

Closer Look

New Place-Based Media Network Seeks to Unite Smaller Developers

By William R. Wilburn, Editor

PLACEWISE MEDIA, THE SHOPPING CENTER INDUSTRY'S LARGEST PROVIDER OF PLACE-BASED CONTENT AND INTEGRATED MARKETING CHANNELS, is seeking to create the nation's largest integrated media network focused on where America shops by uniting the industry's leading small and mid-sized developers in its Shoptopia Network.

Shoptopia combines online, social, mobile and digital screen-based communications into an interactive experience and relationship with consumers. This expansion of the original Shoptopia service, an online shopping community jointly created by Forest City Commercial Management and PlaceWise Media, is designed to enhance the relationship among malls, retailers, brands and shoppers with an interactive experience before, during and after shopping.

"The Shoptopia Network engages our shoppers with insights into all things fashionable, special offers and feedback from their peers," said Jane Lisy, Forest City Enterprises vice president of marketing for Commercial Management and chairwoman of the Shoptopia Network advisory board. "It's a perfect integration of all the digital and physical shopping experiences. Shoppers are engaged, informed and rewarded for their participation."

Shoptopia enables shop-

pers to gain insider knowledge and receive special offers, rewards and event invitations. Content is syndicated and broadcast through personal computers, mobile devices, tablets and in-mall digital experience walls, providing consumers with real digital interactions that are natural extensions of the shopping experience.

Mall Experience Valued

As PlaceWise's charter partner for the original Shoptopia community, Forest City conducted a two-year study to explore the future of retail center marketing. A key focus of the study was the need to better understand digital channels and their influence on both online and bricks-and-mortar purchasing habits. Finding that frequent online shoppers still highly value the in-mall shopping experience, Forest City recognized that the integration of social networking channels with in-mall shopping was necessary to engage shoppers and provide them with a complete experience.

"What makes the Shoptopia Network so interesting and valuable is the targeted communication with shoppers during their entire shopping experience," said Mort Aaronson, chairman and CEO of PlaceWise Media. "This network delivers timely and relevant content to shoppers via the communications medium of their choosing."

Creating Critical Mass

JONESREPORT Plus talked with Aaronson and Lisy to get more details on the launch. By joining a number of developers into a digital network, Shoptopia seeks to create a critical mass that will be attractive to retail advertisers and sponsors, something difficult for the small developers to do on their own. In return, the developers will share in revenue created by the network.

"It's very frustrating for national retailers to have 20 centers here, 30 centers there

continued on page 2

INSIDE	Top Ten Ways to Build Your Tourism Marketing 3
	CENTERBRIEF 5
	Priority Categories Help Focus Decision Making 10
	US MAXI Winners Honored at Fusion Conference 12
	World Earthquake and Cat Market After Japan's 9.0 14
	DDR's Sing! Competition Bridges Digital, Mall Experiences 15

Shoptopia

Continued from page 1

and two fabulous centers by an independent developer over here,” Lisy noted. “They don’t want to have 60 conversations in order to get them all under their messaging tent.

“The vision is that by using this network to connect a group of developers, we offer all our retailers a vital communications link that they can easily access to expand their message — one-stop shopping. They don’t have to pick and choose and group all these centers together,” she added.

To Rival Any Developer

PlaceWise Media began as Mallfinder, a provider of websites for more than 300 malls, more than anyone else in the industry. Aaronson hopes to build on those relationships to bolster the Shoptopia Network. “Jane and I are hopeful that this will be a network as big as any management company in the United States in a very short period,” he says.

“If you’re even a 50-location shopping center company and you approach a sponsor, you’re too small,” he observed. “If you approach the Gap, you’re too small. You kind of get left in the dust. They (smaller developers) have a very difficult time monetizing their customer assets today because of their size.”

The Shoptopia Network promises to provide critical mass, a scalable technology platform and original content that few, if any, of the participating developers could create on their own.

Source of Revenue

“We have 3 to 4 million unique users who come to our clients’ websites today every month,” Aaronson noted. “We have a very healthy seven-figure number of members who have opted in to our programs. We have people looking at 15 to 20 million page views a month across the development companies. And now we’re putting it together. The pitch is very simple. We’re going to

upgrade the assets and interconnect you with others and if you’re a development company — typically a small one would be doing it internally — we’ll be able to provide you all of the tools that the biggest and the best get to use at a very reasonable cost. And at the end of the day you’re going to get to share in the revenue that this network gets to generate.”

