

Automatic MERCHANTISER

The Vending, Micro Market &
Coffee Service Industry Resource

February 2013

SUCCESS STORY:

Operators embrace technology

*Scott Halloran and
Michael Calkins of Trolley
House Refreshments focus
on customer engagement.*

**AND MERGE TO THRIVE
POST-RECESSION**

becoming the
largest independent
operation in
Richmond, Va.

page 12

SMALL OP:

How to maintain inventory
and pricing controls

page 18

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MICRO MARKET EXCLUSIVE

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Contents

FEBRUARY 2013
VOLUME 55, NUMBER 1



Trolley House Refreshments general manager Dan Houston runs the vending management software. **12**

SUCCESS STORY: OPERATION PROFILE

12 ▶ Technology spells success for Virginia operators

How two vending operators who believed in the value of technology partnered to beat the recession and become the largest independent vending operation in Richmond, Va.

FEATURES

8 ▶ 5 key growth trends in 2013

Vending, micro markets and office coffee service thought leaders speak out about what will drive the industry's growth in the coming year.

18 ▶ How to maintain inventory and pricing controls

Focusing on asset management is a must, even if the small vending operation isn't yet ready to invest in vending management software.



8

DEPARTMENTS

2 ▶ Editor's Note

Embrace change for better business

4 ▶ Publisher's Note

Make 2013 your year of growth by being SMART

6 ▶ Vending MarketWatch News

20 ▶ CoffeeTea&Water

The 2012 National Automatic Merchandising Association CoffeeTea&Water event in New Orleans Nov. 13 to 15 centered around coffee service specific education.

22 ▶ Product News

22 ▶ Marketplace



24 ▶ Route Driver Quarterly Winner

Jim Milton, Fox Vending, Inc., Bridgeview, Ill.
He's now working for the second generation, but is as thorough and adaptive as ever.

BONUS CONTENT on VendingMarketWatch.com



▶ **VENDINGMARKETWATCH NEWS** reports the pending acquisition of MEI Conlux by Crane Merchandising Systems.

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Embrace change for better business

Successful business management means evaluating and accepting consumer trends, new technology, better inventory programs and fresh staff.

Business at the beginning of the year is always full of possibilities. For *Automatic Merchandiser*, business means articles that set the tone for 2013 as well as highlight the topics and trends that are most important. That's why this month we tapped our advisory board and the CEO of the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) to bring you the 5 key growth trends for 2013. While most of the topics won't surprise avid readers of the

magazine, the article puts the need for expansion in certain key areas in clear terms. With this information operators will be better prepared to successfully go to market this year.

Forward thinkers embrace technology

Investing and effectively utilizing technology is certainly something to be admired. Often it means spending money and taking the chance to do business differently. And when it works, it can lead to growth. That's what partners Scott Halloran and Michael Calkins of Trolley House Refreshments have learned. They believed in

the value of technology and it allowed them to beat the recession and become the largest independent operator in Richmond, Va. Their success story is shared on page 12.



SUCCEED
by giving customers quality, value and easy access

Introducing editorial for the small business

While technology can help businesses run more efficiently and profitably, it's not possible for each and every operation to make the investment. Because of that, this year we're also going to get back to the basics of vending. To achieve this goal, Dominic Finelli, who many of you know as the long-time owner of Custom Vending Co. in Md., has transitioned to become a contributing editor for *Automatic Merchandiser*. He will be our small operations guru, sharing his strategies gleaned from 43 years working on the job. This month he covers inventory control and pricing in a new column called SmallOp – advice and know-how tailored to the 1 to 4 route operation, on page 18. More articles by Finelli will appear as 2013 unfolds.

New assistant editor joins AM

I'm also happy to introduce a new *Automatic Merchandiser/VendingMarketWatch* team member — Alfonso Flores. A recent graduate of the University of Wisconsin, Green Bay, Flores has been working over the past month to learn our industry. Already he's written a blog about the "bad rap" vending gets in the mainstream media and from some legislators. He's enthusiastic and as someone very wise once told me, attitude is 90 percent of everything you do.

While New Year's resolutions were last month's news, February still brings with it excitement for the future. With the recession tentatively over and increasing consumer confidence, we can embrace the new and smarter business opportunities out there. We can get down to the business of doing business. | ◀

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Make 2013 your year of growth by being SMART

With goals, you can grow your company one step at a time.

