



Where Technology Meets Play

Comcast's Studio Xfinity is an interactive, media-rich experience making customers rethink traditional notions of home entertainment.

BY JENNIFER ACEVEDO, EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

When Comcast (Philadelphia) set out to create Studio Xfinity, a new interactive, immersive retail experience in Chicago's bustling North/Clybourn corridor, the media giant knew it had to connect with consumers in a different way.

Comcast's vision, guided by experiential designers at ESI Design (New York), was to create a media-rich space allowing customers to test-drive new products, participate in demos and learn more about the capabilities of their existing offerings. All of this was to occur in an atypical environment that encourages interaction between visitors, the Studio Xfinity staff and the seemingly limitless world of entertainment and connectivity.

"They really wanted to create something special

that focused on a high level of experience," explains Joe Karadin, director of physical design for ESI Design. "We started by imagining what the best and most exciting experience would be, and we built the design around that. We started thinking about the customer journey and what type of environment would support that."

The space features three studio areas with 12-by-7-foot LED screens and theater seating. These primary experiential zones double as event spaces to welcome and further engage the community. Visitors can participate in single- or multi-player games created by the design team, bringing virtual online experiences to the physical world.

One of the studios is clearly geared toward kids, with brightly colored, comfy furniture and a stack of plush Minion toys temptingly stacked nearby.

"We wanted customers to interact with the store," says Karadin. "We wanted the store to be, in a sense, a social environment and an environment that helps to pull the local community together."

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Two demonstration towers offer one-on-one experiences for customers of varying technological expertise levels. One of the challenges the Comcast and ESI Design teams encountered during their collaboration was to appeal equally to the most hardcore gamer, as well as the novice user.

The physical design elements of the studio are intentionally muted, so as not to compete with the technology-rich features designed to capture the visitor's attention. Encouraging customer engagement on the part of the team members is also key, and visitors are greeted at the door with an offer of coffee or water and a guided tour.

Boasting more than 800 feet of LED screens and large-scale media installations to educate and enthrall visitors, Studio Xfinity has delivered a reimagined experience in a customer-centric model that's part play, part technology and all entertainment. ▽

TOP LEFT Content is the hero at Studio Xfinity. Large LED screens and interactive features capture the visitors' attention.

TOP RIGHT Games and activities encourage interaction with technology.

ABOVE Visitors can explore the studio experience on their own, or take a guided tour.

PROJECT SUPPLIERS

DESIGN
ESI Design, New York

ARCHITECTURE
CallisonRTKL, Baltimore
Gensler, San Francisco

GENERAL CONTRACTOR
Crane, Chicago

AUDIO/VISUAL
IC Tech, New York
DMG, Kenilworth, N.J.

CEILING TREATMENT
VER LED, Los Angeles
Sparks, Philadelphia
DMG, Kenilworth, N.J.

For a full list of suppliers, go to vmsd.com

CEILINGS
Armstrong, Lancaster, Pa.

FIXTURES
Sparks, Philadelphia

FURNITURE
Coalesse, Chicago
Arper, Monastier di Treviso (TV), Italy
Bouncepad, Boston

LIGHTING
Amerlux, Oakland, N.J.

SIGNAGE/GRAPHICS
Southwater Signs, Chicago