

Kiosks Take on Non-Traditional Roles

Self-service kiosks have moved beyond their typical roles and are performing functions that were unheard of just a few years ago.

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Self-service kiosks have cemented their place in society, appearing in nearly every aspect of our lives. It's nearly incomprehensible that consumers today would perform tasks such as getting cash from their bank account, checking in for an airplane flight, renting a DVD or checking their blood pressure at a retail store without the aid of a kiosk.

And the place of kiosks in our lives is only expected to grow. The self-service technology industry is expected to be worth \$31.75 billion by 2020, with the kiosk segment achieving the greatest growth, according to a report by Allied Market Research.

But as self-service kiosks play an ever-increasing role in our lives, the functions those kiosks perform are expanding as well. Combined with smartphone apps and cloud-based information storage, those kiosks are able to provide services which were previously unheard of and are now available virtually anywhere a consumer happens to be.



Taking a dip

Anyone who's ever owned a swimming pool has been through a similar beginning-of-summer ritual. As soon as the weather begins to warm up, it's time to begin the chore of pulling off the pool cover and transforming thousands of gallons of green, stagnant water into a crystal clear playground for the family.

Part of that process typically involves a number of costly, time-consuming trips to the pool store to test water samples and determine the correct balance of chemicals needed. Hopefully, someone at the store has both the time to test the water and the knowledge to recommend the correct solution. What's more likely, though, is that the pool owner will be just one of dozens lined up at a service window waiting for assistance.

So when Lawrenceville, Georgia-based BioLab Inc. introduced its Clorox Pool&Spa brand into the Mass Retail pool and spa category in 2015,



Nails by kiosk

In arguably one of the more unusual uses of a self-service kiosk, in 2014 U.K.-based FingerNails 2 Go introduced a digital nail art kiosk that prints high-tech designs onto fingernails or artificial nails. The C12 digital nail art kiosk can store up to 10,000 designs, and its small footprint makes it suitable for a range of locations, FingerNails 2 Go said.

The kiosk comes with a high-resolution touchscreen, allowing customers to choose from a wide variety of designs ranging from floral patterns to abstract designs and iconic images. Customers also can use the kiosk's in-built digital camera to take a picture of themselves and have that portrait printed onto their nails.

The kiosk picks up the size and shape of the customer's natural fingernails, and prints onto them. It can also print designs chosen by a customer onto a full set of artificial nails that the customer can apply to their own nails.

According to FingerNails 2 Go's website, the kiosk can print a full set of artificial nails at once in around 2 seconds, and can print onto one individual fingernail in 1 second. This does not include the time taken to prep the nail and choose the design.

the launch was accompanied by the introduction of its My Pool Care Assistant kiosk into 320 Walmart retail locations throughout the southeastern United States.

The kiosks, developed in partnership with Wisconsin-based kiosk manufacturer Frank Mayer and Associates Inc., provide Walmart customers with the information and recommendations they need to maintain their pool or spa on their own. The kiosk features an intuitive graphic touchscreen troubleshooter that helps consumers identify and describe their pool conditions, allowing the software to develop personalized treatment recommendations.

In addition, customers can use accompanying test strips to sample the condition of their pool water, with the kiosk analyzing the results and recommending specific products. Information from sessions are stored in an online account that consumers can access from a computer, smartphone or tablet in addition to the in-store kiosk.

In addition to information geared for their own particular circumstance, users can visit BioLab's website to view how-to videos on proper pool maintenance.

Getting back in

The online accessibility of a customer's information from a self-service kiosk and integration with a smartphone app have become common features of a number of non-traditional deployments beyond the My Pool Care Assistant.

Most of us, for example, have encountered the situation of losing car or house keys. Replacing those keys can mean either a costly call to a locksmith to have the locks changed or a trip to a car dealership for a replacement car key. And with many car keys incorporating a transponder chip, a replacement can cost hundreds of dollars.

To help solve those issues, New York-based KeyMe has developed a self-service kiosk and accompanying smartphone app that allows customers to safely store a "digital copy" of their keys in the cloud and create a spare copy at any retail location featuring KeyMe kiosks (or keyosks, as the company calls them).

Users simply insert their original key into the device and choose their preferred design to fabricate a replacement. The system retains a digital copy of the original key in the cloud, so if the user later loses a key they can simply log into their account using fingerprint identification and generate a replacement.

For car keys with a transponder, the kiosk scans the keys and reads the transponder, with a copy subsequently shipped to the user's home.



About the sponsor:

Frank Mayer and Associates Inc. is an in-store merchandising company with vast experience in designing and manufacturing branded permanent displays for virtually every retail format. Clients are a wide range of Fortune 500 brands and retailers. Throughout the years, the company has embraced transforming design concepts and ideas into a reality within the in-store merchandising industry.

Today, Frank Mayer and Associates Inc. is a leader in in-store merchandising and recognized in the point-of-purchase industry for the company's ability to meet and exceed clients' expectations.

Even if a user doesn't need a duplicate key, they can store copies of their keys in advance for free and print them out later if needed. In addition, copies can be shared via email; a boon in a situation where the keyholder is on a vacation and needs to provide access to their home to a family member or neighbor.

Fun for the family

On the subject of vacations, one of the main challenges faced by tourist destinations is how to appeal to children raised on an entertainment diet of role-playing computer games. Kiosks are helping to meet that challenge as well.

Great Wolf Resorts, for example, is North America's largest chain of indoor waterpark resorts with 11 parks in operation and two more under construction.

To capture the interest of children seeking that video-game experience while on vacation, Great Wolf subsidiary Creative Kingdoms partnered with Frank Mayer and Associates Inc. to develop an interactive gaming kiosk now deployed in Great Wolf Lodges across the country as part of a new series of "The Clubhouse Crew: Great Wolf Kids Adventures." The game leads players on an adventure throughout the lodge to meet the Great Wolf Kids.

Participants interact with the kiosks via their personalized activation device, a stuffed animal containing an RFID tag. Children will be able to play a variety of games on the kiosk, including mini games and an interactive scavenger hunt. "Working with Frank Mayer and Associates Inc. has really helped us to take our game play to the next level," said Melissa Blettner, senior vice president of Creative Kingdoms. "With the combination of virtual environments on the interactive kiosks and our physical effects, our games have become a more immersive and engaging experience."