I personally see 2013 as a year of growth for not only the vending industry, but for the nation as a whole. In order to actually grow, one can't wait for the opportunity to fall in your lap. It's all about the attitude and planning you bring to the table. If you approach your business with goals in mind to achieve, you will see success and more importantly, growth. Sounds an awful lot like a New Year's Resolution doesn't it? Let's not call it that, but instead look at it as setting goals for yourself and your business.

This time around though, we are going to be SMART.

Measurable goals

The reason why most goals tend to fail is because a person has incredibly high expectations that are very hard to achieve in a 6 to 12 month period. The key to setting and achieving goals is to be realistic in your approach. Setting SMART goals is a great tool to use when sitting down to



SMART goals will help you grow your company

plan. SMART looks something like this:

S Be specific with your goal. It's not just enough to say, I want to increase revenue, but assign a percentage of revenue increase. This will help you structure ways to achieve your goal.

M Your goal must be measurable. If you want to add additional employees, state how many people you will add to your company.

A Attainable. While having high expectations is good, you should set goals that are attainable and realistic, otherwise you are setting yourself up for failure.

R Set a responsible person. There are a couple of different definitions for this one, but I understand it as simply not coming up with a goal and assigning it to the rest of your company to achieve. You must present the goal in a way that gives your team ownership of the goal and the opportunity to offer their insight as to how to achieve the goal. This is a group effort.

T Time Specific. It doesn't always have to be a 12 month period. Some goals are small and can be achieved in 6 months or less. Remember to make sure that your time period is attainable. If you want to get into installing your first micro market location, it's probably a bit of stretch to be up and running in 3 months. Research so you understand how long the process might take and what to expect to set your timing goal.

Goal setting is important

While using SMART goals is a process that is not new, it's still a process that many of us forget when we are trying to implement something new in our business. By setting goals, you will be able to grow your company one step at a time and when we get to the end of 2013, you'll be able to look back at what you achieved and what new opportunities are in store for you. ◀

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New FDA Act Doesn't Change Vending Commissary Registration Requirements

The new Food Safety Modernization Act (FSMA) enacted by the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) has received a lot of media attention and raised concerns among vending and micro market operators over language that would potentially require increased registration with the FDA.

Larry Eils, the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) Knowledge Source on Health and



Larry Eils, the NAMA Knowledge Source on Health and Safety

Safety, told VendingMarketWatch most commissary operators in the vending and micro market segment needn't worry.

"According to the registration act, we should be exempt," said Eils.

The FSMA act requires "facilities engaged in manufacturing, process, packing or holding food for consumption" to submit to registration every other year and possible increased



FDA's FSMA language has raised concerns.

inspections. Vending commissaries don't fall into this category. "We don't sell it [food] to a third party which in turn sells it to someone else," said Eils.

Eils' work with legislators places vending more closely in the restaurant and retail food establishments categories, which are exempt from the registration. However, if a commissary is making food for multiple vending companies, not just for consumption by its customers, the commissary would fall under the new FSMA requirements.

brand, which includes Ring Dings, Yodels, Devil Dogs, Yankee Doodles, Sunny Doodles and Drake's Coffee Cake. United States Bakery, Inc. has agreed to pay \$28.85 million for the Sweetheart®, Eddy's®, Standish Farms®, and Grandma Emilie's® bread brands. Flowers Foods, Inc. was selected as the stalking horse bidder for the majority of the assets related to Hostess's bread business, including the Butternut®, Home Pride®, Merita®, Nature's Pride®, Wonder® and Beefsteak® bread brand.



VendScreen

VendScreen secures new venture capital

► VendScreen, Inc. has raised \$8.4 million dollars in a Series B round of fundraising with another \$7 million reserved from closed-end private investment funds based in Portland, Ore.

FDA to finalize calorie disclosure rule

► Two years after proposing the "Food Labeling: Nutrition Labeling of Standard Menu Items in Restaurants and Similar Retail Food Establishments" rule, the Food and Drug Administration (FDA) is being given a timetable for final action. The U.S. Office of Management and Budget has set the month of April 2013 as the final action period for implementing the rule, which encompasses the requirement that vending operators with 20 or more machines need to post calorie counts for the products they sell.



USDA proposes new school vending rules

► In order to establish nutrition standards for food sold in all schools, the U.S. Department of Agriculture (USDA) has proposed the "Smart Snacks in School" rule. It sets limits for sodium, total sugar and calories on snack items, including those sold in school

vending machines. Beverages are limited to water and low-fat or fat free milk and 100 percent fruit/vegetable juice. The rule is currently open for public comment.

