

PROFILE

NAME: Wilson Sporting Goods

LOCATION: Chicago, IL

FOUNDED: 1913

WEBSITE: wilson.com

CHALLENGE

Wilson wanted to test new concepts to try to move from a mainly transactional in-store experience to one that was much more engaging and branded through projection technology.

SOLUTION

The Epson[®] LightScene[®] and Pro L25000U projectors provided flexible installation for large and small-scale displays, and created images with great clarity that captivated visitors and grabbed their attention in a way that could not have been achieved with a bank of TVs.

The Power of Projection

Wilson Sporting Goods brings Epson laser projection into its flagship retail store

Kyle Schlegel is learning about the power of projection.

For the first time, Schlegel, who is the Global Marketing Director, Racquet Sports, for Wilson Sporting Goods, used Epson projection technology in the Wilson retail store at one of the world's biggest professional tennis tournaments, in New York at Flushing Meadows Corona Park in August and September of last year.

“We wanted to move from something that had been mainly a transactional experience to one that was much more branded,” Schlegel explains. Epson laser projection products, he says, including the new LightScene EV-105 accent lighting laser projector, brought the brand experience to fans in ways that would not have been practical, or even possible, with other technologies.

“It was a great change,” he says. “Not only did we deliver our brand message in a much more effective way, but sales were up 12 percent over the previous year.”

Their Retail Flagship

For more than 100 years, Chicago-based Wilson Sporting Goods has been a leading manufacturer of tennis rackets, strings, balls and accessories. They were the first company to offer a racket with custom weight and balance, the first to introduce a leather handle wrap, and the first to make a metal



racket commercially available.

While they continue to be industry leaders, Wilson has also mastered the culture of tennis. Today, their products are promoted through an extensive web and social media presence, mainly their products are used by over 300 touring professionals, including many of the biggest names in the sport.

Despite their online presence, Schlegel says nearly all of Wilson revenues are earned through dealer sales. They support their retailers through Wilson-branded store-in-store displays at hundreds of dealer locations around the world.

“Not only did we deliver our brand message in a much more effective way, but sales were up 12 percent over the previous year.”

—KYLE SCHLEGEL, GLOBAL MARKETING DIRECTOR,
RACQUET SPORTS, WILSON SPORTING GOODS

“Our tournament store in New York is our retail flagship, where we like to test new concepts and push our thinking,” he explains. Last year Wilson redesigned the two-story space to minimize the amount of product on display but maximize information about the brand.

An extremely bright, 8-foot wide image on the back wall helped to draw people into the store. This image was created by an Epson Pro L25000U large venue laser projector hung from the ceiling.

On the left side of the store, Wilson rackets were available to lift and hold in a long rack positioned below photos of the tennis stars who use them. On the right, there were more rackets to examine and to purchase; in the center tennis balls and apparel.

After walking up staircases to the right and the left of the projected image, fans could watch Wilson technicians stringing rackets to be used on the pro tour, order a racket customized to their game and their tastes, or stand and watch the videos.

“We added the big projector to show a more intimate picture of the players, those parts of their personalities you would not see in a match,” Schlegel says. Clips included tennis stars talking about their lives on and off the court, and why they use Wilson rackets.

“Epson laser projection delivers excellent detail and vibrant image quality and great flexibility to experiment and expand our creativity.”

—DANNY FIRPO, MANAGING PARTNER,
ALL OF IT NOW

Jumbo Tennis Balls

An eye-catching display on the first floor, above the rackets offered for sale, consisted of seven jumbo tennis balls which had Wilson and tournament logos mapped onto them using four Epson LightScene projectors.

To create a memorable customer experience, LightScene provided a simple solution to engage consumers and direct their attention to the tennis balls through projection mapping technology.

“We sell a lot of rackets at this tournament, but our biggest sellers are our collectible jumbo tennis balls. We sold almost



7,000 of them last year,” Schlegel explains.

The jumbo tennis balls give fans a chance to bring home a souvenir of the tournament, and many try to get them autographed by celebrity players. They’re important to Wilson because they emphasize the fact that the company has been a major sponsor of this tournament for more than 40 years, and the provider of the tennis balls used there. Thus, the jumbo tennis balls were a priority for sales at the store, and this year, with the help of the Epson LightScene, Wilson sold more than ever.

All of it Now

Schlegel says that, in planning the tournament store for 2018, he hired All of it Now, a San Francisco-based creative design agency, to help. “They connected us with Epson, and they helped us to understand how to maximize our opportunity to draw visitors’ attention by using projection in the store.”

“We rely heavily on Epson because of the quality of the projection technology,” says Danny Firpo, managing partner of All of it Now. “Epson laser projection delivers excellent detail and vibrant image quality and great flexibility to experiment and expand our creativity.”

Once the decision was made to create a large, central video screen, the agency worked closely with Wilson’s in-house marketing staff to choose stills and video clips, much of it from

Wilson's social media program. They also produced some of the content and used the disguise gx2 media server to play back the content, as well as create a 3D previz environment to simulate projector throws and brightness.

All of it Now also introduced Schlegel to the Epson LightScene, which allowed for a 2,000-lumen laser projector to be placed into a platform similar to a track lighting fixture. The team used each LightScene to map a small but intense animated image onto each jumbo tennis ball, consisting of the Wilson logo alternating with the tournament logo.



One possibility Schlegel considered was to use multiple flat-panel displays for the main screen, but he did not like the idea of having lines through the picture formed by the edges, or bezels, of the displays. Brightness would have been an issue as well, especially since the team wanted the image to be visible from outside the store.

Of course, there would be no way to map logos onto the jumbo tennis balls using flat panels; it was an effect that could only be achieved with some type of projection. Because of its discreet, compact form, and flexible ceiling mount, LightScene was an ideal solution, making it very easy to project each image exactly where it was needed.

And, the Epson laser technology used in both the LightScene

and the larger Pro L projector is extremely reliable, making any kind of glitch unlikely during the busy, three-week tournament.

“This was our first experience with projection, but it was a very good one,” Schlegel says. “As different as they were, the two types of projector were able to create images with great clarity, really arresting to people coming into the store. It got their attention in a way we could not achieve with a bank of TVs.”

With more than 800,000 fans expected for this year's tournament, Schlegel and his team are carefully reviewing last year's success. “We are now thinking about all the different ways we can use the technology in our future event marketing and retail plans.”

The views and opinions expressed in this article are those of the individual. Individuals were not compensated for this article.