

RETAIL

Robb Vices delights discerning consumers in curated play on passion points

November 14, 2016

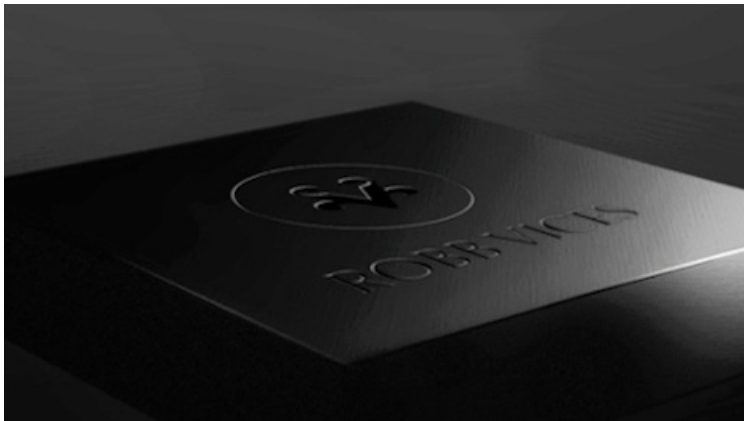


Image courtesy of Robb Vices

By JEN KING

Robb Vices, a monthly subscription service, is eliminating the hassle of gifting through highly curated boxes geared toward the individual who has everything and for whom cost is not a concern.

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The monthly service was born from the defining pillars of lifestyle magazine the Robb Report, which was first published by the family of Robb Vices' founder and CEO, Daniel Curtis, which includes fine wines and spirits, consumer electronics and fashion accessories, among other things. Described as "the good life in a box," Robb Vices seeks to deliver its curious and discerning subscribers exceptional products and experiences, month after month.

"Robb Vices was born out of Robb Report magazine, and is now an independent company in which Robb Report has an equity stake," said Daniel Curtis, founder and CEO of **Robb Vices**. "We take Robb Report's standards of excellence and passion for discovering the best that life has to offer and apply it to the subscription box model with an editorial focus.

"Robb Report exists to celebrate quality, authenticity and the human touch. It is that same spirit that guides the items that are selected for each Robb Vices box and the way that we tell their story in the editorial book that comes with each delivery," he said. "From a personal standpoint, I had the unique opportunity to grow up within the family business of Robb Report.

"Even before I officially joined the company I am grateful to Robb Report for introducing me to the most driven, accomplished, and passionate artists, brand owners, designers and craftspeople in the world. It is through these relationships that the Robb Vices experience is created."

A box of storied treasures

Each month, Robb Vices subscribers are sent a highly curated box that is a complete surprise. Inside, subscribers discover items from various categories such as high-quality foods, fashion items, gadgets, tools and other rare finds.

The products included in a month's box are interconnected by a common theme inspired by a hobby, destination or ideology. The continuity between the featured products works to heighten the experience and provides the subscriber an outlet to learn about the goods included.

"Gifting for an affluent is certainly a hassle...do you get them just another bottle of wine to add to their collection? We spend our lives searching for the products that will delight and surprise the person who has everything," Mr. Curtis said. "As the box is an editorial experience — opening the box is a moment of entertainment which is just as fun as enjoying the products themselves."



Photo courtesy of Robb Vices

Robb Vices' "discovery experience" is outlined further in a booklet that gives an overview of each product, making the subscription service an ideal brand awareness vehicle.

"The monthly boxes are conceived much the way that an editorial calendar for a print publication is designed," Mr. Curtis said. "We develop themes that are interesting and of the moment.

"Themes have ranged from 'American Artisanry' to 'A Story of Brooklyn' to 'Dark Spirits,' which was inspired by a mythological Scottish beast that we decided to manifest in a fine cocktail set with Highland Park Dark Origins Single Malt Scotch at the center," he said.

"Sometimes we find a product so spectacular that we build a box around it."

