

Convenience & Carwash

Canada

JANUARY/FEBRUARY 2022

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<p>January 17–19, 2022 5th Women in Carwash™ conference Fort Lauderdale, Florida www.womenincarwash.com bjj@womenincarwash.com andrew@womenincarwash.com 204-489-4215</p> <p>February 22–24, 2022 WPMAEXPO Las Vegas, Nevada 801-263-9762 www.wpma.com</p>	<p>May 9–11, 2022 Int'l Carwash Show Nashville, TN www.carwash.org</p> <p>May 10th–11th, 2022. Atlantic Convenience Expo (ACE) Hind Hammoud 902-877-8132 Hind@hammoudconsulting.ca</p>	<p>June 20–22, 2022 6th Women in Carwash™ conference Marriott Fallsview Hotel, Niagara Falls, Ontario www.womenincarwash.com bjj@womenincarwash.com andrew@womenincarwash.com 204-489-4215</p>	<p>January 17–19, 2022 5th Women in Carwash™ conference Fort Lauderdale, FL www.womenincarwash.com</p> <p>Brenda Johnstone 204-489-4215 Andrew Klukas 778-772-3057</p>



Happy New Year

Welcome to 2022, and a very Happy New Year to everyone. What a year, the year that wasn't, Groundhog Day, the lost year. You know what I mean.

After the past two years, we are all looking forward to a great year, a year without restrictions, a year of growth and prosperity, and of course, a healthy year.

This edition we bring to you Aisle-24, a unique and futuristic convenience store concept that is sure to make you think twice, or maybe three times, about how you do your c-store shopping.

In light of the previous two years, and even currently, payment solutions in a new don't touch me society, this edition offers two features; Square technology and Payment Source, who both offer some great insights and options to retailers. Personally, I love the Square technology, especially when I'm at the farmer's market, it saves me having to dig out cash and pocketing receipts. The option to tap and go, then print receipts when I get home, is a very convenient method to buy almost anything.

At the 5th Women in Carwash conference, being held January 17 – 19, in Fort Lauderdale, we are offering a session on Female Mentorship and the importance of companies developing and offering a mentorship program. Imagine if every company, not just carwash, offered a mentorship program to all of their employees, how more invested the employee and the employer would be.

Where would a carwash be without their chemicals? Be sure to check out our annual carwash chemical feature detailing a wide array of carwash chemical providers to choose from.

Our Forecourt Insights article featuring the infamous Ed Kammerer offers a user's guide to updating aging UST's and related systems. I would personally like to thank Ed for his contributions to our Forecourt Insights articles over the past number of years. Ed keeps everyone abreast of what's new, what to do, and how to do it well.

As 2021 draws to an end, I again want to say thank you to you, our readers, and to our advertisers for your continued support, your encouragement and passion that you bring to this industry.

As always, my business is your business and my open door policy to your valuable feedback is more important than ever as we look toward a new year – our 14th year of publishing. I am grateful to all who have helped me, helped us, improve every issue and I look forward to bringing you and your team another year of *Convenience & Carwash Canada* magazine.

All the very best for 2022!

Brenda Jane Johnstone
Publisher

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Lab-Grown Coffee

Sitting here sipping on my cup of coffee I am thinking about the future. Coffee is an important product for convenience stores and their customers. A report by The Climate Institute has indicated that the amount of land suitable for growing coffee in the world will be cut in half by 2050 due to climate change, rising temperatures, pests and fungi. In fact, wild coffee is expected to be wiped out completely by the year 2080.

"We are in a pretty dire situation," Adam Pesce, president of Reunion Coffee Roasters, said during the recent Coffee Association of Canada virtual conference Refilling Our Cup. "Some are saying that we have 50 years left with coffee being a crop that can be grown in the world at reasonable levels. We need higher prices for the coffee farmers so they have a reason to stay on their farms."

Sustainability, climate change and the environment are of interest to Canadian consumers. People are starting to realize that in order to take care of the environment, we need to look at the welfare of the farmers, said Sylvain Charlebois, senior director, Agri-Food Analytics Lab, Dalhousie University, while speaking at the conference.

"With climate change impacting the growth of coffee beans around the world, lab-grown coffee is going to become a thing," noted Charlebois. "In the last year alone, we've seen about \$600 million worth of research funding poured into lab-grown coffee projects. There are more than 170 different projects in the world, very few of them in Canada, looking at lab-grown food."

As well as coffee, projects are researching lab-grown beef, salmon, pork and chicken, said Charlebois.

"In 2013, we saw a person eating a 140-gram lab-grown steak in front of a camera," said Charlebois. "That steak cost about \$400,000 US to make. That same steak will cost less than \$4 US to make today so cost is not an issue."

Lab-grown food seems far-fetched to many of us. However, one might have once thought the same about the plant-based products that mimic meat, which are easily found in supermarkets and on restaurant and foodservice menus today.

"There's not going to be enough coffee around in the next couple of decades to meet demand," Matthew Barry, beverages consultant, Euromonitor International said during the conference. "One solution is bean-less coffee that is lab cultivated."

So, as you pour your next cup of coffee, take a moment to reflect. Think about the farmers who grew the beans, the environment that impacts the growth of those beans, and whether, in the not-so-distant future, your cup might be filled by a lab-grown version of your morning brew.

As I write this message, we are dealing with new restrictions due to the omicron variant of COVID-19, and while I continue to ponder the future as we enter into a new year, I am hoping for better days ahead. I wish for you fewer restrictions instead of more, and a year of growing prosperity, hope and health.

Angela Altass
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By Meline Beach

Breakfast Made Simple: Quick & Easy Ideas

There is plenty of room for improvement when it comes to daily breakfast habits. While it's the most common meal of the day to skip, it's something that can easily be picked up on-the-go at your local c-store.

According to Statista, a Germany company specializing in market and consumer data, on-the-go breakfast products are forecasted to reach \$1.8 billion U.S. dollars by 2026. It is one of the fastest growing categories and a major focus in the foodservice industry. It only makes sense that c-stores, who are known for and relied upon for their convenient location and speed of service, would want to gain market share in this category. While not all c-stores have realized the profit potential with a breakfast program, some stores, such as Rabba Fine Foods, Big Dog Convenience and Circle K, are reaping the benefits from a simple offering to something more substantial.

"While our Fresh Food Fast program is fairly new, our breakfast offering includes options that are ready to eat now or heat and eat later," says Terry Frei, director North American Food for Circle K. "This includes a choice of 10 sandwiches, fresh baked pastries, and of course our freshly brewed 100 per cent sustainably sourced coffee."

Hot or cold quality coffee and tea success depend on reliable equipment, service, maintenance and quality ingredients.

Circle K boasts about its 100 per cent sustainably sourced coffee program that gives tools, training, and services to coffee farmers to help build long-term sustainability. As a self-serve option, in a designated area of the store, Circle K customers can select a fresh brewed cup of coffee at the push of a button – between medium roast house blend, dark roast 100 per cent Colombian, medium roast Texas pecan, hazel nut, decaf or iced coffee. A self-serve coffee/tea station can be low maintenance. However, the area must be kept clean and free of clutter.

While its fresh food offering is currently only available at select stores, Circle K is looking for opportunities to expand their foodservice program and make their stores a destination of choice for breakfast as it gains popularity among its customers on the go.