Lisy says that from a developer’s standpoint the advantage is twofold: the potential for revenue and the integration of the communications channels from online to the digital screens in her shopping centers.

Need to be There

“What we’ve discovered ... is that those customers talking on all these channels are our best customers. They’re spending more. They’re more valuable to the shopping center. They are our better customers. So we need to be on all these channels. This organized net-

continued on page 9



The Report for
Shopping Center Management and Marketing
MAY 2011 ■ Vol. 33 No. 7

P.O. Box 50038
Indianapolis, IN 46250
Editorial, Advertising, Circulation and
Mailing Lists:
800/546-9889 ■ 317/576-9889
Fax: 317/576-0441
E-mail: www@jonesreportplus.com
www.JONESREPORTPlus.com

JONESREPORT Plus (USPS 003-938) (ISSN 1555-8347) is published monthly for \$145 per year by Raven Communications, 6939 Lantern Road, Indianapolis, IN 46256. Send address changes to JONESREPORT Plus, P.O. Box 50038, Indianapolis, IN 46250.

This newsletter is published by Raven Communications, which also produces BOOK OF STEALS, booklets and CDs offering decades of successful marketing events for shopping centers, and other specialty periodicals. For more information, call 800/546-9889. In Indiana call 317/576-9889. Our e-mail address is ravencom@comcast.net.

Authorization to photocopy items for internal or personal use of specific clients is granted by JONESREPORT Plus, provided the base fee of US \$50 per copy, plus US \$10 per page, is paid directly to Copyright Clearance Center (CCC), 222 Rosewood Drive, Danvers, MA 01923, USA. For those organizations that have been granted a photocopy license by CCC, a separate system of payment has been arranged. The fee code for users of the Transactional Reporting Service is (0889-485X)1921\$50.00 + \$10.00).

For written permission to reprint published material, please contact JONESREPORT Plus editorial offices in Indianapolis, IN at 317/576-9889.

Robert M. Jones
Founder (1945-1989)

William R. Wilburn
Publisher/Editor



Member of
International
Council of
Shopping
Centers

Shoptopia

Continued from page 2

work helps us integrate those channels into one easier-to-manage system, as opposed to us having a lot of disparate messages out there on various channels that are harder to manage. We see this as a unification of the various channels that we have to speak on.”

She says the network solves a major problem that dogged Forest City from the beginning. “The biggest thing we’ve learned from this process is that everyone on earth thought these online opportunities for communications were

the silver bullet, that it was cheap and easy,” she noted. “(We thought) it was an easy medium. It wasn’t nearly as expensive as traditional media. And look how fast you could talk to people.

Content Has to be Fresh

“What we’ve learned is a large investment in human capital is still needed to do this right. We underestimated how much time and effort it would take to make sure content was always fresh and interesting to people. And if they had something to say to you, you’d better have something to say to them. People bore very quickly, so

that content has to be very fresh. I think we were surprised. I think we knew that was true, but not to the level we found it. You really need to be engaged in this conversation. You can’t lecture your customer. You have to have a conversation, and that requires a lot of time and effort.

“What was helpful about being partners with Mallfinder in the process of discovery was that they were helping us generate content that we just didn’t have the capacity to do on our own. It was important that we have individual conversations, but somebody else needed to be our partner to keep developing stimulating content and programs. And that’s what we’ve been busily working on over the launch phase. We just don’t have the time and the resources on an individual center level to deliver that.”

Madison Marquette Signs On

At press time PlaceWise Media announced that Madison Marquette had joined the Shoptopia Network, bringing the network to 39 retail centers that will reach 23.4 million shoppers. By the end of 2011, PlaceWise projects that the Shoptopia Network will include 150 retail centers and reach more than 100 million monthly shoppers. ■



The Report for Shopping Center Marketing & Management

- One Year, U.S. \$145
- Two Years, U.S. \$260
- One Year, Foreign, \$170 (U.S. Funds)
- Two Years, Foreign, \$295 (U.S. funds)

Name _____

Title _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State/Province _____ Postal Code _____

Phone _____ Fax _____

E-mail _____

Visa Mastercard Acct. #: _____

Exp. Date _____ Signature _____

Please Mail, Fax or E-mail to:

Phone: 317/576-9889 JONESREPORT Plus

Fax: 317/576-0441 P.O. Box 50038

www@JonesreportPlus.com Indianapolis, IN 46250

You can also start or renew a subscription by visiting our website: www.JONESREPORTPlus.com.