



**Kerry Bodine,
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Give the gift of user-friendliness

Small flaws mean big woes for registry users

The retail environment offers unique challenges for kiosks—they must be visible among the store's merchandise and insulated from the sounds and gazes of passing shoppers. To examine how retailers deal with these constraints, we evaluated the kiosk experience at three of the largest housewares stores with in-store gift registry kiosks. Our methodology, which evaluates the hardware, software and the environment, uncovered many areas for improvement:

- Signage doesn't support directional decisions. Retail environments have multiple aisles that lead customers in and around product displays. While this provides maximum exposure to merchandise, it often makes kiosks difficult to find.

Forrester's advice: Physical cues from the store's layout, such as a main aisle leading through the store, can guide customers and help with directional decisions. Place kiosks along major pathways and orient them so that they are easily seen. If a kiosk must be obscured from view, use signs to alert customers of its location.

- Workspaces don't provide insulation from external pressure. Our evaluation looks for kiosks to provide a distinct work area for each user and to provide privacy so that other people can't easily see the screen.


Forrester's advice: Allow some breathing room between merchandise displays, employee desks and the kiosk.

Give users at least one sturdy shelf on or directly next to the kiosk where they can place personal items—and leave this shelf completely free of signs, merchandise and other promotional items.

- Software doesn't help users recover from errors. One thing you can count on, users will always make mistakes. So error messages must help users recover from errors—and allow them to take corrective action without being forced to start over.

Forrester's advice: Timeouts should allow enough time for the user to think about the task or to deal with momentary distractions, such as cell phones or screaming children. More important, they should give the user the chance to say, "Yes, I'm still here!" before the software resets.

- Screen elements aren't presented in a logical order. For this criterion, we expect to see related controls or information grouped together on a screen and positioned so that they reinforce the task flow.

Forrester's advice: If pressed for real estate on a small screen, consider changing the size or shape of buttons. When information must be presented in a table, use large fonts that emphasize data instead of white space. 

Kerry Bodine is a senior analyst in Forrester's Customer Experience group. Her focus on self-service kiosks takes usability and design research beyond the screen and into the physical world. Bruce Temkin, also of Forrester, contributed to this column. For more information about Forrester's Kiosk Review, please contact Jeanne Strepacki at 312-466-5557. www.forrester.com



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