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In addition to its in-house offering, Rabba is home to 10 Tim Hortons locations, which also offers their full breakfast menu. The partnership between both brands, which started in 2015, has been well-received by customers.

special offering, Circle K customers can enjoy breakfast items served hot or out of the chill case, including any of the following 10 sandwiches: sausage, egg, cheese on a croissant, biscuit or English muffin; ham, egg, cheese muffin, or croissant; egg, cheese wheat muffin; sausage, fried egg, cheese waffle; Canadian bacon, egg, cheese muffin; sausage, bacon, egg, Pepper Jack pretzel roll; and brunch

burger.

"All items are made by an outside supplier and delivered frozen, but they are prepared on site to ensure they are fresh for the day ahead between 6 a.m. and 10 a.m.," says Frei. "After 10 a.m., there are a number of other food offerings for customers throughout the day including pizza and taquitos to help fuel customers no matter the time of day."

Rabba Fine Foods, established in the 1960s, has been serving breakfast since its start. The family-owned enterprise has a network of 35 locations across the Greater Toronto Area. For a range of two dollars to \$10, customers can enjoy made-to-order, traditional Rabba kitchen recipes with custom toppings, including egg sandwiches served on a croissant, flat wrap, pita, or toast. Ready-made breakfast sandwiches can be found in grab and go cases for those in a hurry. Breakfast items displayed within reach of the coffee offering or paired with a hot beverage also achieves positive sales results. Consumers like the idea of getting a deal and combos have the ability to create that perception.

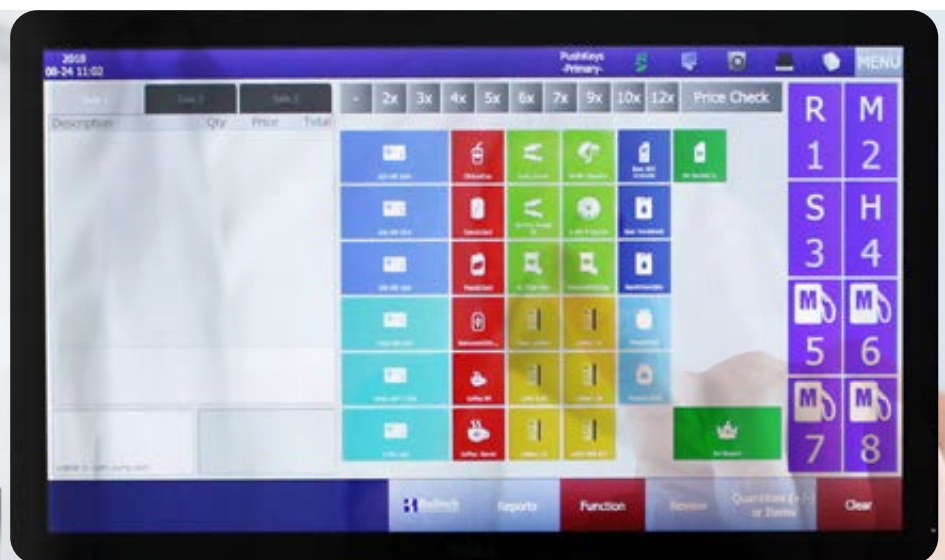
Completely customer-centric, Rabba features a variety of its carefully curated assortment of favourite recipes from around the world on its website, including its superfruit smoothie, cheesy fruit bars and breakfast taco, featuring eggs, bacon, whole wheat tortillas, cheese, sour cream, avocado and taco seasoning.

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Tasty pastries and other baked goods are simple offerings.

Ramona Roberts, owner and operator of Big Dog Convenience in Prince Edward Island, offers customers a traditional banana bread as a breakfast offering. Her local commissary serves this small batch recipe freshly baked to her four locations, plus an additional six stores across the province.

Delivered three times a week to ensure freshness, this wholesome banana bread is served as an inch thick slice, wrapped in cellophane and sold near the coffee machine for under two dollars each.

“Our customers love our homestyle banana bread, made with real bananas and all the health benefits it offers,” says Roberts, who for years was selling it as a mini loaf before wrapping it as slices, when sales skyrocketed 300 per cent. “Slices were more reasonable and are heavily relied upon as a year-round staple product for our customers.”

Rabba offers a variety of goods baked early in the morning and throughout the day as needed, from frozen to ensure consistency. Customer favourites

include butter, chocolate and multigrain croissants, sweet pastries, including turnovers, fruits sticks and cookies, and a variety of muffins, such as bran, carrot, banana nut and chocolate chip.

Their staff are trained food handlers and prepare in-house fresh fruit salads using its own produce, such as grapes, strawberries, melons, oranges and kiwis. Also assembled in-house are yogurt parfaits featuring vanilla yogurt with fresh fruit or granola on top.

“Our philosophy is ‘here for you,’ local market, and we are committed to delivering that need across all categories,” says Rima Rabba, marketing and communications manager at Rabba Fine Foods. “Our early morning customers appreciate accessing everything they need for their first meal of the day during their early morning commute.”

The powerful effect of aroma, especially of freshly brewed coffee and baked pastries can lure a loyal customer base.

Franchised option with a recognizable brand helps increase foot traffic.

In addition to its in-house offering, Rabba is home to 10 Tim Hortons

locations, which also offers their full breakfast menu. The partnership between both brands, which started in 2015, has been well-received by customers.

Partnering with a recognizable brand that provides experience, expertise and strong operational support can boost sales results by attracting a higher level of foot traffic. A retailer’s role would be to ensure available space and a commitment to quality and professional execution.

It’s never too late to boost your profits with an effective breakfast foodservice offering. You can keep it simple or more elaborate – it just depends on knowing what your customers want and the effort you’re willing to put into it. What’s key to its success is consistency – in quality, cleanliness and fast and friendly service. **[9]**

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience & Carwash Canada. In addition to freelance writing, Meline provides communications and public relations support to businesses across Canada. She can be reached at www.mlbcomms.ca.

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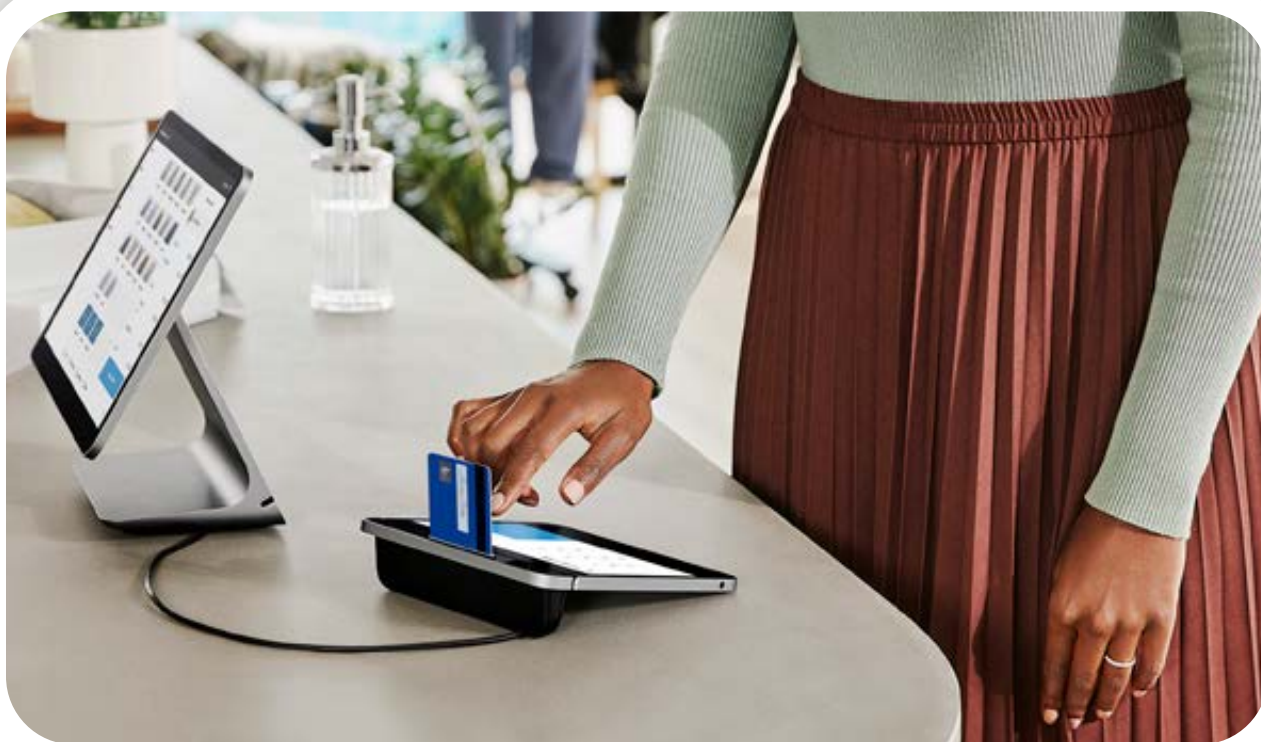


