

# WHAT NEXT?

Following the news that House of Fraser has teamed up with a mobile network to incorporate texting into its marketing strategy, **Christina Williams** takes a look at some of the other more innovative methods of promotion available to retailers in the fifth and final installment of our marketing series

Last month saw high-street giant House of Fraser team up with mobile network Blyk in a marketing collaboration that will see the department store text its way to a more lucrative business.

For independents, many of whom have their own database of customers, text marketing is nothing new. But House of Fraser is just one of the high-street retailers upping its game when it comes to adopting marketing methods that push the boundaries of communication.

When it comes to trialling new and innovative ways to promote a retail business, competition has never been so fierce. So at a time when independents need all the help they can get to maintain their market share, *Footwear & Fashion Extras* takes a look at some of the less obvious methods available, and called upon a panel of publicity experts who represent independent retailers to ask how feasible they really are...

## LIVE WINDOWS

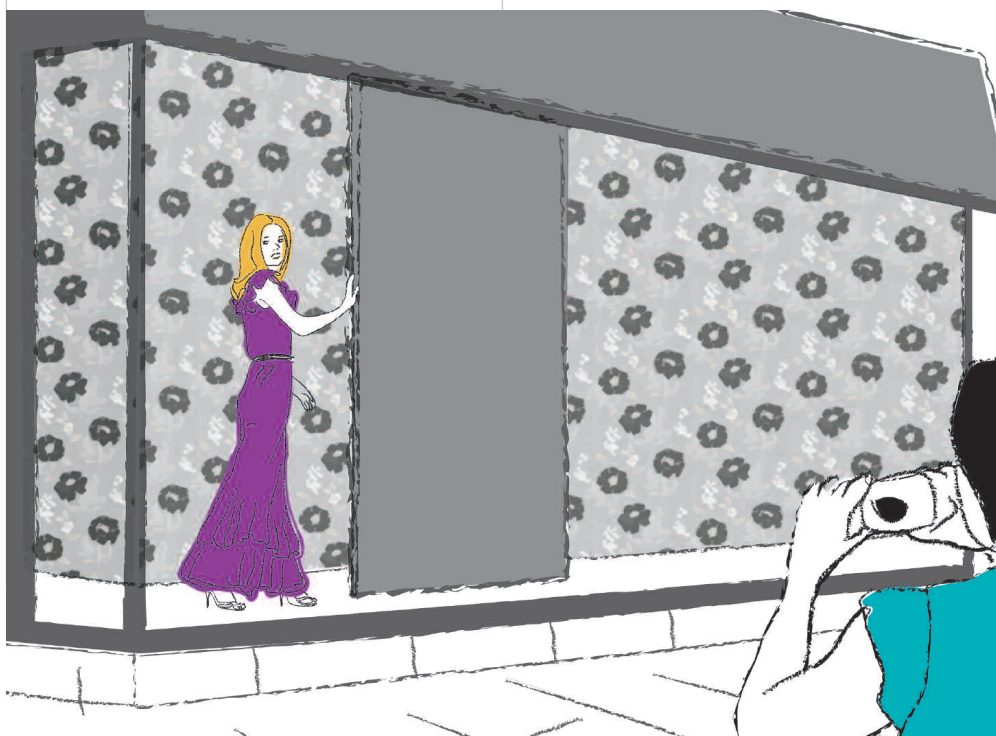
**Used by:** Businesses including lingerie retailer So Shei in west London and Enter Boutique in Croydon.

**How it works:** Quite simply, the retailer replaces the mannequins within its window display

with real live models. The models can dance, wave or simply showcase the collections for passers-by.

### The verdict:

**Cristie Herbert:** "We coordinated the live window event at So Shei earlier this year and it's an ideal way for an independent to promote itself. Having a live model is a brilliant photo opportunity and a good media gimmick, which should ensure some ongoing press attention, even after the event. It's cost effective too – the retailer simply pays for the cost of the model. The only



PR guru Lorraine Worsley with one of her clients, independent retailer Emma Stanworth

disadvantage is that there is a risk of unwanted attention. Because So Shei is a lingerie store, we did get some builders with camera phones who had no intention of buying anything. And, of course, it may not be suitable for stores in remote locations. But those on busy streets can certainly use this to their advantage when launching new collections or highlighting products."

**Lorraine Worsley:** "A group of people gathering outside a store window will also attract attention in itself. But I wouldn't suggest overdoing it – once a year is plenty."

## BLUETOOTH MARKETING

**Used by:** Businesses including Toni & Guy, Latin Square Restaurant and Bar, IBM, BMW.

**How it works:** A device is installed into the company's PC that sends out messages to nearby

mobile phones via Bluetooth. Bluetooth messages are free to receive, although potential recipients must choose to accept the message. The message can be programmed to say anything the retailer chooses, such as "New s/s 09 collections in-store now" or "sale now on at Accessories Boutique".

Bluetooth marketing company Toroblue is just one business that offers this service. It costs a one-off fee of £85, after which the retailer can change or update the Bluetooth message an unlimited number of times at no extra cost.

