

Convenience & Carwash

MARCH | APRIL 2024

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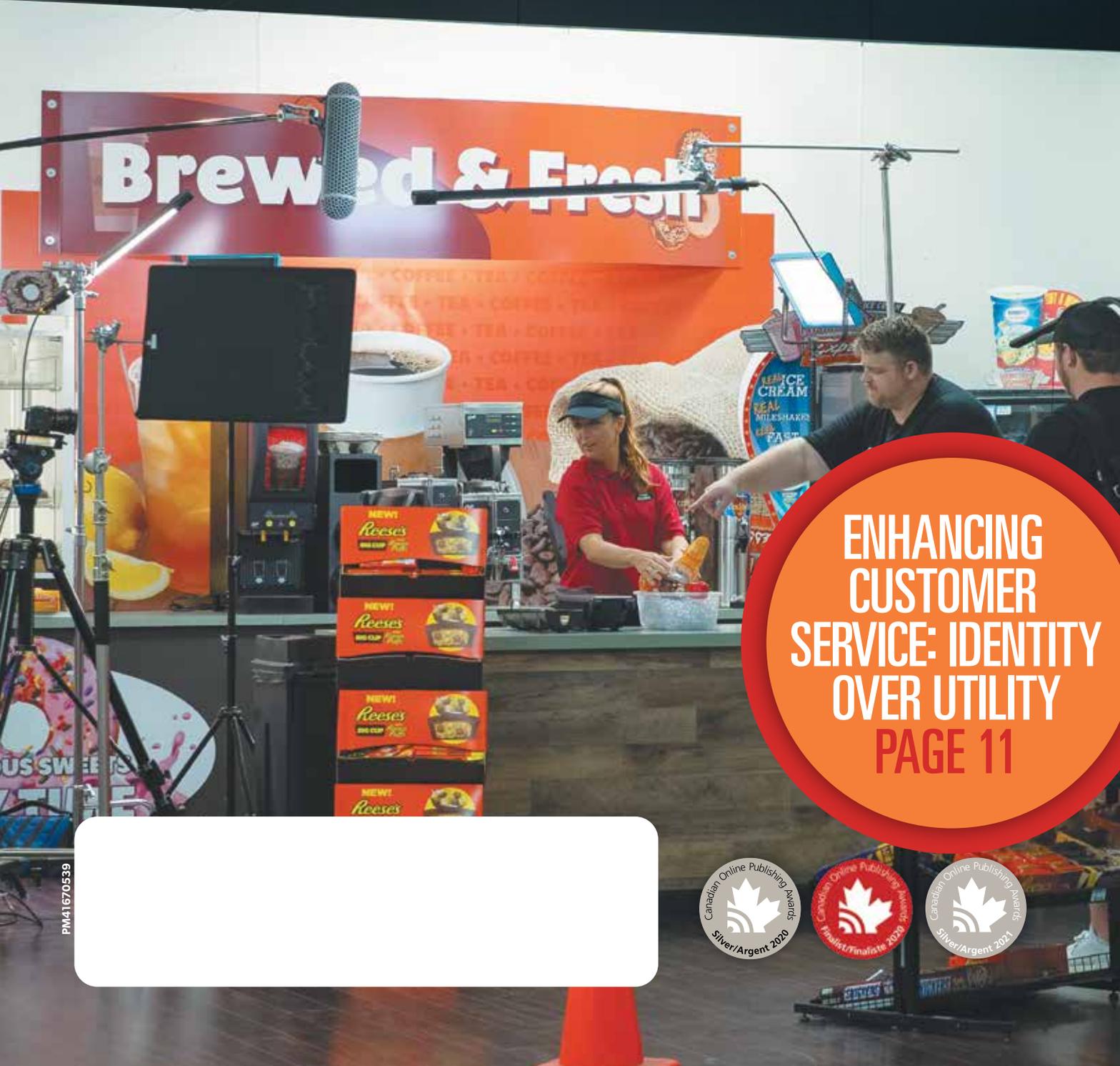
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**Publisher's
Message**

Hello Spring



Hello Spring, after an almost nonexistent winter across the prairies this year, and looking ahead to spring, we bring to you the 94th edition of *Convenience & Carwash Canada* magazine. We share information on many topics that we hope inspire you to keep bringing your customers new and innovative products and ideas to ensure the relevance of your site.

Imagine you're the customer stepping into your store for the first time. What do you notice first when you walk in? Is it the greeting bestowed upon you by the front counter clerks? Are the windows and the door glass clean and lights bright and welcoming?

This edition we are happy to bring to you a special editorial on how you can enhance your customer service by going that extra mile. Little things mean a lot, and those are remembered and can help to ensure repeat customers.

A part of customer experience can include adding meal and snack options that cater to those seeking healthier snack and meal options. Remember, what you offer has a direct effect on who and how often customers frequent your store. Make it "the place to go."

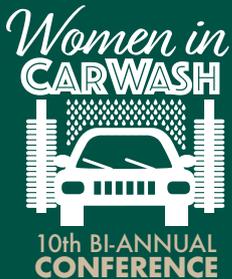
From healthy snacks and customer service, managing employee leaves, and hot beverages, to giving back to your community, this edition has it all, and more.

We hope that you enjoy the read, and as always, your success is my business. My open-door policy to your valuable feedback remains not only intact but stronger than ever. If you have comments or a story idea for an upcoming issue, please email me at

bjjohnstone@convenienceandcarwash.com or 204-489-4215.

A handwritten signature in black ink that reads "Bene".

Brenda Jane Johnstone PUBLISHER



JUNE 16-18, 2024
HILTON SALT LAKE CITY CENTRE
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Communication is Key

What kind of experience do your stores provide for your customers?

This issue's article *Enhancing Customer Service* tells us that the economy has shifted from service-based to experience-based. This means that the experience customers have in your store is just as important, or even more so, than the products they are purchasing. There is also a high likelihood that the experience, good or bad, will be discussed, shown, and commented on in social media posts.

Every business has competition. Convenience store owners are well aware that there are other places to shop so making their stores unforgettable, or ones to remember in a positive way, is one of the best ways to stand out from the crowd.

Keeping up with the latest trends and terminology can help when connecting with your customers. In writing the article *Snacks: Fun and Functional*, I discovered that functional is the word that is commonly replacing the word healthy in regard to better-for-you-snacks. It was less of a surprise to hear that younger customers are the ones who are more interested in seeking out foods that offer functional benefits. Keeping such products on the shelves will attract more Gen Z customers to your stores but don't forget to let them know these items are there. Promote the functional snacks that you have available with signage and marketing both in-store and on your social media and websites.

Communication is key to repeat business. Become the place people can turn to for a friendly face and a welcoming atmosphere. Be more than just the place to buy a lottery ticket or a package of gum. Be the place that people look forward to popping into during their daily grind and don't forget to check in with your customers every now and then to ask how they think you are doing and if they see ways to improve.

We are gearing up for the summer months when people will be outside and on the go. Now is the time to also gear up your communication with them. Make sure you are on social media and that you are updating posts on a regular basis and then pause long enough to take a good look at your stores. How would you rate the experience of shopping there if you were a customer?

Angela Altass
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No: 41670539
Return Undeliverable
Canadian addresses to:
Circulation Department
543 Borebank Street
Winnipeg, MB R3N 1E8

Funded by the
Government of
Canada

Canada



AWARDS



By Meline Beach

Drive Sales and Profitability with Core-Mark's **SmartStock**[®] Category Management Solutions Program

As the convenience market continues to evolve, the pressure to manage your business profitably has never been greater.

Core-Mark's SmartStock[®] Category Management Solutions Program may be the solution you need to manage inventory more intelligently and efficiently.

SmartStock[®] is a full-service merchandising program that offers qualified Core-Mark customers the key benefits of top category management solutions, best-in-class space management software delivered plan-o-grams, and in-store visits by dedicated sales representatives who help identify growth opportunities. Participating products are fully guaranteed.

Launched in 2009, the SmartStock[®] Category Management Solutions Program recently went through a refresh to strategically enable independent c-store retailers to compete against larger chains, with data-backed insights and strategic plan-o-grams to help sell products by evaluating category sets, inventory levels, product rotation, and accuracy of shelf tags.

"With over 180 vendors and more than

4,000 guaranteed products in the program, we work with c-store retailers in Canada to identify the best-performing items to help them increase sales and profits," says Scott Pulvermacher, national category manager - Core-Mark Canada. "The product plan-o-grams are created by subject matter experts who look at the best-performing items through data analytics across industry and market sources."

Core-Mark delivers a strong value proposition with advanced data analytics capabilities and real-time insights. Dedicated sales representatives will work with the retailer, leveraging historical store performance sales and seasonality trends to make sound business decisions. As a result, effective merchandising strategies and plan-o-grams are provided to drive profitable revenue opportunities

in core categories such as candy, salty snacks, meat snacks, ice cream, retail beverages, and fresh foods.

C-store operators participating in the SmartStock[®] Category Management Solutions Program in Canada have gained new levels of operational efficiency, sales performance, and profitability. "Our multivendor candy rack at participating c-stores outperforms by 20 per cent against c-stores that don't participate in the program," says Pulvermacher.

The benefits and impact of Core-Mark's SmartStock[®] Category Management Solutions Program are abundant. Optimized inventory management minimizes waste and frees up more time and resources to enable retailers to focus on delivering exceptional customer service and drive sales. Applied data analytics minimizes the risk of over or understocking items and ensures that shelves are consistently stocked with the right products at the right time. The ultimate objective is to position the c-store as a leader in the retail convenience landscape in Canada.

To learn more about the SmartStock[®] Category Management Solution Program and its capabilities, contact your Core-Mark Sales Representative or visit Core-Mark.com.

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Celebrating Over 30 Years of Innovative Structures



By Meline Beach



Hot Brew: Exploring Options in Hot Beverage Equipment

Coffee is regularly and commonly consumed as part of a daily routine for millions of people. According to the Canadian Coffee Association, Canada ranks among the top countries for per capita coffee consumption, with 71 per cent of Canadians consuming coffee yesterday. The aroma is known to induce feelings of comfort and warmth or productivity and alertness. No matter the season, reason or location, coffee, as a hot beverage of choice, has tremendous influence and represents high profit potential for c-stores. Specialty coffees, such as lattes, cappuccinos, and other espresso-based beverages, as well as hot chocolates, including mochaccino (combining espresso, chocolate syrup or cocoa powder, and steamed milk) are also popular hot beverages that drive repeat visits and higher sales volumes.

The hot beverage market is expected to continue its upward trajectory with an annual growth rate of 4.75 per cent (compound annual growth rate 2024-2038) according to Statista.

As the demand for hot beverages continues to rise, selecting the right equipment is important. Let's explore a few options that are leading the way in providing innovative solutions to meet this growing trend in the c-store channel.

Specialty Beverage Solutions

When it comes to picking the right equipment, Daren Schwengler, president of Specialty Beverage Solutions (SBS), suggests taking a few things into account. From store location to what types of drinks you expect to serve, there's a lot to consider. SBS's La Cimbali has different machines for

different volumes with 110-volt and 220-volt options.

"The beautiful thing about espresso and coffee machines, like La Cimbali, is their versatility," says Schwengler. "We can create all types of drinks, from extra milky or light foam to less milk, more foam and varying degrees of coffee bean intensity."



Efficiency and speed are equally important. La Cimbali's single boiler system, found in several models, means less power usage (La Cimbali S 20 runs on a 20-amp breaker) but more hot water on standby when things get busy. Plus, with an online connection, SBS can offer quick support to retail operators, from tweaking recipes to tackling cleaning and troubleshooting.

"Timing is everything when it comes to coffee," says Schwengler. "With La Cimbali, you can get a cup in about 35 seconds – under five seconds to grind the beans and less than 30 seconds to brew. That means fewer lines and happier customers."

When considering costs, Schwengler emphasizes that pricing typically falls within the range of \$5,000 to \$20,000 depending

71%
**OF CANADIANS
CONSUMED COFFEE
YESTERDAY.**

on the location's volume. He suggests that c-store retailers thoroughly evaluate their anticipated coffee sales and choose equipment accordingly. Opting for a machine intended for lower-volume stores can result in notable wear on components, leading to heightened downtime, operator frustration, and customer discontent.