The most trusted resource for news and information about Canada's convenience, retail petroleum, and carwash industry.

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Looking Ahead to a More Convenient Shopping Experience

Although Canadians are once again returning to in-person shopping, indoor dining and attending large entertainment events, the way businesses operate has been forever changed.



With businesses having pivoted online to keep the lights on during the pandemic, consumers have now acclimated to having myriad options when it comes to shopping and paying.

While the customer experience for convenience stores and carwashes differs greatly from those within more specialized retail businesses, there are nonetheless ways to leverage technology and changing consumer behaviour to build loyalty and connection with your customers.

Build an online presence

The pandemic led to a large uptick in omnichannel operations, with businesses now meeting Canadians wherever they may be -- in person or online. And Canadians are receptive: We recently commissioned a study with Wakefield that found that 57 per cent of Canadian customers are interested in trying newer ways to shop, such as directly through social media or even through virtual reality and livestream shopping.

>>



With the right partner, carwashes can easily set up selling and booking appointments through an online store or QR codes, and allow returning customers to buy multiple carwashes in advance, or at discounted rates.

But the task isn't quite as simple for convenience stores, nor for carwashes. While clothing stores, beauty parlours and restaurants all cater to returning customers, customer loyalty may not be quite as strong within these convenience-driven businesses. Need milk? Pop into the nearest store. Car dirty? The nearest carwash may just do the trick. But despite the one-off, transactional nature of these businesses, omnichannel selling can nonetheless help increase sales and engagement.

With the right partner, carwashes can easily set up selling and booking appointments through an online store or QR codes, and allow returning customers to buy multiple carwashes in advance, or at discounted rates. Online sales also offer a great opportunity to upsell by marketing car cleaning products such as car wax, shammies, windshield fluid and other car paraphernalia alongside the carwash service, helping to not only increase the number of customers, but also the value of the average transaction.

Convenience stores can use these same features to help recommend complementary items to help upsell. They can also leverage curbside pickup features and mobile payments to allow customers to pre-order and pay for their items, saving them time and helping to maintain social distancing as some COVID-19 restrictions remain intact.

Create a loyalty program

Loyalty programs are effective because they add value to the customer experience beyond the first interaction or purchase. In an industry based on convenience rather than loyalty, a loyalty program that rewards customers for continuing patronage and engagement can go a long way.

Luke Nieuwland, a business owner in

Port Colborne, Ontario – who uses multiple Square tools to help run his business – said that, in 2021, his loyalty customers spent “198 per cent more than non-loyalty customers,” averaging 10.8 visits to the golf club compared to 1.7 for those not enrolled in the program.

Initiate a tailored marketing program

Email marketing is becoming more important than ever and our new survey also found that nearly half of all Canadian retailers (48 per cent) are using or planning to implement automation technology to better communicate with customers.

This technology lets businesses quickly share information on rewards, sales, coupons, and other timely promotions. They can also send shareable pay links through marketing messages to easily connect with customers and simplify the checkout process.

In fact, data from US businesses using Square in January 2021 revealed that almost 50 per cent of coupons and discounts sent through our Square Marketing tool were redeemed within one week, while that increased to 78 per cent by August 2021. With the tool having recently launched in Canada, customers will be eager to hear about special carwash discounts and deals on their favourite chocolates and chips.

The pandemic affected different businesses in different ways, but one commonality is that it has changed business as usual. With so many new tools and features launching to help businesses recover and grow, convenience stores and carwashes have an opportunity to begin to build a loyal customer base, in addition to those just stopping by. 📌

Cole Baldwin is a small business expert at Square.

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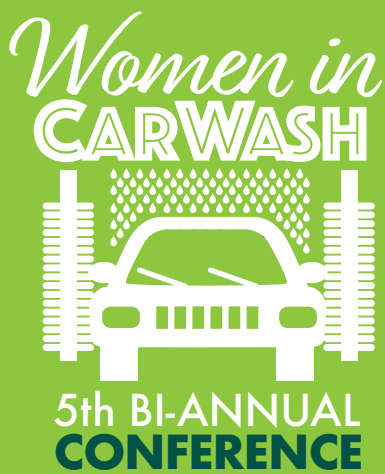


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We want to thank the sponsors of the 5th Women in Carwash™ conference for their continued support and commitment to the growth of this unique conference.

This event features Connie-Lee Bennet as our Keynote Speaker. Connie-Lee will set the tone for the conference with her keynote: **Now is your time to stand on The Centre Stage of Your Life.**

Tuesday morning opens with a session and workshop hosted by Connie-Lee called **The Authentic Female Leader of Tomorrow—3 Keys** to presenting **Who You Authentically are with Clarity, Confidence and Charisma.**

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JANUARY 17–19, 2022 Fort Lauderdale, Florida

Attendance is capped at 90 to maintain the intimacy of a small-group event while also ensuring that adequate space can be maintained between attendees. We will be supplying masks to maximize safety and ensure the comfort of our guests.

Once again, this conference would not be possible without the enthusiastic and continuing support of our sponsors, many of whom have been with us from the very beginning. **A special thank you to each and every one and also our media sponsors** who have done such a fabulous job getting the word out to carwash operators.



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Celebrating Over 30 Years of Innovative Structures





Left to right: Bill, Lindsay, Tony

By Tania Moffat

Opening a wash that caters to professional truck drivers and outdoor enthusiasts requires a much different approach than your regular carwash business. One has to understand the market and the clientele to meet their needs. Owners Tony Barraco, Bill Bailey and Lindsay Belanger understand this and are working to make Tilbury Truck, RV & Boat Wash, southern Ontario's newest destination truck wash.

The wash itself, located off the 401 between Chatham and Windsor, was designed and built four and a half years ago by Tony Barraco's company, Barraco Group. Pencor Developments Inc., owned by Barraco and Bill Bailey, retains the property rights. After two failed lease agreements, Barraco and Bailey joined forces with Lindsay Belanger, whose Tilbury Auto Sales & RV Yamaha business borders the wash property. His 30 plus years of experience in the automotive, RV, powersports, and marine industries, along with his partners' combined business prowess and enthusiasm, has breathed new life into the business.

