

PERFECT FIT:

DESIGN + RETAIL

The importance of collaborative working between retailer, shopfitter and designer.

Communication and collaboration is key in all forms of life, not least when it comes to retailers, shopfitters and designers working on a new scheme or store concept.

'Collaboration between all the specialists on a fit-out project is essential. No project can succeed unless the professionals work together to realise the retailer's investment and bring the designer's vision for outlet to life on time, on budget and to a quality standard,' says Simon Campbell, managing director of fit-out specialist Portview. 'Our internal setting out/CAD department is key to underpinning successful buildability of the client's intent within the timescales and other parameters.'

Portview works with a number of leading brands in important retail destinations, such as London Mayfair, where it recently completed work on a new flagship store

for Issey Miyake. This scheme was much closer in intent to an art installation than a retail fit-out, demanding a depth of understanding and empathy with the designer's vision much greater than it has previously encountered.

Portview also worked on Fortnum & Mason's new beauty floor designed by Waldo Works, bringing the vision to life, which was a challenge the team relished. Key among the priorities at the department store was to keep the floor trading, so all works were carried out behind hoardings and much of the structural work on the

Below: Styles&Wood's front of store refresh roll-out for Waitrose included new customer service desks, quick scan tills and iPad stations.

ceilings, including specialist steelwork to support the signature chandelier in the lift area, was installed at night. New perimeter walls were formed to create niches for the unitary to be built into: the niches having GRG moulds that had to be plastered in position and the units fitted into the alcoves, while an entirely new installation of recessed and pendant lights is all on a sophisticated control system.

'We regard it as part of our role to ensure that lines of communication are fully open throughout a project and that we establish great working relationships with all the teams involved from the start. That way, if problems do arise they can be resolved quickly, without compromising the quality of the work delivered. Our work on a number of projects airside at Heathrow is testament to this approach. In an environment where safety is paramount, effective communication and teamwork cannot be diluted,' says Campbell.

The need to complement both online and bricks and mortar has seen an increase in in-store technology, such as touch points for customers to browse on and search for items that may not be available in-store.

'The convergence between e-commerce and brick and mortar stores, as part of the continued drive by retailers to hone their omnichannel strategies, is placing new demands on fit-out contracts,' says Andy Shaw, operations director at property services group Styles&Wood. 'In addition to the increasing need to integrate click and collect points, more retailers are encouraging customers to browse online offers while in-store - helping to mitigate against the showrooming phenomenon. This, coupled with a need to maximise service lines in smaller shops as the trend to favour convenience stores rather than out-of-town superstores continues, is seeing rising demand for tablet and desktop



devices to be featured in prominent locations in shops.'