Bunn-O-Matic Corporation (BUNN)

In BUNN's lineup, the Sure Immersion 312 stands out as the go-to machine for c-stores.

"Sure Immersion brings together a range of delicious bean-to-cup drinks with an interactive touchscreen," says Jay Beckett, marketing graphic designer at Bunn-O-Matic Corporation of Canada, serving c-stores, carwashes, and gas stations. "Customers love navigating the large touchscreen, where they can also see promotional graphics and videos while waiting for their drink."

The 10-inch full-colour touchscreen Picture-Prompted Cleaning display makes it easy for operators to manage daily cleaning and weekly maintenance routines.

When it comes to value, Beckett raves about the Sure Immersion 312's functionality. With a single grinder for three bean hoppers and two internal powder hoppers, it can whip up café-style beverages along with hot and iced coffee. Plus, the 17-inch touchscreen offers ample space for user-uploaded promotional content. With its diverse offerings and user-friendly design, this machine is a top pick for c-stores looking to boost their hot beverage program.

FRANKE

Understanding that every business is as unique as its customers, Franke has built a lineup of beverage equipment that offers a range of options to suit a variety of business needs. This includes solutions for various levels of investment based on volume, dayparts, and products offered. From lower volume, single-machine applications to high-throughput programs

requiring multiple machines, Franke delivers solutions for any beverage program. The size of the equipment investment can be tailored to a customer's needs and may be as simple as a single machine for a small store. The break even on a single unit starts



around five cups per day for the Franke A400 Fresh Brew, making upgrading a program quite accessible.

"When selecting the equipment, the operator should assess the arrival rate for their customers and ensure they can serve during their peak demand period," says Greg Alford, country manager, sales - Canada. "While many of our customers start with one machine, typical installations feature two machines for freshly brewed coffee. The key is to monitor the service area to ensure customers are not waiting in line too long."

For some, retailers, the A400 Fresh Brew, a small-footprint bean-to-cup machine that is capable of serving 15 to 100 cups a day. At 15 cups sold a day, an operator typically recovers their entire A400 investment in the first year. The A800 finds rapid return on investment from 25 cups per day with a 250 cups per day capacity. This model features patented iQFlow technology and provides perfect extraction times with each cup, and cold-water bypass to keep iced drinks icy. Either way, customers can feel confident knowing that each cup is ground and brewed fresh, meaning more taste, and less waste.

"The super-automatic equipment investment actually reduces total coffee service costs to the operator by completely eliminating waste; no more dumping half pots that have past their fresh time limit," explains Alford. "Typical estimates on waste elimination are around 40 per cent reduction - a huge savings. Add to that an even higher reduction of coffee production labour and operators are finding their investment to super-automatic coffee systems increases profitability in their coffee programs, while the improved coffee quality increases sales."

Franke representatives are ready to leverage their industry expertise to help customers select the right size of system for their business, as well as to provide marketing guidelines to help customers implement a new coffee program successfully and ensure their beverage programs are able to meet their full potential.

Core-Mark

Core-Mark doesn't sell equipment - they facilitate connections between retailers and trusted suppliers that specialize in providing cutting-edge, advanced, technological equipment and financing solutions. They are a leader in sourcing ecologically friendly and sustainable products that adhere to the single-use plastic ban.

"We research and recommend a program packaged with flexible and customizable equipment, one that caters to our

customer's desire for choice in both coffee varieties and condiment selection," Marc Rex, director of Fresh & Foodservice at Core-Mark. "We also look at suppliers who provide marketing support with branded cups, menu boards and posters for strong branding and positioning within the c-store."

Core-Mark's expertise lies in sourcing flexibly designed equipment. They source equipment with multiple dispensing options, including different cup sizes, adjustable temperature settings, and different brewing methods that cater to different customer preferences.

"Hot beverage machines are like building blocks, with parts that fit together easily," says Rex. "Store owners can rearrange these parts to offer various drinks, such as coffee, tea, hot chocolate, and flavoured syrups, giving them flexibility in their offerings."

Other factors Core-Mark takes into consideration when working with suppliers for hot beverage equipment include a user-friendly digital interface, which allows customers to easily select their desired beverage options and customize their drinks. Preferred equipment must allow for self-service, thus empowering customers to customize their beverage according to their preferences, which gives them control over requirements such as the amount of milk or cream to add to the beverage or the type/quantity of sweetener to use. They also partner with equipment suppliers who have service support throughout Canada and are ready to dispatch immediately to c-stores.

"The equipment we source is built to brew hot beverages quickly, eliminate wait times, and get the customer served promptly," says Rex. "Since customers can self-serve with the machines we source, the store staff can focus on other tasks, and it reduces wait times at the cash counter."

C-store retailers have a plethora of options to choose from when creating or maintaining an in-store hot beverage program. From purchasing directly from an equipment manufacturer or working with a distributor who conducts the research for you, coffee is a growing commodity that will only benefit a c-store's bottom line if managed and equipped correctly. 

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience and 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.

Parkland Selling 157 Convenience Stores & Fuel Stations Assets



Parkland has retained two real estate firms to begin the marketing process to sell 157 convenience store and fuel station assets located in six provinces across Canada.

“The decision to divest these locations is part of our ongoing network planning and optimization process,” says Francis Lapointe, vice president of Canadian retail operations. “As we continue to grow, we have identified sites that no longer fit our long-term strategic objectives in their current format. While high quality, these locations would be better suited under someone else’s ownership, however, we will include long-term fuel supply agreements with each of them along with the opportunity to have an onsite ON the RUN convenience store.”

The available sites consist of fuel brands such as Chevron, Ultramar, Pioneer and FasGas, and buyers in certain scenarios have the opportunity to operate under the popular c-store banner, ON the RUN.

The bulk of the stations are in Quebec and Ontario - across major metropolitan areas and smaller cities and towns, with the balance of stores in Alberta, British Columbia, Manitoba and Saskatchewan.

The retail and fuel locations will be packaged with long-term Parkland fuel supply agreements.

“In the end, these sites will still be part of our network and will represent our strong brands within our communities,” says Lapointe. “We’re excited to bring in experienced, entrepreneurial operators who are eager to partner with brands and programs that customers trust.”

Parkland has partnered with NRC Realty & Capital Advisors, LLC; a company specializing in the marketing of convenience store properties and Colliers Canada to facilitate the transactions.

Interested parties can visit the sale website at www.cstorebids.ca, or call 1-855-558-1601 for more information. 



Enhancing Customer Service

Enhancing customer service in convenience store environments can be a challenging and rewarding undertaking.

By Angela Altass

“The 24/7 model of convenience stores sets them apart in the retail industry,” says Kerrie Gill, marketing specialist for It’s All Goods and author of the article *Delivering Top-Notch Customer Service in 24/7 Convenience Stores*. “Serving customers around the clock, these establishments cater to a variety of needs, from a quick snack to last minute household essentials. This continuous operation, while beneficial for customers seeking convenience and flexibility, presents unique challenges for the stores, especially in terms of customer service.”

Gill notes that these challenges include maintaining a consistent high-quality customer experience, attracting and retaining talented employees and staying competitive amidst increasing competition.

Markus Giesler, professor of marketing, Schulich School of Business, York University, notes that competition has impacted customer service expectations.

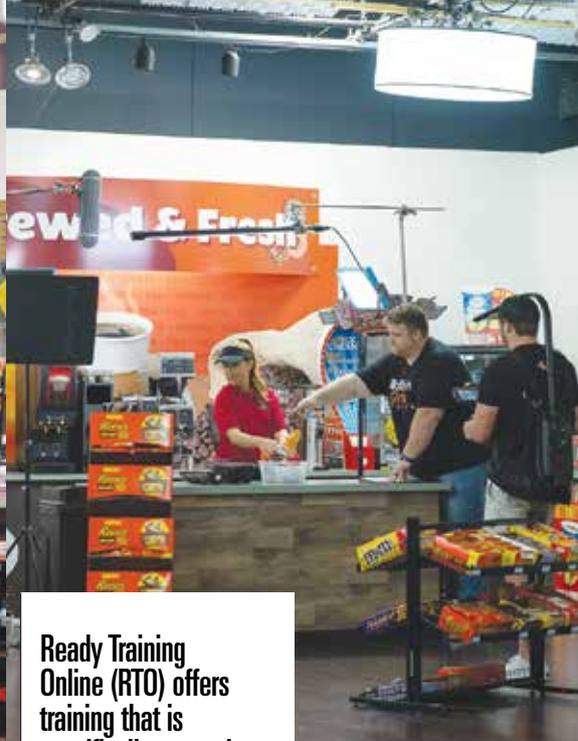
“Competition is at an all-time high,” says Giesler. “There are more people offering the same things so differentiating becomes ever more challenging and important. Everything is an experience now.”

A shift from a service-based economy to one that is experience-based has elevated identity over utility, says Giesler.

“Utility means that, for example, back in the day we used to think of services in terms of their attribute-oriented benefits, such as how well a bakery bakes bread and whether the bread is cheap enough,” says Giesler. “Now, it’s about identity and what going to this bakery says about who I am as a person. In a marketplace dominated by experiences, things are less about utility, or actual values and benefits, and more about the identity value that consumers get out of something.”

Making a store visit unforgettable enhances the experience for the customer, says Giesler.

“This sounds rather trivial but it is actually pretty complicated,” says Giesler. “When you think about the kinds of relationships that people have with convenience stores, sometimes it’s just a superficial transactional relationship and, in other cases, it’s actually a deep and strong, enduring emotional bond because it’s the convenience store down the road that you’ve been going >> to for years.”



Ready Training Online (RTO) offers training that is specifically catered to the convenience industry. Included in their training offerings are videos that are shot at their own production convenience store studio.

Something that adds a personal touch or an element of humanity or a unique experience to an otherwise transactional thing can enhance customer service and make your business one to remember, says Giesler.

“When you look at foodservice delivery, for example, one of my favourite restaurants always sends a little handwritten note with an order,” says Giesler. “It’s just a line or two but it really makes me feel very good about the experience. Another example is the dry cleaner in Toronto where I shop has a little sign in the window that says if you are unemployed and are currently taking job interviews, they will clean your clothes for free. I saw this years ago and have never forgotten it. I take all my dry cleaning there because I think it’s a unique and very human touch on something that is pretty generic: dry cleaning.”

Quality customer service involves emotions, time and space, politics and fairness, and technology, says Giesler.

“One key aspect of service quality is how it makes us feel as consumers,” says Giesler. “It’s not so much about the price or value but how do we feel about the service. Feelings should be on top of the agenda for everyone who is in a small service-based business because feelings really make or break your momentum with consumers.”

Time and space are also important, notes Giesler.

Service isn’t just about the act of washing a car or the sale of convenience items; where the service takes place matters greatly,” he says. “How is the space

designed and how is the flow within that space? That is something that you can influence.”

Politics plays a role in customer service in regard to the sense of fairness and equity that a business signals, says Giesler.

“I’m saying this because a lot of service-based businesses are lower pay and fairness and equity towards employees is an attribute that consumers pay increasing attention to,” states Giesler. “So, if you treat your employees well, that is something that your employees signal and embody in the way that they interact with customers; which is worth a lot. Treat your employees like your most important customers. Happy employees mean happy customers.”

A motivated and inspired crew always provide better customer service, says Tom Hart, director of business development, Ready Training Online (RTO).

“You can’t enforce good customer service,” says Hart. “It is modeled by, and starts with, the store manager. When I worked in operations, the first thing I did was have the district managers greet the employees at the front register when they visited sites. Good customer service needs to be inspired and it starts at the top.”

Technology is also important to providing quality customer service, adds Giesler.

“Allow people to pay in the way that they deem convenient,” says Giesler. “I see a lot of businesses that refuse credit cards or debit cards, which can make paying difficult for some people. I see businesses that are not investing in technology, which is something that consumers are

increasingly impatient about.”