Understanding the customer

Two of Tilbury's three wash bays are designed for oversized vehicles such as RVs, motorhomes, boats, and large commercial trucks and trailers. Since their opening on July 1st, 2021, Belanger shares how they have spent hours getting to know their customers. Using this knowledge, the partners continue to develop their services to go above and beyond for their clients.

"Truck drivers take pride in their vehicles. They keep them clean because they are an extension of themselves, but time is money, and they want to get in and out quick," Belanger explains. Tilbury's employees have mastered completing a basic wash in 20 minutes to meet this need. "Our customers have different wash needs as well. We have several specialized services to

do this, including aluminum polishing, washouts, including trailer and reefer sanitization, acid baths and interior detailing to name a few."

While they wait, customers are invited to relax on outdoor seating or are welcome inside. The bright waiting room is equipped with a seating area, TVs, WiFi and beverages. The owners are even planning to open a chrome shop in the near future for customers to browse through.

Providing specialized service

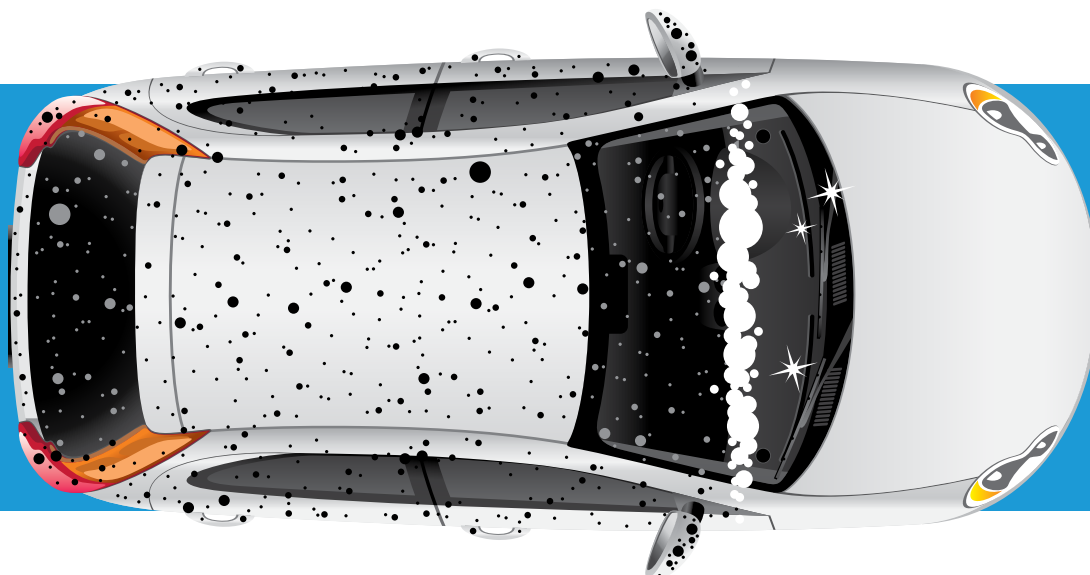
All three wash bays are fully-adorned with new equipment providing staff with a selection of washes, rinses and coatings at their fingertips. Working with Dan Gough, the business development manager for eastern Canada at Transchem Group's equipment and service division, the partners have invested over \$100,000 on equipment for the 150-by-90-foot steel wash structure.

"They were looking for products that are effective at cleaning the tough dirt and stains that come with driving commercial vehicles and went with SOAX Equipment and Auto-Lux chemicals. The SOAX Modular Self-Serve Car Wash System from Transchem is perfect for them; it is a true workhorse. SOAX is built with corrosion-resistant materials meant to stand up to the harsh conditions found inside of a carwash, and its flexible and modular design can be configured for most equipment room layouts. The system is >>

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“Owners, Lindsay, Tony, and Bill, along with their team, have been fantastic to work with. They are very engaging and compassionate about their business and their clients’ cleaning needs. The entire team is always up to the task to take on any job, and they continue to look for improvements with their client base,”



“Owners, Lindsay, Tony, and Bill, along with their team, have been fantastic to work with. They are very engaging and compassionate about their business and their clients’ cleaning needs. The entire team is always up to the task to take on any job, and they continue to look for improvements with their client base,” says Gough.

Tilbury Truck, RV and Boat wash is about much more than just washing trucks. Their vision is to be a destination – somewhere their customers can go to get a great wash and experience, all rolled into one. They are well on their way to realizing this vision and, when it happens, it won’t be by accident; it will be by design. **Q**

Tania Moffat is a freelance writer, editor, publisher and photographer. She has worked on a wide variety of B2B and consumer publications, both in print and online. You can connect with her at info@chiccountrylife.com

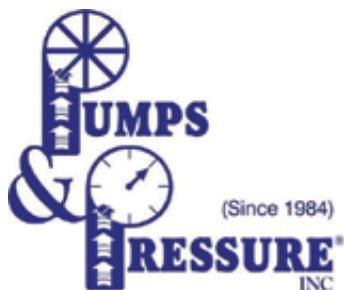


unmatched in reliability and compatible with most payment and bay control systems,” says Gough.

Owners have a choice of installing SOAX’s high-pressure pump equipment on a stand or mounted to the wall. The Tilbury wash selected the SOAX Chemical Dispensing Wall Packs, which allows them to customize and maximize the chemical offerings at their site. It perfectly complements the SOAX high-pressure pumping equipment to generate additional profit. The belt-driven design provides

smooth and quiet operation while the heavy-duty air pump generates consistent product application.

SOAX’s foam brush/gun system uses air injection to produce a thick, rich foam. Their Triple Foam System electronically controls three colours of foam set on an adjustable timed cycle to run sequentially, randomly or mixed. The Auto-Lux products chosen by the owners are remote-injected using low pressure to reduce chemical waste and allow for quick product changeover while washing.



Pumps & Pressure specializes in Car Wash building controls:

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Carwash Chemical

What's a carwash without the chemical? Following are some of the top carwash chemical suppliers and the products they offer. If you're considering a new chemical supplier for 2022 these companies would be happy to speak with you.



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info@blendco.com / www.blendco.com
Blendco Systems manufactures and supplies a full line of formulated detergents, polishes, protectants and solutions for the professional carwash industry, which includes the patented SuperSat Custom Detergent System, SuperClear Water Treatment System, RMS Remote Monitoring System and RED RHINO detergents and protectants. We are now proud to feature a full line of Rust-Oleum Certified Products, along with our newest line of detailing products by CAR Products. Blendco's focus from the start has been to provide the highest quality detergents & protectants at a competitive price.

D.A. Lincoln Pump Service & Supply MB Inc.

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Doug Lincoln
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Pumps & Pressure Inc.

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Unlimited Plans: The Lifeblood of the Carwash Industry 2021

THE STATS ARE IN; CUSTOMERS WASH THEIR CARS AN AVERAGE OF THREE TIMES A MONTH. IN SOME CASES MORE AND SOME LESS.

By Dominick A. Candelore

The unlimited wash plan has been around the carwash business for going 15 years or so. I remember it well, back in 2007, as point of sale companies were trying to convince us operators that this was the future of the business. We initially struggled to come out of the low wash price and free vacuum era. Many suppliers loved the \$3 carwash as it wore out equipment and it sold a lot of chemicals. The question was raised though; did it make the operator any money? Short answer, albeit it controversial, is NO!

I recall when DRB took the initiative and had a program where it funded some local operators a marketing program if they let DRB take the wheel. DRB did an outstanding job of helping the industry transition to what we experience today. I remember going to Akron on one of their carwash tours that took you to their various projects where they took over the pricing models and the on-site signage and more. They effectively created case studies and helped the carwash industry get out of the low price point gutter.