For example, in October 2015 Robb Vices' second box since launching that September, was titled "Reset" and was inspired by Henry David Thoreau's journey into the woods. The box included a Napa Valley harvest wine, leather-bound, noise-canceling headphones by Master & Dynamic MH40 and a sleeve of artisanal caramelized popcorn.

Robb Vices Box Two: Reset (Unboxing)

While Robb Vices is ideal for "the persona who has everything," the service also has the potential to put brands directly into the hands of target consumers through thoughtful, well-executed collaborations.

At its core, the Robb Report publication thrives on discovering must-haves that would appeal to the sentiment and lifestyles of its readers. Where Robb Report remains on the page, Robb Vices physically delivers the goods and services directly to its community of subscribers.

For brands, this means tapping into the "power of the 'Robb' endorsement" while reaching a desirable and elusive audience. Exposure via Robb Vices may also foster word-of-mouth recommendations due to its penchant for rare finds and up-and-coming brands.

Likewise, Robb Vices' presentation and "first taste" approach create a high-quality experiential environment on a recurring basis. Those who have partnered with Robb Vices, such as sunglass maker Finlay & Co. and Scotch distiller Glenmorangie, who came together for a chef Marcus Samuelsson-curated box, have benefited from the exposure and access to discerning clients.



Contents of a Robb Vices box, curated by chef Marcus Samuelsson

"Robb Vices delivers a tremendous marketing solution for luxury brands and the makers of fine product," Mr. Curtis said. "Our members read about why a product matters while they experience it at the same moment — it is as if we are creating an event in the homes of our members every month.

"As our members are owners of businesses, leaders in tech communities, successful artists in Hollywood and influencers in creative industries, they are the perfect people to start a powerful word-of-mouth marketing campaign," he said. "Our platform is designed to light the flame of word of mouth by introducing a powerful set of people to the right products and experiences."

In addition to generating awareness and providing smaller brands with a platform, potential subscribers may be swayed to sign up by the cost value ratio of each monthly box. Robb Vices' subscription fee is tiered, starting at \$74.95 per month if paid month to month, \$69.95 or \$64.95 for a three or six month prepaid subscription or \$719.40 for a year's membership, which breaks down to \$59.95 per month.

Robb Vices includes products with a retail value of two to five times higher than the cost of a subscription.

You've got luxe mail

Luxury goods are traditionally positioned as exclusive items only obtainable for a select demographic, but subscription services have disrupted the traditional formula of how high-end products are experienced.

The beauty industry has seen success in subscription services that offer trial-sized products for a set monthly price, through the likes of Birchbox and LVMH-owned Sephora's version, Play! by Sephora, which all promise to expose consumers to new brands and items that may have previously been unfamiliar. Although the added exposure is unlikely to harm a beauty brand's high standing reputation, does the luxury market have space for a high-end experience with a steep discount presented as a trial ([see story](#))?

Even a brand as exclusive as French leather goods maker Hermès thinks there is potential in the format.

Hermès is increasing exposure for its whimsical Petit h line through surprise gifts, available on a monthly basis.

The monthly offer is available with three price tiers. The PM box for \$240, suitable for both genders, a MM box best suited for women with a price of \$440 and the GM option, available for \$580 and best for female consumers.

Unlike subscription membership, the purchase is not recurring, giving the consumer cause to return to the Web site for another monthly surprise ([see story](#)).

"Curation is key to the Robb Vices experience. Without an exacting level of discernment into the curation process, people would simply be getting 'stuff,'" Mr. Curtis said. "People do not need more random stuff... they crave the things that will deliver memorable experiences.

"Each of our boxes is curated with a specific moment in mind," he said. "The collection will add something to a party, the boxes themselves give people a reason to have people over and entertain.

"Our curating process asks the following: Will this collection add fun/joy/pleasure to our members lives?; Are the products unique and appropriate for people with the highest standards?; Are the products made by good people that deserve to be celebrated? and Will the story of these items together inspire great ideas?"

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