

10 Reasons Why Kiosk Projects Fail

Kiosks can be an integral part of a business, but only if they are utilized to their full potential. Learn what keeps customers away from the kiosk and how to overcome those obstacles.

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The simple answer to the question “why do kiosk projects fail” is: “because no one uses the kiosk.” This white paper will discuss 10 reasons why kiosks sit unused.

Location, location, location

To succeed, kiosks must be placed in a prime location so they can easily be discovered by customers. Unfortunately most kiosks have a significant footprint, and floor space is hard to find in prime locations.

Consider a kiosk that is small enough to be mounted directly to a shelf or end cap without significantly displacing merchandise.

First impressions

Bad first impressions often are made with initial kiosk screens that:

- Are complex with many choices, leading the customer to think “I don’t have time to learn.”
- Play a full-screen video, causing a customer to feel “It’s just trying to sell me something.”

- Display the message “Touch to Begin,” which leads to the question “Begin what? I don’t have the time to find out.”

The initial screen must be simple yet dynamic, but not so dynamic as to be annoying. Avoid full-screen videos and take a cue from digital signage applications, which continuously rotate through a small number of simple screens. Provide a small number of buttons that have an obvious result, e.g., a “see more” button underneath the image of the sale item.



A simple screen with a small number of buttons helps make a good first impression and gives the customer the confidence to use the kiosk.

Work or play

A typical kiosk looks like a computer, which people associate with work and can imply a frustrating, complex and time-consuming experience — the last associations needed to get a customer engaged. Unless there is a pressing need that the kiosk fills (such as an ATM machine), a computer-like terminal results in the customer walking in the opposite direction.

Careful design can give a kiosk toy-like qualities, such as the use of bright colors and non-standard shapes, making the kiosk more engaging and encouraging its use.

Please take a number

No one likes to wait while someone else uses the kiosk. Conversely, no one wants to have someone waiting behind them. It's also frustrating to have to walk some distance to use the kiosk. Unfortunately, due to cost, many installations only have a single kiosk.

The solution is to have multiple, lower-cost kiosks distributed throughout the store.

The kiosk is there to support the customer, not the other way around.

Please wait

Waiting for a page to refresh can be frustrating. Often it is not the length of the wait that matters; it is the unpredictability that people find frustrating. Many in-store kiosk implementations are remotely connected to the company's Web site. While

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this is a necessity for services such as loyalty and remote fulfillment, it leads to unnecessary delays while browsing products. Eventually, after being asked to endure this painful experience, the customer leaves and never comes back.

All browsing delays should be limited to less than 0.5 second; this is best achieved by having all the content reside locally in the store.

Privacy

In some kiosk uses such as healthcare, it is critical that other customers cannot see the kiosk screen. However, there are a number of reasons why privacy is important even for everyday uses. People don't like being watched, particularly if they are trying out something new, and customers don't want to feel judged if they make a mistake. However, a recent trend has been to place ever-larger screens on kiosks.

To maintain privacy, screens must be kept small, preferably less than 12 inches.

Instant gratification

Sometimes kiosks make use of a question-and-answer session in order to identify a product which satisfies a customer need. This makes an implicit assumption that the customer knows exactly how to answer the questions, but it is more likely that the customer will not know how to answer, and

simply abandon the session, sometimes after as few as three screens.

The kiosk is there to support the customer, not the other way around. The kiosk must provide results almost immediately to satisfy the human desire for instant gratification.

Browsing

The common kiosk browsing experience is very clumsy; each page only contains a small number of products, so the customer must click from page to page, taking time and leading to frustration.

An alternative is to display multiple products on a single page in conjunction with an effective scrolling mechanism. Even though trackballs and mice can be used, they are difficult to control standing up, and can actually make the problem worse.

Thumbwheels are a good alternative. 'Thumbing' through products this way allows visual comparison of many different images. This is particularly valuable when color and style are major product features.

Searching

Standard kiosk searches require the customer to type in a query and wait for the results. Misspelling and over-qualification often produce no results, or too many results.

List results in real time as the query is typed. As the query becomes more specific, the number of results reduces. For example, someone searching for an egg roll recipe would:



Making browsing easy with an effective scrolling mechanism helps customers know their options without feeling overwhelmed.



Listing results in real time as the query is typed helps customers find the option that best meets their needs.

- Type in the word "egg," resulting in all items containing eggs being listed
- As the word "roll" is typed, the list

would change to only display recipes for egg rolls

A graphic of each result also can be provided to help identify the results. Searching should be phonetic rather than based on exact spellings to allow for errors.

Web sites in the store

Running an existing Web site on a kiosk in a retail store is a poor choice for many reasons, including:

- Web sites are designed for someone who is sitting down with a mouse and keyboard. A kiosk is designed for someone who is standing up interacting with a touchscreen.
- Web sites have many small buttons which are impossible to use with a touchscreen. This is particularly acute with the use of underlined text on the Web to represent links.
- Web sites make extensive use of

“hover over” technology, which is not supported by kiosk touchscreens.

- Web sites have information which is not appropriate for in-store use.
- Web sites make extensive use of “cookies” to identify user behavior. This does not work when there are multiple users on a single kiosk.
- Any data entered by a user into a kiosk must be deleted after an appropriate timeout. Data to be deleted includes browsing patterns as well as identifiers such as name and address.

So many changes must be made to make a Web site appropriate for in-store use that it is often easier to start again and develop a solution that is tailored to the kiosk.

About the sponsor: *Founded in 1998 and based in Vista, Calif., RedDotNet develops, manufactures and manages end-to-end solutions for the retail environment. The company offers interactive, multi-media solutions, including innovative kiosk design, to help retailers and suppliers connect with customers. To learn more, visit www.reddotnet.com.*