Canteen acquires Stansfield Vending

► Canteen Vending Services Inc. has purchased the foodservice operations of Stansfield Vending Inc. of La Crosse, Wis., according to Financial Tech Spotlight.

The sale did not include the music and games division.



Hostess announces brand bidders

► Hostess Brands Inc. announced stalking horse bidders for many of its brands. Under the first stalking horse agreement, McKee Foods Corp. has agreed to pay \$27.5 million for the Drake's®

Five Star Food Service acquires Light Vending Co.'s Douglas, Ga. operation

► Five Star Food Service Inc., based in Chattanooga, Tenn., recently acquired the Light Vending Co.'s Douglas, Ga. operation from owner Brantley McMinn, for an undisclosed sum. The 9-routes, warehouse and management employees will all be retained and the assets and associates folded into Five Star Food Service.



Visa, MasterCard allow surcharge fee

► Beginning in January 2013, Visa® and MasterCard® started allowing merchants to pass along payment processing costs to consumers who pay with a credit card. The surcharge, or "checkout fee," can increase a credit card purchase amount by as much as 4 percent (maximum allowed).

Master Wholesale and Vending acquires Jones Vend and OCS

► Master Wholesale and Vending Supply, Inc. based in Jackson, Wis., has entered into an agreement to acquire Jones Vend and OCS Distributing, Inc. of St. Louis, Mo.

California requires commissions in writing

► A new labor code in California requires employers paying any type of commission (full or partial) to present a written commission plan signed by both the employee and employer. The

law went into effect Jan. 1, 2013 and violations result in a statutory penalty of \$100 for each aggrieved employee per pay period for the initial violation and \$200 for each subsequent violation.



Crane to buy MEI for \$820 million

► Crane Co. has signed an agreement to purchase 100 percent of the equity interests in MEI Conlux Holdings, Inc. and its affiliate MEI Conlux Holdings, Inc. from Bain Capital and Advantage Partners for approximately \$820 million on a cash free and debt free basis. The Federal Trade Commission is reviewing the sale and its approval is expected in the second quarter.

Sacramento Bottler Sells to Coca-Cola Co.

► California-based Sacramento Coca-Cola Bottling Co., the sixth-largest independent Coca-Cola bottler in the U.S., was recently acquired by the Coca-Cola Co. for an undisclosed sum.



Performance Food buys Fox River Foods

► Performance Food Group, Inc., the parent company of Vistar, has entered into an agreement to purchase Fox River Foods, Inc., an independently owned broadline foodservice distribution company serving customers in seven states throughout the upper Midwest. The transaction will close in 2013.

People in the News

Crane names Max Mitchell president

Crane Co. announced the appointment of Max H. Mitchell as president and chief operating officer.



Mitchell

Michiel Herkemij CEO leaves D.E MASTER BLENDEES 1753

Michiel Herkemij, CEO of D.E MASTER BLENDEES 1753, left the company by mutual consent at the end of 2012. Jan Bennink, non-executive chairman of the board, will assume the CEO's responsibilities until a new CEO has been appointed.

Intrix names senior vice president

Intrix Technology, Inc. announced that Phillip Head, former head of sales for Accelerated Payment Technologies, has joined the company as senior vice president.



Head

Mark Goodman becomes president and CEO of Boyer Coffee

Colorado-based Boyer Coffee Co. announced that Mark Goodman has been appointed chief executive officer and president.

Hillshire tabs Kraft's Brian Davison

The Hillshire Brands Co. announced that Brian Davison has joined the company as senior vice president, corporate strategy and development. Davison joins Hillshire from Kraft Foods, Inc. where he was vice president of strategic planning.



Davison

Eric Dell joins NAMA government affairs

The National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA) recently announced the appointment of W. Eric Dell to the position of senior vice president of government affairs.



Dell

Lock America CEO steps back

Frank Minnella, CEO of Lock America International, Inc. of Corona, Calif. is stepping back from daily involvement in company operations to move to an advisory strategic role.



Minnella

GMCW announces new sales directors and Northeast vice president

Grindmaster-Cecilware Corp. has appointed Kristian Kuh Western U.S. area sales director, Kenny Stratton central U.S. area sales director, and David Haimes to area vice president, Northeast.

