

PROFILE

NAME: Glass-Media Inc.
LOCATION: Dallas, TX
FOUNDED: 2015
WEBSITE: glass-media.com

CHALLENGE

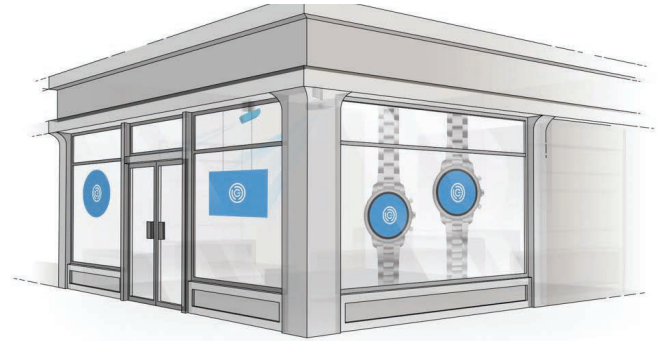
Bridge the gap between online and physical brick and mortar commerce to boost store traffic, build brand awareness, enrich customer engagement, and drive both offline and online sales.

SOLUTION

Glass-Media uses Epson LightScene™ accent lighting and PowerLite® L laser projector series to pair with their proprietary rear, liquid crystal projection film. The result is bright, high-contrast images on store windows that are vibrant, attention-grabbing, and updateable in seconds to support retailers' merchandising and promotional strategies.

Bridging the Gap Between the Physical and the Digital

Glass-Media Uses Epson LightScene for Unique Storefront and In-Store Retail Displays



“When I lived in San Diego, I walked to work each day and passed by dozens of brick-and-mortar retail locations,” recalls Daniel Black, CEO and founder of Dallas-based Glass-Media, Inc. “I realized most of them were using paper signs in their windows to communicate with the outside world.”

“I started thinking about how ineffective that was. Here were people whose livelihoods were threatened by online sellers, and the best way they could fight back was to use marketing techniques that were centuries old to engage those in the immediate vicinity of their storefront.”

In response, Black and his team designed, developed and commercialized an end-to-end solution that's bridging the gap between online and physical commerce. It's helping retail clients boost store traffic, build brand awareness, increase customer engagement and drive both offline and online conversion.

At the heart of their approach is laser projection from Epson, including the new LightScene accent lighting projector.

Tying the Storefront to Digital

Glass-Media, founded in 2015, is actively collaborating with well over 50 notable brands and retailers in and around digital transformation.

Black and his team turned to projection as opposed to stale and antiquated legacy digital signage displays in order to improve brightness, form factor and ease of installation. They also wanted to get rid of the bezel and support non-native aspect ratios. “The main thing was, we wanted something that would draw attention to itself, that would catch people off guard.”

For example, a large cosmetics company is leveraging Glass-Media's projection-based digital storefront solution to transform existing storefront windows into vibrant, dynamic displays in the shape of lips. Remotely, their client is able to update storefront messaging in seconds in order to promote more relevant and personalized content.

“The display looks fantastic.”

— DANIEL BLACK, CEO AND FOUNDER, GLASS-MEDIA, INC.

To maximize color uniformity, optical clarity and viewing angles, Glass-Media is using the Epson PowerLite L610U laser projector with their proprietary rear, passive liquid crystal projection film. “You can’t project on window glass,” Black explains. “Aim a projector at a window and the light goes straight through, blinding anyone who looks at it.” The substrate acts as a super-efficient projection screen, concentrating the light from the 6,000-lumen projector to create a bright, high-contrast image on the windows.



“The display looks fantastic,” he says, “even in bright sunlight.” That’s important because the projection-based displays are all installed in free-standing stores in outdoor shopping centers, each in a different area of the United States. “Phase one of the rollout began with seven stores and we are currently in discussions around a much larger expansion.”

Epson offers much brighter models, giving them the flexibility, they need to work in almost any environment.

One of the campaigns shown on the lips, ties in with a long-standing campaign running on popular social media platforms, as well as the client’s website, in print and on TV. “The idea is to show off the many creative ways someone can use our client’s cosmetics, using images and videos consumers post to build excitement for the brand.”

Other clients use Epson-powered displays to project content on windows, walls, or on shelves next to merchandise. “In doing so, they’re creating a more seamless online/offline customer experience, changing what had been static store displays into something far more dynamic,” Black explains.

A Private 4G Network

To help keep the store displays fresh and alive, Black and his team created a cloud-enabled, browser-based content management system (CMS) designed specifically for projection-based display applications. The system makes it easy, he says, for a client to upload, schedule and deploy content across the country in a matter of minutes.

“During the initial platform design stage, we were mindful of the fact that most retailers typically refresh storefront messaging every four to nine weeks whereas, online marketing initiatives change at a much faster pace.”