People see technology all around them and your customers expect you to have it, understand it and embrace it, says Hart.

“Make sure the technology works well,” states Hart. “Don’t try to embrace everything all at once but when you do install technology make sure your employees understand it. Look at the world around you and make sure you’re reflecting that back in your store.”

Working at a convenience store is a lot of responsibility, notes Hart.

“People don’t expect to spend half an hour at a convenience store,” says Hart. “They want to be in and out quickly. Staff need to keep the line moving. They have to ask people for ID and sometimes customers can get mad about that. Staff have to keep the store clean and wait on customers; sweeping the floor while also keeping an eye on the parking lot. They are constantly multi-tasking and have to do it all while keeping a cool head.”

RTO offers training that is specifically catered to the convenience industry. Included in their training offerings are

videos that are shot at their own production convenience store studio.

“For example, we just filmed one on de-escalation to help employees understand what to do when confronted with certain situations and how best to handle them,” says Hart. “We have universal training on such things as safe lifting, robbery prevention, or interview skills. We can also create custom content.”

Frontline workers can get confronted with various unexpected scenarios, such as dealing with unhappy customers, someone slipping or falling, or even a robbery attempt and Hart feels there is a responsibility to ensure they receive proper training for the job.

“I worked with convenience stores my entire life,” says Hart. “I was held up at gunpoint at the age of 18. When you hire someone, you don’t always think about all the things that can possibly happen. I think we have a responsibility to show people what is expected of them and how they can succeed and what to do in certain situations.”

Listening to customers is a good idea, says Hart. “If you have a new coffee bar set

up or a new foodservice item, ask your customers how it’s going and what they think of it and make sure feedback goes up to the leadership of the company. Sometimes what we think is a great idea can fall flat with customers.”

Being genuine is a key to customer service, says Hart. “I can tell what the mood is when I walk into a store. Make working there enjoyable. Inspire your team and respect the customers. Don’t let one customer who is in a bad mood ruin your day and affect the next 50 to 100 customers you see. Get to know your customers and be the neighbourhood store with a friendly atmosphere.”

Getting to know your customers and taking care of employees is the starting point to a plan that delivers a higher level of service.

“Delivering excellent customer service in a 24/7 convenience store requires a well thought out strategy,” says Gill. “From ensuring a safe and welcoming environment to maintaining service consistency, each aspect plays a crucial role in shaping the customer experience.” **☐**

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COFFEE EXCELLENCE CONSUMERS CRAVE



“Be Back Soon” – Managing Employee Leaves



By Sally Roach

As much as we try to distinguish them, work and personal life are innately tethered to one another. Things come up at work that will leak into our personal lives, and our personal lives will certainly seep their way into the workplace. To keep the floodgates intact, this sometimes requires employees to take a temporary or leave of absence from their job.

Approving a request for leave can come with some reluctance, especially if the duration is unknown or lasting more than a few days. However, there are instances where approval is a must. This includes:

- Job-protected leaves offered through employment and labour standards (e.g., compassionate care, maternity leave, parental leave, etc.).
- Leaves that are being taken for reasons related to protected grounds under human rights laws (e.g., disability, family status, creed, etc.).
- Other leaves that are promised to employees through company policy and/or their individual employment contracts.

Provinces and territories have their own employment standards and human rights laws, so it might be worthwhile to do some research before approving or declining an employee's request for leave.

When a leave is approved, employers should seek to remain proactive. Effective and proactive leave management will prove it's worth when it comes to staffing coverage, employee accountability and facilitating the return-to-work process. Suggestions are provided below to assist with this.

Commencing the Leave

- Request and gather additional information from the employee to substantiate the leave. Often times, this would involve medical notes or directives from an employee's healthcare professional.
- Document the leave request and approval.
- Create a “working” file to keep track of information and documents related to the leave. Take extra caution when it comes to management and storage of employee medical information. Under most privacy laws, this information should be kept separate from the individual's personnel file and should only be accessed and viewed by those responsible for managing the leave.
- Confirm that you have the employee's current contact information.
- Schedule check-ins with the employee in advance.

- Coordinate payroll activities, such as issuing a record of employment, and/or paying wages to the last date worked.
- If the employee normally receives benefits through work, determine whether these will be continued, and how the employee's portion will continue to be paid while they are away.
- Plan for increased workloads; this might involve hiring for casual or temporary positions, or adjusting existing work schedules.
- Carefully communicate the absence in the workplace. Other employees can be made aware of a co-worker's absence, but details and reasons why should be kept in confidence.

During the Leave

- Engage in periodic contact with the employee to share updates. Ensure that you document all communication, including dates, time, and what was discussed. This information can be kept in the “working” file as suggested above.
- Be ready to respond to change; for example, if an employee is on a leave of absence for health or medical reasons, and they expect that they will be returning sooner or later than initially planned,

BY BEING THOROUGH AND CONSIDERATE, EMPLOYERS CAN NAVIGATE EMPLOYEE LEAVES MORE EFFECTIVELY AND FOSTER A SEAMLESS TRANSITION FOR ALL PARTIES INVOLVED.



have them obtain an updated note from their healthcare professional.

- Determine if/what accommodation the employee will require upon their return to the workplace, and prepare to implement these accommodations before their return-to-work date.
- Confirm and prepare for the employee's return to work date. This may include placing the employee back on payroll,

re-adjusting work schedules, and notifying their co-workers.

Embracing proactive management in the workplace is consistently beneficial, yet it is infrequently applied when addressing employee leaves. These scenarios are often approached with a simplistic mindset, overlooking potential impacts and unique complexities. Employers can enhance their approach by implementing

organized and diligent measures, ensuring a smoother process for both the leave and return-to-work phases. By being thorough and considerate, employers can navigate employee leaves more effectively and foster a seamless transition for all parties involved. **■**

Sally is an HR Professional having a diverse background in policy review and development, recruitment, performance management, employee relations, and application of employment legislation and HR best practices. Sally brings forward experience in HR consulting services where she has become effective and knowledgeable in developing client-focused HR solutions.

Sally is a graduate from the University of Winnipeg, earning her Bachelor's Degree in Business Administration. Sally also holds a Business Administration Diploma from McMaster University and certification as an equitable and Inclusive leader.

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By Savannah Brush

Boosting Fundraising Efforts: How to Collaborate with Organizations for Carwash Fundraisers and Give Back to Your Community

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Develop a fundraising structure that benefits both the organization and your carwash. Consider offering a percentage of the proceeds from each carwash or a fixed amount per vehicle washed as a donation to the organization.

Carwash fundraisers are an effective way to support local organizations, giving back and engaging with communities. By partnering with non-profit groups, schools, or other community organizations, you can help them raise funds while increasing your carwash's visibility and customer base and helping local groups.

An excellent first step is to identify potential partners. Start by researching local organizations that align with your carwash's values and have fundraising needs. Non-profits, youth sports teams, school clubs, and charitable foundations are often eager to partner with local businesses for fundraising initiatives. Reach out to these organizations, attend community events, or network with individuals involved in community programs to identify potential partners.

Craft a compelling proposal. Once you've identified organizations to collaborate with, develop a persuasive proposal outlining the benefits of hosting a carwash fundraiser. Communicate how the partnership will benefit both parties. Highlight how the organization will raise funds, increase awareness, and foster community engagement through the event. Explain how your carwash can provide

the necessary resources to ensure a successful fundraiser, such as facilities, staff, equipment, and marketing support.

Define event logistics: Work closely with the organization to define the logistics of the carwash fundraiser. Determine a suitable date, time, and location for the event. Ensure you have the necessary permits and permissions in place. Collaborate on promotional materials and strategies, such as flyers, social media posts, or email newsletters, to reach their target audience effectively and maximize participation. Plan how the funds will be collected, tracked, and distributed to the organization. Clear communication and organization will contribute to a seamless and successful event.

Create a win-win fundraising structure. Develop a fundraising structure that benefits both the organization and your carwash. Consider offering a percentage of the proceeds from each carwash or a fixed amount per vehicle washed as a donation to the organization. Alternatively, you can establish a ticket system where supporters purchase carwash vouchers directly from the organization and redeem them at your carwash during the event. This way, the



organization retains a higher portion of the funds while you gain increased foot traffic and potential new customers.

Collaborate on event promotion. Collaborate closely with the organization to promote the carwash fundraiser effectively. To generate buzz, leverage your marketing channels, such as social media platforms, websites, email newsletters, and physical signage at your carwash. Provide the organization branded promotional materials such as flyers or digital assets to distribute within their network. Encourage the organization to involve their supporters, volunteers, and participants in spreading the word about the event. Remember to tailor your messaging to highlight the cause, the impact of the fundraising, and the benefits of getting a carwash from your establishment.

Provide an exceptional experience. During the event, prioritize providing an exceptional carwash experience for every participant. Ensure your staff is well-trained, friendly, and efficient. Create a welcoming and engaging atmosphere with music, refreshments, and comfortable waiting areas. Emphasize the organization's mission and the

impact its supporters are making by participating in the event. This will enhance the overall experience and leave a positive impression on both the organization and the participants, potentially leading to repeat customers for the carwash in the future.

Conclusion: Collaborating with organizations for carwash fundraisers is a win-win opportunity to support the community while increasing your carwash's visibility and customer base. By identifying suitable partners, crafting compelling proposals, defining event logistics, creating a win-win fundraising structure, collaborating on event promotions, and providing an exceptional experience, you can maximize the success of the fundraisers. 📌

Savannah Brush is an account executive and team lead at WelcomeMat, specializing in data-driven marketing strategies tailored for the carwash industry. Savannah helps her clients set up targeted ad campaigns that leverage their point-of-sale software and deliver measurable results. She also leads her team in day-to-day operations to ensure they and their clients are successful.



Tailor your messaging to highlight the cause, the impact of the fundraising, and the benefits of getting a carwash from your establishment.

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Snacks: Fun and Functional

By Angela Altass

Keeping up with healthy snacking trends and giving consumers the options they are looking for can be tricky and sometimes confusing. However, there is one thing in particular that c-stores have that in abundance that snackers are seeking – convenience.

Euromonitor's Snacks in 2023: The Big Picture report indicates that rising health consciousness is a significant trend observed across most product categories. Post-pandemic, Canadian consumers are shifting their focus to their health and seeking products that offer functional benefits while avoiding those that are detrimental to their overall wellbeing.

The report indicates that a resurgence in on-the-go snacking has encouraged manufacturers to focus on packaging, particularly smaller portion sizes that are more suitable for everyday consumption. Convenience stores and forecourt retailers have been steadily gaining market share, sometimes at the expense of traditional retailers, states the report, with the resurgence of on-the-go snacking driving this shift as consumers seek convenient options.



“Consumers want to eat better but they do not necessarily choose the better options all the time,” says Rhonda Goldberg, president, Oh! Naturals. “I believe having options in the convenience store that are better-for-you are very beneficial. There are a lot of dietary restrictions and not everyone wants to go to a larger grocery store.”

Oh! Naturals describes their product line as fun and functional snacking on the go and Goldberg encourages convenience stores to use similar wording to let their customers know they have options available in the store.

“I think fun and functional might be better wording than healthy,” comments Goldberg. “Consumers want a snack that will satisfy their cravings and know that it is a better-for-you choice so they do not feel so guilty.”



The future of food is functional, especially in packaged foods, says Krista Anderson, founder and CEO, Healthy On the Go.

“I think that after the pandemic, people are more health conscious and are looking for these types of products,” says Anderson. “Convenience stores are missing a huge opportunity to increase incremental sales if they are not inviting in that customer who is searching for healthier options.”

People have to be very cautious when it comes to healthier-for-you claims on packaging, says Anderson.

“We live in a land of marketing,” says Anderson. “It might say it’s vegan on the front of a package but that doesn’t necessarily mean it’s healthy. It’s about turning the package over and looking at the ingredients. Is each ingredient coming from nature without any change at all, straight from the source? That’s how we look at it.”

Having a separate section deemed as healthy snacks helps customers navigate and educates them about the products, says Anderson, whose company creates Healthy On The Go display solutions for Canadian retailers in partnership with their distributors.

