



Target's San Francisco Open House store showcases digitally connected products in an inventive setting

US

# Target's Open House hits the switch on internet of things

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**TARGET HAS UNVEILED** its Open House format to showcase a new product category – and the address says as much about its priorities as the items on display.

Situated in downtown San Francisco, 2,000 miles from Target's Minneapolis headquarters, the 'part retail space, part lab, part meeting venue' is a clear sign of chief executive Brian Cornell's interest in the tech sector – specifically, the so-called internet of things (IoT).

Laid out by design firm Local Projects, Target's Open House resembles an actual house – a San Francisco Victorian, to be exact, with bay windows and a motorcycle in the garage, all made from translucent acrylic that gives the space a futuristic feel.

From the entrance, visitors will first come across a mock kitchen, which features IoT adaptations of familiar items such as a Crock-Pot and a Mr Coffee machine alongside more novel products such as Drop (a smart kitchen scale) and Wemo (a smart electrical outlet).

It is an important distinction for retailers and marketers seeking to promote IoT products.

In the case of familiar products the challenge for retailers will simply be to convince consumers that the ability to control them from their phones is worth a higher price than the equivalent item they already use.

The greater challenge will be introducing shoppers to entirely new product categories created by the internet of things.

For example, it might be difficult to immediately think of a use for 94Fifty's smart basketball – some quick research shows that the ball's sensor communicates with an app to track the trajectory of a player's shots, but that information would only be useful to serious athletes.

And at \$179.95 (£117), this is not a marginal upsell – it's a fundamentally different product from a conventional \$30 (£19) basketball.

The same is true of Mimo, a smart onesie for infants. Mimo 'kimonos' contain sensors that monitor a child's breathing, body position, sleep activity, and skin temperature. This information is relayed to an app for parents to monitor.

In general, the true promise of the internet of things is not just that people can communicate with our appliances from afar, but that those appliances can communicate with each other. This facet was on full display.

Besides triggering the parents' alarm clock, one Mimo baby's crying also switched on a smart Hue light bulb, some soothing music on a Sonos speaker and, amusingly, Mr Coffee's smart coffee maker in the kitchen.

But surely the internet of things must do more than hit a few 'on' switches in the morning?

**3,500 sq ft**

Target Open House's footprint