5 key growth trends in 2013

Vending has always been a customer-oriented industry, offering the public convenient food and beverage options at an affordable price — anytime, anywhere. The industry has evolved over the years from the traditional coin-operated vending machine to unattended micro markets, cashless vending, touch screens and coffee services, to name a few.

So how will the industry continue to evolve in 2013? We asked the experts, and they collectively agree that it must advance by giving customers what they want — including convenience, value and quality.

“When I look at our industry and our three business lines [vending, micro markets and coffee service], I tend to look at it holistically, and think we will remain strong with some growth in 2013,” said Carla Balakgie, president and CEO of the National Automatic Merchandising Association (NAMA). “We are a consumer-oriented industry, so if we give our customers what they want, our businesses will grow. You have to think about where your outlets are placed, what the customer base is, what’s going to sell. There may not be one solution, so diversify your business lines and diversify your product mix within them in order to succeed.”

So what does the customer want? And how can the industry continue to succeed? Here are five ways the vending industry can meet today’s consumer needs and continue to flourish in 2013:

by Laura DiGiulio, Contributing Editor

Vending, micro markets and office coffee service thought leaders speak out about what will drive the industry’s growth in the coming year.

1. Healthy Choices

Long thought of as machines that only dispense cookies, candy, chips and sugary beverages, vending machines are including a wider variety of product selections following a change in consumer snacking preferences. Global research company, Hartman Group, recently released a snacking report that said 57 percent of Americans rated having healthy snack options as important or very important.

Another 2012 research report, by Symphony IRI Group, shows 87 percent of consumers are trying to eat healthier. Many operators have already jumped on the bandwagon of providing healthy options, but in order to stay ahead of the game, the industry as a whole must show it is nutritionally responsible.

“As an industry, we have to take a very proactive role in showing that we are a part of the solution, instead of a ‘devil’ that only offers unhealthy options, especially in special markets such as schools and health care facilities,” said Balakgie. “If we show that we are part of the solution and not the problem, various public and political administrators will see us as an active partner, and will be more likely to support a blended set of offerings that provide consumers what they want, including healthy options.”

Of course there will always be those consumers who would like to purchase a traditional snack, such as chips or a candy bar; however, more and more Americans are becoming health conscious. In order to increase sales, operators should offer a wide variety that includes both healthy and traditional options to ensure a sale every time.

**WE need to
show we are
part of the
solution**



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2. Cashless Vending

For years, vending was a coin-operated industry; however, fewer and fewer people carry around cash or coins these days — especially the younger generation.

“Cashless payment, enabled currently in less than 5 percent of all vending machines, will continue to grow as vending patron demographics shift,” said Chuck Reed, director, marketing and sales operations support for MEI, a manufacturer of cashless technology. “Generation X and Y consumers are clearly predisposed to carrying less cash and they are demanding alternate payment methods on vending machines. Vending operators will need to accept any form of payment, cash or cashless, in order to compete with retail establishments.”

The 2012 *Automatic Merchandiser* State of the Vending Industry report showed there are less than 200,000 vending machines in the field that currently offer cashless as a payment option. Compare that to market research from Javelin Strategy & Research which reports that in 2011, only 27 percent of all point-of-sale purchases were made with cash and you see the problem. The number of cashless transactions is expected to drop to 23 percent by 2017, so the industry will need to make this payment technology a priority in 2013, in order stay competitive. Otherwise, what will keep a consumer with no cash from going somewhere else?

While credit transaction fees may be a concern, payment solutions providers are making this option more affordable.

“Cashless payments must become the norm for vending to moving forward,” said Anant Agrawal, co-founder and chief marketing officer of Cantaloupe Systems.

“With increased pricing, and changing demographics, it’s the only way to keep sales minimally at the same level as they are today. With two tier pricing [where consumers get a discount for paying with cash], the increased transaction costs can now be shared, making it more affordable.”

3. Micro Markets

As the fastest growing segment of the vending industry today, micro market placements will continue to increase in 2013. According to *Automatic Merchandiser* research, 5 percent of operators added micro markets in 2011. Out of those who do not operate micro markets, 16 percent planned to add them in 2013.

Although increasing in popularity, micro markets will not replace vending all together, but instead serve as an enhancement for the industry.

