

Aetrex CEO on the Benefits of Going Mobile

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The days of Brannock devices being the most high tech feature in comfort footwear stores are long gone. And driving the updated innovation is men's and women's brand Aetrex, which paved a way for digital footwear fitting with its in-store iStep Technology, which scans and dispenses accurate foot measurements, arch type and pressure point information in less than 30 seconds.

Now, to support the fitting system, Aetrex recently launched the iStep Mobile App generator, a first of its kind aimed at supporting retailers who offer Aetrex's iStep fitting system. As Aetrex Worldwide CEO Larry Schwartz explained, "We have a robust software team that enables us to develop mobile apps for customers. Our iStep business and everything we create for that program gives us a unique capability in our space that differentiates Aetrex from competitors."

Through the customizable app generator, Aetrex's retail partners can stay plugged in with their clientele through social media updates and send in-store and online coupons and promotions. The software includes GPS technology, which enables consumers to help find the nearest store location. And with Apple's iBeacon technology, retailers can send personalized alerts and messages to shoppers when they are near the store.

Aetrex's movement toward mobile reflects the comfort category's ever-changing and increasingly younger consumer. Schwartz said, "Our brand connects to customers both online and in store about comfort and health. To our core customer, Aetrex is synonymous to innovation, comfort and health. We've consistently tried to find new materials and technologies to improve the way people feel on their feet and improve their overall health and well-being."

Sourcing Journal spoke with Schwartz about the benefits of retailers—big and small—going mobile and how brands can help.

SJ: Is the Aetrex consumer using apps frequently?

LS: We believe our consumer is app savvy. We have consumers of all age ranges and based on the success we are having with mobile marketing, we believe that most of our consumers would be considered app savvy.

SJ: How does the app complement Aetrex's other technology, like iStep?

LS: Aetrex has the ability to install iBeacon software on a retailer's mobile app. When consumers who have downloaded the app walk near the store, the retailer can communicate with them and ask them if they want a free digital foot scan. Since we have the software capabilities, which are unusual in our industry, we try to find ways to help our customers by creating something dynamic for them. The mobile app generator has allowed us to do this relatively easily.

SJ: What do you tell your retail partners about going mobile?

LS: A mobile app isn't going to immediately revolutionize someone's business. However, it is really important for retailers to get into this game and they don't need to be a giant retailer to have an omnichannel retailing strategy. The stats show that mobile is growing like crazy and development takes place in this area. Everything is evolving where mobile is being integrated. We encourage retailers to think three or five years out. Is this going to be bigger or smaller than it is today? Having a plan to communicate with consumers outside the store, through mobile channels and a mobile app is an important component to any mobile strategy.

SJ: How do you communicate that mobile message to some of the smaller retailers who have been slow or reluctant to go online?

LS: Think about some of the most common websites, like Facebook. The stats for Facebook are evolving more and more towards mobile. When we carry out educational seminars on this topic, we ask participants how they would access Facebook two or three years ago. On their computer, or on their mobile device? How are they accessing it today? The answer is obvious. Everything is evolving towards mobile and apps are a dominant part of mobile usage. If retailers want to stay competitive, they have to start integrating mobile into their marketing strategy.