“You have nine seconds to talk to consumers and help them make their buying decisions,” says Anderson. “In that time, our displays can help them quickly navigate and make their choice.”

Mintel’s 2023 *Better For You Eating Trends* report notes that 60 per cent of consumers say they would rather see added benefits from whole food ingredients than isolated nutrients and 58 per cent said they believe that what you add to your diet is more important than what you avoid.

When asked what they consider when choosing a new food or drink product, 46 per cent cited brand, suggesting that consumers like to find a brand and stick with it.



“People aren’t trying new types of snacks or experimenting with things,” says Warren Brown, founder, Spark Bites. “They’re buying what they know.”

Brown says that healthy snacks should be separated from other options in the store but notes that this can be challenging for stores with a smaller footprint.

Portion sizes and packaging can also affect the success of products.

“We’re seeing a lot of interest in the product if it’s in smaller sizes and we are looking into doing a refresh and change in packaging to better reflect the healthy aspects of the product,” says Brown.



During morning traffic, convenience stores can pair healthy snacks with coffee as an opportunity to drive incremental sales, says Asad Amin, head of syndicated solutions, Ispos. However, he notes that the afternoon hours bring the largest daypart for snack sales.

“The needs throughout the day are different and there continues to be a blurring of the lines between meals and snacks,” says Amin. “Mini-mealing is a common factor for those skipping larger meals that also leads to grazing throughout the day. We do observe the demand for healthy and nutritious snack options has increased when compared to 2020, driven by the afternoon and evening occasions.”

The healthy snack market is driven by younger cohorts who are generally more conscientious of what they consume, with less processed products and generally sweeter snacks tending to skew towards healthier fare, says Amin.

>>



Convenience store customers are no longer exclusively looking for just the bite size snack, particularly when they are looking for a healthy snack, says Michael Cronin, executive director, strategy and partnerships, The Great Canadian Meat Company.

“That’s why we also make available 75g or 80g snack/meal replacement options as well as the 80g pepperoni and cheese option that is made with real cheese,” says Cronin. “Customers looking for a healthier-for-you snack are not likely to be looking for an edible oil product masquerading as cheese.”

Consumers are interested in products that are high in protein, says Cronin.

“It comes down to protein,” he says. “Great Canadian Meat Company snacks continue to pack in less carbohydrates or fillers and more protein per bite. High carbohydrate snacks continue to decline in popularity as many consumers look for healthier and more functional snacking options. As consumers evolve and become smarter about their snacking choices, it’s important that your customers see those healthier-for-you options front and centre in your store. Having these items at the front of the store, or at least in high traffic, high visibility areas, also tends to drive repeat business as many consumers have expressed that they will stop going to specific retailers that don’t offer better-for-you options.”



Effective product placement holds paramount significance for retailers engaged in the merchandising of healthy snacks, says Samuel Tenenbaum, key account manager, KIND Canada.

“Within the realm of convenience, where consumers are typically individuals leading busy lives, navigating errands and commuting to and from work, prioritizing convenience is imperative,” says Tenenbaum. “To cater to these dynamic consumer needs, it is essential to strategically position healthy snacks alongside conventional snacking categories such as confectionery and salty snacks. This deliberate placement offers consumers a spectrum of options, empowering them to choose the type of snack that aligns with their preferences and sustains them throughout their hectic day. The implementation of this strategic approach has yielded remarkable results for our retailers, underscoring the efficacy of this methodology in enhancing choice and satisfaction.”

Consumers are looking for real ingredients and a variety of functional benefits, says Tenenbaum, adding that KIND Canada recently launched Dipped Clusters chocolate covered nut clusters, pairing wholesome ingredients with decadence to deliver a healthy and tasty snack.

“Snacking has changed considerably over the years as the evolution of the snacking industry is intricately linked to consumer demands,” says Tenenbaum. “We are now in the information age where in five seconds or less you can obtain comprehensive details about a snack, including specifics about ingredients and the manufacturer of the snack, as well as reviews from other like-minded consumers.”

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Creating a Great Carwash Site

There are endless decisions to be made when creating your carwash, from the type and style of equipment to the services you will offer and the type of building that will provide dual duties in housing your equipment and relaying your brand to the public. As important as each of these is, there is a decision of paramount importance that will affect the daily operations and performance of your carwash business each and every day. The process includes not only selecting your site location but also how the site is configured to provide the most efficiency in the course of business.

This is known as your site layout, and it can very well determine the success or failure of any carwash location. Even the best site location can be hampered by a poor site layout, making it less effective. You must think of your carwash site as a pump that flows without obstruction so that the volume will be the most it can be. This path must be designed to bring the client in off the street with clarity and speed and continue moving the client through the various stages of the sale from the entry point to the pay point to the tunnel services.

Just as important as the entrance is the exit from off the site, which must be efficient as well. Your aim is to move clients

quickly and efficiently from entrance to exit. It is your job as the owner to attract the client to your property with easy access and move them along to the exit with speed and efficiency, and in that formula of entering and exiting your property, you secure a profitable transaction. This may sound simple but many carwashes are built with the site layout as an afterthought and thereby never achieve the ultimate success possible.

Keep in mind that you will employ a civil engineer in the process of providing documents for permitting. This civil engineer will do a layout based only on what the locality will require per code. Most civil engineers will only do one or two carwashes during their professional work. It is best to have an expert in the carwash field provide a base layout that the civil engineer can then take and place into the code-required documents. The modern retailer strengthens their professional position and establishes their expert status by employing and applying a modern, clean, detailed design aesthetic to the retailer's building, operations and site layout.

The modern car wash operator would benefit by mimicking the site design criteria of larger retail chain operations. These larger retailers have employed expensive

A SMALLER FOOTPRINT STYLE LAYOUT SO THERE MUST BE MORE CREATIVITY REGARDING THE BUILDING STYLE AS WELL AS OPTIMIZING THE VACUUM PARKING USING AN ANGLED DESIGN. >

firms to research and learn their clients' characteristics to determine the best practices for their site layouts. Utilizing some of these characteristics can greatly improve the unified design of their locations thereby increasing sales and client loyalty.

In the competitive landscape of carwash businesses, site design plays a pivotal role in creating a seamless and efficient experience for customers. For an express carwash location, the ability to facilitate easy entrance and exit not only ensures customer satisfaction but also contributes significantly to the overall success of the business. >>



◀ A CONVENTIONAL SHOTGUN STYLE LAYOUT WITH RIGHT ANGLE VACUUM PARKING. THIS IS A GENEROUS SITE AND HAS ROOM TO EXPAND THE LAYOUT TO THE VERY EDGES TAKING INTO ACCOUNT ALL THE USEABLE SPACE.

Achieving excellence in site design requires meticulous attention to various aspects, from traffic flow to aesthetics. Here are key considerations and strategies for creating an outstanding site design focused on optimizing entrance and exit points.

Strategic Location and Accessibility: The foundation of an excellent carwash site design lies in its location and accessibility. Selecting a site that is easily accessible and visible from main roads, with ample space for entrance and exit lanes, is fundamental. Proximity to high-traffic areas and clear visibility can attract potential customers and simplify their access to the carwash. The building design in terms of height is extremely useful in helping your visible perception from the road. Towers, extensions, as well as roof surround elements should be considered.

Carwash owners can create an environment that attracts and retains customers by optimizing entrance and exit points, prioritizing traffic flow, ensuring safety, and enhancing aesthetics.

As previously stated, think of your site as a giant pump that will bring clients onto your property and move them through the various stages of a profitable transaction. Prioritize the layout to ensure a smooth traffic flow from when customers enter the premises until they exit.

Remember, your marketing starts at the road, your client's first experience upon entering. Clear signage, designated lanes, and ample space for maneuvering vehicles implements a one-way traffic system that prevents congestion and minimizes the risk of accidents. Think again of large retailers and how they use unified design, colors, signage, etc., as each plays an important role. By utilizing a smart unified design, all site elements are considered. This includes the entrance into the carwash site as the entrance should be a smooth transition from the highway to the site. It should have well-designated sweeping curbs and corresponding eye-level entrance signage that "channels" the client into the main entrance,

leaving no obscure interpretation by the client. Several operators overlook curbing as it does add cost. However, the use of curbing establishes and reinforces the flow to the site.

The site needs to "auto-navigate" the client as much as possible. Also, utilizing visible, clear, simple, color-coordinated signage helps to keep traffic flowing once on site. This signage can be in posted signs and employing adhesive or painted directional arrows on the pavement. These all need to correspond and be uniform to prevent misinterpretation. Our research has shown that even adding an "ENTER" sign prior to the pay station area helps to alleviate potential slowdowns. The site signage should have a modern, clean font that is easily readable while navigating the site. The turning radius should be generous, with mainly left-hand turns to make the client more comfortable when negotiating the carwash entrance. All these items and elements help the client to feel more comfortable, giving them no reason not to enter the facility.

Well-Defined Entrance Structure: The entrance to an express carwash location should be visually striking and easily identifiable. Incorporate eye-catching signage, well-lit structures, and themed landscaping elements that guide customers toward the entrance. Implement a design that minimizes confusion and encourages a natural flow of incoming vehicles. Hardscaping is an excellent benefit to help direct the flow of the client and elevated hardscape also can be a good background for raised site line signage.

Streamlined Payment and Check-in Process: Efficient entrance design involves optimizing the payment and check-in process. Utilize technology such as RFID tags or mobile payment systems for seamless transactions. Designate clearly marked areas for customers to check in and receive any necessary instructions before entering the wash lanes. This is a critical area for the sales process and it should be carefully considered.

Enhanced Exit Services Experience: As crucial as the entrance, the exit area should be designed for convenience and safety. Provide ample space for vehicles to exit without hindrance. Install clear signage and indicators at the exit end of the tunnel guiding customers towards the exit while ensuring a smooth transition back onto the main road.

Operators must view their location and its ease of usability from their customer's point of view. Too many times we have seen the operator settle for decreased

vacuum parking space dimensions in order to squeeze a few more vacuums spaces onto the site. This can be a mistake as the customer's discomfort level of use of these decreased spaces can be cumulative over time causing a possible reason not to use the facility. Operators should never discount their clients' concerns regarding their comfort and ease of use on their sites.

Safety Measures and Customer Convenience: Safety should be paramount in the site design. Implement safety features like speed bumps, adequate lighting, and clear directional markers to ensure a secure environment for both customers and employees. Additionally, offer conveniences such as trash receptacles, vacuum stations, and amenities that enhance the overall customer experience.

Aesthetics and Branding: Create an inviting ambiance through thoughtful landscaping, appealing architecture, and cohesive branding elements. Think again of the big box retailer and how they use these elements with color and shapes to provide a unified design no matter which location the customer shops. These elements are all reproducible at different locations, allowing you to capture your client no matter where their shopping market is. Consistent branding throughout the site, including signage, color schemes, and logo placement, can enhance brand recognition and customer loyalty.

Adaptability and Future-Proofing: A well-designed carwash site should also consider future expansions or technological advancements. Ensure scalability and adaptability in the design to accommodate potential growth or the integration of new technologies that enhance efficiency and customer satisfaction.

In conclusion, the design of an express carwash site plays a pivotal role in shaping the customer experience. Carwash owners can create an environment that attracts and retains customers by optimizing entrance and exit points, prioritizing traffic flow, ensuring safety, and enhancing aesthetics. A meticulously designed site not only improves operational efficiency but also contributes to the overall success and reputation of the business in the competitive carwash industry. **■**

Timothy Hogue is the president and senior designer of Modernwash Buildings and Solutions, Inc. Modernwash designs and creates multiple prefabricated structures for the carwash and retail industry. They utilize a modern HSS frame system that features a proprietary hidden fastening system



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By Josh Hart

Carwash Door Trends

When people think about carwashes, doors are almost never the first thing that pops into people's minds. However, doors play a very important role in a successful carwash. They are literally the access point to your business.

Doors control traffic flow, provide security, keep chemicals in the bay, keep heat in the bay, block wind, let natural light into the bay, and enhance the appearance of your building.

