

3 SECRETS TO BETTER MICRO MARKET SERVICE

Operators need more retail focused planning, dedicated drivers and high-end product considerations. **page 30**

2013 READERS CHOICE AWARDS

Micro markets, nutrition and coffee round out this year's Readers' Choice Award category winners. **page 26**

Products of the Year

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

— 2013 —

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April 2013

Strategies to Increase Your Profits



Expand business lines **page 38**

Merchandise a vending machine **page 14**

Survey customers **page 18**

Find revenue in telemetry data **page 22**

Build a better vending Website **page 34**

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EXCLUSIVE COLUMN

Joe On The Job with Rod Nester of Smith Vending
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APRIL 2013
VOLUME 55, NUMBER 3



Jennifer Skidmore, left, recently joined her parents Joel and Brenda at J&J Vending.

SUCCESS STORY: OPERATION PROFILE

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This California family vending operation has thrived for more than three decades and continues its success with the addition of the third generation, who added new business lines to drive growth of the Canteen franchise.

Products of the Year

**READERS'
CHOICE
AWARDS**

— 2013 —

Automatic
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PAYMENT
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- ▶ **VENDINGMARKETWATCH NEWS COMING SOON: The latest update from NAMA on calorie disclosure.**



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Bridging the Gap

In these pages, vending thought leaders tell about the latest hot topics – everything from daily business to future technology.

One of the goals of a trade publication is to bridge the gap between the latest innovations in an industry and the day-to-day operations of running a business. There are usually announcements of the latest available products and upcoming trends in technology. Those have to be tempered with the practices and procedures vending operators are using today, not just what they might use tomorrow. To get a good balance, we asked some of the

industry experts, including some long time vending owners, to share real solutions that will successfully get operators from point A to point B via a steady, successful bridge of profitability.

One leader is industry consultant Ben White, who is back in this issue to help operators understand their telemetry data and dig out the information that will increase profits. His article, *How to find profits in telemetry data*, appears on page 22.

If your operation hasn't added telemetry yet, there's still important information here including vending veteran Dominic Finelli's

article on merchandising at the point of sale. He covers some important basics for the beginning vendor on page 14.

Having a good Website is paramount in this age of computers, tablets and smartphones. That's why we asked long-time vending Website

Looking ahead Let your voice be heard

The 2013 State of the Vending Industry Report is going to be our focus in the next few months. As always, information from the readers of *Automatic Merchandiser* is paramount to providing an accurate report. Please check your email inboxes for the invitation to take the survey and help contribute to the best and most comprehensive industry-specific report of the year.

designer Neil Swindale to give readers some Website basics. Read about building a better Website on page 34.

EXPANDING AND BETTERING SERVICE

Better service starts with understanding customers. That's why we reached out to Vicky Hudson, founder of a survey and market research company in St. Louis, Mo. about the importance of surveying customers. Her article is on page 18.

Last, but not least, is an extraordinary operation profile about a third generation company that's been successful for three decades. J&J Vending, a Canteen franchise in the California San Francisco Bay area, expanded its business in 2009, and has thrived because of it. The success story is on page 38.

Being informed leads to better, smarter solutions. Operators don't have to reinvent the wheel, but can learn from others and use that knowledge in their own organizations. It will build a stronger industry, and one with a positive future. | ◀



OPERATORS don't have to remake the wheel in order to succeed

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Who are you?

New terms for our industry are circulating, but being new doesn't necessarily make them better or more accurate.

Not too long ago, the term receptionist was perfectly acceptable. I'm sure many of you have one at your business. However, have you heard the term receptionist being changed to first impression specialist? We have a first impression specialist here at our office and I have to admit, it does make me laugh. You do have to give props to being unique and the name really fits — she's the first person that any visitor to the office sees, that's exactly what she

does. I doubt that if someone from the outside referred to her as a receptionist, however, that she'd correct them or feel like that title wrongly described her profession.

What's in a name?

Is it just me or does it seem that society in general has gotten tied up with job titles and defining

exactly who we are and what we do? As we get ready to head out to the NAMA OneShow in Las Vegas this month, I can't help but wonder who exactly are you? I've been hearing a lot of "newer" terms being thrown around in the industry that should define exactly who you are and what you do, so before I start throwing my two cents into the ring, I thought we'd ask you.

In a recent survey conducted by *Automatic Merchandiser*, we asked our operator subscribers which of these five terms best related to their business. Sixty-nine percent of you answered with vending. Then we had a tie with ten percent answering OCS and ten percent of you answering refreshment services. Eight percent answered with automatic merchandising and three percent of you answered with foodservice.

Vending still strong

Now, I think that the answer is pretty clear; we are vending. I'm sure that some of you will stop me and tell me, "Monique, you got it all wrong, I handle this and that, so my business is really X!" That's fine, there will always be exceptions and I in no way mean to make you feel like you can't identify with a specific segment of the industry, but my question to you is, would you be offended if someone referred to you as vending?

I did mention I was going to throw my two cents into the ring. Call me old fashioned, but I still find the term automatic merchandising a perfect way to define what our industry does. We display the products that we want our customers to buy (merchandising them) and they get the product "automatically," either by using coins, paper money, a credit card, their cell phone or a fob. A person does not have to be physically there to handle the transaction.

If you're headed out to the NAMA OneShow, and you really should be by the way, feel free to stop me and let me know what you think. | ◀



SIXTY NINE percent of you answered vending

Automatic MERCHANDISER

1233 Janesville Ave., P.O. Box 803,
Fort Atkinson, WI 53538-0803

BUSINESS STAFF

PUBLISHER **Monique Terrazas**
Telephone: (920) 568-8386
E-mail: Monique.Terrazas@VendingMarketWatch.com

INTEGRATED MEDIA CONSULTANT **Jamie Bauer**
Telephone: (920) 568-8314
E-mail: Jamie.Bauer@VendingMarketWatch.com

LIST RENTAL **Elizabeth Jackson**
Account Executive
Merit Direct LLC
Telephone: (847) 492-1350, ext. 18
E-mail: ejackson@meritdirect.com

EUROPEAN SALES REPRESENTATIVE, **Julian Maddocks-Born**
Sales Director
ITSLS MEDIA julian@itsluk.com,
+44 (0)1442 230033

Benedict Hume
Sales Manager
benedict@itsluk.com
+44 (0)1442 288287

EDITORIAL STAFF

EDITOR **Emily Refermat**
Telephone: (920) 563-1615
E-mail: Emily.Refermat@VendingMarketWatch.com

ASSISTANT EDITOR **Alfonso Flores**
Telephone: (920) 563-1651
E-mail: Alfonso.Flores@VendingMarketWatch.com

SUPPORT STAFF

ART DIRECTOR **Erin Brown**

PRODUCTION DIRECTOR **Steve Swick**
PRODUCTION SERVICES REPRESENTATIVE **Barb Evenson**
Telephone: (920) 563-1629
Fax: (920) 568-2392
E-mail: Barb.Evenson@cygnus.com

AUDIENCE DEVELOPMENT MANAGER **Wendy Chady**

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CHIEF EXECUTIVE OFFICER **John French**
CHIEF FINANCIAL OFFICER **Paul Bonaio**
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Hostess selects winning brand bidders

Hostess Brands Inc. has obtained U.S. Bankruptcy Court approval to sell the majority of its snack cake business and the majority of its bread business in separate transactions totaling approximately \$800 million in proceeds.

Apollo Global Management, LLC and Metropoulos & Co. will pay \$410 million to purchase several brands, including Twinkies®, Ho Hos®, Ding Dongs® and Donettes® snack cakes as well as five bakeries and certain equipment.

Flowers Foods, Inc.'s \$360 million bid for the Hostess Wonder, Nature's Pride, Merita, Home Pride, and Butternut bread brands; 20 bakeries; and approximately 38 depots has also been accepted. Additionally, the court approved the sale of the Beefsteak® bread brand to affiliates of Grupo Bimbo, S.A.B. de C.V. for \$31.9 million.

