

INTERNET

Moda Operandi leverages technology to elevate high-touch service

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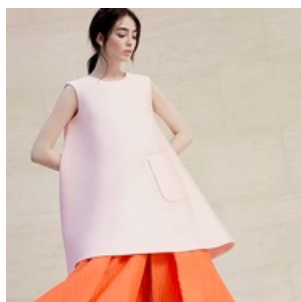


Image courtesy of Moda Operandi

By SARAH JONES

NEW YORK While technology can help to deliver a high-touch experience to consumers, data and automation cannot replicate the level of engagement that a salesperson can create with shoppers, according to an executive from Moda Operandi at Luxury Interactive 2015 on Oct. 13.

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Moda Operandi employs stylists, who work with its most valued consumers to provide personalized recommendations and one-to-one communications, but the process being used to deliver this service was tedious. Keeping the same human touch business model, Moda Operandi built a new platform to help its stylists deliver more relevant, visually appealing messages to the most important customers.

"We took a small team aside and built out a very bespoke, custom CRM solution specific to the needs of our in-house stylists," said Keiron McCammon, CTO at **Moda Operandi**. "The initial focus was just simplifying this outbound email communication.

"Key things were leverage technology to increase productivity, leverage technology to measure, to quantify, but don't try to use technology to replace the stylist," he said. "Don't lose the high-touch, and I think that was one of our key insights going in, was you look at what the stylists did, technology could not do that. Technology could help, but it could not automate emails that were suddenly going to get the kind of interaction and engagement that the stylists were getting from their clients.

"We went with the idea of everything our stylists do is all being curated by a human being. It's hard to beat that human touch; the clients feel it at the end of the day."

Relationship building

As with most other luxury brands, Moda Operandi sees about 80 percent of its business generated by about 20 percent of its clients. However, due to the high-end nature of its business model, it takes this idea further, with about 1 percent of clients driving 10 percent of its sales, and 60 percent of its business attributable to 10 percent of customers.

Wanting to reach this highly valuable set of customers in a more specialized manner, the retailer assigns each high-net-worth client a personal stylist. In addition to working together remotely through online communication, they will also have meetings in New York and London.

Stylists were using their personal work emails to send ideas to their clients, a two-hour process that in the end resulted in messages that were not very compelling. Compiling these notes required them to consult multiple systems to get client information and find current products that might be a good fit and then edit together images in Photoshop.



Bally trunkshow on Moda Operandi

With the amount of time required to speak to one client, each stylist could only take on about 50 to 75 customers. There was also no way to measure the results of email communications, leaving Moda Operandi without an idea of efficacy.

Looking to scale its stylist service and improve the quality of communication, the retailer decided to build a new custom CRM system specifically for its stylists.

The result is a simple dashboard. Once a stylist is signed in, she can view product recommendations for her clients, view all of the live trunkshows and see merchandise being bought by her customers. If a client has not been contacted recently, the CRM platform will suggest that they be reached, but all aspects of communication are still driven by the stylist rather than being automated.

To facilitate the product selection, each client's browsing and purchase history can be viewed, creating a better likelihood that fashions will resonate. Once merchandise is selected, stylists can create more dynamic emails by using a kind of Polyvore-esque collage creator, adding blurbs of texts and creating sets.

This has sped up the email production time to 20 to 30 minutes. Moda Operandi is experimenting with a new type of stylist who will work with 300 clients, enabling the retailer to offer the same service to its valued clients as it does to the very top customers.

Digital meets physical

This CRM platform comes on the heels of a new Web site launch for the online retailer.

Building a new Web site from the ground up is not an easy feat, but sometimes it is the best strategy to make an impact in luxury ecommerce, Mr. McCammon explained at Luxury Interactive 2014.

With limited ability for the marketing team to tell stories, and a clunky shopping experience, Moda Operandi realized it needed to reinvent its online storefront. The team built a completely new user interface in-house to ensure that the online presence matches the offline brand it had worked hard to build ([see story](#)).

Moda Operandi Web Redesign Video

This Web site went live on April 11, and the content focus expanded in September with the creation of flagship brand experiences during fashion weeks, the first of which were Burberry and Dolce & Gabbana.

As it has grown in its five years, Moda Operandi has found ways to connect with its consumers in a memorable way.

Moda Operandi expanded its reach in Britain with a new bricks-and-mortar space opened just in time for London Fashion Week last September.

This space holds designer trunkshows and curated events, as well as hosting clients. Keeping a level of exclusivity, the physical store will be open to consumers on an invitation only basis ([see story](#)).

Moda Operandi is far from done with its ecommerce evolution.

"The new Moda Operandi that was back in April, and the site has continued to evolve we're six months in," Mr. McCammon said. "So I'd say we're very early days with our experimentation, but it seemed to go down very well and

our business has not had a hiccup with such a sizable change."

Final Take

Sarah Jones, staff reporter on Luxury Daily, New York

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