Now the game is all about pricing ratio and the value proposition for the rationale of the unlimited purchase. The secret is to increase your base wash price to get your establishment a good unlimited plan wash price. The stats are in; customers wash their cars an average of three times a month. In some cases more and some less. Other data companies can tell you the average length an unlimited

customer stays on for; industry average is around eight months. We at Cheetah Clean experience over 18 months, which is relatively unheard of in the industry. Showing that if you have the right model and treat every customer as if they are your only customer, they will stay.

There are many experts selling the \$9.99 unlimited program, which we don't agree with or adhere to, and this is why: We don't agree to the idea of selling our unlimited package at an even more discounted rate. With unlimited plans, the name of the game is conversion. How many one-time customers can you convert to a lifetime customer? Part of the success we have is the transparency of our pricing structure. When you pull up and sign up for a \$29.99 plan it's \$29.99. Our salespeople are knowledgeable and sell the benefits of our service at the price point we have set. Our wash process is like no other and our customer service is the best in the country. We don't need to discount an unlimited plan to bait and switch the customer at a later date.

The other side of this is churn rate (the number of customers you lose). When you deep discount your unlimited plans to a price like \$9.99 and then the next month it's \$29.99 or \$39.99 the sticker shock is tremendous. You can be thorough and explain it, but most customers see the \$9.99 and that's it. So, the next month when the higher price hits not only do you lose a customer, but the perception of dishonesty sits with them.

Now not only have you lost them, but they will tell family members and friends how they felt they were treated. I always said a happy customer tells two or three people, but an angry customer tells 10-12. In this business, where numbers and reputation are everything, an incident like this could crush you. That is why full transparency and upfront pricing has always been our policy.

We start our unlimited program at \$29.99 for our \$15 wash. We are careful not to go over two times the wash price with our strategy. It's a great for those that wash more than twice a month and the plan pays for itself. Like I said earlier, most customers wash their cars an average of three times a month. With that being said we average around \$9-\$10 per wash. That's efficient. It's really all about how many dollars you take to the house.

We are all in this to make a profit. There's no sense in us operators abusing our equipment and running through excessive amounts of chemical for a lower gross profit. 📌

Dominick A. Candelore, director of operations, Cheetah Clean Auto Wash, has over a decade in the industry from site manager to owner operator. Experience in full service and high volume express, Dominick spent 10 years as a behavioral specialist with DHS. Married to his best friend for 22 years, he loves karaoke and cooking for his family and friends.



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Aisle 24 Enjoying a Category unto itself in Canada

By Meline Beach

It's called micro-markets and they're starting to pop up everywhere.

A concept between vending machines and convenience stores, micro-markets appeal to tech savvy, on-the-go consumers who seek speed and convenience, and are comfortable with self-service.

Aisle 24 is a Canadian success story, co-founded in 2015 by husband-and-wife team, John Douang and Marie Yong. Their story starts with humble beginnings based on an article and a casual conversation at the dinner table. An article on advancements in vending technology and automation caught Douang's attention and subsequent focus on grocery vending services – specifically, a highly customized vending machine that could dispense fragile grocery products.

"After months of late nights, we had

a business plan and sought out family members for an initial investment, which then led to the first iteration of our business," says Douang, co-founder and CEO of Aisle 24. "To much success, the vending business was doing well as we expanded into apartments and condominiums throughout the Greater Toronto Area."

Within a few months, Douang was approached to design a unique concept for a new student residence and culinary arts centre at Centennial College in Scarborough. They met with the owners and developers of the property when they pitched the concept of a cashierless, staff-less, 24/7 convenience store that offers customers easy access to fresh and convenient food, beverages and other essentials.

"They loved the concept, wrote a cheque for \$25,000 and off we went to build Canada's first cashierless, staffless convenience/grocery store." Douang adds, "We launched this location in September of 2016 and over the next several years, expanded across the GTA. In 2018, we, along with our investor Wes Hall, who's the newest dragon on CBC's Dragon's Den, decided to look at national expansion with a franchising business model."

With a footprint of 300 to 1,800 sq. ft, Aisle 24 is best suited in both community and commercial markets (larger size) and residential spaces, such as condominiums, apartment buildings and university and college campuses.

Together, Douang and Yong are dominating the micro-market category with



"Our goal is to be at 200 locations over the next several years across Canada," says Douang.

nine locations in Ontario and Quebec, and over 40 in queue to be launched over the next year. Franchised locations are expected to follow corporate-driven quality standards and guidelines in an effort to maintain a consistent, positive experience, with checks and balances in place.

"Our goal is to be at 200 locations over the next several years across Canada," says Douang.

Global customer-centric powerhouse Amazon is another player in the micro market category with its new Amazon Go store. The e-commerce company currently has over 20 Amazon Go locations in the U.S., each with a footprint range of about 450 to 2,700 sq. ft. in the front of house.

Amazon Go customers need an Amazon account and the free Amazon shopping app to appreciate the value of the store's Just Walk Out technology. Anything a shopper takes off the shelf is automatically added to their virtual cart. Anything they put back on the shelf comes out of their virtual cart. When the shopper exits the gates at Amazon Go, their card associated with their entry method is charged and later, they will receive a receipt. This is known as autonomous retail, autonomous checkout. With Just Walk Out Shopping, shoppers just walk out. No lines, no checkout.

Although cashierless, Amazon Go locations have staff on site to greet customers, restock shelves, answer questions and make product recommendations.

"Our business model is distinctly different than Amazon Go, in that it is actually staffless, relying on technology to take over many manual aspects of running a retail store," says Douang.

Known as unattended retail, Aisle 24 relies on an array of cameras to ensure a secure shopping experience.

"Security and integrity of the location are of utmost importance, but it also needs to be balanced with the customer >>



experience,” says Douang. “We’ve upgraded our security systems so there is real-time tracking with our camera systems and point of sale, but the first step in security is our mobile app.”

Douang is referring to the fact that customers need to download the app and create an account first in order to access the store. Part of this process requires a selfie photo to be taken, and a credit card linked to the customer’s account.

“In this way, we know who is coming and what they are doing in our stores and our systems will allow us to suspend users who don’t follow our community guidelines,” says Douang. “Using smart technology and digital displays, we’re able to communicate directly with our customers in notifying them to of various promotions to help drive sales.”

In terms of inventory management, each Aisle 24 location is replenished, cleaned, disinfected and re-merchandised regularly throughout the week either by corporate staff for corporate-owned stores, or by the franchisee in franchised locations. Inventory is tracked through the store’s POS systems and delivered through Sobey’s Wholesale nationally, and smaller distribution upstarts like FreshSpoke, for more locally-sourced products.

“Retail is changing and companies need to think about how the customer experience needs to change to meet the expectations of a digitally experienced population,” says Douang.

In addition to applying innovative technology, Douang also emphasizes

the importance of product selection and supporting local and small business as well. He and his wife consider several factors in choosing product, including age and ethnic demographic data – each community is a little different with unique customer characteristics. For instance, grab and go items sell best in student residences, such as frozen pizza, pre-made meals, and ramen noodles, whereas stores located in communities consisting of young professionals and young families, freshly prepared products in larger sizes are more appealing. Its FEAST branded foodservice menu features a variety of premium salads and hearty sandwiches, including roasted chicken and red peppers, roast beef, roasted vegetable and herb-roasted chicken and coleslaw – at competitive c-store pricing. Beyond food, Aisle 24 also sells electronic accessories, cleaning materials and personal hygiene products.