Hostess Brands will seek court approval April 9 for the McKee Foods Corp. agreement to pay \$27.5 million for the Drake's® snack cake brand and certain equipment as well as the sale of Hostess' Sweetheart®, Eddy's®, Standish Farms® and Grandma Emilie's® bread brands, four bakeries and 14 depots, plus certain equipment to affiliates of United States Bakery for approximately \$30.9 million.



Some Hostess products will be back on shelves this summer.

Police have disabled the machine, which was outside an apartment complex.

Vending camera nabs Tennessee burglars

▶ A small camera placed inside a vending machine by the owner, JBA Vending in Sevierville, Tenn., caught two people stealing cash and vandalizing a vending machine in Newport, Tenn., according to 10 News. Police said more and more vending companies are protecting their assets with these internal cameras, which could stop vending theft completely.



GMCR To Cut Jobs In California, Canada

▶ Green Mountain Coffee Roasters (GMCR) recently announced a workforce reduction affecting a total of 74 full-time production and production support employees in its Castroville, Calif. and Toronto, Ontario, Canada facilities. In addition, seasonal layoffs impact a total of 36 positions in its Toronto and Montreal, Quebec facilities.

Site calls for credit surcharge reports

▶ The Consumerist, a not-for-profit subsidiary of Consumer Reports, recently published an editorial asking readers to take pictures of notes on vending machines across the nation that have a cash discount or credit surcharge.

CONTINUED ▶

People in the News



Schleyer

NAMA Promotes LyNae Schleyer

NAMA, the national association dedicated to vending and refreshment services, announced the promotion of LyNae Schleyer to vice president of meetings and events.

Former AMS President Dies At 93

Former president and chairman of the board of Automatic Merchandising Systems Inc. (AMS), Roy Steeley died March 16 of natural causes. He was 93 years old.

Bertsch Vending Founder Passes Away

Charles Edward Bertsch, who founded Bertsch Vending Co. in Warsaw, Ind., recently passed away at age 89.



Bertsch

John Scallion Passes Away At 83

John M. Scallion a sales representative with Canteen recently passed away at age 83.

Michigan college adds food venders

▶ Schoolcraft College in Livonia, Mich. has added gourmet, glassfront food vending machines that dispense meals made by chefs from the Schoolcraft Culinary Arts Department, according to Hometownlife News. The food items include pasta, fish and meat meals vacuum sealed and replenished daily.

Malt beverage machine found in D.C.

▶ In the Trinidad neighborhood of Washington, D.C., a Pepsi-branded vending machine was caught dispensing malt liquor for \$3 a container, according to DCIST.com.



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* Automatic Merchandiser Magazine, August 2011

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Second Avanti Markets Meeting Draws 150

Avanti Markets held its second annual operator meeting in Dallas, Texas from March 5 to 6. The meeting included a day and a half of education sessions, round table discussions, and the launch of many new features/programs for the 150 attendees.

During the meeting, Avanti announced its 2012 Operator of the Year — Pro Star Services, also known as Parks Pantry.

Canteen Of Owensboro, Ky. Acquires Fischer Candy, Part Of RDM Sales In Indiana

▶ Canteen of Owensboro, Ky. has acquired the assets of Fischer Candy of Evansville, Ind. and the vending routes of RDM Sales of Ferdinand, Ind.

From Fischer Candy, Owensboro gained seven vending routes, a warehouse and personnel. From RDM Sales, Owensboro gained

eight routes and residence in the RDM building in Ferdinand. Owensboro plans to retain the facilities and the majority of employees from both sellers.

Fischer Candy also sold wholesale assets and Faygo distribution to RDM Sales. Fischer Candy is now closed. RDM maintains wholesale, OCS and other business ventures.

Marc Rosset, principal of Chicago-based Professional Vending Consultants facilitated the transaction.



Dr Pepper Acquires Dr Pepper/7-UP-West

▶ Dr Pepper Snapple Group announced that it has acquired the business assets and territory of Dr. Pepper/7-UP Bottling Co. of the West, based in Reno, Nev. The acquisition includes rights to the Dr Pepper/7UP-West territory and ownership of its distribution operations in Reno, Nev.; Chico, Calif. and Boise, Idaho.



VendScreen

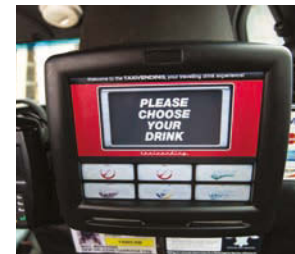
VendScreen Moves To Larger Facility

▶ VendScreen, Inc. outgrew its headquarters in Portland, Ore., prompting a move into a larger space twice the size.

The new headquarters remains in the same vicinity of the old office, which keeps the company close to the Portland International Airport.

Judge Overrules NY Large Beverage Ban

▶ The proposed ban on large-size sugary drinks in New York City was struck down by state Supreme Court Justice Milton Tingling just before it was set to take effect, according to the Associated Press. Justice Tingling ruled that the first-in-the-nation measure singled out only some beverages and establishments, has a number of loopholes and that the Board of Health intruded on City Council authority.



Drink machines added to New Orleans taxis

▶ New Orleans Carriage Cab in New Orleans, La., has installed soft drink beverage machines in more than 200 taxis. Passengers can choose one of five non-alcoholic beverages for \$0.99 with a click of a button and swipe of a credit or debit card.

CALENDAR OF EVENTS

APRIL 2

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APRIL 11-14

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APRIL 22-24

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APRIL 24-26

NAMA 2013 OneShow

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APRIL 26

NAVA Board Meeting

Venetian-Sands Resort, Las Vegas, Nev.
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APRIL 26

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How to merchandise a vending machine

By Dominic Finelli, Contributing Editor

Having a good looking machine with products customers want is within a vendors' grasp with control in the stockroom, item variety and visually appealing product placement.

Visual appeal

Keep the customer's eye interested by spreading out colors.

New products

Try new products in the vending machine, but trust your instincts.

Price point

About 60 percent of items should be top selling items; 40 percent then can be "rotational items" to create variety.



