

## Store Fixtures: Consumer Acceptance is a Pressing Matter

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*Membrane-pressed woodgrain surfacing drives consumer acceptance of Duane Reade's high-tech pharmacy kiosks.*

When consumers are deciding where to spend more than \$200 billion annually on prescription drugs in the U.S., it is convenience more than anything else that drives their decision, says the National Association of Chain Drug Stores. These same consumers also believe that being able to interact with their pharmacist is very important.

In an effort to give consumers what they want, while at the same time strengthening its position as the largest drug store chain in the metropolitan New York Area, Duane Reade has introduced the DR Express — a sophisticated pharmacy kiosk that blends high-end exterior styling and electronics to allow consumers to not only order prescriptions from remote locations, but also to talk directly with a pharmacist 24 hours a day, seven days a week.

“There is nothing like this on the market today,” says David Siegel, director of business development for Duane Reade.

The DR Express offers an interactive system, complete with two-way video conferencing, which provides 24/7 pharmacy access to answer questions and fill prescriptions.

“It’s all about customer convenience,” adds Siegel. “Customers no longer have to make two trips to the pharmacy to drop off their prescription and then to pick it up. And the compact design of the store fixture allows us to bring pharmacy services directly to our customers at work, at the doctor’s office, and at hospitals and clinics.”

The sophisticated technology would not be successful without an equally innovative combination of material and design to draw in consumers.

“It’s the attractiveness of the machine that has made the user acceptance of the DR Express as significant as it has been,” says Siegel.

In fact, Duane Reade originally rolled out a demo design of the store fixture with metallic surfacing that the company built itself, and the user results were significantly less than the current design generates.

“Once we brought in an expert in the kiosk design field, GA-based Creative Kiosk, and deployed a kiosk using woodgrain membrane-pressed cladding and backlit signage, we saw a significant upsurge in interest from consumers,” explains Siegel.

### **Woodgrain Cladding Adds Appeal, Flexibility**

“The DR Express store fixtures is primarily gray powder-coated sheet metal clad with woodgrain membrane-pressed three-dimensional laminates from American Renolit,” explains Tom Zaken, director of national program development at Creative Kiosk, Norcross, GA.

“Membrane pressing allows us to soften the exterior edges of the kiosk and offers us increased design freedom, because the film conforms to virtually any three-dimensional shape that can be routed into MDF board. Most importantly, the woodgrain finish looks so close to the real thing that it’s hard to tell that it’s not real wood, and that realism provides the sophistication required to place these kiosks in high-end facilities,” Zaken adds.

DR Express store fixtures can be found in a variety of New York-based locations, including medical buildings and grocery stores. The fixtures also are being placed at large companies with more than 2,000 employees, such as CitiGroup, Viacom, the Federal Reserve Bank of New York, BMW and Time Warner. Additionally, the kiosks are being installed in the lobbies, emergency rooms and clinics of hospitals like Mount Sinai, Bronx-Lebanon Hospital Center, Peninsula Hospital Center and Lutheran Medical Center.

Originally, Creative Kiosk, which designs, fabricates, assembles, tests and deploys the DR Express kiosks, planned to take advantage of the flexibility of the kiosk’s membrane-pressed panels by changing the exterior finish based on the location. However, it quickly became apparent that the woodgrain kiosk easily blended into any environment.

“The woodgrain has a professional look to it that makes the kiosk acceptable in prestigious investment banks, while at the same time, it is absolutely appropriate in a hospital or retail setting,” says Siegel.

### **The Right Combo of Materials and Design**

The DR Express kiosk packs a lot of equipment into a relatively small footprint.

“When you approach the kiosk and touch the screen, you are talking to Duane Reade’s pharmacy staff,” says Zaken.

A camera at eye-level allows a pharmacist to see the customer and the customer can see a pharmacist on the screen. A built-in microphone allows for easy communication, but customers also may choose to pick up a telephone

handset for added privacy. Medical cards, prescriptions and registration cards can be faxed directly to the pharmacist via a built-in flatbed scanner.

“It was a challenge to get all of the equipment into such a tight space and still have it work properly and be accessible for servicing,” explains Zaken. “The exterior is also very complicated, incorporating a number of membrane-pressed and powder-coated components,” he adds.

Membrane-pressed parts include the top piece on which the sign is mounted, two side panels, a center section, edging on the privacy wings, four sides on the pedestal and the panel holding the camera and microphone.

Membrane pressing for this project is outsourced to Piedmont Woodworking, Rutledge, GA.

Prior to membrane pressing, components are milled to create detailed edge profiles. Machined components are then coated with adhesive and placed on a membrane-pressing table — with film from American Renolit suspended above — then slid into a chamber that heats the film and creates a vacuum, drawing the film tightly onto the part.

Exceptional formability enables the film to conform to any detail in the wood, including undercut edges, while maintaining a uniform wall thickness with minimum thin-out. Once excess film is trimmed from the perimeter of the backside, membrane-pressed components are delivered to Creative Kiosk for assembly.

Once assembled and tested, the kiosks are delivered directly to the specified remote locations, ready for installation by a Duane Reade technician.

Currently, more than 50 DR Express kiosks have been deployed in the New York metropolitan area, and Duane Reade has plans to double that number over the next year. The company is also in the process of marketing its kiosk solution to pharmacy chains outside of its market area.