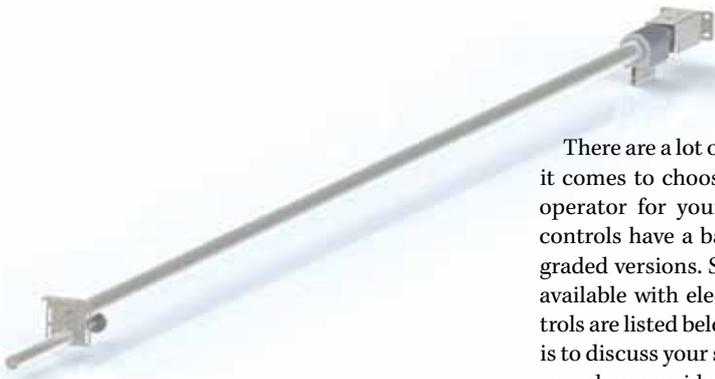
Airlift Doors has been manufacturing doors for car washing for 40 years so we have seen it all when it comes to trends and changes in the market. Going back 40 years if you had doors on your carwash, they most likely consisted of a steel insulated door with some type of electric opener. No products at this time were designed or engineered for the extreme wet conditions and constant opening and closing between cars.

To combat some of these issues, the air powered garage door opener was introduced. This style opener was designed to withstand the corrosive environment and operate at high daily cycles to accommodate high volumes of vehicles passing through the bay. Although this was a great improvement to the openers in a carwash, the doors the openers were operating were typically still the steel insulated model. Over time, the steel doors would absorb the water from the wash and would become heavy and unbalanced. On top of this, the hardware would corrode and break down and doors would require constant maintenance and repair or break down completely.

The introduction of the polycarbonate door virtually replaced the steel doors in a matter of a few years. At one point, just about every wash you saw had a polycarbonate door and an air powered opener. That was until the introduction of the vinyl style roll up door. Vinyl roll ups have been utilized in the carwash market for almost 15 years now. Vinyl roll ups became popular because they have less wear parts, operate at higher speeds, and can take the impact of a vehicle and reset in the tracks to continue operating after impact. The interesting part is that the vinyl roll up door is operated with an electric opener. The big difference is that the new electric openers are modified to withstand the corrosive environment of the carwash. Modifications such as stainless-steel components, coated internal windings, and waterproof housing are a few of the improvements that have been made to electric openers resulting in IP65 rating. The IP65 rating is given to motors that have been tested and passed the standards based on dust and moisture protection. Currently, about half of the carwashes in the industry have polycarbonate doors and the other half is the vinyl roll up style.

One of the newer trends in the carwash door industry is utilizing electric jackshaft openers on overhead doors. With the new modifications to the electric opener, it has become an equal alternative to air powered openers.





Constructed completely of stainless steel, the Magnalide Air Opener operates at speeds 3 times that of electric openers which makes it ideal for high cycle, corrosive environments.



E-MAXX Motor

There are a lot of different options when it comes to choosing the correct electric operator for your overhead door. Many controls have a basic model and then upgraded versions. Some of the key features available with electric operators and controls are listed below. My recommendation is to discuss your specific application with your door provider to determine what type of system is best for you.

Corrosion Resistance: This is one of the most important things to consider when choosing an electric operator for your carwash. Make sure to verify that the operator has an IP65 rating and that all your controls are Nema 4X rated waterproof enclosures.

Power Supply: This can vary, but most models require 110V power supply with a designated 20-amp breaker. Many controls convert the 110V power to 3 phase 240V to the motor through a variable frequency drive.

Opening and Closing Limits: Some models have built in limit switches to determine open and close positions. These are easy to set and can also be used to monitor door position and act as a floor cut off so the door will not open if the safety eyes are blocked when the door is in the closed position. Other control models offer electronic limits. This allows you to set the limits from the open and close buttons without using the internal limit switches. Some models of controls also have a programmed adjustable cushion built in where the speed will be reduced prior to final open and close positions.

Controlling The Doors: Many carwash doors are controlled entirely through the carwash equipment. Signals from the equipment at various stages of the wash process let the door know when to open and when to close. You should consult your carwash provider to determine what the carwash is capable of and then determine what you need your door controller to do. Many people use closing timers in the door controller to close the door after the vehicle has passed through the safety eyes. Some door controllers have this as a standard feature and with others it is optional. Temperature control options are another option with door controls. Using temperature probes, the controller can hold the door open when the external temperatures rise above a designated level. The doors will then automatically close and operate normally if the temperatures drop below the designated level. Time of day is another feature with some door

controllers. Simple programming can activate your doors at a specific time in the morning and shut the door off at night if you are not a 24/7 operation.

Emergency Open: All overhead doors are balanced with either torsion springs or a Strapeze Counterbalance System. My recommendation is to make sure your electric opener has a quick release system in place to disengage the motor from the shaft allowing you to manually operate the door. One example of this is a pull cord release on the motor. If someone were to become trapped in your bay for any reason, the customer could easily pull the cord on the motor to disengage it and then manually open the door to exit the bay safely. Another option to provide an emergency exit option is to install a battery backup system tied into the door controller. This type of system has reserve power to operate the door temporarily in case of power failure.

Remote Monitoring: Newer style door operators and controls have capabilities to monitor your doors remotely from a computer, phone, or tablet, or any internet connected device. There are a lot of different variables to consider with this type of system and you will want to discuss with your carwash equipment provider as well as many carwash controllers provide this option as well. With this type of control option, you can monitor door position, bay temperatures, safety eye communication, and general error codes. Self Diagnostics: Newer controls have self diagnostic capabilities. They are constantly monitoring the performance of the operator and will diagnose and display any errors on the screen. These touch screens allow you to change control settings on the screen without accessing the internal controls.

In summary, whether you are using a polycarbonate overhead door or a vinyl style roll up door, there have been a lot of advancements in the operator and control options associated with carwash doors. Talk with your door supplier or the manufacturer of the product to customize a control package that best fits your wash application. 

Josh Hart has been with Airlift Doors, Inc. for 23 years. He has held positions in production, service and installation, and sales. He spent the majority of his career with Airlift in sales prior to taking over as company president in 2014.

By Charlotte O'Connor

Membership Matters

There are many reasons to have and sometimes not to have a membership subscription at your carwash.



I recently threw a question out there to the public through a Facebook group called Talk Car Wash, and I am baffled by some of the feedback I received. The question was: “Why do you choose NOT to have a membership at your carwash?” I received quite a few interesting comments that I would like to share. Some seem to think that membership will only work well at a high-volume carwash. There is certainly some debate about that.

One comment was: Small town, a small market with no competition...

In my opinion, memberships are a numbers game; high volume overcomes and outweighs frequent washers, which makes offering unlimited work and high volume the secret sauce of unlimited.

However, if the potential for unlimited membership sales isn't large enough to get you there, it only cannibalizes your current pool of frequent washers; it's a margin killer.

Rebuttal: High volume is attained by offering membership. High volume is not the secret sauce to membership. The 50,000 yearly volume sites easily have the potential for 3000+ members. Adding 3000 monthly members will add 90,000 more annual washes, making this example a high-volume wash.

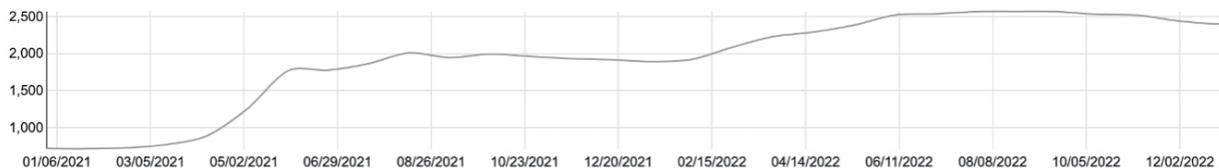
I tend to agree with the rebuttal.

Not every frequent washer is frequent. There are times that they can't make it, whether it's going on vacation, tightening their belt, or just being too busy to get their car washed. Also, not to mention the weather patterns. The frequent washer will end up being more loyal if you offer them a reasonable unlimited package. Like I always say, it's just too cheap not to have, even if you have to miss a month. Typically, most memberships are that way. The whole idea of membership is to reel you in and keep you so that you can count on that monthly revenue. Membership draws in more unexpected customers if priced right. Pricing will vary depending on where you live, but generally, it is priced at a ratio of one and a half or two carwashes.

So, if your basic wash is \$10, a good monthly rate would be \$15.99 or \$19.99 monthly.

One thing with the carwash industry and in most areas of the country is that washing cars is seasonal. I have been selling memberships at carwashes for over five years and I see the highs and the lows throughout the seasons. A lot of people cancel their membership in the winter because they say they don't drive their car as much, which I find to be crazy because the winter should be when you get the most

Your attendants, who are your greeters and front person, sell memberships. This is a critical piece to membership growth at your carwash.



Grew 239.1% from 719 to 2,438 members

Gaging your growth and looking at your return on the dashboard, the chart below says it all. This was a screenshot of January 1st, 2021, to January 22nd, 2023. With loyalty and dedication as your goals, your chart will look something like this.

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14	1	0.0%
13	1	0.0%
12	2	0.1%
11	1	0.0%
10	5	0.2%
9	12	0.5%
8	12	0.5%
7	27	1.1%
6	32	1.3%
5	74	3.1%
4	122	5.0%
3	208	8.6%
2	441	18.2%
1	761	31.4%
0	819	33.8%

As far as usage goes, this is even more surprising. This chart shows you a 30-day cycle of membership usage.

As you can see 819 members did not get to the wash that month and very few came often. In this particular 30-day outlook, the usage is 2.5 times.

value out of your membership. Then, when the weather gets better, people cancel because they can wash their vehicles when it's nice out. This would be called your churn; these members will come and go seasonally.

As far as your retention goes, this is where you will have your employees collect and act on member feedback. If a member says it's getting too expensive, try to get them to be in a less expensive package. If they say I'm not happy with the wash quality, find out exactly what that is and make it right for them.

Personally, I have built such a rapport with our members and regular washers. At times, when a member cancels their membership, I can get some feedback from them and potentially get them back on the platform. Knowing how much money they spent without having that membership is vital information. You must be able to spit quick factual numbers out to the consumers of how much they spent without the membership. It's really a numbers game.

One thing that's also good from a marketing standpoint is to offer multi-vehicle discounts. Most people's households have more than one vehicle, and putting them all into one account with a discount can be a significant draw and entice more users. Most carwashes offer a 20 per cent discount.

This leads me to the next important thing: Your attendants, who are your greeters and front person, sell memberships. This is a critical piece to membership growth at your carwash. I know some of you might be saying that you have a carwash with no attendants. You can do a couple of things about that: Create significant signage around the wash or hire somebody on your busiest days to chat with customers and hand out information. I know this works because I've done it. Also, when you find good greeters, reward them because they will be your bread and butter for your

membership growth. Training your attendants properly and providing them with the perfect pitch to sell more memberships is very important. Generally, a rule of thumb is to have a daily 10 per cent capture rate.

With one particular carwash I work for, in December 2022, we washed more cars and had less income than in December 2023. So, on December 23, we washed fewer cars and generated more revenue due to membership.

Lastly, another important factor when it comes to membership, is managing the memberships. Whether you do it yourself or hire a company, the best part is being able to negotiate or trying to convince the member to hang in there by offering a less expensive package. Depending on how many members you have and if you have anything less than 8,000, it is very manageable on your own, but, if you don't want the extra work, there are plenty of companies out there like EverWash, Retention Express or Rinsed, to manage it for you. For a small fee, these companies will be your best negotiators to retain members.

Charlotte O'Connor is the membership sales manager for Town Wash Holdings, LLC. She has a strong hospitality background, specializing in sales and customer service. Charlotte grew up working in family-owned restaurants with all facets of the business and brought that energy to the carwash industry, focusing on membership sales. She worked closely with the EverWash App platform and continues working with other carwash industry membership platforms. She trains the employees to learn the perfect pitch and to enroll new memberships at the highest pace possible. She can be reached at co@townwashholdings.com.