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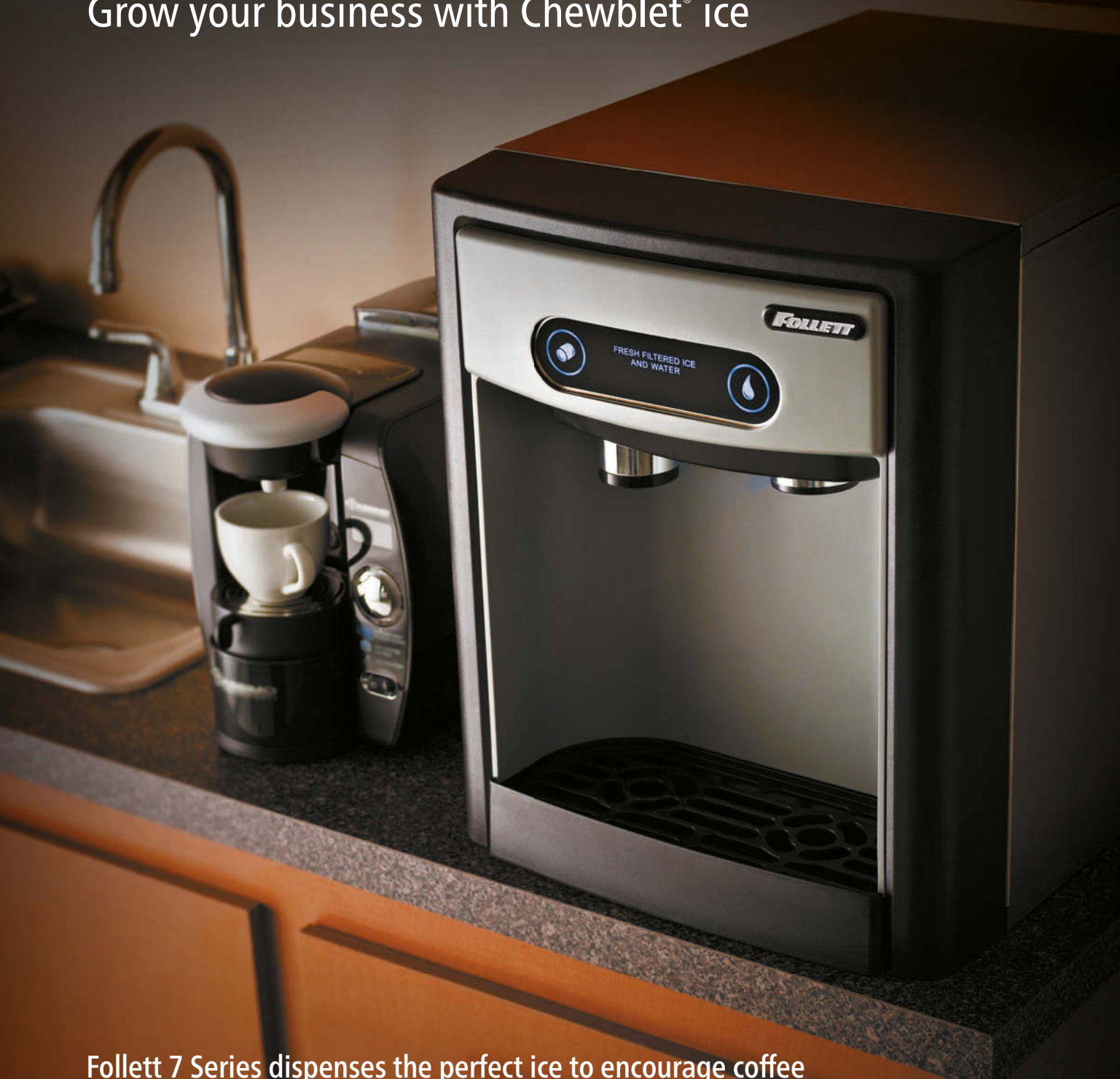
All vending companies, large or small, are in business to try and sell as many products as possible at every location. How a company goes about doing this varies greatly. Many use a set planogram, others allow their drivers to pick whatever they want from the stockroom and a growing number are using their technology to monitor every spiral, check sales and quickly change out non-sellers. However, even if an operator isn't set up to instantly monitor sales, isn't using a hand-held and doesn't have a planogram, maximizing sales is still possible. To do it, operators need to get the product they want out to their customers by beginning the merchandising process in the stockroom.

Dictate what goes in the machines

We all agree that merchandising is an essential part of buying and selling products, and operators can do it by controlling what they buy and what they allow drivers to take out of the stockroom. Operators should start by setting aside an area in the stockroom where they place the products they want to go into the machines, and then make the drivers only take those products. Operators have an idea of how many spirals in the machines are dedicated to each price point, so place the same amount of products, by price point, in this area. For example, if the machines have 10 spirals for candy products, then place 10 different kinds of candy in this area and no more. This way operators pick which items are to be put into the machines, and when an item is depleted, they pick the replacement, providing a good variety as well as a good average cost per price point. Now the driver can't just pick what he or she likes or what is the easiest to load.

CONTINUED ►

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Rotational items lower price points

Now let's talk about what goes into a good merchandising program. We all know what the top selling items are nationally, and even if operators don't, they need look no further than this magazine which publishes a top selling list yearly. For me, the simple rule of thumb was to make sure that 60 percent of all my price points contained the top selling items, which we kept in the machine year round. We used the other 40 percent of the spirals to provide our customers with an ever-changing variety which we called our "rotational items." Because the cost of the top sellers are always going to be the highest, we used the rotational items, which we could choose by cost as well as salability, to bring down the average cost of each price point. By merchandising from our stockroom, we were

USE NAMA FITPICK for healthy items.

able to control the items that went to our customers, made sure all the machines were filled with the same items and kept the number of SKU's we had on hand, at any given time, to a minimum, while controlling the costs of our price points.

If operators are using this approach to merchandising, then there is one more thing that I would advise them to do. Operators shouldn't be afraid to try new items, but they should be careful who they listen to as what may sell for their competitor may not sell for them. Operators should trust their vending instincts as to what is best for

their customer and don't allow cost to be the primary reason for a purchase. Remember, operators make money when they sell an item and not when they buy it. If an item costs a penny and sits in the machine, then the operator hasn't really made any money.

There are going to be locations that will want operators to provide some healthy items in their machines. If an operator gets this call, I would recommend using the NAMA Balance for Life FIT PICK program. It doesn't mean changing the entire machine — just place the products in 30 percent of all the price points. Do identify them with yellow tabs on the spiral front, place the informational stickers on the front of the machine and educate the customer on the program. I would never go companywide with this, but only to the specific accounts that request it. And even with these items, think merchandising.

Check for visual appeal

Now before I finish, allow me to mention one more thing about the placement of products in machines. This may seem silly to some, but we always looked at the fully filled machine to make sure that it had eye appeal. For instance, don't place all the red colored bags together, don't put two peanut items together, spread them around to create an eye-appealing rainbow look. I guarantee it will attract a customer's eye to the machine and make them stop and look, and if they look they are more likely to buy.

Increasing profits is possible for any size operator as long as they choose what goes into the machine, mix products and check for visual appeal. ◀

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ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Dominic Finelli is 43-year veteran vending operator in the Washington D.C market. Finelli can be reached at dom@askfinelli.com.

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Why customer surveys are a must

By Vicky Hudson, Contributing Editor

In a highly competitive market, like vending, surveying customers is necessary to provide the best service.

Vending operators are always looking for new ways to retain customers and grow revenue, especially in this increasingly competitive economic environment. One way is to improve customer conveniences and improve the overall customer experience. To do this, many in the industry rely on knocking on doors, cold calling and standard selling strategies. One tactic that operators often overlook is surveys geared to their customer base.

Surveys are used frequently, if not constantly, by hundreds of large com-

panies who sell consumer products and services. However smaller firms, like many in the vending industry, often overlook this fundamental component of market research or simply do not understand its effectiveness as a business tool. They may also believe surveys are too expensive when, in reality, survey programs can be tailored to be affordable for the small business owner.

Operations improvement

A customer survey can provide real nuggets about business operation

Know more about how to improve service by asking customers first.

and areas for improvement. Operators may learn their sales approach is not as professional as those of their competitors or how a location rates the operation's service response time compared to expectations. A survey would indicate whether micro markets or cashless readers would be well received, and ultimately increase revenues. The information gleaned can indicate overall strengths and weaknesses and help establish a baseline for better performance.

Marketing effectiveness

Customer surveys can also reveal the effectiveness of your marketing strategy. Do customers understand the operation's marketing message? Do they visit the website and/or read the sales brochure? A survey can help direct or reinforce a marketing plan, such as whether an operator should add social media.

CONTINUED ▶

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FINANCING AVAILABLE

The Gen Y business owners and managers are technically savvy. They like to connect on social media sites such as Facebook, LinkedIn, Twitter and others. Surveys can reveal which sites these executives not only visit but also value, and therefore which sites an operator should focus on building for successful promotions.

Competitive analysis

Many businesses conduct surveys to reveal the strengths and weaknesses of their competitors. For example, a more technologically advanced vending owner may be hurting another operator's business and costing him or her opportunities by chatting-up advanced capabilities and, at the same time, making the other firm look old-fashioned or out-of-touch with the needs of today's businesses.

Surveys can reveal what other competitors are saying about an operation and if there is some measure of credibility in those statements.

Demand for new products and services

Surveys often reveal the need for new or additional products and services. New ideas are often hatched from suggestions or needs voiced by customers. A survey can indicate what these needs are. If the approach is truly novel and different it can help give the company the "first-in" sales and marketing advantage and a huge edge on the competition. Knowing what new products a location wants will lead to greater sales.