Communication between the cloud and Glass-Media’s media player takes place over a private 4G cellular network, simplifying installation while avoiding the need for custom IT protocols and firewall changes. “From a connectivity standpoint, we remain completely off-net.”

“Our CMS is the first ever developed for projection,” Black adds. As such, it includes a projection-mapping feature, which allows the client to project on a polymer display cut to any shape or size and prevent unwanted light from spilling out through a window or onto a background within the store.

The CMS also includes software to easily choose the projector for a particular site, given the display size, shape and ambient lighting conditions. Black says the team most often uses laser projectors from 2,000 to 6,000 lumens, but they appreciate the fact that Epson offers much brighter models, giving them the flexibility, they need to work in almost any environment.

“The systems are completely automated, turning on and off on a schedule, so we don’t have to rely on store personnel to make sure the videos are playing. Our software also provides remote monitoring of the displays, letting us know if there’s any problem with a player, projector or the network.”

Key Performance Indicators

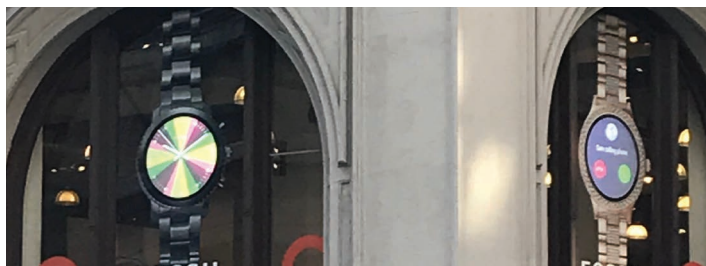
Black says he has always been interested in testing and optimization, and so he realized, early on, that analytics would be a crucial part of Glass-Media’s offerings.

That said, the company does not produce its own analytics software, but instead acts as a marketing consultant to help clients tie in-store KPIs (key performance indicators), such as door counter data, coupon redemption and sales, to their overall campaigns. “We will help a client use the software they are most comfortable with to analyze how much the displays affect traffic and drive conversions. If the client uses mobile sensors, such

as Bluetooth beacons, we can help them push notifications out to shoppers.”

He and his partners have also run a series of A/B tests on the products Glass-Media buys or builds, using them to pick the best projectors, the best screen material, the best ways of rolling out a digital campaign. That type of side-by-side testing led to the relationship with Epson.

“I’ve always had a lot of respect for Epson, starting with the fact that, within the world of display technology, they are strictly focused on projection. That focus that has allowed them to build a better projector, with higher contrast and more uniform, richer colors, things that are crucially important for the digital storefront. And when Epson introduced their laser technology—that was a game changer for us. Now a projector can go two to four years without needing maintenance, depending the hours it runs each day.”



Digital Content on Nearly Any Surface

Black says he’s especially excited about the Epson LightScene accent lighting projector, which shares the rich colors and crisp images of other Epson laser projectors but looks and mounts much like a track-lighting fixture, blending easily into a store’s décor.

“We like LightScene for a lot of reasons, but there are several places where we expect it to disrupt older projection technology,” he explains.

For example, the size, shape, and short throw distance of LightScene makes it ideal for tighter areas within a store.

“We work with a lot of retailers who use vestibules, which include the store window and a white wall three feet behind the glass, in between which are mannequins or other product displays. We don’t have a lot of throw distance but can embed the LightScene within that space and it works well.”

Then too, LightScene is ideal for projecting on the floor. “Imagine walking into a convenience store in the morning, and the floor graphics direct you to coffee and donuts; at lunchtime to salad or sandwiches; in the evening to wine or beer.”

He and his team are doing more and more work in augmented reality applications using projection technology. “Here we might map an image directly onto a white shoe in the store window, so the shopper would see it changing from one color to another. Or a business apparel store could project a series of logos onto a shirt or uniform.”

Omnichannel Marketing

“When we first thought about starting our business, we asked ourselves, ‘Why are storefronts not dynamic? Why is there such a big gap between online and physical commerce?’” Black recalls.

In looking for ideas to bridge that gap, he and his partners developed a better, faster way to deliver media to the stores, a better approach to analytics, and a far better way to display digital content, based on Epson laser projectors and their own proprietary projection substrate.

In doing so, they created a practical, high-impact solution for omni-channel marketing, merging the physical storefront with web, online, and social media campaigns.

“It’s been a great journey,” he says. “We’re doing some really cool stuff these days and are excited to be working with Epson. Their team sees the same trends and gaps that we do and is an active participant in delivering solutions to help enhance the customer experience and create more engagement between customers and brands.”

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the individual. Individuals were not compensated for this article.