

# Bringing the dream to life



FOR THE FIRST TIME, SHOPPING CENTRES CAN DELIVER AN IMMERSIVE FAMILY HOLIDAY EXPERIENCE THAT TRULY DELIVERS ON THEIR EXPECTATIONS. PAUL J KURZAWA, HEAD OF GLOBAL RETAIL DEVELOPMENT & ENTERTAINMENT, DREAMWORKS ANIMATION, TALKS US THROUGH THE THRILLINGLY UNIQUE DREAMWORKS DREAMPLACE CONCEPT.

Claus, taking families on a magical sleigh ride to the North Pole with the help of Shrek and his Friends. Launched in 2014 with eight locations in the US, DreamPlace magically combines the old age tradition of the Christmas holidays with ultra-modern technological wizardry to deliver a visual marvel that will delight children and adults of all ages. The attraction includes a virtual sleigh ride that transports guests to the North Pole to see Santa Claus as well as interactive activities for children and parents to enjoy along the way.

The DreamPlace concept brings huge benefits to the

shopping centre, driving traffic and boosting sales as its unique proposition draws customers from far and wide.

This year has seen the number of DreamPlace shopping centre venues rise to 14 and the introduction of the concepts first international locations, at Westfield London and Westfield Stratford City in the UK.

DreamPlace is roughly 1,300sq ft in size and about 70 per cent of the exterior surface of the house is covered in digital LED screens, providing an the ability to animate it, recreating the architecture and bringing it to life with the integration of characters from DreamWorks' extensive library of much-loved characters and stories.

This year, the attraction sees Shrek and Fiona decorating the house with the help of their children, providing an hourly





SLEIGH DESIGN LAB



REINDEER STABLE



NORTH POLE WELCOME CENTER



SLEIGH HANGAR

light show. There will also be a group of elves with bells on their hats, playing a tune for the waiting crowd.

The concept itself is simple, though the experience is anything but: families book their reservation from home and when they arrive at the shopping centre they are greeted by a guide that will lead them through the DreamPlace experience. They receive a 'passport' and enter the house to be greeted by Shrek and Donkey who tell a short story about the journey they are about to take. They then move on to the next room where the family plays a short game that prepares them for the next stage – a four-minute, motion-based ride to the North Pole.

"In the past," says Paul J Kurzawa, Head of Global Retail Development & Entertainment at DreamWorks Animation, "families go to the mall and stand in line to see Santa; you sit down and he asks your name and what you want for Christmas... The experience that we have created, with its water and wind effects,

omni-screen display and motion effects, is a truly immersive one in which you truly feel that you have been transported to a different place – the North Pole!"

This journey sets up the family's meeting with Santa Claus and, while the children wait, there is an opportunity to play a programme and design your very own unique, customised Gingerbread Man that can be printed off before leaving the experience.

The family then enters Santa's study and, magically, Santa knows their name and what they want for Christmas.

"Up until last year there hadn't been any experiences with Santa really delivered," says Kurzawa. "At DreamPlace, Santa truly delivers an experience that the family deserves, adding real value to the shopping centre experience."

The concept has received a great deal of interest from the UK and Europe and discussions are underway with a view to further international locations in 2016. The

Middle East, which is quick to embrace innovation and experience-led attractions is a key target market.

"Commercially, DreamPlace's infrastructure and technology allows it to be used for other holidays, so for example in the Middle East an experience can be created centred around Ramadan," he adds.

Indeed, DreamWorks is also working on additional content, which it expects to be available for Halloween 2016. "In fact, one of the challenges we face is that we have too many ideas! It has been important that we remain disciplined in how we roll out each one of the different holidays," he continues. "But that's the real magic of this concept, we designed it so that DreamPlace can be used throughout the year as an attraction to draw traffic and provide customers with a new reason to come back."

The company is seeking locations that benefit from a dominant position in the market, ideally a super-regional centre – last year, in almost all of its locations many people drove 2-3 hours to visit DreamPlace.

"People are thirsty for a new experience, especially nowadays when information and entertainment comes so easily whether it comes through a smartphone, a tablet a computer or streamed online. When you look at commercial destinations, it's the same thing; people are actively seeking that same interaction. I believe that the reason why DreamPlace is proving so successful is because for the first time, we have the ability to create something that truly delivers on those expectations," Kurzawa explains.