Developing a new business plan

Customer research can reveal more than what clients like and dislike about an operation. The information can be used to discard products and services that are not resonating with the location and make the appropriate changes immediately, or

SURVEY responses revealed St. Louis vending customers would pay more for healthy foods.

in the future. For example, should an operator improve office coffee service offerings? Do specialty or local brands have greater appeal for a certain location?

Survey responses gathered for a vending client in St. Louis revealed that their customers were willing to pay more for healthy foods as opposed to standard snack machine brands. The information helped the business determine that they could leverage the healthy foods to increase profit margins.

The research also indicated that the vending company could target larger firms, with 200 employees or more. The company began offering and creating micro markets with a few customers. Now the vending business has several micro markets in the works and the opportunity to capture larger clients and increase revenues.

Cost effectiveness

Consider the costs of retaining a client versus those of replacing one. Finding a new client takes hours of work prospecting, attending sales meetings, generating requests for proposals (RFP)s and follow-up to secure a relationship. Instead, opera-

tors should focus on client retention, which involves a few telephone question and answer exchanges that can reveal a great amount of customer dissatisfaction, or satisfaction.

Customer surveys need not be expensive. The cost depends on whether the survey is done in-house or outsourced and the needs of the business and size of the database.

In-house surveys will cost anywhere from \$50 to \$150 per hour factoring in the manager or president's time doing the survey in addition to standard work, as well as understanding the nuances of creating a survey or interpreting the results.

For an outsourced survey, operators can expect to pay \$22 to \$24 per hour with an established marketing company. This can include as little as 2.5 hours per week surveying new customers or up to 10 hours per week for research geared to the entire customer base.

Whether a company conducts surveys in-house or outsources them, they are an efficient way to connect with customers and allow operators to plot the next steps for increasing revenue in their business. In a highly competitive industry, the only way to give customers what they want is to ask them first. | ◀

Connect with customers about:

- Level of vending service
- Effectiveness of a marketing plan
- Competitor ranking
- New products and services

Vicky Hudson is CEO/Founder of Hudson Management Services in St. Louis, Mo. She and her firm work with clients on a nationwide basis to help them with customer surveys, marketing research, telespecting and sales support. She can be reached at vhudson@hudson-managementservices.net.



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Companies who use data for self-improvement have a tremendous advantage.

How to find profits in telemetry data

By Ben White, Contributing Editor

There are four important operational “mineshfts” vendors should look for in their data that will help them grow their businesses.

Over the past decade, our industry has done a tremendous job building data collection systems to efficiently operate and manage thousands of vending machines. I applaud the hard work and dedication of everyone who has advanced our industry from the era of paper tickets to modern-day telemetry and vending management software. Companies have employed armies of installers, managers, drivers and office staff to move technology forward. In return for their efforts, operators have received virtual mountains of data. Billions of transactions populate databases around the country. However, has this push toward automation resulted in relevant returns? Does the collection of all this data really make for better service, happier

customers and a healthier bottom line? What benefits can operators expect to receive for embracing our computer driven society?

I, for one, am a firm believer in the data driven organization. I think companies who use data for continuous self-improvement have a tremendous advantage over companies that don't. The old adage, “That which we measure, we improve” is greatly assisted by computer collected data. However — the sheer amount of data streaming into vending companies can become daunting, confusing and even counterproductive to customer service and efficiency efforts. Building better operational systems through the analysis of data requires teamwork, common goals and a enthusiasm for success. I think a company willing to systemati-

cally mine its data will find not only profitability, but improved working conditions as well. I see improvement emerging from four “mineshfts” of efficiency: cash accountability, sold out management, spoilage reduction and vend visit efficiency.

Before we begin dragging nuggets of profitability out of our database, we must first confirm our data integrity. Any computer science grad will agree that there is a primary rule for working with data: Garbage In — Garbage Out. Once we know our input data is trustworthy — let the data mining begin!

Data integrity begins with staff

Tackling data integrity involves the entire operating team. Drivers as well as warehouse and office staff all have

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important roles to play in the development of quality data. Each department must do their part to help their fellow employees succeed. Drivers, for example, are primarily responsible for accurate ending inventories. Each vend visit is an opportunity to make sure the physical quantities on hand match the theoretical amounts in the handheld. Drivers who verify inventories each and every vend visit make their workdays significantly easier than drivers who ignore the importance of quality data collection. Accurate inventories create accurate pre-kits. Accurate pre-kits make filling machines quicker and easier. Quicker and easier vend visits make for quicker and easier days on the road. Just 45 seconds spent verifying an inventory can save hours of extra work for a route driver every single week.

Drivers, of course, are not the only employees who should be concerned with accurate information. Warehouse staffs are also well served when they understand how accurate pre-kit orders affect the entire company. Accurate pre-kit orders result in a higher percentage of completely filled machines. Vend visits with accurate pre-kit orders lead to lower amounts of returned product. Lower returns boost morale throughout the warehouse, and quality pre-kits lead to more accurate warehouse ordering. Properly stocked warehouses send out fresher product which entices consumers to purchase more. The benefits of quality data are seemingly endless!

Office personnel responsible for data management responsibilities also have their own important role to play. Dispatchers and/or database administrators should be the primary guardians against excessive sold-outs and spoilage. Correct par levels make a big difference! Proper schedule management drives route efficiency and can increase the overall level of customer service. Low spoils and

LIMITED *supply can motivate customers to buy.*

low sold-outs create machines that consumers look forward to using. I believe what's written on every box of M&M/Mars products, "Rotate Product — Freshness Sells!"

Four mineshifts for profitability

Once data integrity becomes a priority, the company can begin focusing on the main areas of accountability: cash, sold outs, spoils and visit efficiency.

Every operator using electronic data collection devices deserves to know that the receipts accrued in a piece of equipment are making it all the way to the bank account. Handling and processing cash correctly is still incredibly important to our industry. Accurate cash accountability data not only gives operators peace of mind; it also tells us that information is flowing properly from the equipment. Cash accountability reviews can even be used to uncover technical or mechanical issues at the point of sale. Is a machine consistently collecting more coin than it should? Chances are there is a changer problem which may require a service call. Our industry has always been plagued

by the claim, "that machine took my money." Any methods we can use to minimize broken equipment will result in happier customers and higher sales.

Sold out columns are, of course, a measure of our customer service level. With accurate data and proper dynamic scheduling parameters, the data-driven company should be able to tout a level of service significantly higher than that of its competitors. Imagine being able to guarantee a client that they'll never run out of Diet Coke again. I believe this is possible and would even suggest that the data driven company could make low sold-outs part of their service guarantee. Perhaps there could be a marketing program built around a promise: "If your soda machine ever runs out of Diet Coke, we'll buy pizza for your office."

Spoilage, on the other hand, is like the proverbial white elephant lying in the living room. Maybe if we ignore it, it will just go away. Spoilage (and returns) CAN be minimized with diligent monitoring of vend visit data. I believe drivers should be encouraged to enter spoilage in the handheld. It's the office's job to manage spoilage and reduce its likelihood in every machine.

Mining data correctly will result in more productive vend visits. Each year, vend visit service costs such as labor and gas continue to rise. Using data to ensure that each trip is worthwhile (say, 100 plus vends per visit) will either reduce the number of routes currently needed to maintain placed equipment or slow the need for additional routes in the future. Efficient visits ensure the

Four elements to improve profits:

- Review cash accountability to spot issues
- Minimize empty spirals or "sold out" products
- Reduce spoilage
- Ensure maximum vend visit efficiency

best use of everyone's time — not just the route driver.

Data mining also allows operators to make sure each piece of equipment is the best store it can be for clients and consumers. Whether it's getting a machine to sell more or limiting spoilage, data allows us to make intelligent product and par decisions with the click of a mouse. Every operator has slow selling equipment that can't be removed for one reason or another. Rather than lament a machine's lackluster sales, let's extend the service cycle to the longest interval possible (21 days for snacks and 28 days for beverages is acceptable to most companies) and limit pars which will minimize our need to throw product away.

