hearth & Home. "They developed a practical plan to realize a remarkable design within our budget." The 15,000 square-foot pavilion creates an urban village. At the entrance, a waterfall with flames at the base features graphics that introduce the company's brands. As visitors continue, they stroll along an imaginative city street where each brand has its own storefront and "neighborhood," where products are displayed in home-like settings.

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"Their exhibit site was a parking lot with a six-foot change in elevation from the front to back, so we engineered a terraced flooring system that is leveled on site," commented Shawn King, nParallel's creative director. "And an HVAC system maintains the inside air temperature at an even 70 degrees, even with 80 burning fireplaces in the pavilion."

Cambria produces quartz surfaces for countertops, vanities, floors and other applications. The company's natural stone surfaces offer beautiful colors, strength and care-free durability. Cambria wanted their trade-show booth to captivate visitors and engage them in the Cambria brand experience. "nParallel's design is elegant.

The displays at the perimeter of the booth focus attention on our rich and varied color palette," said Jenny Sullivan, Cambria marketing manager. "The open design invites visitors into the interior where a video, and our sales people, explain the qualities of our quartz surfaces. Presentation of product applications brings all our brand attributes home."

Smiths Medical MD, Inc. is a world leader in the design, manufacture, and distribution of medical devices used in infusion therapy. To design and construct a tradeshow booth as cool, simple and user-friendly as its Deltec Cozmo® Insulin Pump, Smiths Medical turned to nParallel. "Consistency in brand communication is essential, so our display has to exemplify the Deltec Cozmo® Insulin Pump, which is part of the CozMore™ Insulin Technology System," said Brian Johnson, director of marketing, Smiths Medical. "nParallel crafted an open, streamlined display with simple, high-tech lines and bright colors from our color palette. Just as importantly, nParallel delivered on time."

When it comes to scanning lasers for glaucoma management, Heidelberg Engineering is unsurpassed. To design and craft a modular display that reflects the innovation, precision and integrity of its leading-edge technologies in retinal imaging, Heidelberg selected nParallel. "From our first meeting, nParallel engaged us as a partner and focused with us on the strategic role of our tradeshow program in brand communication and product marketing," commented Travis Lindsay, general manager and chief operating officer, Heidelberg Engineering. "nParallel was the one company that really listened and met our requirements."

Additional Information

More information on nParallel is available at www.nparallel.com. For personal assistance, members of the media should contact David Aquilina, strategic storyteller, press@nparallel.com or 612.922.5551.

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