

Three Different Mobile Strategies

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Annemarie Frank

Photo By Daniel D'Errio

A panel of three retailers showed the many different approaches to mobile.

"Your social strategy and your mobile strategy need to be inextricably linked," said Julian Chu, general manager, online retailing, Puma North America. "[This year] seems to be the year of mobile really emerging as a mainstream topic in the industry," he continued.

His own company is developing a Puma-branded phone in Europe, and recently came out with an iPhone app to herald its foray into innerwear.

Brooks Brothers plans to bring the Web into the physical store with mobile projects. The company will roll out basic e-commerce on mobile devices in August, then add personalization and clienteling in the spring.

When a customer accesses the store site, he will see the store he shops in, his sales associate and a virtual closet, where he can see things a salesperson recommends for him based on his buying history. So he could check some recommended ties against suits hanging in his closet at home. In the store, sales personnel will have access to their little black books and the same virtual closet on an iPad.

"We've found that relationship [with a store associate] is a huge driver of profitability," said Brooks Bros. vice president of direct Brian Dean. "We want mobile to be more than just another form factor of our Web site; we want it to be a way for the local customer to maintain that

engagement."

Avon's "little sister," Mark, a well-edited line of cosmetics, bags and fashion that changes monthly and is aimed at Millennials, turned its expensive print look book into an iPhone app in the summer of 2009. In the fourth quarter of this year, all of Mark's 1,000 sales reps will be able to ring up a sale on any phone (not just a smartphone). So if a girl admires, say, a Mark rep's ring, the rep can sell it to her on the spot, said Annemarie Frank, director of e-commerce and digital and strategic alliances for Mark.

"The thing I'm taking away today is the diversity of approach and the appropriateness of these different technologies and utilities across different brands," said Jeffrey Max, chief executive officer of e-commerce service provider Venda Inc., who moderated the panel. "The key is to know yourself — is it a brand-building exercise, an engagement exercise, drive to the store or a retail exercise?" he asked.

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