The company also recently launched a “support local” initiative to include more locally sourced and manufactured products from smaller brands that may not have the reach into larger grocery formatted stores.

“We hit a sweet spot with our offering as many communities rely on options closer to home but don’t have great choices,” says Douang. “We’ve also received some special requests for products we should be carrying – and so we appreciate every chance to improve.”

Though the store is staffless, Douang believes that connecting and engaging with the local community and providing

the best overall experience is what will drive profitability and long-term business sustainability.

Autonomous technology

Autonomous technology covers both autonomous checkout and unattended retail – the difference being autonomous checkout involves a virtual cart, essentially tracking each item as they’re picked up or returned to a shelf. Autonomous checkout may have staff on location, such as Amazon Go, to greet customers, restock shelves, answer questions and make product recommendations. Unattended retail, such as Aisle 24, applies autonomous technology in a staffless setting, relying on an extensive security system to maintain integrity and a secure shopping experience.

Frank Beard, senior marketing and customer experience manager at Standard AI points out the benefits of applying autonomous checkout technology in that it “offloads the transaction and payment processes and allows employees to be refocused on higher-value tasks.” He adds, “Manning the “till” or traditional point of sale system is only one of many tasks typically required of employees. The register monopolizes an employees’ time and sometimes means they don’t have the bandwidth to clean the store, help out in the kitchen when it’s busy, or even chat with regular customers who might like the conversation.”

“Autonomous checkout has the ability to put the “human experience” back into



Beyond food, Aisle 24 also sells electronic accessories, cleaning materials and personal hygiene products.

retail,” says Beard. “Rather than having to repeat the same script over and over for hours on end, a convenience store employee might instead have the flexibility to engage in meaningful conversations with regular customers – or introduce shoppers to samples of a new menu item from their foodservice program.”

Beard points out that checkout automation has additional benefits in drawing out powerful insights and capabilities. Computer vision can track, for example, what products are picked up most often and set back, serving as valuable information to category managers and CPG companies.

“We’re going to see a digitization of brick-and-mortar stores that provides retailers with a level of insights that was previously only available to eCommerce brands,” says Beard. “As we enter the new year, we believe 2022 will be a momentous year for autonomous technology – we’re going to see the beginnings of a race to “own the ceilings” in retail.”

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience & Carwash Canada. In addition to freelance writing, Meline provides communications and public relations support to businesses across Canada. She can be reached at www.mlbcomms.ca.

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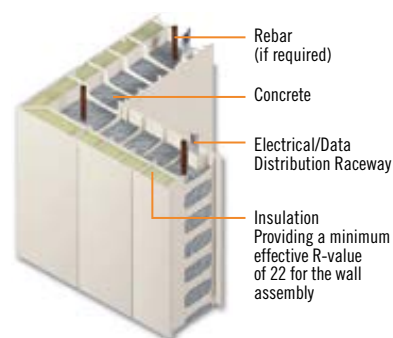


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To Updating Aging USTs and Related System Components

By Ed Kammerer

In 1998, **Titanic was the number one movie** in the world, two Stanford University students founded Google, the Apple iMac made its debut and the average retail price of a gallon of gasoline was \$1.06 (diesel was \$1.03).

If you were a retail fuel-site owner or operator in Canada who was selling that comparably affordable gasoline or diesel fuel, 1998 was also the year that the underground storage tanks (USTs) at your location needed to become compliant with 40 CFR, Part 40, the regulation – which was first developed by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) – that governs the storage of hazardous materials in USTs.

Though it may be hard to believe, we are now 24 years removed from that implementation date, meaning that we are rapidly approaching the 30-year expiration deadline for most UST manufacturers' product warranties. Once these 30-year-old USTs are out of warranty, they may become more difficult to insure, and the owners of those that are able to still be insured may be faced with much higher insurance premiums.

In the Oct. 28, 2021, issue of the Petroleum Equipment Institute's Tulsa Letter, Rick Long, the newsletter's editor, addresses this looming situation. He notes that according to

the EPA's UST Finder Tool, more than 150,000 USTs in North America will be out of warranty by 2030. To combat that, the first suggestion from insurance carriers "is for owners of aging USTs to install new tanks." For those owners not willing or able to install new USTs, one of the insurers' additional suggestions is to "install new piping, sumps and spill buckets."

No Better Time Than Now

As the extreme cold temperatures and severe storms of winter descend with full force on much of Canada, now is not the time to break concrete to install new UST systems. But it is the perfect time to assess the age and condition of your UST systems and, if necessary, plan those capital outlays for the upcoming 12 months, which may include UST-system replacement or retrofit.

While the iMac has gone through thousands of upgrades since it first launched, a lot of other things have changed in the retail-fueling industry since 1998, aside from those average gasoline/diesel prices. The most obvious is that the fuel menu has expanded significantly, with many retailers now offering multiple grades of gasoline with differing percentages

of ethanol, from E5 to E85. Ultra-low-sulfur diesel (ULSD) was not available prior to 1998, but it is now a staple at many retail-fueling sites.

The great unknown with these new gasoline and diesel formulations is how they are reacting with or affecting the performance of USTs and their components that were installed in the ground before the formulations even existed. As an example, after ULSD was introduced to the motor-fuel pool, it was discovered that it reacted adversely with Buna-N (nitrile) rubber, which is commonly used in fueling-systems, meaning that it had to be replaced with a substance that was compatible with ULSD.

The end goal in all of this is the ensure that the fueling site's UST system achieves and maintains the highest level of performance in regard to fuel storage, dispensing and containment. There is nothing worse for a fuel-site operator than to find out that a leaking UST, tank sump or piping connection has resulted in the contamination of the local groundwater supply, the repercussions of which can be costly and far-reaching from both a financial and reputational perspective.

Let Us Be Your Guide

To aid fuel-site operators as they assess the state of their UST systems, OPW Retail Fueling in Smithfield, NC, USA, has created a "Guide to Breaking Concrete" – a list of five things to consider before beginning construction, keeping in mind that it's not only the UST that must be removed and replaced, but also system components like piping, sumps, spill buckets, overfill valves, manholes, etc.:

Make sure that all UST-system tanks and components are certified for use by Underwriters Laboratories/Underwriters Laboratories Canada (UL/ULC).

To ensure that you create a fully integrated UST system that is designed to work seamlessly together, it is best to source all components from a single manufacturer, rather than creating a "Frankenstein's monster" consisting of different parts from different suppliers.

Make sure that all new USTs and their components are fully compatible with current and future fuel formulations, blends and additives, including alcohol blends from E5 to E85, and ULSD.

Try to install UST-system equipment that is testable, repairable and maintainable from ground level with no need to break concrete to access the components; this will optimize fuel-site

uptime while controlling costs.

Where possible, identify and deploy so-called "plug and play" fueling systems that employ prefabricated, factory assembled and tested components that result in dramatically lower field labor and associated costs, while reducing the risk that installation errors will occur.

OPW Retail Fueling offers the solution to all five of these points with its complete lines of Piping & Containment Systems and Underground Storage Tank Equipment, all of which are UL/ULC-certified. While OPW does not manufacture or sell USTs, it does offer industry-standard families of dispenser, tank and transition sumps, piping systems, entry fittings, multiports, manholes, overfill-prevention valves, spill buckets/containers, emergency shear valves and pressure vacuum vents, along with the FlexWorks Loop System, the industry's first plug-and-play UST system that allows hassle-free installation, inspection, maintenance, repair and replacement of all critical UST-system components.