Operators with advanced analysis techniques also tap into a little known sales secret: Machines with

adjusted par levels actually sell more! Extensive anecdotal evidence suggests that consumers will purchase more if they think their favorite item might run out before the machine gets refilled. For example: If the Snickers row is full to bursting and has been for the past six months, a consumer is in no hurry to make a purchase. However, if the consumer can clearly see through the glass that Snickers may soon be gone, he or she will be much more motivated to pull out money and make a purchase before walking away.

From the idea that personal computers would eliminate the need for paper to the notion that cars will someday drive themselves, technology has only ever offered a promise. Real progress comes when human beings use electronic tools correctly and consistently. Data collection

for vending companies is no different. Take some time this week and dig into the data mine currently residing on your desktop. Does the information look accurate? Are clients being better served? Are your people using their time wisely and productively to deliver better results than your competition? Hopefully you'll see nuggets of opportunity everywhere you look. | ◀



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Ben White was the general manager at Monumental Vending in Beltsville, Md. for many years. He recently started Vending

Insights, Inc. to help operators incorporate technology and advance large projects such as micro market development. Contact White via email at ben@vendinginsights.com



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Products of the Year

READERS' CHOICE AWARDS

— 2013 —

Automatic
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The best and brightest

By Alfonso Flores

Micro markets, nutrition and coffee round out this year's category winners.

Automatic Merchandiser and VendingMarketWatch.com readers love new products. They showed it again this year by voting for their top sellers in the 2013 Readers' Choice New Products of the Year contest through an online ballot at VendingMarketWatch.com/awards. More than 300 votes were submitted in seven categories.

This year's winners are consistent with the vending industry's key growth trends of 2013 — micro market friendly products, items considered nutritious and America's love of coffee.

New products of the year

The cookie category winner, **RUGER**, LLC's **RUGER**® **Strawberry Wafers**, is served in multi-functional pouches

perfect for traditional vending or micro markets, as is the diverse packaging sizes of the candy category winner **Mars Chocolate North America DOVE**® **Brand Silky Smooth Cookies and Crème bar**. The food category winner, **Advance-Pierre Foods Pierre Drive Thru**™ **Deluxe sandwich**, fits the grow-

ing micro market trend by offering restaurant-style food.

Wellness focused, the snack category winner, **Kellogg's**® **Special K**® **Cracker Chips** is regarded as a healthy choice snack low in sodium and calories. In addition, the cold beverage category winner, **Nestlé** **Sweet Leaf Tea**, is viewed as a healthy beverage alternative, made with pure cane sugar and no high-fructose corn syrup.

Consistent with the demand for café-quality office coffee, the **Barista Prima Coffeehouse**® **Vanilla Latte Café Beverage for the Keurig**® **Vue**® system, has won the hot beverage category.

The last category is representative of a consumer favorite — **Mrs. Freshley's**® **Cinnabon**® **Honey Bun** which won in this year's pastry category.

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Micro market mania

The cookie category winner uses real fruit flavor to entice consumers. **RUGER®**, LLC has introduced **RUGER® Strawberry Wafers**, with the taste of fresh strawberries. The new wafers have strawberry flavored cream between crispy, crunchy wafers. Shelf life is 18 months.



Mars Chocolate North America offers a classic candy combination with the 2013 new product of the year candy winner. The **Mars Chocolate**

North America DOVE® Brand Silky Smooth Cookies and Crème bar

blends sweet and creamy white chocolate and crunchy chocolate cookie bits into a nutritious treat that only

DOVE® Chocolate can deliver.

DOVE® Brand encourages consumers to own moments of chocolate pleasure every day.

This new item is available in three formats – single bar, large bar and bags of individually wrapped DOVE® Brand PROMISES® for micro markets.



Restaurant-quality taste straight from the microwave is the goal of the food category winner — **AdvancePierre**

Foods Pierre Drive Thru™ Deluxe sandwich.

These sandwiches use high quality ingredients and are available in three varieties, a 100-percent beef cheeseburger with ketchup and mustard, a breaded chicken breast filet sandwich and a spicy breaded chicken breast filet sandwich.



All-natural, healthy

A low calorie, high-fiber product is the winner of the snack category. **Kellogg's® Special K®**

Cracker Chips are hybrid snacks that combine the goodness of a cracker with the light crunchiness of a chip for a snack that delivers great taste, fiber and 110 calories per bag. Flavors include cheddar and sea salt.



Nestlé Sweet Leaf Tea, the cold beverage category winner, offers a full line of Sweet Leaf Tea made from a superior blend of black and green organic tea leaves in purified water. Sweetened with pure cane sugar, no high fructose corn syrup, Sweet Leaf iced teas are free from artificial preservatives, colors and flavors. The line of 15.5 ounce cans includes the following flavors: original, mint and honey, citrus, lemon, peach and raspberry.



OCS and fan-favorite

The hot beverage category winner, **Barista Prima Coffeehouse® Vanilla Latte Café Beverage for the Keurig® Vue® system**, shows the emphasis on premium coffee amongst consumers. Exclusive to the Keurig® Vue® Brewer, Barista Prima Coffeehouse Vanilla Latte Café combines premium gourmet coffee with real milk, real cream and a hint of vanilla to create a true latte lover's delight.

Mrs. Freshley's® combines two pastry favorites, Cinnabon® and Honey Buns, for the pastry category winner. **Mrs. Freshley's®**

Cinnabon® Honey Bun pastries

are baked with Cinnabon® cinnamon, Mrs. Freshley's® Cinnamon Danish has a cinnamon filling, wrapped in a golden, flaky crust, that's drizzled with icing. The Coffee Cake, topped with icing, has the flavor of Cinnabon® cinnamon in every bite. And Mrs. Freshley's® has taken its classic honey bun to a new level, swirling Cinnabon® cinnamon throughout the popular icing-topped pastry.

All of the products nominated can be found online at www.vendingmarketwatch.com/directory. ◀



2013 Readers' Choice New Products of the Year runner ups

Candy: Promotion In Motion Inc. Juicefuls

Snack: Clif Crunch Granola Bars

Pastry: Cloverhill Brownie Mini Muffins

Food: Wilbur Curtis Café Oat Meal

Cold Beverage: Snapple Lightly Sweetened Ready-To-Drink Tea

Hot Beverage: Mars, Bright Tea Co. Recyclable Freshpacks, Reunion Island Coffee Donut Shop Original Dark Blend

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Mrs. Freshley's and Cinnabon combined to create a high-quality pastry that is the perfect recipe for an immensely popular, incredibly profitable and highly requested product. The Mrs. Freshley's Family wants to thank you for making this product a winner!



3 secrets to better micro market service

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By Emily Refermat, Editor

Micro markets require a different set of skills than traditional vending, including more retail focused planning, dedicated drivers and high-end product considerations.

Micro markets are the newest trend in the vending industry. They offer operators a chance for increased revenues because they allow the product variety and delivery format customers want. However, micro markets are not vending accounts. In order to gain the monetary benefits they offer, operators need to ensure their micro market service more closely resembles retail than traditional automatic merchandising. This requires vending operators to be better retail merchandisers, service micro markets differently and sell the products micro market customers want.

3 secrets to better servicing micro markets

- Embrace retail strategies
- Hire dedicated drivers
- Understand needs of new clientele



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1. Embrace the retail environment

The first thing vending operators have to understand is [a micro market is] retail, and not vending,” said Joe Hessling, CEO of 365. “Not portraying a retail experience means micro markets can be a disadvantage if operators aren’t paying attention,” Hessling said. He believes this starts with quality looking displays from the shelving racks to the micro market kiosk. “We pay a little more attention to the way a store looks,” he said.

