

P/O/P TIMES®

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P-O-P On A Mission

Big-hearted entrepreneur finds big sales with TOMS, all sales benefit children of Argentina

By Erika Flynn

VENICE, CALIF. — Blake Mycoskie started his shoe company, TOMS, last year with a very specific mission in mind: to give away one pair of shoes to a needy child in Argentina for every pair sold in the U.S. The company saw immediate success, prompting a big step toward creating some in-store marketing support.

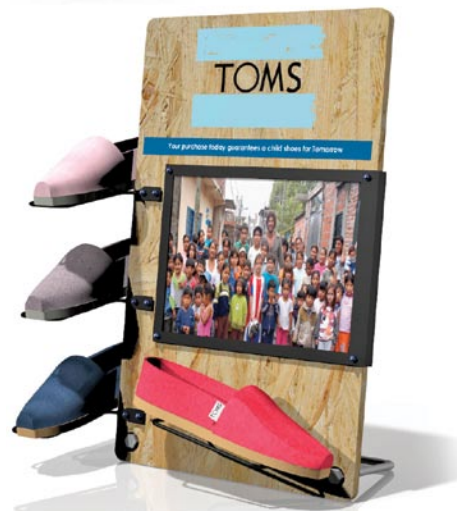
The P-O-P, which hits all stores this month, shares the brand's charitable story. Display imagery features pictures taken during the first shoe drop this past October, when Mycoskie and a group of his family and friends personally handed out 10,000 pairs of shoes to equal what had been sold in the company's first seven months.

"In order for us to be successful at the retail level, we have to have the ability to explain our story and our brand," says Mycoskie. The Carlson Group, Portland, Ore., designed the program pro bono for TOMS. Components suppliers Richter Industries, Kenosha, Wis., and Thunder Tool, Broadview, Ill., also contributed.

"What intrigued us about this project was that there was some social advocacy attached to it," says John Carlson, president of The Carlson Group. "It's a rare thing in our industry where a project is tied to something that has social cause and implications. We liked that."

The P-O-P includes variations of a tabletop display and a wall presentation. All displays are made of particleboard, wood and metal components, with bolt detailing for a hand-fabricated look. "I wanted something that would be elegant but natural and very simple," says Mycoskie, whose title is founder and chief shoe giver. "We didn't want it to look like a lot of money was spent on it, because we don't want to be spending excessively on P-O-P, or anything, for that matter. We're trying to give back as much as we can and impact the world in a positive way."

The shoes, which are modeled after a traditional Argentine shoe called the "alpargata," are currently sold in 380 locations, including Nordstrom, Bloomingdale's, specialty boutiques and Urban Outfitters, at a retail price of \$38. While Mycoskie realizes that getting merchandising placed in the high-end department stores is a challenge — the majority of the P-O-P will go



A wall presentation (top) and a counter unit (bottom) accentuate the TOMS charitable mission by featuring photographs of founder Blake Mycoskie with the Argentinian children receiving his shoes.

into the 198 boutiques — a variety of options were designed for current and future retailers.

A wall presentation is ideal for the larger outdoors stores that are expected to sign on by the summer selling season. It features three par-

ticleboard pieces at the top, the largest showcasing the company's main graphic of Mycoskie putting a shoe on a child. The litho-printed graphic was chosen for all pieces for 2007 because of the story it tells. "It was important to me that people realize that we don't just send these shoes out to some charity. We actually go down ourselves and place them on the children's feet."

The tagline under the image reads, "Your purchase today guarantees a child shoes for Tomorrow." The company's logo, created to mimic the Argentine flag, is screenprinted on the smaller boards, under which are changeable graphics in sheet-metal frames.

Aisle violators flank both sides of the unit and were printed to look like particleboard, with each image framed. "They were created to look like a collage of photos from Mycoskie's travels," says Thomas Chisari, design director for The Carlson Group in Chicago. The shoes hang on 32 facings of metal brackets.

One of two tabletop presentations features three easel boards with the TOMS logo at the top. One board features the tagline and the changeable graphic image. The other two easels each merchandise two shoes that sit on dowel rods. A more vertical, four-shoe tabletop presentation is also being used, with three shoes sitting on metal brackets on the side and one under the graphic frame.

A total of 260 displays have been produced and shipped from The Carlson Group's Chicago facility. Additionally, displays will start shipping internationally; 30 stores in Canada have signed on, and orders were expected from stores in Japan and Australia.

To measure the program's success, Mycoskie says he plans to get feedback from some of the original retailers that started without P-O-P and now have one of the pieces.

A four-month RV tour — the only other advertising to date — to visit every store that sells his shoes began in February. "I think as the P-O-P hits stores, it's important that the sales reps understand the passion we have for what we're doing," he says. "It also gives the retailers an opportunity to invite their customers in to learn more about the mission of TOMS so people will continue to buy our shoes." ■

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