

Cover story

celio*



Visualising success

By implementing 3D merchandising software from Dassault Systèmes, the popular French menswear retailer celio* is taking a big step towards its vision of becoming a world leader. Lindsay James finds out more

When Laurent and Marc Grosman took over their family's shop in rue Saint-Lazare, Paris, in 1978, little did they realise that almost 30 years later they would be heading up a global success story. By 1980, the two brothers had opened up a number of celio* stores across the capital and, by 1989, there were 34 celio* establishments across France. Fast-forward to today and the two brothers are still very much at the heart of the men's fashion retail company, which boasts more than 1,000 stores across 60 countries, 500 of which remain in France.

"As a men's fashion company we are now the leader in France, and we're well known in Belgium, Italy and Spain," explains



celio*'s chief information officer, Laurent Rousset. "But we want more than that – our vision is to be the world leader. We want to deliver something very simple; we want to democratise fashion for men."

To deliver on its aim of becoming a world leader, celio* needs to keep up the momentum on its expansion and develop its subsidiaries outside of France. "We expect huge growth in the next three to four years," says Rousset. "To achieve this, we have built a strong brand which is supported by a new logo, new image and very specific branch merchandising."

However, until recently, managing the branch merchandising was very much a manual process, as Rousset explains: "We

have two main collections: spring/summer; and autumn/winter, which are supported by additional smaller collections throughout the year. We have special merchandising and promotions for each. Each season we have to define new store merchandising. All this work used to be done manually; we printed the designers' sketches, pinned them to mood boards, produced a book or photo and distributed them to visual merchandisers in each store. It's incredible that we did this! It was so time consuming."

These manual processes simply couldn't be maintained. "As we grew, the processes became more and more complex," explains celio*'s vice president of supply chain, Laurent Thoumine. "Operating in multiple

countries with multiple product lines across multiple channels is no easy feat. We needed a way to display products in the different outlets that vary in size and architecture while delivering a consistent experience to the customer. This could no longer be done effectively using our traditional method."

"As we continue to grow we want to ensure a consistent brand experience, present a good and precise message, and make sure that all of our teams around the world can create the same store concept," adds Rousset. "With this in mind, we realised we needed a 3D merchandising solution that could do a lot of the hard work for us."

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Having already been in touch with Dassault Systèmes (DS) to discuss its product lifecycle management (PLM) solution, celio* discovered that the company was also innovating in the 3D space. “We jumped at the opportunity to work with DS,” says Rousset. “The company has a fantastic knowledge of PLM and a real understanding of the retail industry. We had every confidence that DS could meet our needs and that the team was committed to helping us achieve our goals.”

“We understand that retailers and brands continue to face significant challenges and accelerating change,” explains Susan Olivier, vice president of consumer goods and retail at DS. “Today’s consumers are empowered and informed. Brand loyalty is fragile, and social innovation has changed the way consumers interact and spend. Assortments must be on trend, on time and presented in ways that catch the consumer’s attention. And even if merchants and brand managers have a good understanding of their customers and clear vision for their assortments, if the merchandising isn’t right – at that first moment of truth – the customer won’t be motivated to buy.”

Taking the time to understand celio*’s specific situation, DS worked hand in hand with the retailer to create a personalised solution that would go on to exceed its expectations. “It wasn’t a simple case of implementing an out-of-the-box solution,” explains Rousset. “We had very specific ideas about what we were after. We needed a strong, automated solution and DS took the time to understand exactly what we wanted. We worked together as a partnership to get the results we needed.”

The solution was based on DS’s My Store solution. For celio* this provides the opportunity to optimise assortment finalisation, product placement, revenue generation and profit, while evaluating and refining the actual shopping experience from the perspective of its consumers. Driving compliance with the corporate merchandising strategy ensures consistent, visual brand equity across stores. From a branding perspective, this solution provides the ability to visualise in 3D the set-up of ‘shop within a shop’ locations or to

influence retailers in product positioning and thereby increase presence and revenue.

“Using the My Store solution, celio* can create 3D models of its store layouts, fixtures and marketing collateral,” explains Olivier. “It can take 2D photographs or even good illustrations and render them into a 3D representation that can be used to virtually merchandise the store and visualise the assortment from the perspective of the consumer – before having the physical products available.”

What’s more, store teams and even consumer focus groups can share a 3D walkthrough and ‘shop the assortment’ virtually, providing early feedback just from images. “That means the placement, quantity and the assortment itself can be adjusted to maximise visual appeal, enhance revenue and profit, even before committing to production,” says Olivier. “Once satisfied that the right products are featured, in the right volumes, the assortment manager can generate clear 2D planograms with product details and mounting instructions in a single click for in-store execution.”

Built on Microsoft SQL Server, the solution benefits from unrivalled performance. “It’s important to our customers that DS supports a variety of platforms so that companies can use the platform of their choice based on available skills, budgets and technical preference,” Olivier explains. “Microsoft SQL Server is broadly deployed in the consumer goods and retail industry since it’s cost-effective and easy to support.”

By March 2013 the basic solution has been implemented. “We wanted the product to be ready to start with our winter collection,” says celio*’s Rousset. “There was a lot involved because it meant completely changing our processes. After one month we then went back to DS with feedback, who tweaked the solution to better fit our needs. Throughout the process we received a great amount of help and support from DS, who got very involved in training. You have to remember that before the implementation, people were used to working with paper and scissors! So training was crucial.”

