

Heinen's Branded Environment Cleveland, Ohio and Chicago, Illinois

- Brand Strategies
- Site & Sign Audit
- Sign System & Environmental Graphics Development
- Design Intent Documentation
- Implementation Management

Developing a consistent, comfortable décor standard and storytelling signage program that aligns with the We Care philosophy differentiates this family-owned local grocer from other retailers in the marketplace and provides a truly personal guest experience.

Objective

Create a consistent look and feel for store décor; help identify what makes the Heinen's special from a brand value perspective; and design a signage system that keeps navigation simple while telling a story and creating a shopping experience that visitors actually enjoy.



“Our relationship with Guide Studio began over 12 years ago, when Heinen’s realized we had an opportunity to create a consistent ‘look and feel’ for our stores that would be aligned with our brand and have our legacy stories come alive.”

Kathryn Falls, Director of Marketing

CASE STUDY

Heinen's Branded Environment

“As a third-generation local, family-owned retailer, we are committed to providing an extraordinary place to shop with an experience where you feel better when you leave than when you arrived at our store,” Falls says.

Consumers have an array of grocery shopping choices today, from national chains and big box retailers to regional brands and local independent stores—even online shopping and home delivery has entered grocer space. Heinen's recognized the pull its customers feel when selecting a grocer and the need to stand out among the competition.

“Heinen's strategic goal is to differentiate ourselves from other retailers by consistently delivering an outstanding customer experience through engaged associates,” says Kathryn Falls, Director of Marketing for Heinen's.

The people at Heinen's are ultimately what make shopping there different. “As a third-generation local, family-owned retailer, we are committed to providing an extraordinary place to shop with an experience where you feel better when you leave than when you arrived at our store,” Falls says.

To accomplish that, Heinen's partnered with Guide Studio through architect Process Creative to: 1) create a consistent look and feel for store décor; 2) help identify what makes the Heinen's special from a brand value perspective; and 3) design a signage system that keeps navigation simple while telling a story and creating a shopping experience that visitors actually enjoy.

By shifting from a cool to warm color palette, and using color and signage positioning to bring messaging closer to shoppers, a more intimate, storytelling feel was accomplished.

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Ultimately, Guide Studio helped Heinen's convey its “We Care” philosophy, Falls relates. That is, “that we can be trusted to provide exceptional value every day and offer great food from sources we know.”

Creating a Consistent, Comfortable Look

When Heinen's initially engaged Guide Studio to assist with creating a consistent décor and signage program, its stores had been updated over time with various color schemes and finishes that were not specific to the Heinen's brand. Signage was positioned at a high level and treated as labels for departments, with no real hierarchy or differentiating features to illustrate what made certain key departments like Meat, Prepared Foods or Wine/Beer special.

Guide Studio helped Heinen's select a warm color palette and set a design standard for existing and future stores. That way, the visual experience would be consistent no matter which store shoppers visited. The décor program offers consistency, but is not overly restrictive so it can evolve with the times. For example, various type faces were selected, and the pattern set and color palette have been edited during the course of Guide Studio's long-term relationship with Heinen's. Flexibility is paramount given the dynamic grocer market.

Patterns selected depict variations on kitchen tablecloths, a nod to pulling up a chair at the family table at Heinen's. This feel aligns with Heinen's brand goal to ensure that guests have a comfortable shopping experience and feel better leaving than when they came—and that the food they bring home is quality and sourced with care.



CASE STUDY

Heinen's Branded Environment



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Developing Storytelling Signage

Calling out feature departments at Heinen’s with storytelling signage showcases special departments and works in two ways: to prompt associates to provide more detail about the products, and to differentiate these star sections from other areas of the store.

The storytelling signage supports the We Care philosophy and tells how Heinen’s is thoughtful about its product selection and sourcing. It connects consumers with the products and opens up doors for conversation when associates engage with guests.

For example, rather than simply labeling the meat department, this area got special treatment as Joe’s Meat Market, a tribute to the Heinen’s founder’s original butcher shop, where the story of Heinen’s ultimately began. The Prepared Foods department was named Kitchen Table, with a descriptor detailing what makes this department stand out. Storytelling signage was also created for Produce, Seafood and the Wine/Beer department. Meaningful messaging

was developed for the signage of each specialty department.

In the Wellness department, a kiosk was created and is staffed by a knowledgeable associate who can make shoppers feel comfortable making choices and guide them toward products that suit their lifestyles. To further educate and connect with shoppers, Guide Studio worked with Heinen’s marketing to produce information pieces to showcase programs they offer. Those include the 21-Day Fresh Start whole foods eating program, and Store Tours, where a wellness associate shows a guest the store and how to make informed, better food choices.

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Differentiating the Heinen's Experience

Evolving a basic grocer sign program that was label-focused into a storytelling, engaging tool that supports the Heinen's brand and aligns with its customer service focus has helped bring guests even closer to their preferred grocery store. With so many shopping choices in the market today, customers select Heinen's when they want to feel comfortable, find quality products and get the type of personalized service that can be rare in the retail world.

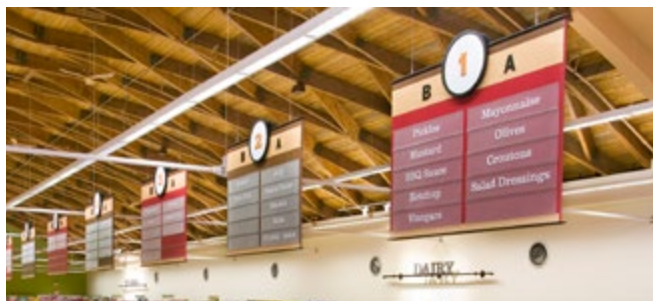
As Heinen's continues to expand its footprint, the décor and wayfinding program is customized to suit the personality of new stores. For instance, when Heinen's opened the Chagrin Falls location, they elevated the Wine/Beer department by calling it the The Tasting Room. There, guests

can choose from 48 wines and 8 beers to purchase by the glass, and gather with friends for lunch or dinner, or simply sip and shop.

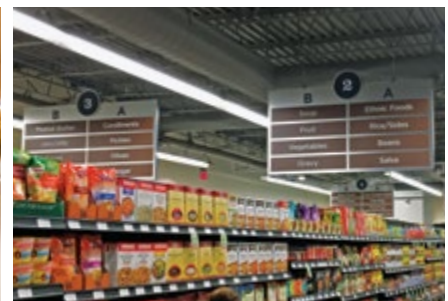
"Understanding consumer shopping insights and trends is at the core of Guide Studio's design recommendations and enables them to present well-thought out, winning design programs that connect the Heinen's brand with our customers," Falls says.

"Similar to Heinen's, Guide Studio focuses on establishing a great customer experience that is warm and welcoming. They consistently bring positive energy, creativity and enthusiasm to every project, along with an in-depth appreciation and understanding of Heinen's brand, our customers and our need to be relevant to our loyal customers."

Speaking to the value of experience, Heinen's Downtown Cleveland location in the historic Rotunda building was rated by TripAdvisor as one of the top 10 places to visit in Cleveland.



Aisle Signs at a "typical" Heinen's store



Aisle Signs at the Heinen's Chagrin Falls store