

Spar, UK's Largest Convenience Store Operator, Conducting Six-Store Test with Help of POPAI

Spar [www.spar.co.uk], the largest chain of convenience stores in the UK, has begun a pilot test of a digital media network with the help of The IQ Group [www.theiqgroup.com], a reseller of the RePromotion narrowcasting technology.

Simon Fisher, advertising and promotions manager for Spar, said, "We are pleased to be one of the first to recognize the potential of digital media network. ... Showing our own promotional messages on the screens has already been generating positive feedback from both the retailers and customers. ... The stores in the trial are showing good growth year-on-year and we believe some of this uplift is directly attributable to the screens."

The testing is being staged at six stores – Farnham Common, Wordsley Green, Chadsmoor, West Malling, Great Kingshill and Swanscombe. The pilot is being created and managed by The IQ Group, with that company handling installation, media sales, content creation and network operation. In addition to Spar's own brand promotion, other brands being featured during the trial include Smirnoff vodka, Smirnoff Ice, Baileys, Kronenbourg, John Smith's, Foster's, Birds Eye Frozen, Weetabix and newspapers the Sun and The Times.

According to The IQ Group, research for the pilot is being sponsored by Point of Purchase International (POPAI). The research will cover sales audits, customer interviews and staff feedback. Findings from the research program are scheduled to be announced by David Williams, a partner at The IQ Group, at the Multi-Channel Retail Show February 17-18, 2004 at the Commonwealth Institute, Kensington High Street in London.

Spar, with 2600 locations in the UK generating £2.3 billion (\$US 3.8 billion) in retail sales, operates with a range of store configurations -- including village stores, petrol stations, high-street stores and some supermarkets. According to Spar, 75 percent of the UK population lives within three-quarters of a mile of a Spar outlet. In describing the test, Fisher said, "We have identified a range of stores of different formats and in different types of locations. The trial also involves varying sizes of screens to establish the most effective combination for each environment."

Content for the Spar pilot is being created by Foundation Design [www.thefoundationdesign.com] and Wavemaker Marketing. The satellite-communications infrastructure is being handled by Kingston In-Media [www.kingstoninmedia.com]. The IQ Group is a reseller for Israel-based RePromotion, Ltd. [www.repromotion.com], the producer of the DSMS TOROS software and communications system to manage narrowcast networks.