

How to Rock Retail

Even in a Fast-changing
Digital Landscape





We knew we were in for something incredible before we even took the first step onto the campus of Orvis, an American staple of sporting good retail in business since 1856. Talk about a successful business model.

Our conversation with Dave Finnegan, Orvis' CMO and CIO, took place in the great outdoors -- this is a company that lives its brand through and through. Dave oversees marketing, digital, e-comm, tech and catalog to ultimately develop the optimal customer experience, whether shoppers come by in-store or online.



Finding the Tension

At Orvis, experience and product weave together to create an excellent retail process from start to finish. “The number one thing for a great experience is a great product,” Dave explained, noting that he first learned that lesson from the company’s CEO, Leigh Perkins Jr.

The goal, always, is to develop “a product that [customers] can see solves a problem for them. So what we do is we start by first understanding the tension, the problem the customer has. That frames up the opportunity to go solve that tension.”

Sometimes these points of tension are so ingrained, consumers don’t even realize they’re a persistent problem. Father’s Day was the perfect example: Orvis understood that every single year, people of all ages struggle to figure out what in the world to give Dad. Each member of the team reflected on that tension, thinking about themselves, their own children, their own fathers, and then worked together to find the solution.

Most dads don't want items, they want things money can't buy:
Quality time, relaxation, meaning.

So the Orvis team developed a marketing plan that emphasized how their products serve those intangible purposes.

Dave described this process as "working backwards." In an industry as fast-paced as retail, it's tempting to just, as they say, throw stuff against a wall and see what sticks. But thoughtful strategy is what works best for both the consumer and the company.



Numbers are a Necessity

Developing cross-channel, highly interactive customer experiences isn't a straight-line task. There are countless metrics to consider day in and day out -- you really could find yourself drowning in numbers. That's why it's so important to identify which numbers really matter. Those are the metrics the team should be using to set reasonable but challenging goals.

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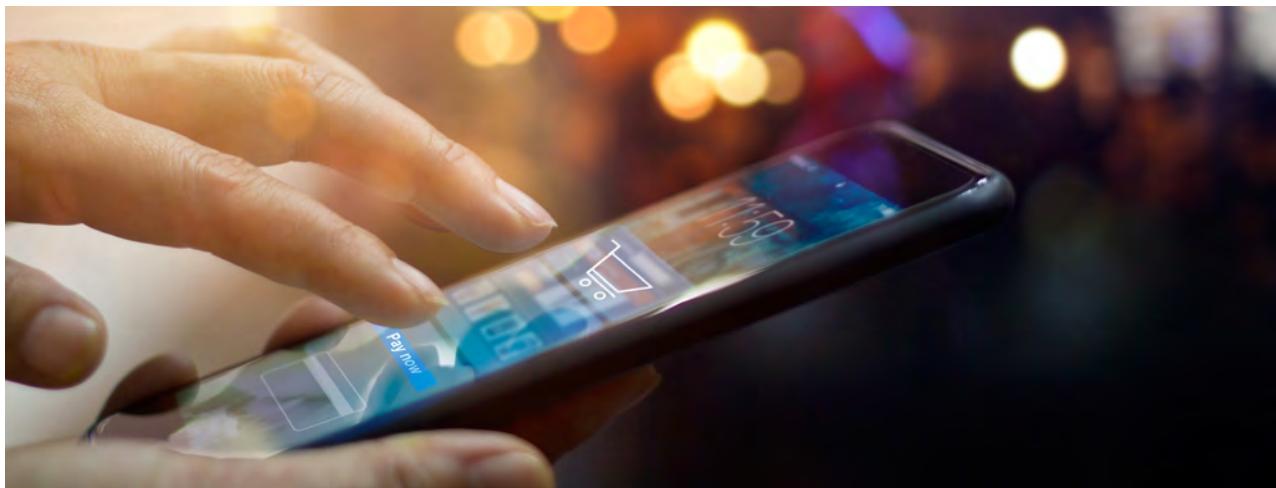
When we asked Dave what metrics he most heavily relies on, his answer was straightforward as anything: Gross profit.

Many businesses look at gross profit on a monthly, quarterly or even yearly basis. Not Orvis. They’re tracking that figure every single day. It is, Dave said, the most telling measurement of how everything across the board is working.

“Our team’s scorecards for marketing and merchandising are gross profit based,” Dave said. “We know what our gross profit is every day -- we don’t have to wait until the end of the month to see how we did.”

The answer was methodical and highly focused, and that type of fixation on numbers can be scary for businesses, especially during rocky periods. But avoiding or downplaying metrics is only going to hurt in the long term.

It’s also worth pausing to consider that Dave’s role at Orvis blends together hard numbers and off-the-wall creativity, two seemingly very different ways of thinking. Instead of dividing them, allow them to coexist and build off each other.



What's Up on the World Wide Web

The retail industry had no choice but to embrace the internet. E-commerce is only growing in popularity, which has been to the dismay of the operators of traditional brick-and-mortar stores. That's why we loved Dave's perspective on the so-called war between e-comm and regular sales.

"It's not a battle to me between retail and digital; it's a blending of how they're used," Dave said, calling the best possible customer experience an "omni experience" -- one that seamlessly combines all types of service.

Online shopping is a convenience, but customers are still heading to the mall for something their laptops can't offer: "Next time you're in a retail shop, watch what [customers] do," he said.

"People will have their hands touching the fabrics, holding it up in front of them."

Orvis' team embraces the digital world to cater to customers' mix of interests: They want the organizational ease of online shopping, but they also want the physical experience of visiting the store and seeing the products with their own eyes.

Incorporating digital elements into their stores has helped Orvis to really take its brand to the next level. When you walk into any Orvis location, you're going to get, as Dave calls it, the omni experience: Passionate employees who are knowledgeable about the products, digital signage that helps customers determine what exactly they're looking for, and top-tier products they'll want to bring home that day.



On the Road Again

Talking progress and innovation led us to the topic of trade shows, which have the potential to take business from decent to incredible.

Trade shows allow Dave to chat with other CMOs from all types of companies, and many of them are eager to share their

insights and tips. He's often found that when he mentions a tough question his team's facing, people are more than happy to discuss how they tackled similar issues.

"Comparing notes with people not on the sales side, but on the practitioner side, is the most valuable thing for me because I learn so much," he said, also adding, "We're successful when we're great partners and have great partners. Trade shows are often a place where we can meet with all our partners at the same time."

Our own reaction? We want to head to more trade shows in hopes of bumping into more people like Dave -- people who understand their brands and are pushing their teams above and beyond to deliver those grade-A customer experiences.

Want to learn how to use digital signage to increase customer experience and keep metrics top of mind for your team?

Schedule a discovery call today!

Schedule Now