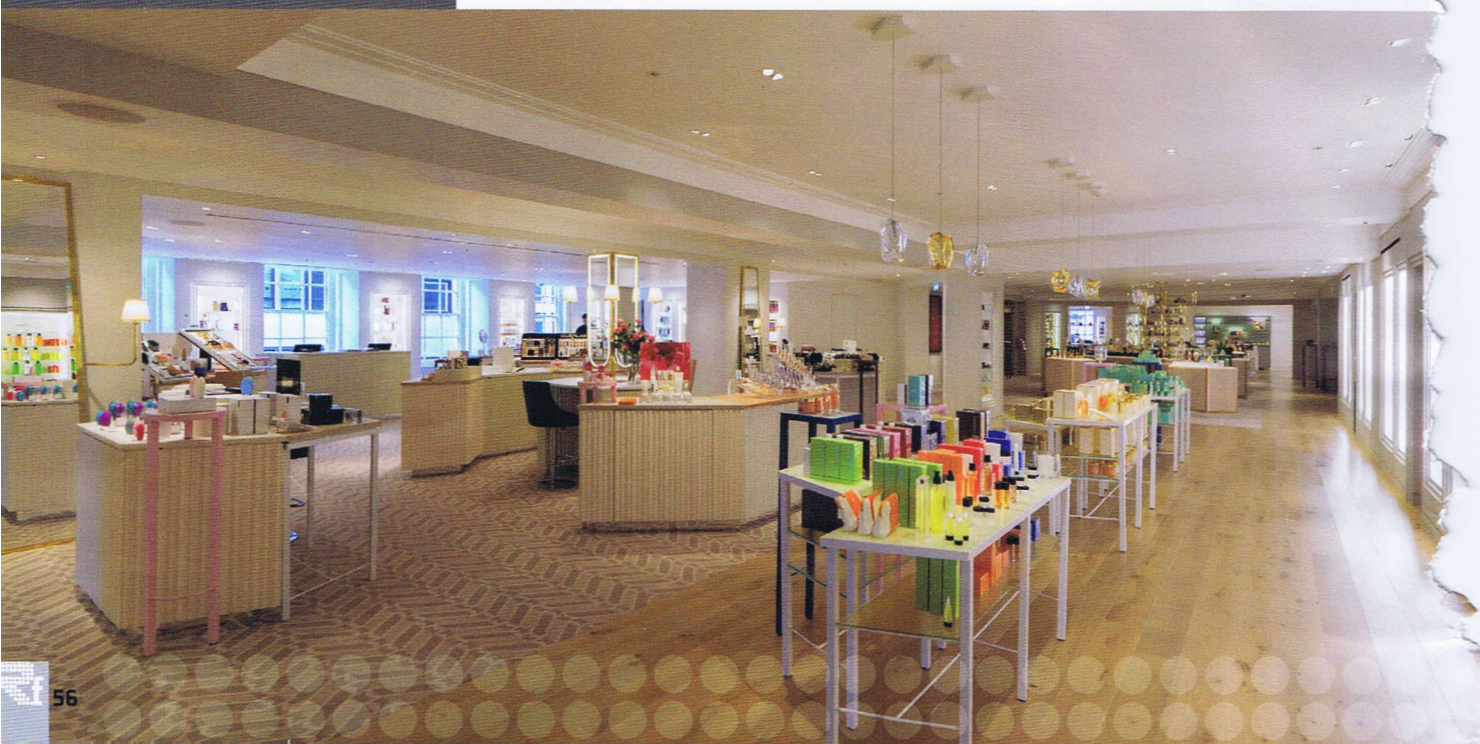
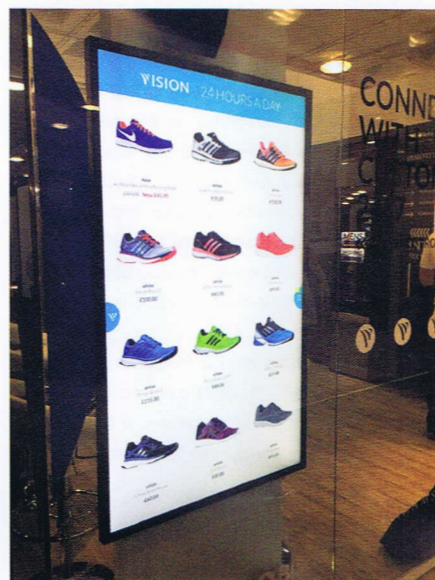
Shaw notes that in retail banking space in particular, the technology has come into its own because it increases self-service, alleviating staff to focus on customer advice. It also allows the bank to quickly advertise new services and products to customers without having to spend on new printed marketing materials to be rolled out branch-to-branch. 'What this means for fit-out work, is greater end-to-end management. More projects require not only the installation of IT, and associated technical know-how, but delivery of the full change management. Often this includes liaising with a central IT team and network providers, as well as training staff to use new devices so that these are used to their full potential. Contractors are now upping their skills in this area, given that more retail clients are keen to maximise cost efficiency by awarding projects to a single supplier that can offer this full change implementation,' continues Shaw.

right: Portview worked on Fortnum & Mason's new beauty floor. Touchscreen windows offer a modern twist on window shopping, like this window kiosk by One iota. **below:** Portview relished the challenge of bringing the vision to life on Fortnum & Mason's beauty floor.