Conclusion

Since its debut, Titanic has amassed \$1.8 billion in box-office revenue worldwide. While no fuel-site operator will ever come close to accumulating revenue at that level, there are ways to ensure that the bottom line will be healthy. One of those ways is avoiding exorbitant repair, replacement or remediation expenses that can be caused by aging UST systems that are approaching end-of-warranty status. OPW stands ready to assist by offering a complete array of UST-system components that are designed to operate seamlessly with each other, allowing for the creation of a fully integrated system that optimizes cost, uptime, safety and regulatory compliance. **Q**

Ed Kammerer is the director of global product management for OPW, based in Cincinnati, OH, USA. He can be reached at ed.kammerer@opwglobal.com. For more information on OPW, go to www.OPWGlobal.com.



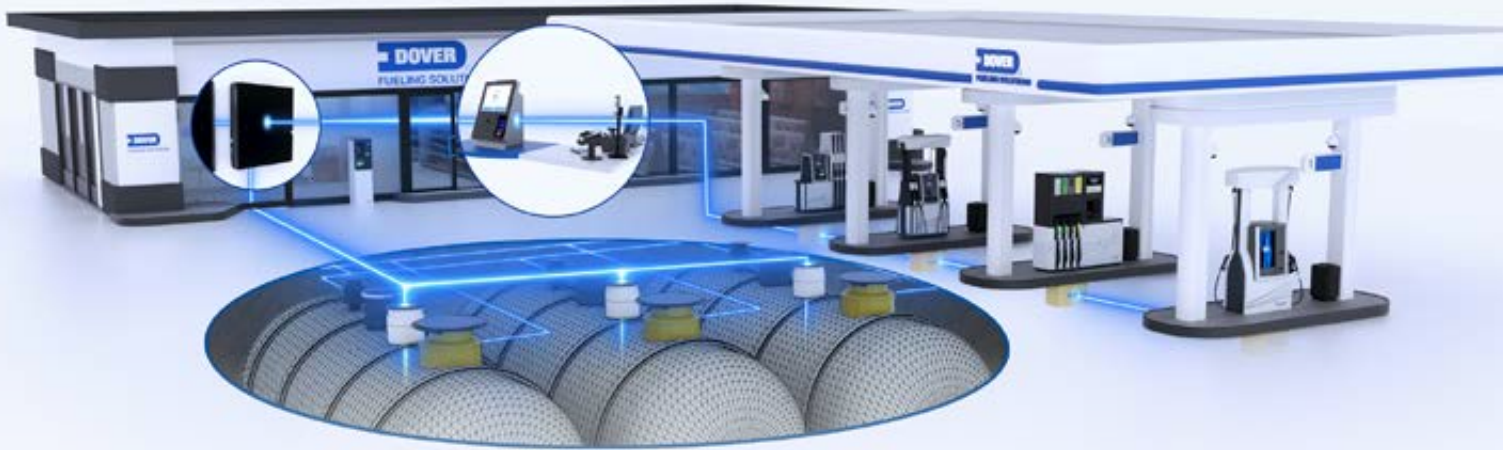
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DEFINING | WHAT'S NEXT



Dispensing New Opportunities with Technology

By Scott Negley

As 2022 rolls around, it's a disappointing reality that the COVID-19 pandemic is still a key driver of events around the world – and within our industry.

While businesses and consumer activity are rebounding (and even booming) in many sectors, the future remains uncertain due to new virus variations, possible travel restrictions and further supply chain disruptions.

Still, for fuel and convenience store operators, there are opportunities to shine, especially with the forecourt and fuel dispenser technology that you use to serve your customers. In a world where consumers value speed, convenience and safety more than ever, you can meet their changing needs and expectations with unique new products and services.

“As one of the biggest companies in the fueling industry, we work with retail and fueling businesses all over Canada,” said Dean Cirone, director of sales and marketing at Dover Fueling Solutions (DFS). “This puts us into a unique position to spot trends in the industry – and the shift we are seeing is a new focus on winning the forecourt consumer experience.”

So, what are the top new trends that are driving this transformation? Check them out below.

The focus on sustainability will increase

Consumer expectations are continuing to change and the convenience and carwash industries will be challenged to respond. Our friends to the south are embarking on a massive infrastructure spending project which strongly incentivizes clean energy investments – a trend that's sure to influence Canadian markets as well.



Businesses are responding by turning necessity into opportunity. More and more retailers are installing electric vehicle (EV) charging solutions and charging stations, not only because their customers are asking for them, but also because they create new opportunities. Customers who are charging their vehicles are likely to visit your convenience store.

Your Forecourt Will Fuel Your Success

It's now becoming clear to businesses that many of the consumer behaviors that were created by the pandemic might be here to stay. One of the most significant trends for our industry is the growing importance of the forecourt experience. Consumers who are hesitant to enter a store will, of course, prefer contactless shopping experiences, especially those that can occur right at the fuel pump.

"We've seen an enormous uptake in next-generation fueling forecourt technologies," said Cirone. "Our customers are asking us for solutions to help them stand out from the crowd. They want to differentiate themselves from their competitors by offering a distinctly unique consumer experience at the pump – but they also see the urgency in creating new sales and promotional opportunities."

To help businesses transform their at-the-pump experience, fuel pumps are now coming loaded with consumer-friendly features like giant high-resolution touchscreens that are controlled like a tablet. Personalized media, like sports scores, entertainment news and local traffic and weather, can be streamed in real-time. It's now even possible to have your fuel pumps greet customers as they approach the pump.


Beyond the "wow" factor, these new technologies create new upsell and cross-promotion opportunities, from driving customers to the carwash to increasing enrollments in loyalty programs. At DFS, we have seen our clients use dispenser technology to transform their forecourt from a value-added element into the heart of their retail operation.

It will be easier to create new operational efficiencies

As you already know, efficiency is one of the biggest challenges in running fuel, retail or carwash operations. The good news is new technological solutions and products are now available that can help you gain almost unprecedented control over your entire operation, often from a single, real-time dashboard that you can access from any device.

For example, there are now forecourt solutions that allow you to connect your retail POS system and manage it in real-time. Wetstock management solutions can be managed in real-time, from an app that only takes seconds to begin using. Best of all, many of these solutions don't require any infrastructure updates, since they can be delivered wirelessly and can be cloud-based. Businesses that move quickly to implement these solutions will

gain an advantage over their competitors.

At DFS, we expect 2022 to be another challenging year for our industry. Uncertainties exist -- but so do opportunities. Standing out from the crowd with a unique customer experience and brand differentiation will be more important than ever. Let technology help you seize the advantage! Contact Dover Fueling Solutions to learn more. 

Scott Negley is senior director, product management – dispenser products and platforms, DFS.

Scott has been with Wayne Fueling Systems and DFS for over 35 years and has held roles in the engineering, product management and global business development functions. During his career, Scott has been directly involved in the development and market introduction of proportional blending technology, the iMeter and Xflo meter products, dispenser and payment electronics, vapor recovery solutions, user interface designs (including the Anthem UX User Experience Platform) and the Wayne Ovation and Helix model series. He is a frequent contributor to trade publications and is recognized for numerous patents in the industry. Scott holds a bachelor of science in mechanical engineering from Penn State University. He and his family live in Austin, Texas.