This is a sentiment shared by Michael Coffey, vice president of strategic initiatives for Canteen Vending Services. “We see lots of operators entering micro markets by the lowest cost of entry,” said Coffey. That includes getting free coolers and shelving from suppliers. Coffey has had greater success with a more sophisticated looking presentation for Canteen’s micro markets, called Avenue C’s.

Presentation is only a portion of retail merchandising however. One thing that is more important is how the products are displayed. Coffey recommends zones of product, more like the aisles of a grocery store. “It has to be consistent with how customers shop for retail,” he said. Coffey’s other tips include bundling products together, such as cookies and milk, having featured items and offering discounts. He recommends programs in micro markets and believes in once a quarter addressing the bottom 25 sellers.

2. Hire dedicated drivers with merchandising skills

Because the look of a market and the products inside are so important, it requires special attention from the service provider. “A vending machine does first in, first out

Shrinkage and inventory

Another piece of the retail environment micro market operators must accept is a certain amount of shrinkage. Vending management software and handhelds have helped eliminate this from vending, but it does exist in micro markets — although at a very low percentage. “My shrinkage across the board is 1.5 percent,” said Jim Brinton, CEO of Avanti Markets and Evergreen Vending in Tukwila, Wash. Some locations are as high as 2 to 3 percent, while some have virtually none, and it’s difficult to predict.

Aaron Speagle, CEO of Breakroom Provisions, and Piedmont Vending in Hickory, N.C., accepts average losses of 2 percent. “That’s about the same as a grocery store,” he said.

Inventory of the micro markets is handled in many ways. Brinton does inventory monthly and has drivers spot check each category during service visits. Drivers are able to spot a theft problem even before the inventory, because they will arrive with less product than they actually need to fill the space back to par level.

Speagle, on the other hand, has a manager inventory the entire market every three months.

[automatically], but a micro market operator has to be involved in merchandising,” said Jim Brinton CEO of Avanti Markets and Evergreen Vending in Tukwila, Wash., which currently operates 250 micro markets. He trains his drivers to rotate product and be aware of stales.

This special attention to detail is why some vending drivers just aren’t right for servicing micro markets.

Instead many operators hire drivers outside of vending. Aaron Speagle, CEO of Breakroom Provisions, and Piedmont Vending in Hickory, N.C., tries to hire drivers who once stocked shelves in grocery or convenience stores. “They know how to create the right presentation,” he said.

3. Understand the needs of the new client

Micro markets have created a meal stop for customers. “It’s driving a lot more customers to buy full meals versus just snacks,” said Brinton, “so operators have to have enough of those items.”

Offering a full meal includes different kinds of fresh foods as well as the snacks and beverage options to pair with them.

Specifically, hot beverages are evolving in micro markets. The clientele visiting these new formats likes having single cup options, which more micro market operators are adding. “In our micro markets, we’re running Keurig type single cup, Tassimo and even some Starbucks iCup brewers in large locations,” explained Brinton. He sells these in addition to traditional coffee service being offered elsewhere by the location.

“What really goes up in a micro market is the premium beverage, healthy and fresh food,” said Coffey of Canteen. For example, in the Avenue C markets, 11 percent of the total sales are from specialty salads. The price point of these salads is \$5 to \$6, nearly double what can be charged for salad in a food vending machine. “This is a new customer that never used vending before,” said Coffey.

Micro markets are a sales growth area for vending, but also a different business model. It requires even more of an eye towards merchandising and picking the right products to really make the micro market a success. | ◀

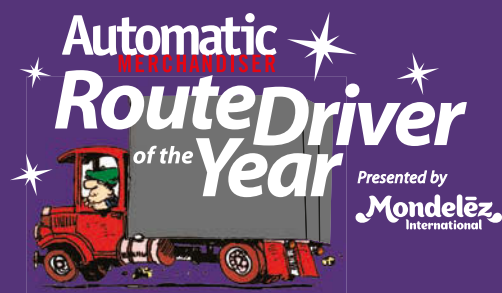
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A Website creates the first impression of a business to a new customer.

How To Build A Better Vending Website

By Alfonso Flores

By using basic Web design concepts, vending operators can market their businesses to new, eager customers online.

One of the most important aspects of a business is marketing. Vending operators market by wrapping their vehicles with logos, mailing brochures or taking out print or radio ads, but what about the digital marketplace?

Search engines are the new phone books and people use social media as an alternative news source, yet, according to Neil Swindale owner of VendCentral, a digital marketing firm dedicated to helping vending com-

pany owners grow their businesses, most operators aren't utilizing the Web to its full potential.

"If somebody lands on your Website, chances are they don't know who you are," Swindale said. "They're going to base their perception of your company on your Website."

That is why it's so important for vending operators to budget for, and plan the creation of, a Website before committing to creating it. Swindale believes having a cheap Website is almost as bad as not having one at all.

Background

Swindale operated his own vending company for a number of years before launching VendCentral 15 years ago, so he has been on both sides of using the Web for digital marketing. He believes there are two main concepts to focus on when developing a Website — conversion and search engine optimization (SEO).

Conversion

Swindale defines conversion as the Website's design and navigability. First impressions are everything in sales, and when consumers come to a vending Website, their first impression of the entire operation lies in what the Website looks like, and how much it can tell them. Swindale focuses on three key factors to conversion that can make or break a vending operation Website. They are design, information and images.



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Design

Swindale believes having a modern design that dazzles the consumer is the first step to drawing them in. The home page of a site should be well-representative of the operation. Having a large, strong logo, images of the operation and interactive links that clearly inform the consumer and navigate them through the site is a must for any vending Website.

Information

Consumers will not go out of their way to find information, according to Swindale, so making it accessible and easy to find is important. Having links on the homepage that lead to subsequent pages dedicated to information is a good way to help consumers navigate the site. Links Swindale suggests include:

About Us — a detailed history of the operation, including background, achievements and affiliations.

Products — a complete listing of products available in all channels, be it vending, coffee service or micro markets.

Technology — any new and innovative technology in the vending operation that might intrigue consumers.

Contact Us — this area should include all contact information including the address, phone number, fax number and direct email link so visitors can leave a message directly from the page.

Optimize for multiple platforms

It is important to consider multiple platforms in Website design. Along with traditional computer browsers, people are using their mobile devices to gather information as well. Having a responsive mobile site that is as functional on a desktop computer as it is with a smartphone is important to reaching as many visitors as possible. Swindale suggests avoiding technology that isn't functional on all mobile platforms, such as Adobe Flash.

Images and video

Engaging site visitors is an important part of having an interactive site. Because of that, Swindale suggests having up-to-date photos and interesting video snip-bits. They are a good way to inform the consumer about an operation and add to a Website's appeal.

Search engine optimization

Search engine optimization, or SEO, is all about being found, explains Swindale. Customers use search engines to find information, and having a strong SEO presence ensures an operation's name is toward the top of the results, improving the chances it will be viewed.

Swindale has seen the numbers. He knows the more consumers that find a business through search engines (due to good SEO), the more site visits for that operation, which in turn brings potential sales. His tricks to utilizing SEO include keeping the target local, using business listings online and digital advertising.

Localize SEO

Most consumers will narrow down their searches by entering local keywords like cities or states. This ensures the consumer a more concentrated list of operations for them to do business with, explains Swindale. This is to the operator's advantage. Because consumers are searching locally, vending operators don't have to compete at a national level. Instead of solely using the word *vending* as a keyword, operators can accom-

Create keywords

Search engines use algorithms to find keywords from the text on a Website. Swindale explains that the more times a specific keyword is found throughout the site, the better the chances of that word pulling the Website up in search results. Therefore, operators should repeat keywords on each page and multiple pages of the Website.

pany that keyword with a geographical area they service, narrowing the number of sites they're competing with and giving them a better chance of being found.