Graham Kempster of Toroblue Support says, "It really is a good idea for a retailer in the fashion sector. It's a call to action to look at the shop window or come into the store, and is also a great way to send mobile business cards out to clients."

The Toroblue device can be unplugged at any time and it remembers which mobile phones it has already transmitted the message to, to avoid repeating the information to the same consumer. This memory can be erased, however, when the content of the Bluetooth message is updated.

### The verdict:

**Lorraine Worsley:** "This could certainly help a retailer to pick up a new client base. I can imagine that it would appeal to young, gadget-y types, particularly men. But it may also alienate people who aren't really sure what Bluetooth is and my main concern is that it could come across as looking a bit desperate."



## INTERACTIVE WEBSITES

**Used by:** Businesses including Asos.

**How it works:** Taking the concept of having an online presence to the next level, interactive websites incorporate features that allow the user to play a more active role in their online purchases.

Asos.com, for example, offers surfers the chance to see each garment on a live model as he or she walks up and down a catwalk. The feature offers a 3D view of the item, allowing the customer to see the fit, cut and length of the item on a real person.

A spokesperson for Mutiny Design, a web development company that builds websites for businesses, says that implementing the feature is very straightforward. "Incorporating a catwalk show of an item is simply a case of uploading a video clip," says the spokesperson. "The real effort for the retailer would be the time and effort involved in filming the model wearing the clothing."

While web developers who build a website from scratch could easily upload relevant video clips, those who use templates or offer a limited bandwidth may not be able to incorporate the feature.

### The verdict:

**Lorraine Worsley:** "I don't know of any independents who do this but it could work because it would be a bit like being at a fashion show. It would probably work best for a retailer with a small collection as people get bored very easily and would probably only watch one or two clips. It could also be a very long process for the retailer in dressing the model and filming the footage."

## SOCIAL NETWORKING MARKETING

**Used by:** Businesses including online boutique Brittique and brand and retailer Bolongaro Trevor.

**How it works:** As well as offering companies a platform from which to advertise, Facebook offers a facility for any company, organisation or individual to set up an online group for free. The group can act as a forum for existing members and the creator of the group is able to send out invitations to potential members within a specified area or within a particular social network.

Once they have joined the group, members can be contacted with news, invitations to events and invitations to view photographs.

### The verdict:

**Jojo Iles:** "This is a very cost-effective method of marketing because it's free, but the retailer would have to dedicate a lot of time to maintaining the group. You would have to regularly update the page to keep people interested and you may find that you receive a lot of email enquiries that you would have to keep on top of. Having said that, it would be a great way to promote an event or to inform people instantly of a bestseller."

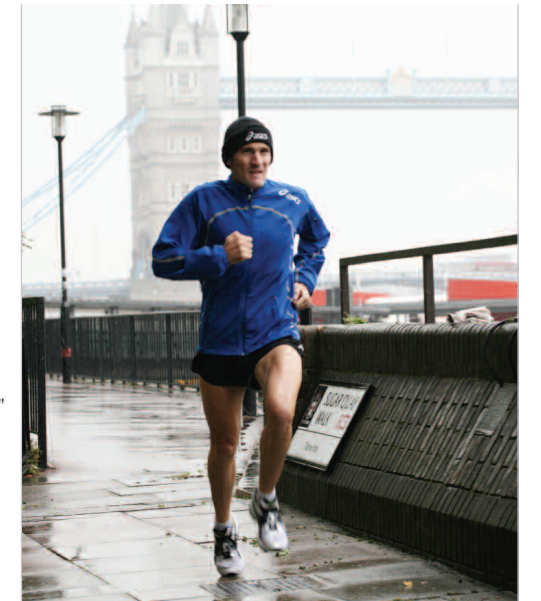
**Cristie Herbert:** "This is also a great way to conduct market research because the retailer can interact with the customers and group members directly. Also friends of friends will join the group so it will grow and develop all the time. The only disadvantages is that competitors could join the group to find new, potential customers."

## LIFESTYLE CONCEPT MARKETING

**Used by:** Businesses including footwear and apparel brand and retailer Asics.

**How it works:** Most retailers or brands appeal to a consumer with a particular lifestyle, so it makes sense to market the business accordingly. For example, performance footwear and apparel brand Asics celebrated the launch of its first UK store last month with a "man versus machine" event to promote exercise and physical activity.

The event saw triathlete Tim Don race 5km against the Circle Line tube – and beat it – from Tower Hill to St. James Park, in a bid to encourage Londoners to walk or jog to work instead of commuting. For the store, it was a marketing dream that captured the attention of



the media, as well as its fitness-loving target consumer demographic.

### The verdict:

**Lorraine Worsley:** "There is a lot of potential to market a store in this way and some lifestyle elements have clear links with fashion, music for example. It can work really well and the possibilities are endless – a retailer could invite a celebrity to appear in store for example, if that celebrity had a similar appeal to the clothing or footwear in question. The only drawbacks are that the appeal will be limited to the existing consumer demographic and that there may be a lot of cost involved, depending on what is organised by the retailer." ○

## THE PANEL:



Cristie Herbert, director, CICI Creative PR Consultancy



Jojo Iles, managing director, Fashion PR



Lorraine Worsley, managing director, Countess Publicists