

Best Buy Evolves With Samsung

Retailer refines its ‘Samsung Experience Shops,’ further augmenting the in-store experience

By Patrycja Malinowska

Best Buy is making changes to its store-within-a-store “**Samsung Experience Shops**” as it strengthens its relationship with the manufacturer and fine-tunes its overall in-store strategy.

Three years after an aggressive rollout that brought the shops to virtually all flagship and Best Buy Mobile locations, the consumer electronics retailer is closing some 160 of the 1,400 shops and expanding 250 others, underscoring that its relationship with Samsung is growing overall.

The dedicated shops give the brand more visibility while augmenting the in-store shopping experience with customized demonstration stations and specially trained employees. They are outfitted with large brand signage and stock a wide range of Samsung products including smartphones, tablets, laptops and connected cameras. Many of the items are showcased on tables for shoppers to test.

Positioned next to the high traffic mobile department, the shops vary in size by store, with the largest covering roughly 460 square feet. The bigger shops boast a “**Samsung Connected Solutions**” area that demonstrates how various devices connect and share content across multiple screens.

Among other initiatives, the shops have let shoppers try out Samsung’s newest smartphones prior to their launch.

Earlier this year, the shops stocked Samsung’s Galaxy S7 phones weeks prior to their March 11 rollout. Table display headers touted the new device as “more than a smartphone.” Massive window banners, upfront table displays, easel signs and A-boards supported, many of them promoting purchase incentives. A year prior, similar activity supported the launch of the Galaxy S6 line.

“We have a great relationship with Samsung,” a Best Buy spokeswoman told the *Star Tribune*. “We’re always moving stuff around in our stores to make a better store experience, and this is part of that work.”

The partners’ alliance includes two other in-store “vendor pads.” In some 500 stores, Best Buy also hosts “**Samsung Entertainment Experience**” shops to spotlight the manufacturer’s TVs. There, shoppers can experience a variety of the brand’s latest TVs and home audio products.

The partners periodically drum up excitement for the shops by offering sneak peeks of upcoming theatrical releases. Last summer, for example, the shops aired an



exclusive clip of Universal Pictures’ “**Jurassic World**” on Samsung’s new SUHD TVs. Counter signs positioned near the TVs promised a “firsthand” experience. On the other side of the store, supporting table headers in the Samsung Experience Shops directed shoppers to “visit Samsung’s SUHD TVs.” Earlier that year, Best Buy and Samsung similarly tied in to Marvel Studios’ theatrical release of “**Avengers: Age of Ultron**.”

A third Samsung shop showcases the brand’s appliances. In place at 200-some stores, the 20-by-20 foot “**Samsung Open House**” shops stock such technologically advanced appliances as a robot vacuum cleaner and smart refrigerator.

The appliance shops hinge on an 85-inch touchscreen display, dubbed **CenterStage**, that lets shoppers interact with Samsung’s complete portfolio of home appliances through life-size photos, videos and other custom functionalities.

All the shops are part of Best Buy’s “**Renew Blue**” trans-

formation strategy to work closely with vendor partners to innovate and update stores with competitive differentiation and a consultative sales force.

The retailer also hosts stores-within-a-store experiences – or vendor pads – with other key partners including Apple, Samsung, Windows, Sony, Verizon, AT&T, and, most recently, LG.

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