



This towering, two-stories-high LED display, comprising 16-by-32-ft. screens, is a striking welcome into the Sydney Telstra store. Existing limestone columns were left exposed to add a natural feel.

Discovery Zone

Sydney's tricked-out Telstra flagship is a digital playground with the ultimate try-before-you-buy shopping experience.

BY LAUREN MANG, CONTRIBUTING WRITER



The Australian telecommunications company Telstra made headlines this past New Year's Eve, when it propelled two custom-built drones skyward during the Sydney fireworks display. Capturing 360-degree views of the celebration, it streamed the video footage live via its official smartphone app – one the company designed specifically for the event. The tech giant's fondness for unmanned aerial vehicles doesn't stop there, either.

Walk into Telstra's redesigned flagship along Sydney's George Street and you'll find more drones on display, catching the eyes of some curious customers. With an emphasis on discovery, the smartphone and mobile device provider acquired an adjoining building to create additional ground-floor space, and transformed the high-traffic, technology-dense location (there's an Apple outpost across the street) into an energized, 4972-square-foot hub, full of hands-on digital interaction points.

continued on page D8

TOP, BOTTOM LEFT *Interactive elements, such as the Device Lab table (shown), encourage customers to take products for a test drive prior to purchasing. Here, they can learn more about how each product fits into their daily lives.*

ABOVE *The design teams kept the store's look neutral by mixing in natural materials, such as whitewashed oak timber and 100-percent wool fabrics, in contrast to the intense digital screens.*

“Australians [have an] affinity for technology,” says Andrew Coull, executive director for Telstra Country Wide (Melbourne, Australia). “We saw the opportunity to increase our brand presence in a key area and use the store to showcase our retail strategy and the world of possibilities ... technology is bringing to [everyday] life.”

Sydney-based interior design firm, Geyer, and Portland, Ore.-based creative agency, Downstream, partnered with Telstra to design to an interactive product exploration adventure for shoppers, complete with tablet-equipped consultants who never need to abandon the sales floor.

“Effective customer engagement and assistance in decision-making ... is mostly aided by a consultative interaction, rather than a transactional process,” says Robyn Lindsey, partner, global retail sector leader at Geyer. “It’s the reason customers ultimately come to the store, rather than purchase the products online.”

When a shopper visits the new Telstra store,

they’re able to test and play with live, out-of-the-box gadgets – specifically, at the generously sized Device Lab table, outfitted with multiple touchscreens, where customers are encouraged to “play and learn” about product features and capabilities, which pop up on the screen when a display model is placed on its surface.

To save any desired specs on a particular product of interest, customers tap personalized cards called “digital tickets,” which operate using near-field communication (NFC) technology, onto specific, illuminated in-store beacons. Once home, they can retrieve the information saved on their digital ticket through a unique URL.

Screens flash throughout the space, but most prominent is a curved LED display positioned near the entrance, above which reads “discover the possibilities,” on a separate LED element, suspended from the ceiling. The large screen highlights relevant content that reinforces Telstra’s brand ethos of a “brilliant connected future.”

The shop’s simple, clean backdrop is a nod to natu-

Meeting spaces inside the Telstra flagship help drive conversations, not just between employees and customers, but also among other shoppers.





ral materials and textures, and provides what Lindsey describes as “a deliberate contrast to the digital experiences and communications” abundant throughout.

A flexible lateral and vertical fixture display system enables easy product change-out and storytelling. An unobtrusive, secure storage system houses all products on the sales floor, within arm’s reach of associates – quelling any need for the “let me check in the back” conversation.

What’s more, the design team strategically placed “go-to blocks” in areas of the store (the plush-seating-filled collaboration zones, for example) that accommodate all the tools – business cards, point-of-sale systems, packaging – employees need to engage shoppers.

“A customer’s first impression is important to his or her overall experience,” Coull says. “From the warm, open design to the innovative technology, the energetic consultants, and even the subtleties of the store scent – we want shoppers to feel welcomed, excited and inspired.” ▲

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

RETAILER
Telstra Corp. Ltd.,
Melbourne, Australia

DESIGN
Downstream, Portland, Ore.
Geyer, Sydney

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
LendLease, Sydney

FIXTURES
Aisle 8, Rowville, Victoria, Australia

FLOORING
Earp Bros.,
North Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Gibbon Group,
Brendale, Queensland, Australia

FURNITURE
Cult, Melbourne Victoria, Australia
Vitra, Melbourne, Victoria, Australia

LIGHTING
2B Designed,
Melbourne, Victoria, Australia
Osram Sylvania,
Mississauga, Ontario, Canada

For a full list of suppliers,
go to vmsd.com

ABOVE LEFT *The retailer plans to roll out key elements from the Sydney flagship through its broader store network, including its site in Melbourne.*

ABOVE RIGHT *In the Tech Bar area, cold-rolled steel was used on the ceiling to add texture and contrast to the softness of the surrounding materials.*