

Coricraft embraces digital in store

By  Lauren Hartzenberg

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In modern retail, a little digital intervention to heighten customer experience is not just welcomed, it's necessary. Coricraft knows this. That's why the southern African furniture retailer is weaving digital elements into its physical stores, enhancing the in-store environment and making the path to purchase simpler and faster.

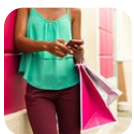


From one branch in Cape Town, Coricraft has grown into a chain of almost 50 branches scattered across South Africa, Namibia and Botswana. The retailer manufactures its own furniture out of its factories in Cape Town and Johannesburg. Every day, couches are made in genuine leather or customised according to a customer's preferred fabric choice.

But manufacturing locally and offering quality, customised products are not enough to draw feet into stores in today's competitive retail environment. Customer experience is king.

With the industry in the throes of change, Coricraft is arming itself with digital technologies that suit the brand and its customers. Acknowledging the strategic value that lies in an omnichannel approach, the retailer is on a journey to seamlessly merge the physical and digital customer experience.

"Our strategy is to be as flexible as possible; the digital world will always be growing and as a growing retailer we want to equip ourselves to be able to transform together with merging technologies," says Coricraft COO Craig Schneeberger.



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Digital touchpoints

This transformation is on display at the recently opened Coricraft store in Mall of Africa. Among other features, shoppers can now browse through the brand's latest catalogue and scan the QR codes, which lead to product information on the website. Serving the same purpose are QR codes on the shop front window as well as inside the store.

Digital screens have also been installed behind the till points to showcase the brand's furniture and inspire those customers waiting in the line to pay.



Coricraft plans to roll-out its new digital format in selected stores going forward.

“While our digital transformation will be unfolding, we will be continually perfecting our balance between physical presence and a digital connection. Essentially it is important for us to always keep our customers in the front line of our strategies, making their experience flawless,” says Schneeberger.

Here, Schneeberger shares more on Coricraft's omnichannel vision.

■ Which elements of the in-store experience did Coricraft prioritise when planning the store transformations?

Our new Mall of Africa store was focused on elevating the digital experience. We have incorporated digital screens at the till points which is a great way to capture the attention of customers waiting in the line to pay. In addition, we are in the process of launching our omni-hubs in selected stores where customers will be able to place an order online in stores.

Lastly, we have launched our e-quotes which means customers can pop into any of our 49 stores, choose the furniture

they like and we will email a quote to them, enabling our customers to pay from the comfort of their own homes.



■ Explain Coricraft's focus on "merging the real world and digital customer experience". Why do you consider this integrated approach as necessary in retail today?

As a retailer, we understand the importance of allowing our customers to shop when and how they want to. Its all about bridging the gap and creating a frictionless shopping experience.

Shopping patterns show that customers visit our stores and convert online later, which is why we are investing in our in-store experience as we know our bricks and mortar stores contribute significantly to our online sales.

■ What is Coricraft's strategy in terms of rollout of the new digital format stores across your various locations?

With the success of Mall of Africa, we have identified key stores that we feel will be best suited for our instore omni-hubs, with expansion into other stores in the next few years. Our e-quote is available in all stores, which gives customers the flexibility to pay from home at a later stage.



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■ In your opinion, what are Coricraft's key challenges over the next 5 years?

With the digital disruption in the market, we have seen e-commerce growing exponentially. We need to create a seamless online and offline experience, from when the order is placed in store/online to final delivery.

Secondly, customers are always looking for unique experiences in order to customise the products they want. We are looking at systems to improve data analytics so that we can better serve our customers and in so, retain customer loyalty.

▣ ***What is your vision for Coricraft?***

To be the leading and most admired omnichannel home furnishings group in South Africa.

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