Free Local Business Listings

Search engines, such as Google, offer free local business listings. Swindale encourages vending operators to list with these sites as the search engine, in this case Google, will find keywords within the information and use them to suggest businesses for consumers searching locally. To sign up, create a Google account and visit the Google Places website (places.google.com).

Pay-Per-Click Advertising

All search engines allow businesses to pay for advertising on their sites. This can also increase SEO, according to Swindale. Operators can budget how much money they want to pay per click, and determine how much money per month they are willing to spend. The search engine will then act as an auction, giving precedence to the highest bidder of payment per click. There is no limit to how much a business can bid, and the search engine will generally only charge \$.05 to \$.10 more than the second lowest bid, explains Swindale. Once the bidding is complete, when a person searches the chosen keyword, for example vending, the vending operator whose bid was highest will have his or her business advertisement displayed on the top of the page.

Success story

William Mandile, president of Champion Vending in Astoria, N.Y., relaunched his Website three years ago. Using Swindale as a consultant, the new site focused on conversion as well as SEO and its entirely taken the place of his sales department.

"A vending company without a Website is like a store without

a sign in front of it," Mandile said. "A majority of people look online for vending [companies], and if you don't dedicate the money to making the site the way it should be, it can really hurt your business."

The digital marketing platform is something vending operators can't ignore. With search engines

and social media playing such a large role in how consumers gather information, being a part of the digital world is a must. An effective Website is a way for vending operators to set themselves apart from their competition all while sharing their brand with a potentially new client-base. ◀

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35 years of growth

By Emily Refermat, Editor

This California family vending operation has thrived for more than three decades and continues its success with the addition of the third generation, who added new business lines to drive growth of the Canteen franchise.

J&J Vending of Union City, Calif. turns 35 this year. The Canteen franchise, started by father and son Joel C. (Senior) and Joel E. (Big Joe) Skidmore in 1978, had four accounts. Now there are more than 1,300 machines and eight routes. With the addition of the third generation, Joel E. Skidmore's daughter Jennifer, the company expanded its business into office coffee and pantry service at a time when vending was feeling the recession, and the operation continues to innovate. J&J's latest addition, micro markets, has brought the company a number of new locations.

Partners from the start

In 1978, Skidmore Senior was working as a manager for Canteen of Burlingame when they approached him with a franchise opportunity. They would take larger accounts, but send smaller locations to him for vending service. He agreed and asked his son, only 17 at the time, to become

CONTINUED ►

Joel Skidmore is a hands-on owner who moves equipment and helps with daily business.



Sales from coffee service and cardboard recycling are helping Jennifer Skidmore plant a garden on J&J property to grow food for charities.

a full partner in the new business — J&J Vending. They ran it out of their home garage.

Now J & J Vending resides in a 12,500 square-foot facility. The operation serves businesses making up to \$40,000 in vending revenue in the San Francisco Bay area.

Through the years, Skidmore found it both a pleasure and struggle to work with his father. Skidmore Senior was resistant to new technology, like the handhelds and vending management software the operation added in 2003 in order to increase the cash accountability and inventory control.

“When I was the young one and worked with my father, he resisted a lot of things,” said Skidmore. “I always said if I had a child working here, I would never say no.” Skidmore’s declaration would be put to the test in 2009 when his daughter started working full time at J&J Vending.

Skidmore senior retired in 2004. He passed away in 2010. That year Skidmore and his wife, Brenda, bought the outstanding company portions and become sole owners of the franchise.

Third generation expands business

Four years ago, after graduating college, Jennifer Skidmore was looking for a job. Her father suggested she work at J&J on a temporary basis. She agreed, but soon realized it was



Ashley Karpan handles J&J’s coffee customers including the operation’s lobby single-cup store where J&J offers K-cups for direct pick up.

something she really enjoyed. “It’s fun,” Jennifer said. “And I really do enjoy working with my parents. They’re my best friends.”

Almost immediately Jennifer added an office coffee service (OCS) division to J&J. She got the idea from attending a NAMA show where coffee was featured as a sales growth strategy during the recession. “It seemed OCS was where the money was,” said Jennifer. J&J has been successful using mostly drip brewers. It doesn’t have a private label, but offers brand names and local coffees. “It’s kind of a trend to go local in this area,” said Jennifer. The company offers

J&J Celebrates Its Anniversary With Makeovers

To celebrate its 35th year in business, J&J Vending is updating its logo, building a new Website and moving to a new building, which will include a micro market on the top floor.

“Every week we plan to invite a location to explore the Company Kitchen,” said Joel Skidmore. He believes this will help locations understand what a micro market is and increase business.

CONTINUED ►

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some single-cup options as well such as Keurig and Newco pod brewers.

Along with OCS came pantry service, where a location pays for free food and beverages to be provided to employees. J&J provides the coolers and snack racks, often branded with the location name and logo, as well as delivery of the refreshments. “It’s really resulted in big growth for us in the last year,” said Jennifer about pantry service.

Jennifer’s other contribution to J&J was more philanthropic. One percent of J&J’s OCS sales go to Planting Justice, an Oakland, Calif.-based non-profit which is dedicated to food justice, economic justice and sustainable local food systems. Also, this year Jennifer is planning to start an apple orchard on the company’s property. Dedicated to her maternal grandfather, the fruit from “Papa’s Garden” will be donated to local food banks.

“Who would have thought my third generation would have brought so much to the company,” said Skidmore. He also credits his wife and partner in the business. “Brenda, my wife, is a huge part of our company,” said Skidmore. “She runs the office and keeps Jennifer and me in check.” She will ride with route drivers or make deliveries — whatever is needed.

Technology will bring new efficiencies

While Jennifer is the newest family member to work at J&J, she remains dedicated to the business and services it provides. She is excited about the next 5 to 10 years and how technology will better the operation. “Vending could be a lot more efficient,” she said. The company is planning to add prekitting in the next year and a warehouse product picking system.

Already, J&J has added micro markets. “We started with A vant in 2011,” said Skidmore. “But have since changed to Company Kitchen systems.” Company Kitchen allowed J&J an exclusive territory and Skid-

Operation Profile: J&J Vending

Owners: Joel and Brenda Skidmore

Location: Union City, Calif.

Number of employees: 14

Number of routes: 7 vending, 1 dedicated micro market and OCS route

Software provider: MEI

Annual revenue: \$3.5 million



Joel Skidmore believes opportunities like micro markets and cashless payment systems are exciting developments for the industry.



J&J Vending installs sophisticated looking shelving and coolers in its micro markets.

more preferred the high-end look of the shelving and furniture. “It’s more like office equipment,” he said.

Local fresh food

J&J uses a local foodservice provider to supply fresh food to the markets. The micro market driver delivers food on Mondays and Thursdays. “We sell a lot of salads,” said Skidmore. Other popular fresh food products include yogurt parfaits and fresh fruit. On the frozen side, J&J has had success with frozen meal replacements like Weight Watchers and Lean Cuisines.

Micro markets increased J&J sales 70 percent in the first location Skidmore tried. Part of that was likely due to the fact a food machine was not previously offered, but the concept has been successful elsewhere as well. J&J converted one existing account, but has gained two new locations just for the micro market segment.

Shrinkage hasn’t been a problem in J&J markets. Skidmore finds the

flat screen television showing people in the market is a deterrent. Locations also police themselves. He’ll get notifications from a customer that a certain employee might have taken an item without paying. Skidmore checks the account and will let the location know the situation, such as if there was a credit on the account. He thinks his shrinkage averages 2 to 5 percent, depending on the market.

Investments in vending too

Micro markets aren’t the only place J&J has invested in technology, however. The company has added LED lights to vending machines and a retrofitted touchscreen door on a machine at a hospital. J&J is also advancing its cashless payment program — a ready about 5 percent of the machines except credit and debit cards. “All the new installs have cashless,” said Skidmore. “The workforce has changed. People, myself included, never carry cash. Everything is on credit cards.”