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Concept of Leak Detection

The concept of leak detection in the conventional meaning is slowly becoming a thing of the past. Over the past 20 years tank and equipment manufactures for the retail petroleum industry have developed tools and equipment to prevent and/or detect a leak when it occurs.



Double wall fiberglass tank system installed with tank sumps for better access and containment.



Tank sump with pump and sensors to detect fuel.



Commonly used double wall flex lines.

Tank manufacturers have developed double wall (DW) fiberglass tanks that are corrosion-resistant both on the inside and outside of the tank. They can hold all types of retail petroleum, such as ethanol-blended fuels and biodiesel and ultra-low sulfur diesel fuels. For sensitive areas, such as near aquifers, large bodies of water or environmentally hazardous areas, some tank manufactures have developed a triple wall tank system for an extra level of security. The tanks are designed in such a way that the interstitial space between the primary and secondary tanks can be constantly monitored with the proper equipment.

Piping manufacturers have evolved over the years developing better piping, piping fittings, containment sumps and entry fittings. There are three main types of piping currently being installed in North America: FRP (fiber reinforced plastic) double walled (DW) rigid piping; semi rigid or fusion welded DW piping that can be welded or fused together and Flex DW Pipe. Flex DW piping is the most used in the industry as it is easily adaptable to different situations and applications. The piping can be cut to the size required and installed using a specialized fitting with a permanent test port built in so that the interstitial space between the primary and secondary line can be tested. The Flex DW piping is usually installed within a four-inch conduit access pipe so that it can be easily replaced, if necessary, with all connections done within containment sumps that are above tanks or below the dispensers.

Tank containment sumps are securely attached to the riser collar of the tank or connected through a mounting flange that is threaded directly through the tank. The tank sump allows a contractor access to the submersed turbine pump (STP) sump and all piping connections within the sump. The tank sump will contain any spills or leaks that occur within the tank sump and any leaks for primary piping line that are connected within a tank sump. A dispenser sump is buried underground below the dispenser with the piping connections all contained within the sumps. The dispenser sumps are designed to contain any spills or leaks from the dispenser or fittings within the dispenser sumps.

Once a tank system is installed properly all the containment sumps and interstitial spaces can be continuously monitored electronically using different technologies such as automatic tank gauges (ATG's), sump sensors, electronic line leak detection (ELLD) or pressure line leak detection (PLLD) and interstitial vacuum or brine sensors for the tanks. An ATG gauge inside a tank can gauge for a sudden loss and set off an alarm; or inform your hauler that you require a delivery as well as gauge the on-site inventory in the tanks. Sump sensors are capable of sensing product or liquid in the sump and setting off an alarm, shutting down the associated equipment or the entire site depending on how it is set up. Most interstitial sensors will normally set off an alarm without shutting down any associated equipment. ELLD's are usually set to alarm and shut off the associated STP. Note it

is extremely important that all these devices be inspected/tested annually to ensure that they are operating as they are set up to. These systems are great tools for leak detection but, like all devices and technology, they do break, wear and eventually fail.

There is a lot more detail and options for the items listed above that can be searched online or by contacting the manufacturers directly. The retail petroleum industry has come a long way in developing products and continue to develop products to protect the environment from unwanted leaking storage tank systems.

With all the equipment and technical developments over the past 20 years for leak detection, Leak Detection companies have also evolved and developed in order to utilize the technical development to enhance leak detection from finding leaking tank systems to tracking and managing the causes of leaks or shrinkage losses that are not associated with an actual leaking tank system. The new technology at the retail petroleum site means that there is a lot more information being produced at the site level. In

financial losses are not just the shrinkage losses but also potential on-site investigation losses that occur when you are unable to explain your losses. On-site investigation can include unnecessary calibration, tank and line testing or service visits from a petroleum contractor. All of these can become expensive and may never resolve the unexplained losses. In many cases the contractor is unaware of how what they are doing on site may or may not affect the shrinkage. For instance, when calibrating a meter if you do not fully understand your equipment and how it works then you would have a difficult time understanding how the results affect the shrinkage at the site. When field technicians are trained to not just complete a task on site, such calibration or testing leak detection equipment, but are also trained to look for potential shrinkage losses through on-site systems and reviewing site processes they enhance the fuel management program.

The conventional sense of leak detection has evolved with new technology. Most sites that are physically tested now are sites



Dispenser containment sump with DW lines.

fact, hundreds of data points daily are produced from each site. The data points would include delivery notifications, POS sales, inventory changes, any alarms that may go off and much more. These data points are usually too numerous for an individual at the site level to manage and become even more difficult when an individual is managing any number of sites.

Companies that have been managing large statistical inventory reconciliation (SIR) programs over the past 20 years have developed their software to embrace the massive sets of data and analyze it in order to give meaningful recommendations. Most of these companies no longer run an SIR program but a fuel management program. These companies have 20-plus years of analytic experience, not only at detecting leaking storage tanks but also are able to react to any type of alarm as it goes off, ensuring deliveries are made on time and the accurate amount is delivered, tracking data issues, metering issues and any unexplained losses. Current legislation allows plus or minus half of one per cent loss on sales output for any tank system. On a high output tank system this could mean hundreds to thousands of litres lost or gained daily. Fuel management companies are tracking daily losses that are less than 10 litres per day on some tank systems.

When you can track daily losses this small you are no longer just detecting leaks but managing shrinkage losses which in fact is a significant financial loss to petroleum companies that may appear as a leaking tank system to an untrained analyst. The

with older equipment or sites that are not on a fuel management program. A physical test is only good for the day it is tested and is usually used to confirm that a tank system is tight or confirm where the tank system is leaking. Sites that are on a fuel management program are continuously monitored for any type of loss whether it be an actual leak into the environment or a shrinkage loss. A fuel management program is designed to reduce and manage shrinkage losses as well as keep your petroleum site in compliance with legislative requirements. Note fuel management programs can also work with sites that do not have all the electronic equipment. [9]

Brent Boodoosingh is the director of the fuel management program at Tankology, a division of Englobe. For over two decades, Brent has been managing and facilitating all functions of the fuel management department. As an engineer, he has impacted industry standards by playing key roles in solving many fuel management and compliance problems for the petroleum industry. His roles have included involvement in various testing methods for tank and line inspection, the development of API-653 inspections, in addition to working closely with developers and Measurement Canada in the process of certifying calibration equipment. Some material in this article was obtained from the Xerxes webpage (www.xerxes.com) and the OPW document Underground Piping and Containment 101.

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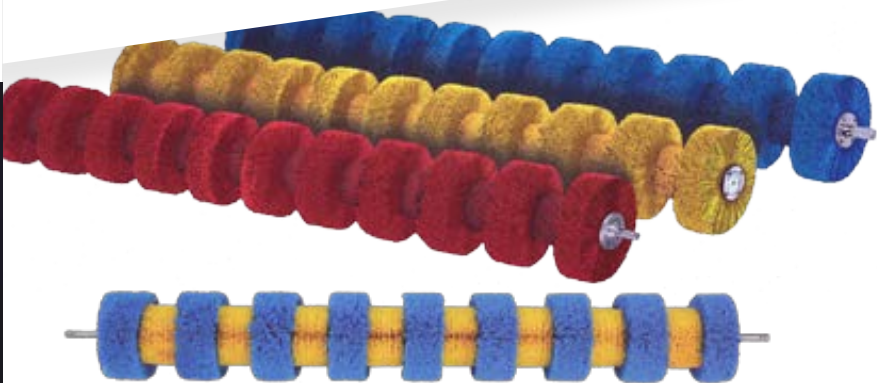


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