Rousset and the team helped DS define the nuances of working with a fashion brand and, after six months, a working solution

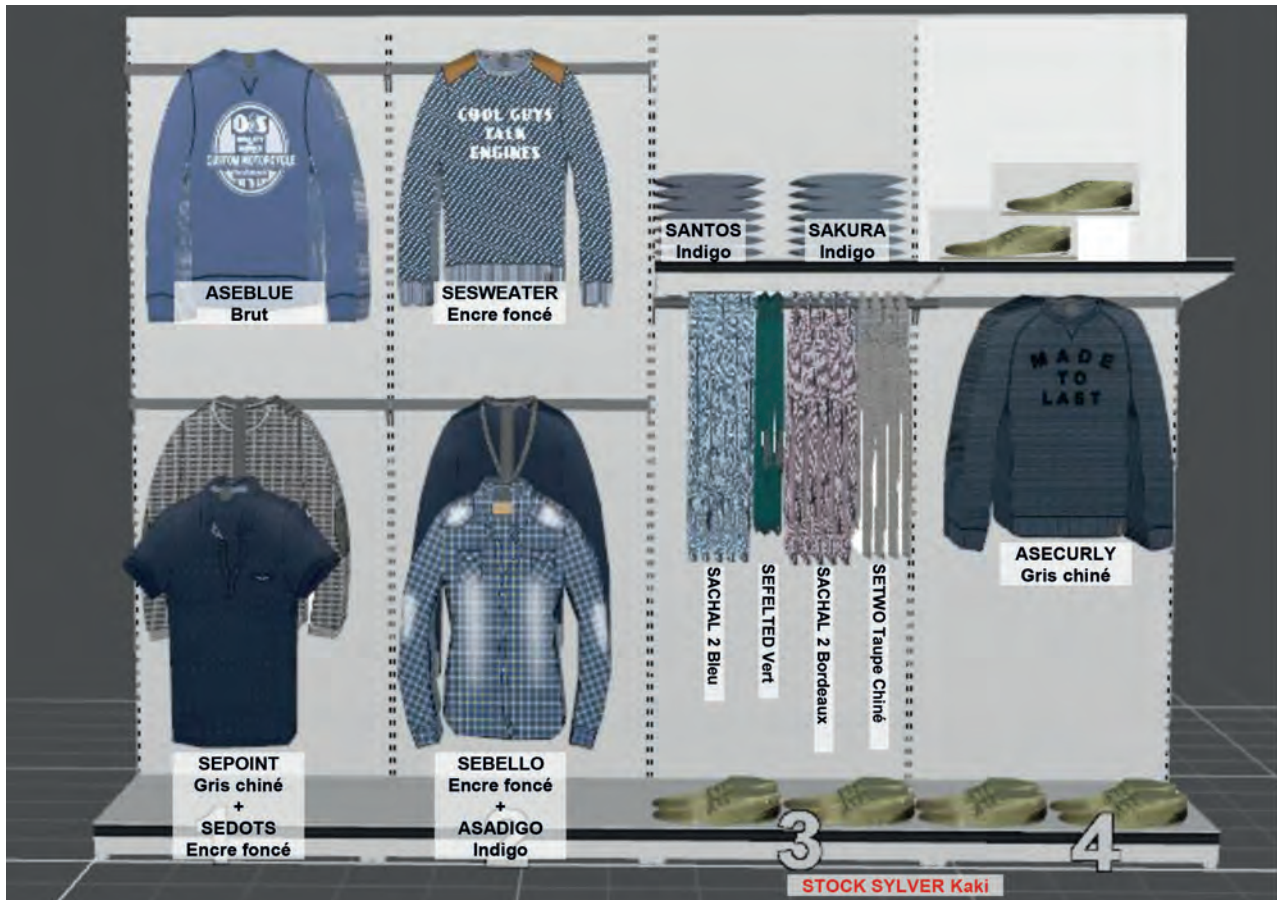


was in place. “We’re treating this solution as a continuous evolution,” says Rousset. The solution we have in place now is very different to what we started with and we hope to keep developing it to suit our ongoing needs. We couldn’t have dreamed of doing this without a strong relationship with DS and effective communication.”

Today, the merchandising team works together much more effectively. “They have a renewed sense of collaboration,” says Rousset. “They’ve got laptops so they can share their work more easily. And at the end of a meeting they can quickly share the results.”

“The team has been amazed by the DS solution and what it can do for them,” adds celio*’s Thoumine. “It’s very easy to use, hassle free and complements what they do on a daily basis.”

While the adjustment to the way people work is still in progress, Rousset believes that the improvements are extremely



celio* aims to democratise fashion for men by using My Store to improve its store layouts

valuable. “The last six months have been very interesting,” he says. “We now have more KPIs to work with. We can also go into the individual products and see the effect the merchandising has had on sales. We can see what’s working and what isn’t.”

Overall, the merchandising team is much more involved in value-added tasks. Everyone can work more efficiently and they can interact better with each other. They can communicate if they have any problems and use the store image to clearly show what the issues are. “Merchandising is now more upstream,” explains Rousset. “I hope that we will be able to make fewer mistakes regarding the quantity of clothing items. And we’re helping the stores best present our collection. In short, the way the team works has been transformed. They know that we can now track what they do, so they’re more responsible and they can see the results of their work more quickly. The main benefit is enhanced productivity.”

The customer experience has also improved. “There’s no doubt that stores are better organised and look less messy,” says Thoumine. “There’s now more logic behind the assortment – it tells a story. And this creates a far better customer experience.”

celio* is confident that its relationship with DS will continue long into the future. “Moving forwards, we hope to connect some of the MyStore solution with our merchandise planning and business intelligence solutions,” explains Thoumine. “This will allow us to modify store layouts to maximise sales of certain items.”

“We will keep working with DS to evolve the solution and to help them progress too,” adds Rousset. “Working with DS has been so easy and convenient. The team were so accommodating and helped us adapt the solution to meet our needs. It wasn’t a simple implementation, but they definitely stepped up to the challenge.”

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