

P/O/P TIMES[®]

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Fit for any Retailer, New Balance Rolls Out Modular Shop

New Balance Athletic Shoe Inc., Boston, rolled out a permanent concept shop system that provides a cohesive look while offering versatility.

Pairing with **The Carlson Group's** Chicago and Portland offices, the shoe company developed a 28-piece modular fixture system that allows the brand's various product lines to be displayed in different configurations according to the needs of the specific retailer.

For instance, while a boutique athletic specialty store might only have room for a few shoe shelves with a header, a big box sporting goods retailer could use almost all of the pieces to create a New Balance store-within-a-store shop.

Because of the different types of spaces the system was designed to accommodate, each type of fixture was produced in different quantities rather than as whole shops, another area of versatility for the athletic company's push.

"We've been quieter in the past in introducing the brand to new consumers and reaching our current customer," says Catherine Jakaitis, global creative services and brand manager for New Balance. "The driving force behind this project was to create a system that is modular and versatile to the different types of spaces available to us."

The resulting pieces, introduced in January 2006, vary in size from the aforementioned shoe shelves to modules as large as 4-foot-by-8-foot clothing displays covering 15 square feet of floor space. Each piece is constructed of silver-painted metal and molded plastic, and features the company's corporate color, bright red, emblazoned with the New Balance logo.

Each unit comes mostly or fully assembled, with most construction as simple as snapping on feet. Detailed instructions are included, but the company will send a technician to construct the fixtures if a

store requires a large-scale installation. Units are available to all New Balance customers.

"It's part and parcel of the program we sell into a store," Jakaitis says. "We sell in the whole marketing and fixture programs with our products."

In addition to the system's versatility in regards to space and production numbers, the molded plastic areas allow retailers to change the fixtures' graphics from season to season. The changeable graphics can also be used to highlight product launches and technology changes without introducing new fixtures.

"The fixtures will always be consistent with the brand, and that's their purpose," Jakaitis says. "The graphics can be used for our launches."

Jakaitis says that the company plans for each fixture to last for two years, meaning those launched in January are roughly at half-life. The company is hoping to increase brand awareness as well as sales with the campaign, and the brand manager is happy with the results thus far. "In some instances, we have seen a sales lift," she says. "As a result of all the marketing support we're doing right now, we have very good brand awareness, and a little more recognition than before."

—Greg Presto



New Balance worked with The Carlson Group to produce 28 different branded fixtures made of metal and molded plastic. Retailers choose the components that best fit their stores.



Product: New Balance athletic shoes and apparel

P-O-P company: The Carlson Group, Portland, Ore.

Distribution: Sporting goods stores, shoe departments, athletic specialty stores

Introduction: January 2006

Duration: Permanent

Construction: Metal and molded plastic

Set-up: Retail staff or New Balance technicians, depending on order size

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