Laugh Your Way to Savings: How Comedy Can Slash Your 2024 Social Media Marketing Bill

By Mel Ohlinger

So, picture this: You're diving headfirst into the lukewarm (and strangely fishy) waters of social media marketing for your carwash business.



You know you've got to do it because everyone says so, but you find yourself spending more time in your carwash's equipment room than you ever thought possible. You start inventing reasons to stay away from your computer, like pretending to inspect chemical lines and nodding knowingly as if you're conducting top-secret experiments. And guess what? I'm not just imagining this. I've actually witnessed your escapades through your computer's webcam. Yep, I've also tapped into your CCTV system, and I've caught you pacing back and forth outside your building. You're so engrossed that you haven't even noticed the dastardly villain in the self-serve bay trying to clean an enigmatic, gooey substance from his pickup truck. Stressful, right?

But hold on, it doesn't have to be this way! Instead of agonizing over a blank Canva canvas and pondering how to make your "first month free" promotion for the unlimited plan shine brighter than the carwash down the street—stop! Take a deep breath. Recognize that you'll never create graphics as impressive as the owner's 12-year-old kid at the carwash nearby. Pivot slightly. Remember that hilarious

joke your friend told you last week (the one you can't repeat out loud)? Well, clean it up a bit and use it! Remember how funny it was? I do.

As the internet ages, and the social media landscape evolves and/or de-evolves, and entire well-established social media platforms kill their existing, iconic brand in favor of a single letter, it's hard to stay in the know.

Most of us hate being bombarded with sales pitches, but guess what? We're bombarded all day long. We can spot a salesy pitch from a mile away, and so can your current (and future) social media followers. Yet, many businesses still stick to the same old stuff, overly formal, and pushy tone that you'd expect from a late-night furniture store commercial. But here's the thing: Brands that put entertainment first are winning on social media. And considering that every aspect of the interface is screaming for your fleeting attention (which usually lasts mere seconds), humor is the secret sauce. It disarms, it engages, and it makes your carwash business seem approachable. Most importantly, it removes that "I'm being sold to" feeling—well, at least to a certain extent.

Directly engaging with customers through online channels is still kind of new. Back when businesses first dipped their toes into the social media pool in the early 2010s, their posts were dripping with corporate stiffness and simplicity, or they were basically copies of their print and TV ads. But there was one trailblazer – Denny’s, the American breakfast behemoth.

Denny’s did something different; they didn’t try to sanitize or ignore the internet’s wild weirdness and “culture.” They embraced it. Their Tumblr page was an explosion of bacon jokes and neon depictions of massive breakfasts, all riding the lightning-fast trends and memes erupting from the internet’s weirdest corners. Other brands followed suit, turning Facebook and Twitter into platforms of entertainment, competing for your attention in ways that felt relatable. You were being advertised to, but it was...fun?

How does this relate to your quest to build a social media following for your carwash? By understanding that the rules beyond the platform’s hard and fast rules (think terms and conditions) can be bent and stretched. You don’t have to create polished Canva animations to promote your carwash business. You do, however, have an obligation to use that wacky idea you had last week that made you chuckle.

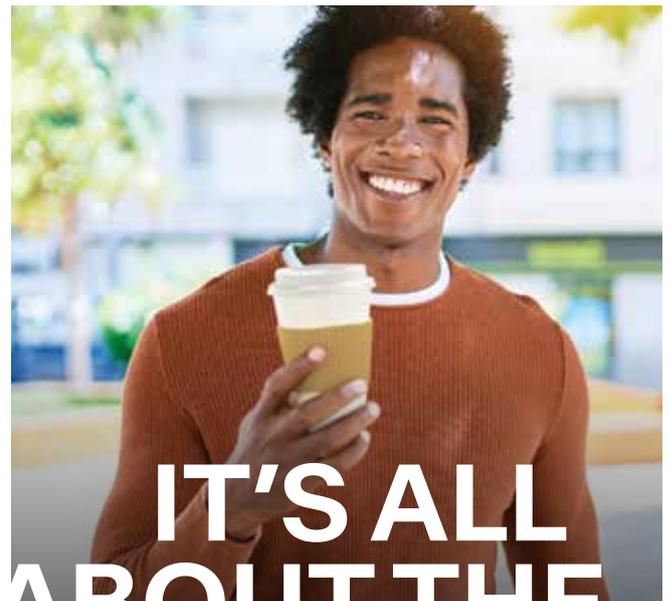
Social media users are sharp cookies. The moment they sniff out an ad, they put up their shields. Fortunately, humour is the universal language that breezes through those defenses, making messages easier to swallow and understand. Humour also

leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling in its wake. By focusing on entertaining your social media audience first, you ensure they won’t ignore you and are more likely to think of your carwash when they’re ready for a scrub.

Social media remains the most cost-effective advertising tool currently available. Moreover, humour in social media marketing actually reduces advertising costs. As each organic view, share, or like accumulates, the cost to advertise decreases. As behavioral scientist Jennifer Aaker highlights in her Ted Talk: “Humor sells. If you add a touch of light humor to a sales pitch, people are willing to pay up to 20 per cent more.” In the carwash world, this translates to repeat customers and membership purchases.

Peter McGraw, the head honcho at the Humor Research Lab and author of the Humor Code, says humour lives in the sweet spot between harmlessness and violation. If something is completely harmless, it’s probably not funny. And if it violates social norms or sensibilities, it’s definitely not funny. For the carwash industry, which often gets labeled as mundane despite innovations like LED lighting and aromatic trifoam, humour is the >>

Fortunately, humour is the universal language that breezes through those defenses, making messages easier to swallow and understand. Humour also leaves a warm, fuzzy feeling in its wake.



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So, if you're promoting your vacuums, you can absolutely talk about how they "suck." But you can also use this as an opportunity to create a new word. Perhaps your carwash vacuums are 'suck'-cessful? Or maybe your carwash membership has free vacuums so your member's suck in all the savings? True, not funny, but the cheese factor will get stuck in your customers head and be easier to recall the next time they think they need to vacuum their car.

Remember, things that are a little funny might get noticed, but truly hilarious content gets etched into our brains forever. Think about those funny quotes from TV shows, movies, TikToks, and ads that we still reference decades later. If you can create that kind of super funny content, your brand name, image, and message will stick in the minds of social media users for eternity. This is the essence of using comedy in content marketing, and it pays dividends without needing a massive marketing department or a colossal mailing list. Funny content also generates organic reach, which is a godsend for small businesses that can't splurge on Facebook's paid post promotions. When you post something

funny, your followers are more likely to engage by liking, commenting, or sharing. They essentially become your unpaid brand ambassadors, spreading your message far and wide without costing you a fortune. But, whatever you do, steer clear of harmful stereotypes and culturally insensitive jokes. Avoid poking fun at race, religion, creed, or gender—unless your goal is to go viral with a worldwide apology. Stick to the kindness lane. Instead, tackle universally relatable topics, like the skyrocketing cost of living. Suggest that instead of an extravagant vacation, people could visit your carwash for an affordable alternative to Disneyland.

Humour humanizes your social media presence and makes your business feel safer in real life. The digital bond creates a real bond and helps you build relationships, foster brand loyalty, and handle customer service issues with a friendly touch. When customers have questions or complaints, they want to interact with real people, not automated responses or canned messages. Using light-hearted humour in your social media responses shows users that you care about their concerns and that you're not just a faceless corporate entity.

Now, humour may not be a miracle cure, but it's a potent tool in your social media toolbox that can help you bring in the right kind of customer. While a joke won't help a customer chill out from their swirl marks claim, a baseline of humour might prevent a cruel customer from even coming into your wash in the first place. When used wisely, humour will captivate your audience, spur action, and save you big bucks on marketing. So, go ahead, embrace your quirks as comedic gold, and have fun poking fun. **■**

Mel Ohlinger serves as the CEO of OhmCo, a carwash marketing agency based in Neenah, Wisconsin, USA. Her background includes a specialization in communications and cryptology during her tenure in the United States Navy, where she excelled as a CTR/Morse Code specialist. She is not only the CEO but also the founder of OhmCo, previously known as Rule of Design, Inc. Her expertise in design spans from the era before desktop publishing to the modern digital landscape. Website: <https://www.carwash-marketing.com/>

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A Holistic Approach Can Help Optimize Fueling-Site Design and Operation

By Ed Kammerer

THIS ARTICLE THE FIRST IN A THREE-PART SERIES— WILL TAKE A LOOK AT THE TYPICAL “HEALTH” SITUATION AT MANY RETAIL-FUELING SITES AND THEN OFFER SUGGESTIONS ON HOW A HOLISTIC APPROACH TO OUTFITTING AND OPERATING THE BUSINESS CAN LEAD TO IMPROVED CUSTOMER LOYALTY AND PROFITS.

It was in the mid-1970s, or nearly 50 years ago – though the idea had been developed as far back as the days of Socrates – that the concept of “holistic medicine” (or “health” or “healing” or “therapy”) began to gain mainstream attention, use and popularity. Basically, holistic medicine is a form of care that attempts to simultaneously optimize the health and performance of a person’s body, mind, spirit and emotions. Therefore, the foundational tenet of holistic medicine is based on the notion that a person can only achieve optimum health by living a life that is in the proper balance.

Which – because of course it would – brings us to a retail-fueling operation. Much like a human being, a retail-fueling operation is made up of many different parts, all of which must work in perfect harmony if the whole is to experience its optimum performance level. So, if one part isn’t functioning properly, then all of the other parts will be affected, meaning that any imbalances will have the potential to adversely affect ultimate performance from both a customer-satisfying and bottom-line financial perspective.

This article – the first in a three-part

series – will take a look at the typical “health” situation at many retail-fueling sites and then offer suggestions on how a holistic approach to outfitting and operating the business can lead to improved customer loyalty and profits.

Survey Says...!

The first step in an undertaking such as this is to perform a bit of, as they say in the sports world, “self-scouting.” This involves casting a critical eye at the fuel-dispensing and storage systems and equipment at the site and assessing the health and performance of each component. When the site was first built, every piece may have been shiny and new, but over the years different pieces of equipment age at different rates, so while the tank sumps, for example, may be 10 years old, the shear valves may only be three.

The question then becomes is the newer equipment able to function harmoniously and reliably with the older equipment? Compiling answers to those types of questions will help give a better look at the overall health of the operation. It will also help determine where the weak links in the system are, knowing that the fueling

OPW has developed the **Pre-Plumbed DSE Dispenser Sump**, which is the newest addition to its E-Series Containment Sump family. Like all members of the E-Series sump family, the Pre-Plumbed DSE sump is constructed of fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP) using the next-generation Sheet-Molded Compound (SMC) manufacturing process. The SMC process produces consistently thick and smooth walls, inside and out, that enable entry fittings to bond and resist deflection more effectively, helping to create a watertight seal that can better prevent leaks.



system is only as strong as that weakest link.

Component age is also a variable to strongly consider. Most people don't drive a 20-year-old car, and if they do, they must be cognizant of the fact that breakdowns may occur more frequently and OK with the idea that increased repair costs will be a significant part of the cost-benefit analysis behind driving a two-decade-old vehicle. The same theory applies for the operators of retail-fueling sites.

As mentioned, a healthy mind is a critical component in a holistically healthy body. The same, again, is true for the fuel retailer. The main job of fuel retailers is selling the "big four:" motor fuel, vehicle washes, snacks and beer. That's where the majority of their daily attention should be, not wasting time praying to the "fuel-island gods" that water intrusion or fuel leaks don't occur. Constantly focusing on maintaining and repairing aging, inefficient or ill-performing equipment takes focus away from the "big four" in addition to the time and money it takes to service aging or replace irreparable equipment.

There are also aesthetic considerations to take into account. A retail-fueling business that suffers from chronic "bag on nozzle" syndrome that leaves fueling islands inaccessible or constantly has repair vehicles dotting the lot will be less appealing to drivers, even (eventually) those loyal ones that have made your site their preferred refueling location.