Damian Hanson, CEO and founder of one-iota, a multi-channel retail specialist in online, in-store and interactive solutions, says retailers can bring innovation and multi-channel retail technology into their design and shopfitting. 'Shopping today is evolving, with customers demanding far more than a simple trip to the shops when visiting the high street. They now require a retail experience. Connected technology plays a critical part in providing this and it's an area that retailers should consider - although many overlook - when planning their shop fit and design,' says Hanson.

Retailers have a golden opportunity to enhance their customers' experience by utilising the highly sophisticated in-store technology solutions available today. It can help them create an interactive shopping experience that brings online and digital shopping experiences into bricks and mortar outlets, by literally making them part of the furniture.

Take shop windows for example. Touchscreen window kiosks offer a modern twist on window shopping, allowing retailers to connect with shoppers 24/7 and encouraging round the clock shopping. 'Using the touchscreen window display, customers can browse a retailer's full range of products and add items to a basket. Having scanned a QR code on the window kiosk, their basket of goods is transferred and opened on either the retailer's app or mobile site on their own device. The customer can then pay for their items when and where they want using their preferred



payment method and delivery option,' explains Hanson.

He also notes the use of interactive mirrors that are becoming a key component of a shop's design. By scanning a product barcode, the interactive mirror technology enables the customer to select any colour and size options that may not be available in-store, and then transfer their basket of goods either on to their own device to make the purchase, or to a store till where they can make payment in-store.

'Integrated kiosks also form an essential part of the shop-fit for the retailer who is looking to embrace multi-channel retail technology into their fixtures and fittings. Kiosks bring the entire eCommerce range in-store with intuitive multi-touch and entirely self-service devices. This connected technology enables customers to shop an entire product range while still in the store, giving them access to extended ranges and out of stock items - all of which helps retailers to maximise the potential for sales while the customer is still in-store. On a larger scale, digital signage offers the ultimate in customer engagement and in-store entertainment, as well as creating a dramatic visual impact in the store,' continues Hanson.



Chris Bartram, managing director of flat panel display specialist Crystal Display Systems, stresses the importance of collaborative working. 'For us this is absolutely critical, especially due to our positioning between the designers and the shopfitters with our digital display and touch solutions. The reasons for this include the fact that designers need our input and expertise on the best digital solutions for their specific project/requirement including the latest technologies we have introduced or are about to introduce. With the shopfitters it's similar but more focused on the best mounting and packaging solutions to ensure optimum performance and no overheating or issue with the displays/touchscreens once in store.'

'We effectively become an extended technical team/consultant for these companies, which means they keep their overheads low as they don't need these expensive people in-house and we are on the cutting edge of the display technology.'

Bartram says his company is very careful to ensure its customers and the end client are clear about what CDS is offering, including the benefits and downsides, if there are any, which he feels is also important. 'Communication can be improved with face to face meetings, site visits and analysis, confirmation in writing of the recommended solution and any important information associated with that. We will often visit end clients with our customer as a member of their team to have direct contact and ensure we understand any issues so we can recommend the optimum digital solution.'

When asked what advice he would

give to make the process as smooth as possible, Bartram stresses: 'Communication, communication, communication! Understand what the end user client needs and wants to achieve and focus on that, including highlighting any potential issues or alternatives so the end client has all the information to get the optimum solution.' **Rf**

Above: One iota says connected technology plays a critical part in providing a retail experience.

Below: Transparent displays in Harrods' windows by Crystal Display Systems.



NAS Design Partnership Awards 2015

Taking place at Kent House, Knightsbridge on 24 September 2015, the NAS Design Partnership Awards, in conjunction with 100% Design, celebrate the success of retail, non-retail and leisure collaboration between interior designers, shopfitters and fit-out contractors.

Recognising achievement throughout the interiors sector, a prestigious panel of highly-respected leaders from the interiors sector will judge nominations for the awards categories on their merit and positive impact on the market which is interiors. Visit www.shopfitters.org for more information about the awards.

