



MARK A. STEELE, COLUMBUS, OHIO

# What's Your Number?

Mattress retailer Sleep Number sets out to integrate digital technology into an elevated, intuitive brand experience. | BY JENNIFER ACEVEDO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

For the past 30 years, Sleep Number (Minneapolis) has been well-known for its innovative mattresses and other sleep products. The familiar phrase “What’s Your Sleep Number?” captures the essence of the brand – just as no two people are alike, there is no “one-size-fits-all” mattress.

The retailer recently turned to design firm JGA (Southfield, Mich.) to help digitally integrate the store

experience at its flagship location at Easton Gateway in Columbus, Ohio, an extension of the Easton Town Center shopping mall. In what is essentially a commodity market, the brand sought to differentiate itself.

“The store creates a consumer-centric, technology-driven environment that transforms a purely rational shopping experience to one that maximizes both rational and emotional appeals,” says Angela Gearhart, senior director of store experience, Sleep



Number. “The technology, from an interactive perspective, brings to life all of the [products’] features and benefits. It does so in a way that’s demonstrative, but that’s also simple and intuitive. Our goal is to take the confusion out of mattress shopping.”

Sleep Number and the JGA design team integrated a range of in-store technology into an approachable and intuitive environment, including one key feature called Individual Fit, a system which maps a customer’s body in order to identify key pressure points. Customers can then adjust the mattress’ comfort settings by fine-tuning the firmness level to relieve those pressure points, explains Gearhart. Using proprietary interactive software with a 3-D, surround-sound experience, visitors can also see a projected image of the bed adjusting to them in real-time.

“It’s a continual evolution of [the brand] integrating technology both in the product and the experience so that the store becomes a 3-D selling tool for the team, supporting the relationship-based selling process,” Gearhart explains.

Sleep Number has also capitalized on the self-monitoring craze that has consumers wearing various connected devices day and night (think smart

watches, Fitbit). This, combined with the Internet of Things (IoT), has made the retailer’s SleepIQ technology, which inconspicuously tracks and monitors your sleep, a powerful tool. The technology allows the bed to be paired with a user’s smartphone or other devices via Bluetooth to access personalized results based on data including average heart rate, breathing rate and movements that occur during sleep.

Striking the right balance between inanimate technology and human interactions to create a warm, welcoming space proved tricky.

“That is a big part of this project, because the technology always feels ‘hard,’ but bedding is such a soft, intimate product,” explains Miho Koshido-Downey, creative director, JGA. “Merging [the two] experientially and architecturally [was] challenging.”

The designers chose task lighting to help sustain what she calls a warm, bedroom-like ambience. Naturally, purchasing a mattress with this level of technology is a more thoughtful (often partner-driven) decision than one made solely based on price. For that reason, designers built areas for guests to have private conversations.

“[Sleep Number] has evolved from trying to sim-

*ABOVE Instead of the typical sea of mattresses, customers shop in a serene, approachable environment.*

*OPPOSITE Dynamic in-store visuals like this iconic chandelier comprised of translucent Sleep Number buttons, are reflective of the brand’s personalized approach.*



**RIGHT** Inside and out, new Sleep Number concept stores feature a simplified, intuitive and welcoming environment that is meant to enable thoughtful decision-making.

**BELOW** Individual Fit uses digital mapping technology to locate and identify pressure points on the body. An in-store digital screen allows the customer to visualize potential places of discomfort.



#### PROJECT SUPPLIERS

**RETAILER**  
Sleep Number, Minneapolis

**DESIGN**  
JGA, Southfield, Mich.

**GENERAL CONTRACTOR**  
Scott General Contracting Co., Orland Park, Ill.

**ARCHITECTURE**  
L&M Associates, Ltd., Eden Prairie, Minn.

**MECHANICAL/ELECTRICAL ENGINEERING**  
Erickson Ellison & Associates Inc., New Brighton, Minn.

**LIGHTING**  
Villa Lighting, St. Louis

**FLOORING**  
Kaswell, Framingham, Mass.  
Boulon, Stoughton, Mass.  
Mohawk Industries, Calhoun, Ga.  
Florida Tile, Plymouth, Minn.

**MATERIALS/WALLCOVERINGS**  
Tube Art, Bellevue, Wash.

**FIXTURES AND MILLWORK**  
Madsen Fixture and Millwork, Forest Lake, Minn.

**SIGNAGE/GRAPHICS**  
Grafix Shoppe, Eagan, Minn.  
Tube Art, Bellevue, Wash.

**LAMINATES**  
Kydex Thermoplastics, Westfield, Ind.

**FURNITURE**  
Euro Style, San Rafael, Calif.

ply create a mattress store to a sleep store," says Koshido-Downey. "Sleep Number isn't in the business of selling beds, they're in the business of selling great sleep, and the by-products are the mattresses."

Considering the design components and in-store tech, the end result is a very different approach from the typical mattress-shopping experience – exactly what the retailer hoped to accomplish.

"The traditional mattress environment is just a sea of mattresses. What we're doing is creating a completely different alternative," explains Gearhart. "We're offering innovation in a category that's completely commoditized and is often a dreaded experience." ▀