

INTERNET

Bloomingdale's uses humor to highlight customer service

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Bloomingdale's Bow Knows still

By SARAH JONES

Department store chain Bloomingdale's is putting the focus on its sales associates for the holidays with a series of videos featuring a perky, sometimes comically misguided, mascot assisting consumers.

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Bow, who is very knowledgeable of the store, tries very hard to help consumers find their ideal gift for loved one, even if her help is sometimes taken the wrong way. Department stores have been using their customer service to differentiate themselves this holiday season, and this quirky campaign is likely to help Bloomingdale's stand out.

"There is so much angst and anxiety, and sometimes even dread, around holiday shopping," Christine Kirk, CEO of [Social Muse Communications](#), Sherman Oaks, CA. "The crowds, the lines, taking forever to find parking – not mention the pressure of finding the perfect gift for every person on your list.

"The Bow Knows videos infuse some fun back into the holiday shopping season."

Ms. Kirk is not affiliated with Bloomingdale's, but agreed to comment as an industry expert.

Bloomingdale's was unable to comment before press deadline.

Search party

Bloomingdale's introduced its "Bow Knows" videos on its gift guide page, as well as on social media.

In the first film, Bow appears magically in front of a female customer, who needs a gift for her boyfriend. After Bow runs through a list of possibilities, including a Duvetica puffer to make his outer appearance stylish even if the clothing underneath is not, the customer gets distracted by a handbag in a display off screen.



Video still

She runs over to check it out and ends up leaving with the bag instead of a gift for her boyfriend. Bow helps her convince herself that her relationship needs the purse.

Another of the videos features a young girl shopping for her mother. Bow approaches her in the handbag department and tells her she likes her outfit, while wearing an almost identical ensemble.

Bow shows her a Tory Burch Fitbit bracelet, to which the girl replies, "Are you calling my mom fat?" A Moschino Cheap and Chic sweater is turned down after the animal on the front slightly offends the girl, who thinks that Bow is trying to say her mom is a cougar or a tiger mom.

After a detour to the housewares department for an emphatic demonstration of an appliance, the pair end up on the floor among coats eating ice cream, as Bow continues to name possibilities. The girl finally responds that she thinks a Ferragamo handbag would be best.

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/TmgiFsyZXa4](https://www.youtube.com/embed/TmgiFsyZXa4)

Bow Knows Moms - Full Video | Bloomingdale's

In "Bow Knows Girlfriends," the sales associate magically appears again, this time next to a man's bed at night, during the few minutes where his girlfriend is out of the room. She climbs into bed with him as he looks at present ideas on a tablet and flirts with him about

brand names, including professing her love of her Vitamix.

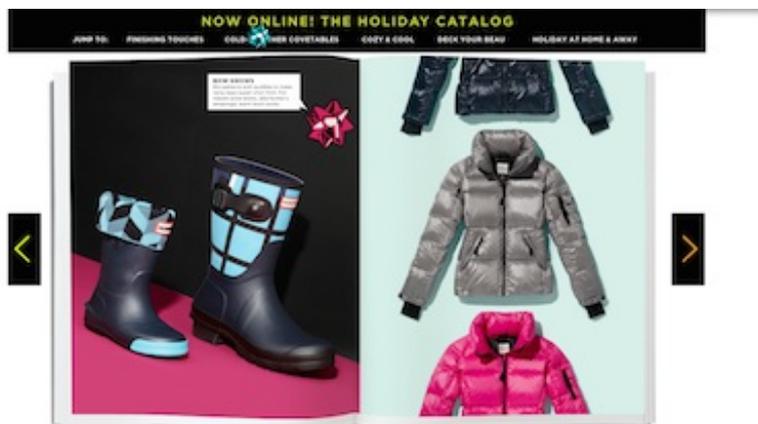


Video still

Bow then proceeds to get ready for bed while picking a small fight, eventually curling up and turning out the light.

The videos help to introduce Bloomingdale's gift guides, which feature many of the same products mentioned. Consumers can either flip through digital catalogs of ideas or go directly to edited ecommerce pages.

Bloomingdale's catalogs are separated into categories, including outerwear, women's wear and men's items. Throughout the booklets are small Bow Knows messages about products, labeled with a sticky bow.



Screenshot of Bloomingdale's gift guide catalog

For instance, Hunter willies come with a style suggestion to mix patterns, as well as the advice to make them snow boots with the addition of the brand's boot socks.

Items in the catalogs can be shopped directly on the page.

Helping hand

Bloomingdale's gifting effort also extends to social media, with an Instagram guide.

Department store chain Bloomingdale's is highlighting more than 500 gifts in a clickable Instagram guide.

Hashtag #Zoomingdales, which launched Dec. 11, works around Instagram's lack of post hyperlinks, allowing consumers to follow tags to separate profiles to view gift sets. Since Instagram has the most engaged community, the store will likely see results from giving consumers gift guides they can follow directly to ecommerce ([see story](#)).

Other retailers have been focusing on presenting their customer service as a differentiator this holiday season.

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

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 ([see story](#)).

Bloomingdale's is not only putting its sales associates front and center with this campaign, but is also showing its sense of humor.

"This video series shows that Bloomingdale's doesn't take itself too seriously, which is refreshing to see from a brand," Ms. Kirk said. "The holiday shopping season is the busiest (money-making) time of year, and most brands put out ads or content to lure consumers in to purchase as much as possible. They take the holiday shopping season seriously.

"However, with this video series, Bloomie's shows that they, and thus their shoppers, can have fun while taking care of business," she said.

"Done wrong, Bloomingdale's could definitely give the wrong impression about Bloomie's sales associates. However, the videos are easy and fun – and most consumers have poked fun at a department store sales associate before – so it's refreshing to see the store do it themselves in a light-hearted way!"

Final Take

Sarah Jones, editorial assistant on Luxury Daily, New York

Embedded Video: [//www.youtube.com/embed/IX997nasgN0](https://www.youtube.com/embed/IX997nasgN0)

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