

MOBILE

Watchmakers introduce Google Glass strategy to build cohesion and awareness

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By JEN KING

Although watchmakers may avoid jumping on the smart watch bandwagon, how can horology benefit from other wearable technologies such as Google Glass?

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With rich heritages, watch brands pride themselves on innovation and detailed craftsmanship. The incorporation of Google Glass, or similar innovative wearable technologies, can enhance the consumer experience and bring traditional horology into the future without the chance of product dilution.

"It's an exhilarating feeling to be on the forefront of this new technology, and to be trailblazing the way for other luxury brands both inside and outside of the luxury watch industry," said Ralph Simons, president of [Alpina Frederique Constant USA](#), New York. "Alpina and Frederique Constant are prided on their innovative spirit, we employ a unique mix of traditional artisanship and Swiss heritage with very non-traditional, American influences like embracing new technology. Finding that balance is what sets our brands apart.

"Google Glass is going to have effects on a number of categories within our businesses,"

he said. "The most obvious is the recording functionality that allows you to capture and create customized content from a first person perspective.

"We'll be able to share out that content across our social media channels and web presence, but also with our retail partners and across their own social media channels. Alpina and Frederique Constant are well known by watch lovers for creating complicated movements with useful, easy-to-use functionalities to benefit the final consumer. The introduction of Google Glass is in parallel with that internal goal – we are utilizing a complicated piece of technology to create accessible and highly unique experiences for our staff, retail partners and consumers."

Looking at the clock

Even though joining forces with a smart watch manufacturer such as Apple, Google or Microsoft would undoubtedly increase exposure for traditional watchmakers, the allure and value of their traditional craftsmanship would be pushed aside when producing a smart watch. With interest in horology at a high, watchmakers must step up their game to maintain relevance in a changing market space where more consumers gravitate toward all things digital ([see story](#)).

With this in mind, watch brands should explore the benefits of incorporating Google Glass into marketing strategies. Google Glass' technology will allow for a seamless retail experience and is likely to enhance consumer interactions as well.

Though Google Glass may not extend its time telling capabilities beyond a simple clock display, the technology can increase product awareness and ensure brand cohesion across the retail space. As Google Glass becomes a sure reality and less a futuristic vision, Swiss watchmakers such as Alpina and Frederique Constant have worked the technology into their marketing strategies.



Google Glass with Alpina and Frederique Constant watches

These two watchmakers are part of the Official Google Glass Explorer Program and aiming to change how timepieces are marketed and shared. With only a few thousand individuals worldwide previewing Google Glass, Alpina and Frederique Constant have an

unprecedented opportunity to alter its strategies, likely causing consumers, and other marketers, to take notice.

Since Google Glass is still in its testing stages, with less than 1 percent of brands experimenting, the technology's benefits and reception has only been weighted in a few instances among the luxury realm. For example, during New York Fashion Week, Women's Wear Daily fitted its reporters with Google Glass to capture backstage content "on the fly," according to [WWD](#).

[WWD](#) also reported that U.S. apparel label Diane von Furstenberg sent models down the runway wearing Google Glass for its spring/summer 2013 collection. In attendance was also Google cofounder Sergey Brin, who sported his own pair down the runway as part of the device's debut.



Google cofounder, Sergey Brin wearing Google Glass

Alpina and Frederique Constant has seen Google Glass as a vital step for "growth and development in both business-to-business and business-to-consumer capacities," per a branded statement. Both watchmakers will use Google Glass to reassess their training programs, communication practices and overall merchandising approach.

Most importantly for brand image, Google Glass will be used in more than 2,800 watch boutiques around the world to ensure than Alpina and Frederique Constant displays are presented to consumers in accordance to branded guidelines. Sales associates take photographs using Google Glass that are then uploaded to a shared database via an in-house iPad/Android application.

Besides creating seamless displays regardless of location, using Google Glass allows Alpina and Frederique Constant to create how-to videos, from the first person perspective to create tutorials on topics such as merchandising and functionality in an "on-demand" setting. Also, the watch brands plan to use Google Glass as an internal research and development tool and for creating immersive content for consumers such as videos of a watchmaker assembling a timepiece from his point of view or a virtual tour of the brand's factory in Plan-les-Ouates, Switzerland.

The future is now

According to market analysts cited in Alpina and Frederique Constant's release, over the

next five years, one in 10 brands will outfit sales associates with Google Glass or similar wearable technologies by 2019.

Other brands have begun testing Google Glass to enhance consumer experience.

For example, German automaker Mercedes-Benz is looking to stay ahead of its competitors by fine-tuning a Google Glass door-to-door navigation system that will likely pique the interest of technology enthusiasts.

The automaker's quest to create an operational Google Glass navigation program may encounter obstacles, but the innovative bent of the project demonstrates the brand's forward-looking objectives. Reliance on GPS navigation is second-nature for drivers today, so searching for ways to enhance this technology will likely appeal to huge swaths of consumers ([see story](#)).

Also, Google Glass may have other ramifications for smartphone developers, such as Vertu, Samsung and Apple ([see story](#)).

Frederique Constant and Alpina will likely inspire other brands to follow in their footsteps.

"Everything is a learning experience at this very early stage in the adoption of Google Glass, both for consumers and also employees for internal training purposes," said Simon Buckingham, CEO of [Appitalism](#), New York.

"Early adopters of this technology are sure to be curious about trying any new applications and uses for their new device so they will be more likely to check out and explore this brand and its Glass enabled retail experiences," he said.

"High-end watches are a considered purchase rather than an impulse buy so being able to provide enhanced and additional information at the point of purchase can help consumers understand the brand heritage and get more excited about a purchase of the product."

Final Take

Jen King, editorial assistant on [Luxury Daily](#), New York

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