Closing The Loop

No matter the outcome of the personalized site survey, we recommend a holistic approach to outfitting a fuel-dispensing and storage system. Specifically, this requires standardizing on construction specifications and partnering with a dedicated equipment manufacturer, one who is a proven innovator with a history of field-tested fueling-system enhancements that allow the operator to focus on the money-making aspects of the operation. This also takes the guesswork out of any compliance, assembly, installation, maintenance and service questions that may arise, which will also help dramatically reduce total cost of ownership.

Let's face it, though, finding a reliable and trustworthy one-stop source for your fueling-system equipment can be daunting. There are many different manufacturers and suppliers to choose from, all with their own particular product lines, but many haven't been designed to work seamlessly with each other. That creates compatibility concerns that can negatively affect the

system's overall performance and reliability.

One company that has taken a holistic approach in designing its' fueling-system equipment and components is OPW Retailing Fueling, Smithfield, NC, USA. This holistic approach is epitomized by the patented FlexWorks Loop System. The loop system is the industry's first "plug-and-play" fueling system that consists of underground fuel-delivery and containment components, all of which are manufactured and pre-assembled at OPW's factory before being shipped to the retail-fueling site. The loop system's plug-and-play nature optimizes installation from the dispenser sump back to the tank sump because it requires minimal on-site sub-assembly work. This minimizes downtime and shortens the construction window, whether the business is a brand-new build or undergoing a knockdown rebuild.

The loop system – which is essentially failsafe – uses a combination of piping and connections; dispenser and tank containment sumps; entry fittings; and emergency shear valves to create a streamlined installation process. The loop system features double-wall coaxial piping that is contained within a larger access pipe, which allows a pipe section to be removed and replaced without needing to break concrete. All of the piping connections and fittings are located in containment sumps that are easily accessible from forecourt level, which simplifies inspection, testing, repair and replacement.

The pre-fabricated and assembled dispenser sumps are shallow and have angled sidewalls that will not deform or crack under burial loads. All piping penetrations are sealed with rigid (REF) or hybrid (HEF) entry boots that are compatible with long-term exposure to fuel and the environment, as well as ground forces and movement. The entry fittings are installed and tested at the factory, ensuring that they are in the exact location for proper connection to the dispenser's piping inlets.

All piping enters and exits the shallow dispenser sumps at a 45-degree angle instead of horizontally, which makes them easier to install and connect near the top of the sump. The ends of the coaxial piping are fitted with double-wall swivel couplings or barbed NPT fittings that connect directly to shear valves that have angled connection ports. This method of coupling and connection eliminates the need for rubber interstitial test boots, additional pipe fittings and field-fabricated steel riser pipes or flex connectors that are required for use with deep-lying dispenser sumps.

OPW has also introduced the HiFlo >>

Loop System, which takes the components from the original loop system and “supersizes” them so they are able to produce the increased flow rates that are required to realize expedient high-volume fueling of long-haul trucks at truck stops and larger hybrid convenience-store locations. While it is able to offer higher dispensing rates, the HiFlo Loop System possesses all of the features and benefits of the original Loop System, most notably pre-fabricated, factory-assembled components that drastically reduced the amount of field labor and time that are required to install it, while simultaneously lowering the risk that installation errors will occur.

For a more targeted holistic approach to fueling-system component construction, OPW has developed the Pre-Plumbed DSE Dispenser Sump, which is the newest addition to its E-Series Containment Sump family. Like all members of the E-Series sump family, the Pre-Plumbed DSE sump is constructed of fiber-reinforced plastic (FRP) using the next-generation Sheet-Molded Compound (SMC) manufacturing process. The SMC process produces

consistently thick and smooth walls, inside and out, that enable entry fittings to bond and resist deflection more effectively, helping to create a watertight seal that can better prevent leaks.

In addition to boasting all of the features of the SMC-manufacturing process, the Pre-Plumbed DSE sump is fitted with factory-assembled and tested fittings, which are installed in a controlled environment at the factory by a trained installer. This helps eliminate field-installation errors by ensuring that all entry points are located in the correct configuration, allowing for quick and easy connection to the dispenser. That makes the Pre-Plumbed DSE sump ideal for use by operators who need to minimize construction time, reduce installation variability and reduce installation costs.

The Pre-Plumbed DSE sump is compatible with the Wayne Ovation and Gilbarco Encore dispenser models. It is shipped to the retail-fueling site with OPW 10 Plus Emergency Shut-Off Valve, dual-sided Rigid (REF) or Hybrid (HEF) Entry Fittings, flex connectors or NPT

rapid-riser pipe nipples, and secondary test kits and test jumpers, making it a holistic way to streamline that installation process while helping reduce the risk of installation errors occurring.

Conclusion

If implemented properly, a holistic approach to health care can have many benefits, and the same can be said for adopting a similar approach to outfitting a retail-fueling site. Identifying and partnering with a trusted and respected fueling-system manufacturer and provider is the first step in building a holistic system – one that will have long-term operational and bottom-line benefits. In future articles, we will take a closer look at ways that this holistic strategy can aid fuel retailers who are looking to upgrade existing sites or build new ones. **■**

Ed Kammerer is the senior director, 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 opwglobal.com.

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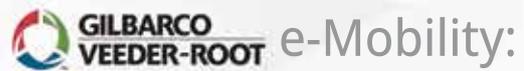
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Women in CARWASH



9th BI-ANNUAL CONFERENCE

By Gretchen Matthews



By Gretchen Matthews

Another Opportunity to Grow and Connect – The 9th Women in Carwash Conference

Attendees from nearly 40 companies came to the Ocean B Resort in Ft. Lauderdale, FL, from across the U.S. and Canada to engage for two and a half days in meaningful discussions and workshops that enriched their minds, hearts, and spirits.

On January 15, Sonny's hosted Women in Carwash for a first-time onsite visit to its CarWash College in Tamarac. The large group met Sonny's instructors, toured the tunnel, and saw the state-of-the-art equipment labs and learning environments. Sonny's teaches 1,000 students annually in maintenance, repair, and management.

Participants returned to the Ocean B Resort for opening night cocktails and dinner, followed by the keynote. In her address, "The Power of My Perception," Katie Balash, president and CEO of Vaughan Industries, Inc. shared that many years of experience have taught her when to invest time and energy in professional endeavors, and when to step back. She encouraged each woman to recognize and honor her own talents and power.

On day two, some attendees met for the first of two morning yoga sessions led by Amy Boudreau, aka The Yoga Cop, a Toronto police officer who conducts trainings throughout North America on health and wellness techniques to lessen stress in the workplace. Later, Boudreau also hosted

the "Carwash Safety" workshop with tips for crime prevention and self-protection. Her focus, combined with Balash's remarks on perspective, dovetailed nicely to create an emerging theme for the conference over the next two days: Self-care.

Connie Lee-Bennett, a life coach with Meraki Training Academy, picked up the unplanned theme. She centered her remarks in the first general session around the concept of vulnerability, and asked participants to consider the limiting beliefs they carry that are holding them back. In the second general session, Lisa Romaniuk, a psychologist in private practice, spoke on "Why You Should Make You and Your Wellness a First Priority." She shared personal experiences of having overextended herself for what seemed like good reasons, only to become very ill. Now fully recuperated, she emphasizes the need for personal care. She taught attendees to rate their own health in six core areas: Stress management, physical wellness, mental and emotional wellness, spiritual wellness, relationship wellness, and priorities.

Small-group workshops also kept participants fully engaged. Diane Stafford of UpTalent Solutions returned to Women in Carwash to teach Predictive and Emotional Intelligence, methods of using workforce data to optimize efficiency by uncovering the unique strengths of each team member. Julie Graff of DRB also returned to share insights on beating the social media algorithms. Jessica Lodispoto a partner in both Car Wash King and Car Wash Kingdom taught attendees how to read and understand financial statements and spreadsheets. Herb Alston of Canyon Pacific Financial Services provided an overview



of what's needed to purchase a carwash. Kelsey Roberts of Welcome Mat spoke on creating community engagement through strategic marketing strategies and communication technologies. Martina Hopkins from PayChex leads a team of more than 100 human resources professionals; her seminar focused on the ever-important topic – handling sexual harassment. Another human resources speaker, Mary Adams from the Employee Relations Group, covered hiring. And finally, I taught a workshop on specialized techniques for business writing.

As is now tradition, participants dressed in their 70s and 80s gear and enjoyed a dance party on the second night of the conference. Conversation flowed freely; it seemed that just 24 hours into the event, there were no strangers in the room. Or, as Penny Clarke from Mister Auto Wash said,

"I'M THE ONLY WOMAN IN MY ORGANIZATION AND ALTHOUGH I CAME ALONE, I [DIDN'T] FEEL ALONE. EVERYONE IS SO WELCOMING, AND THE WORKSHOPS ARE FABULOUS."

Others shared similar praise:

"YOU FEEL SUPPORT AND LOVE AND EVERYTHING YOU NEED TO GO TO THE NEXT LEVEL."

Ciara Gonzalez, Big Dan's Car Wash

"IF YOU HAVEN'T ALREADY BEEN, HERE'S WHAT I HAVE TO SAY YOU SHOULD ALREADY BE HERE! IT'S A FABULOUS EVENT WHERE YOU CAN CONNECT WITH OTHER LIKE-MINDED WOMEN IN THE INDUSTRY AND IT REALLY FEELS EMPOWERING TO BE SURROUNDED BY THESE WOMEN, AND IT'S FABULOUS!"

Carly Klein, El Car Wash

"I'M LEAVING THE WOMEN IN CARWASH CONFERENCE WITH MORE KNOWLEDGE, CONTACTS, CONNECTIONS, CONFIDENCE, AND THE DESIRE TO GROW MORE IN THE CARWASH INDUSTRY."

Amy Olson, WashCard

The conference finale was lunch and an executive panel moderated by Katie Balash and featuring four industry leaders with different backgrounds and experiences:

Megan Davis, maintenance director for three Ultra Clean sites; Kelly Maria, vice president of operations for Mark VII Equipment; Kati Pierce, president and chief revenue officer of Sonny's; and Hannah Skaanland, CEO of Elephant Car Wash. Their insights and stories motivated the group to keep striving to meet the goals they'd set for themselves.

As attendees gathered up their suitcases and headed for the airport, they snapped

pics and bid fond farewells "until next time!" – the 10th conference at the Hilton Salt Lake City Centre, June 16-18. At Women in Carwash, there are no goodbyes, just more opportunities for growth and connection. **C**

Gretchen Matthews is a writer, Women in Carwash conference speaker, and the editor-in-chief of L.E.A.R.N.— the Women in Carwash newsletter. Contact her at gmatthews@chesapeakequill.com.

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By Meline Beach

Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash – A Story of Revitalization and Growth

Nestled in the heart of Welland, Ontario, Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash stands as a beacon of transformation. Originally built three decades ago, the carwash recently underwent a remarkable rejuvenation, driven by a vision to incorporate the latest innovations and technologies and reposition itself as a high-quality interior and exterior carwash company.

Upon acquiring the site several months ago, the owner recognized the need for a comprehensive overhaul. Outdated equipment, including the old-fashioned chain and roller system, no longer aligned with the owner's commitment to excellence. Thus began their quest to embrace cutting-edge solutions that would elevate the customer experience and propel its business into the modern era.

A key part of its transformation was the integration of state-of-the-art equipment from Tommy Car Wash Systems, a trusted partner known for its commitment to innovation. The installation of the Tommy dual belt conveyor and tunnel marked a significant milestone in its journey toward redefining the carwash experience. Designed to enhance efficiency and throughput, these systems offer a quantum leap from the conventional chain and roller setup, enabling the business to accommodate a higher volume of vehicles with unparalleled speed and precision.

"Tommy's revolutionary License Plate Reader (LPR) technology is the best in the industry," says Spencer Carter, installer/distributor, Carter Wash Systems, who managed the installation of the new equipment at Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash. Carter oversees numerous installations of carwash equipment across a wide network of businesses. "We've been able to seamlessly integrate it with the Tommy Transporter Dual Conveyor System. This cutting-edge solution streamlines the customer journey, facilitates transactions and ensures a seamless wash experience. With the ability to process over 150 cars per hour, our wash has set a new standard for efficiency and customer satisfaction."

