

MOBILE

Selfridges pushes use of personalized shoppers with mobile gaming

December 10, 2014



Elfridge and the Enchanted Forest character

By JEN KING

British department store Selfridges is building awareness for its in-store helpers this holiday season through a gaming effort.

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Selfridges' "Elfridge and the Enchanted Forest" game, available on desktop or as an application for Apple devices, allows the consumer to play as one of the retailer's in-store helpers to save Christmas. Similar to how a sales associate may save the day by suggesting a thoughtful gift for a difficult loved one, the consumer will come to affiliate Selfridges' employees in the same helpful manner.

"The game is intuitive but you quickly realize, from some details such as the jacket the main character is wearing emblazoned with a big S, that the character is the Elfridge and you are the Elfridge taking on a perilous but entertaining journey full of surprises," said Adam Gamble, head of digital creative at [Selfridges](#), London.

"In the game, the Elfridge is in charge of saving Christmas, which is exactly what our squad of Elfridges, our dedicated Christmas personal shoppers available to all our customers, are tasked to do every day from our stores in the run up to Christmas," he said.

"Their time is dedicated to ensuring customers get all their Christmas shopping done as painlessly as possible.

"No challenge is too big for them, from finding the perfect gift for the most demanding friend or family member, to sorting out the best food and drinks to have at Christmas."

Special helpers

From Oct. 23 through Dec. 24, Selfridges sales associates, referred to as Elfridges for a playful holiday spin, provide personal shopping assistance to consumers in-store.

Whether a consumer needs help finding an outfit for a holiday party or is unsure how to decorate their home, the Elfridges are there to spread a "mighty force of festive inspiration."

Available in all four of Selfridges' bricks-and-mortar locations, the one-of-a-kind, personalized experience is complimentary, but consumers must book an appointment. If the appointment is made online, the consumer simply fills out a series of fields to help the Elfridges curate the shopping experience.

The consumer can include the date and time of the visit, how long they would like to shop for, contact email and phone number and who they are shopping for. Selfridges promises to answer via email within two hours as to not complicate the consumer's shopping plans.

For help instantly, consumers are encouraged to interact with the Elfridges via Twitter for gift recommendations. Consumers can tweet at the Elfridges Monday through Friday between 10 a.m. and 8 p.m., using the hashtag #AskAnElfridge and including the handle @Selfridges along with details about who the gift is for and the ideal price range.



Selfridge's tweet for its Elfridge personal shopping service

"Mobile users are already in the habit of turning to their smartphones in the shopping experience," said Melody Adhami, president and chief operating officer of [Plastic Mobile](#), Toronto. "They take and share photos, check out product reviews, and do price comparisons to help make buying decisions.

"Gift shopping adds a layer of complexity because the best person to facilitate the decision is usually also the recipient of the gift. Offering a service that mobile users can turn to make those difficult gift decisions is a utility that is likely to be appreciated by the users and allows them to fulfil the social validation of the purchase."

To build awareness for the Elfridges service, Selfridges created a game that places the consumer in the role of the holiday helper to save the day.

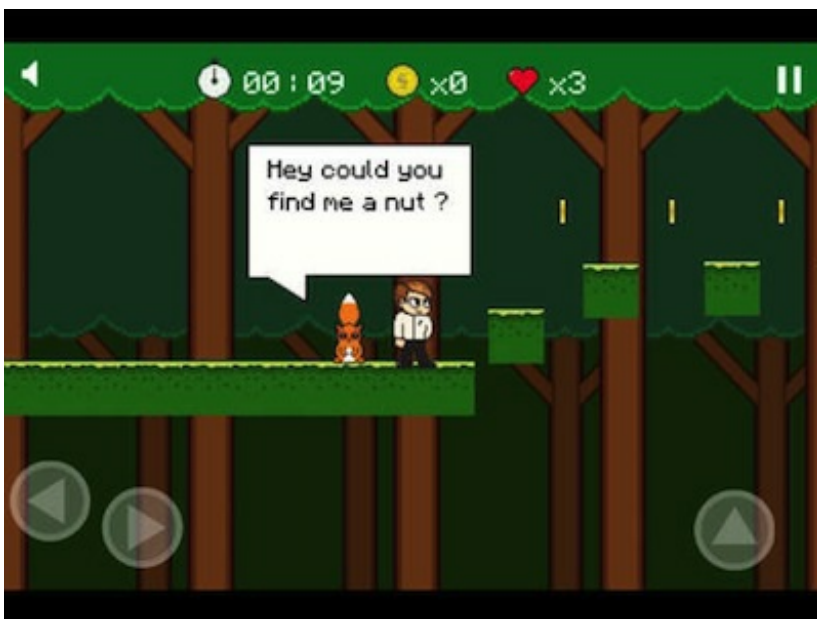
For the Eldridge and the Enchanted Forest game, a “devilishly dapper” golden goose has stolen all the Christmas presents. The player, in the role of a Elfridge, must navigate through five boards, in a take on Nintendo's Mario Brothers, to rescue the gifts and save the holiday.



Level in Eldridge and the Enchanted Forest game on mobile

Boards are found within the video game version of Selfridges' different bricks-and-mortar locations, and include different forest scenes and obstacles. When a board is complete, a scoreboard formatted as a receipt shows the consumer's progress.

While dodging dangers such as spikes, the Elfridge character helps find items for forest friends, such as an acorn for a squirrel and a carrot for a rabbit, as they work toward completing the mission.



Level in Eldridge and the Enchanted Forest game on mobile

"The holidays are perfect to spend time with family and friends but they are also great for some me-time in between," Selfridges' Mr. Gamble said. "People travel a lot visiting

relatives and friends and such journeys are often spent playing games on smartphones or tablets.

"As this year we were keen on creating real buzz online at selfridges.com and giving our customers a multi-sensory experience that pushed the boundaries of not only what we'd done before but also what is available online within our industry," he said.

Selfridges' Elfridge and the Enchanted Forest can be played on the retailer's [Web site](#) or downloaded for iOS devices from Apple's [App Store](#), for free.

Get gaming

The holidays are an ideal time to develop an interactive gaming campaign as it links the retailer or brand to the nostalgia of the season.

For example, British department store Harrods is helping consumers decorate their Christmas tree with an in-application game that offers users various decorations to place upon the virtual tree.

The "Never Mind the Baubles" game can be found within the Harrods Magazine application in the Christmas edition and users can share their tree to potentially win a prize. The location of this game will likely spark downloads of the app and the prize may incent consumers to join in on the contest ([see story](#)).

Last year, French leather goods and ready-to-wear brand Louis Vuitton took the conventional gift guide a step further by creating an interactive game to helped users find gifts for their loved ones.

"The Goose's Game" was a digital board game that propels users across a calendar to view gift suggestions. By adding an interactive feature to the gift idea spread, Louis Vuitton was able to increase its customer engagement and reach entry-level consumers ([see story](#)).

"Over the years we've seen a steady surge of mobile game activity over the holidays when people are spending time with family," Plastic Mobile's Ms. Adhami said. "Games and entertainment sharing has become a popular social pastime at the dinner parties and the holidays lend themselves well to the occasion.

"This is a time when mobile users are seeking new gaming experiences, and tying it to a customer service offering is very timely because the service stays top of mind for customers as they're being entertained," she said. "Both the game and the Elfridges service are in high demand at this time and will likely yield results as pairing utility and gaming is a winning combination in mobile."

Final Take

Jen King, lead reporter for Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/Ci0LoEUTci4](https://www.youtube.com/embed/Ci0LoEUTci4)

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