Thirty-five years is a long time to be in business. Skidmore keeps the momentum going by embracing, instead of resisting new technologies and business lines including new ideas from the third generation — his daughter. With new revenue streams and giving back to the community, J&J Vending is poised to be successful well into the future. | ◀

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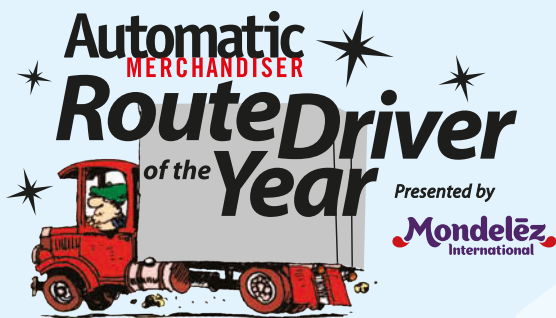
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2012

Fox Vending, Inc.'s Jim Milton Wins Route Driver of the Year

By Alfonso Flores

Sponsored by Mondelez International and Automatic Merchandiser, the award recognizes the industry's finest route drivers.

FOR MORE than 36 years, Jim Milton has been delivering products and smiles for Bridgeview, Ill.-based Fox Vending, Inc. In recognition of his exceptional customer service, Milton was recently named *Automatic Merchandiser's* 2012 Route Driver of the Year.

Worthy recipient

Jennifer Fox, president of Fox Vending and nominator, struggled with a way to show appreciation for such a dedicated employee, wondering how to repay someone for so many years.

"Milton is not someone who has ever required accolades; he's a humble kind of guy," Fox said. "He does his job so well every day because he takes personal pride in doing so, not so he can be told how great he is or get a pat on the back."

Ultimately, Fox believes winning this contest was a fitting reward. Nominations were scored on years as a driver, number of machines serviced, miles traveled, accidents and citations, sick days, speed, thoroughness, likability, number of compliments, friendliness, appearance, condition of truck, empty spirals and sales.

“He takes personal pride in doing [his job], not so he can be told how great he is.”

In for the long-haul

Milton has been involved in the vending industry since graduating high school. He began working in a factory for a vending operation that has since gone out of business. When they began down-sizing, Milton decided to search for a new position, and found a listing for an opening at Fox Vending.

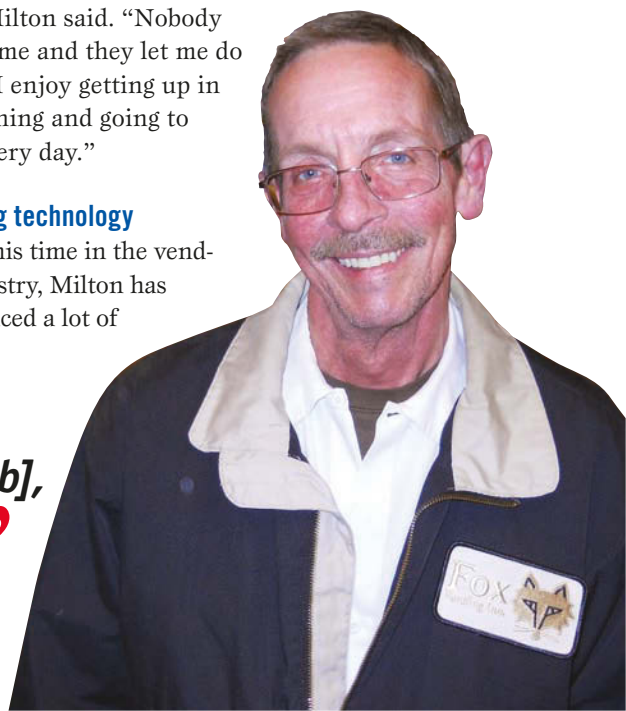
During his 36 years of service, Milton has declined offers for management positions to continue doing what he loves — running a route.

Being a driver allows Milton to work independently and plan his route, all while providing customer service. Due to his efficiency and grasp of inventory needs, he often returns to the warehouse without a single case left on the truck.

"It's kind of like being my own boss," Milton said. "Nobody bothers me and they let me do my job. I enjoy getting up in the morning and going to work every day."

Changing technology

During his time in the vending industry, Milton has experienced a lot of changes.





Jennifer Fox, president of Fox Vending, trusts Jim Milton to provide great vending route service.

One change Milton has witnessed is customer-loyalty, citing the loss of a 30-year account for slightly better prices: "It's very competitive now. When I started, there used to be loyalty with customers. If you had good customers they would stay with you, but times have gotten tighter over the years." Milton contributes the increase in competition to healthy vending and greater product variety.

"There used to be only nine selections in a candy machine" Milton said. "Now they've got glass-front machines with a whole variety of products to choose from."

While he admits market shifts have made his job more difficult, Milton feels new technology designed to help the driver and the customer is the key to navigating these trends. His willingness to welcome new technology, such as implementation of vending management software, points to his dedication to the future of the operation.

Milton will be recognized by Mondelez International, as well as *Automatic Merchandiser*, as the 2012 Annual Route Driver of the Year winner at the NAMA One-Show held in Las Vegas, Nev. April 24 to 26. | ◀

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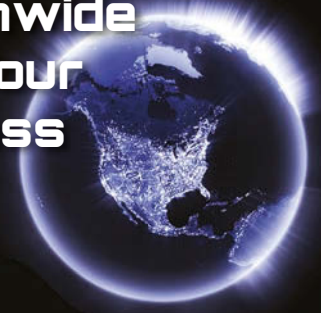
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PRODUCT AND EQUIPMENT NEWS



Mondelez International, Inc. a pre-eminent maker of chocolate, biscuits, gum and candy, announces the launch of **belVita Breakfast** biscuits in foodservice and vending. Made with 18 to 20 grams of whole grain, each individual package of four biscuits is portioned to provide nutritious and sustained energy all morning long. Each package provides 3 grams of fiber and is a good source of B Vitamins and Iron. The belVita product has no high fructose corn syrup (HFCS), hydrogenated oils, artificial flavors or sweeteners.

belVita is available in Golden Oat and Blueberry flavors. Each box is packed in eight boxes of eight packs, with each pack containing four biscuits.

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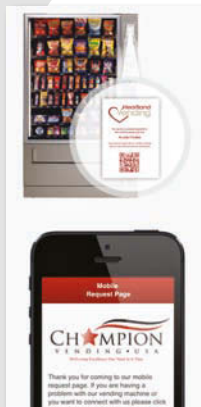
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GMCW announces the new **Korinto Super Automatic Espresso Machine.** Partnering with Italian-based N&W Global Vending to bring Necta branded Super Automatic Espresso Machines to the U.S., the Korinto will allow the user to create a variety of specialty hot beverages using fresh coffee beans, solubles and fresh milk (optional). With an increase in customer demand for specialty coffee beverages, GMCW offers

customers a solution that will allow them to profitably serve cafe quality espresso-based beverages in non-cafe environments.

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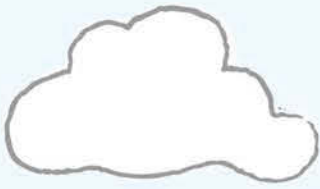
VendCentral has launched a new web-based mobile app. Designed as an additional offering to vending customers, the app, named **MR1** (or Mobile Request 1), will allow customers to have a direct link to the vending company, being able to request refunds, report machine problems, ask for new products and provide feedback from the convenience of any smartphone.

Vending companies engaging MR1 will have a quick response (QR) code sticker on their vending machines next to the standard support phone number. If a customer experiences any type of problem, they can simply scan the QR code with a smartphone and immediately access a mobile optimized Website featuring simple action buttons, such as “request a refund,” “report a machine issue” and “request your favorite item.”

MR1 is available to vending companies for a start-up fee and monthly subscription cost. VendCentral handles all setup and design that is needed to establish the dedicated mobile Website for each involved company. Beyond the standard service requests, vending companies can also utilize the app to promote any social networking sites and to link to the full company Website.

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