Beyond hardware upgrades, Niagara

Soft Cloth Car Wash's commitment to technological innovation extends to every facet of its operation. From the advanced wash controller by Guardian Controls to the precision detergent delivery system from Tommy's, Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash leverages state-of-the-art solutions to optimize performance and minimize operational costs.

"This is the "brains" of a carwash and can control the whole operation from an iPad," says Michael Van Wieren, Tommy Car Wash Systems Equipment Sales. "Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash also installed Tommy's FloPro detergent delivery system to control all the chemicals, air controls and fine-tune what is necessary with just the turn of a switch. This helps the car wash operation stay as efficient as possible and offers peace of mind in ensuring they're getting the right mix to make sure cars are clean while keeping operational cost down."

The entrance module, which is a tall, stainless-steel tower at the beginning of the carwash, directs the customer to enter the wash and also states details of the service selected visually on a screen and audibly so the customer can see and hear instructions.

Everything has been upgraded – from blowers, brushes and stainless arches, representing a huge improvement in operations and a significant reduction in labour costs. The old wash had someone prepping the wash and loading every customer with the chain and roller.

In terms of environmental sustainability, Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash prides itself on using reclaimed water in its wash, along with fresh water.

"We clean the used water and reuse it on the pre-rinse when a car enters the wash

to help get some of the initial grime off,” says Carter. “Also, reclaimed water is used on the belt flush which keeps the conveyor clean and on the cars’ door handles and below. This serves as a dual purpose; it is good for the environment and good for cost savings.”

In terms of industry trends, Niagara Soft Cloth Car Wash offers a monthly subscription-based membership along with its pay-per-wash option through the Wash Club app. Paired with its License Plate Reader technology, the app offers unparalleled value and convenience to customers with seamless transactions each time.

With another site in Welland slated for integration into its operations, the company’s vision of establishing a comprehensive network of carwash facilities is well underway. 📍

Meline Beach is a Toronto-based communications practitioner and frequent contributor to Convenience and 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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Editor’s Note: WashTalk is a regular feature that highlights carwash businesses that have an interesting story to tell. It is not intended to promote any one business but rather to provide information on activities of businesses within the industry. If you know a carwash that has undergone an interesting transformation or project or has something special to share with our readers, please contact us at:

editor@convenienceandcarwash.com for consideration of being featured in an upcoming issue.



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What's New

Cold Brew Coffee blends premium flavours with inspiring innovation for a winning combination



Less than a year after its launch, Chapman's Super Premium Plus Cold Brew Coffee ice cream has been awarded Product of the Year. This prestigious award celebrates innovation and recognizes the best products on the market as voted by Canadian consumers.

Crafted from a unique blend of coffee beans, rich cream and fresh milk, the bold and smooth taste of the luxurious Cold Brew Coffee ice cream was created for true coffee aficionados. This Chapman's Super Premium Plus ice cream is made with real cold brew from Indigenous-owned Birch Bark Coffee Co. and comes in a popular 500mL size. Even sweeter is that a portion of the Super Premium Plus Cold Brew Coffee sales gets donated to clean drinking water initiatives for Indigenous homes across Canada.

"This Cold Brew Coffee ice cream is truly the best in class! Partnering with Birch Bark Coffee was a great experience, and we're proud that it is getting the recognition it deserves," says Ashley Chapman, chief operating officer of Chapman's Ice Cream.

Canadians agree that the world's only allergy-friendly super premium ice cream is worthy of the esteemed award. A

survey of 4,000 Kantar consumers voted Chapman's Cold Brew Coffee Ice Cream as the 2024 Product of the Year Canada in the Ice Cream category.

Product of the Year is the world's largest consumer-voted product innovation award. For over 35 years, its trusted red seal gives consumers a shortcut to the best new products in the market and rewards manufacturers for quality and innovation. Look for the familiar Product of the Year seal on top brands in consumer categories, including food and beverage, health and beauty, personal care, household products, pet supplies, pharmaceuticals, small appliances and electronics.

Chapman's launched their line of Super Premium Plus ice cream in the company's 50th year in business, 2023, and Chapman's Chief Operating Officer, Ashley Chapman, boldly declared that they wanted to compete for the title of 'Best Ice Cream in Canada.' Fast-forward less than 12 months and they did just that.

After a banner year in 2023, the iconic ice cream company is not slowing down, with Chapman teasing what's to come in 2024: "We are launching four new Super Premium Plus flavours, as well as several exciting new novelties. Look for them in stores beginning in March!"

Know Human Trafficking Campaign



Human trafficking is one of the most heinous crimes imaginable, *often described as modern-day slavery*. The victims, who are mostly women and children, are deprived of their normal lives and compelled to provide their labour or sexual services, through a variety of coercive practices all for the direct profit of their perpetrators. Exploitation often occurs through intimidation, force, sexual assault and threats of violence to themselves or their families.

There are two types of human trafficking: **Sex Trafficking** and **Labour Trafficking**. Children account for more than half of the victims of human trafficking. In fact, the average age that a young person becomes involved in sex trafficking is 12 years old.

- It is estimated that **1 in 6 missing children** are victims of sexual human trafficking. *Source: MissingKids.org*
- **Migrant workers are particularly vulnerable to Labour Trafficking** due to many factors, such as language barriers, working in isolated/remote areas, lack of access to services and support, and lack of access to accurate information about their rights. *Source: Public Safety Canada*

How You Can Help

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What's New



Flourish, the brand who is reimagining breakfast, is proud to unveil a refreshed look, new flavours to its Protein Pancake and Waffle Mix line-up and two brand new product innovations. Created to fuel the progress we want with high protein, low sugar foods that we love, Flourish is poised to continue providing delicious, nutritious breakfast options that inspire joy and support long-term success.

At its core, Flourish believes in helping individuals make lasting and positive changes by satisfying both their goals and their desire for a little joy along the way. The brand's breakfast options are designed to deliver excellent nutrition while tasting delicious, ensuring that every bite brings a smile to your face while supporting your journey towards a healthier lifestyle.

In partnership with design agency, PIGEON, Flourish's new look reflects its commitment to innovation while retaining a sense of joy and warmth. From the updated logo to the vibrant packaging designs, every element has been carefully crafted to embody Flourish's philosophy of balancing goals with enjoyment. The result is a fresh and modern aesthetic that resonates with both loyal customers and newcomers alike.

"After months of planning and creative collaboration, we are thrilled to reveal Flourish's revitalized visual identity," said Andrew Maida, founder, Flourish. "Our updated branding reflects our ever-evolving commitment to innovation while providing nutritious breakfast solutions that delight both taste buds and hearts."

"We wanted to create a brand that breaks through at shelf, injecting positivity into the packaging with a bold, modern design" added Sienna Skelton, design director, Pigeon Brands. "Recognizing the challenge of balancing joy with nutrition, we designed Flourish to reflect the positive feeling you have when you make healthy choices. The previous packaging delivered on the functional aspect of what the brand offered but we wanted to enhance the emotional benefit."

In addition to its striking new look, 2024 also brings innovation into the Flourish product line-up with both flavour

extensions to their whey and plant-based Protein Pancake and Waffle Mixes, and entries into new categories, like syrups and breakfast-on-the-go.

Today, Blueberry and Apple Cinnamon Whey-Based Mix and Blueberry Plant-Based Mix join Flourish's line-up of high-protein, low-sugar pancakes that are not only delicious but also packed with nutritious ingredients to fuel your day. This Spring, Flourish will introduce two brand new product innovations - Flourish Protein Mug Cakes and Sugar Free Maple Flavoured Syrup. The Flourish Protein Mug Cakes redefine the concept of guilt-free indulgence, blending the convenience of single-serve mug cakes with a low sugar, protein-packed (23g) breakfast that's ready in less than 2 minutes. Sugar Free Maple Flavoured Syrup, a lusciously sweet concoction that adds a touch of natural goodness to any dish, is crafted with premium maple flavour, sweetened with monk fruit juice concentrate and has zero sugars. It's the perfect accompaniment to pancakes, waffles, or even drizzled over a bowl of fresh fruit. With these innovations, Flourish continues to reimagine breakfast and inspire healthier choices without sacrificing flavour or enjoyment.

For more information visit www.flourish-pancakes.com.

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OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions Highlights Belanger insta-KLEEN Fleet Car Wash System at 2024 NADA Show

Northville, MI – OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions exhibited its industry-leading vehicle wash equipment at the recent National Automobile Dealers Association’s 2024 NADA Show, at the Las Vegas Convention Center in Las Vegas, NV.

With an eye on delivering the best vehicle wash solutions for the auto-dealer market, OPW VWS featured the insta-KLEEN Drive-Thru Fleet Car Wash System from Belanger at the show. Dubbed the “car a minute wash,” insta-KLEEN has been designed to be a severe-duty, drive-thru vehicle wash system that can meet the unique needs of automobile dealers and other businesses that employ a fleet of vehicles.

The insta-KLEEN system features a heavy-duty, aircraft-grade aluminum framework that houses minimal moving parts.

Instead, when motion is required, the system actuates the wash process through the use of automotive-rated bearings and lube-free pivot points that are built for reliable, maintenance-free operation and long service life. Additionally, unlike rollover systems that require the entire wash unit to sweep over each vehicle, the insta-KLEEN framework remains in place, allowing it to achieve the highest level of structural integrity.

What truly separated the insta-KLEEN from the competition, though, is its proven ability to produce a clean vehicle in 60 seconds or less. This not only fast tracks the wash process, but it also means that less water and electricity are needed to facilitate the process. Energy is also saved because the system doesn’t have to move over the vehicle, meaning it can require as little as four horsepower of electrical power per wash. In terms of water consumption, freshwater usage is minimal, especially if the wash is outfitted with a water-recovery system.

The insta-KLEEN XT has a vehicle clearance height of 114 inches (9.5 feet), which is 24 inches higher than the 90-inch vehicle clearance of the standard insta-KLEEN system. This extra clearance enables the insta-KLEEN XT to accommodate the taller “sprinter-style” delivery vans that are now a common sight on the nation’s roads.

To learn more about the complete range of vehicle wash equipment and payment systems offered by the companies of OPW Vehicle Wash Solutions, visit opwvws.com.



Jones Soda Expands New Food Service Division, Dot Foods Partnership to Canada; Adds North South Management

Food Service Operators Across Canada Can Now Carry Jones Soda on Their Menus

SEATTLE /CNW/Jones Soda Co. (CSE: JSDA, OTCQB: JSDA), the original craft soda known for its great taste, unconventional flavors, and iconic brand recently announced its partnership with Dot Foods Canada and North South Management.

The news dovetails with the craft soda icon’s recent launch of its first food service division in the United States, with market leaders Dot Foods, Green Nature Marketing and Ignite Brand Advisors as partners. The Canadian expansion of the new division continues Jones’ momentum in bringing its iconic taste and formulations into bars, restaurants, and other eating and drinking establishments, in addition to its strong legacy in retail grocery, convenience stores, and mass retailers. Loïc Tomei, managing director Canada will be leading the Canadian team.

“The Canadian expansion with partners Dot Foods and North South opens a new opportunity for food service operators, distributors, and the entire Canadian market to bring Jones to their customers,” said David Knight, CEO of Jones Soda. “Dot provides the opportunity for any distributor in Canada to order as little as one case at a time, opening the door to distributors of all sizes to carry Jones products.”

“We at North South Management are extremely excited about our new partnership with Jones Soda. Jones Soda is the true pioneer in the launch and building of the Canadian craft soda segment,” said Andrew Armstrong and Charles Perez, of North South Management. “We are privileged to be at the forefront of this development and look forward to working with Jones Soda for many years to come.”

“Jones Soda is an iconic Canadian brand, and Dot Foods Canada is thrilled to partner with a company that has such strong roots in the country as our first craft beverage launch,” said JB Harrington, director of business development with Dot. “Dot’s mission is to positively contribute to the success of our business partners, and we see so much potential to do just that with Jones Soda in the Canadian market. Dot’s newly opened distribution center in Ontario and soon-to-be expanded warehouse capacity in Alberta mean we’re able to provide nationwide distribution of Jones Soda’s products across all channels.”

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