"I am very optimistic about the future of micro markets," said Paul Schlossberg, an industry consultant and president of D/FW Consulting. "Micro markets offer a much better shopping environment for consumers, due to the fact that we can offer a much wider range of product categories and package sizes. Sales results have been very positive for operators, as the investment is much less and the payback is

much faster. I would recommend that operators carefully assess their locations to see where this alternative can be deployed."

One of the driving factors behind the growth of micro markets is the variety of products they hold, meeting a spectrum of consumer needs.

"Micro markets are a great opportunity. The customer satisfaction is incredible," said Randy Parks, president and founder of ProStar Services in Carrollton, Texas. "There is also so much room for growth here, it's crazy. It's the best thing to happen to the industry since glass-front venders."

4. Machine Upgrades

Customers are no longer satisfied with the traditional vending machines. Much like all other technologies and industries, everything has become bigger and better with more bells and whistles. And the vending industry must keep up.

"Consumers have a choice, and our industry is competing everyday with other retail channels," said Brad Ellis, president of Crane Merchandising Systems and NAMA chairman emeritus. "Convenience stores have transformed themselves over the past decade; while the average vending machine is 12-plus years old. You can take an old machine, clean it up, paint it, add new plastic front panels and sell it to locations as like new, but that's not changing the

consumer experience. Today, technology advancements have become much more cost effective and reliable, including cashless, touch screens, wireless technology and brand promotion, and are truly changing the consumer vending experience."

Although it may require investment, this advancement in technology will help the vending industry differentiate itself, catch the consumers' eye, improve the experience and drive more sales.



5. Coffee

How would the world survive without coffee? The customer will definitely want to continue receiving their morning fix in 2013.

Recent NAMA-sponsored research about the coffee trends among consumers reveals that only 41 percent of consumers have access to coffee at work. Only 22 percent of those locations have gourmet or specialty coffee, which is the most highly consumed and preferred coffee drink. There's certainly opportunity for growth in the coffee service segment.

OCS remains strong segment

"We expect to grow 25 percent this coming year," said Scott Guardino, vice president and general manager for Paramount Companies, a coffee service provider. "This will hopefully result from expanding our geographies, sales force and product offerings, as well as forging into more micro markets and foodservice locations, such as restaurants and hotels."

Knowing what to change and what to keep while running a business is the key to succeeding. In 2013, customers will want more healthy products, additional payment options, better coffee and technologically advanced equipment, including micro markets. Operators can expect a good price and continued profits for meeting these needs. | ◀

Laura DiGiulio is an experienced writer on various topics. She earned a BA in Journalism from The Ohio State University. She may be reached at digiulio.3@gmail.com.



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Technology spells **success** for Virginia operators

Partners Scott Halloran, left, and Michael Calkins continue to focus on enhancing their business with the latest trends in vending.

By Emily Refermat, Editor

How two vending operators who believed in the value of technology partnered to beat the recession and become the largest independent vending operation in Richmond, Va.

Scott Halloran and Michael Calkins give new meaning to the term ‘friendly competitors.’ In 2011, after successfully running their own vending operations for years, they merged their companies and became a n11-route operation with 40 micro markets, serving the greater Richmond, Va. area.

“We were two like-minded local companies using technology,” said Halloran. To him and Calkins, it seemed better to become partners than stay competitors.

Merging allowed Trolley House to take advantage of route driver efficiencies and additional locations. It also helped the operation survive the Great Recession. “It [the recession] drove two or three other vending operators out of business in our area,” said Calkins. Trolley House, however, emerged strong and prosperous.

Better hours in vending

Halloran began his vending company, Fresh Direct, in 1995 as a way to make money while he was in college. He had four drink machines in Richmond and serviced them on weekends. After college he worked in the restaurant industry briefly before getting married and realizing vending offered him better work hours. That’s when he dedicated himself to growing Fresh Direct full-time.

Sometimes Halloran can’t believe how different business was then. “When I started in 1995, there were just...12-ounce cans, small chips, candy, cookies and pastries...no website, no

marketing plan, no cell phones...we were working off pagers and an answering service,” he remembered. As Fresh Direct grew, Halloran adapted to these new technologies, including the need for vending management software, which he added in 2006.

After a number of acquisitions, he also decided to rebrand the company to better incorporate new and old routes. In 2009, he changed the name to Halloran Refreshment Services.

Always with an eye to the future, Halloran knew he wanted to grow and was looking at new product delivery methods in the industry, which sparked the next chapter in his vending operation — a merger and micro markets.

Employee turned owner

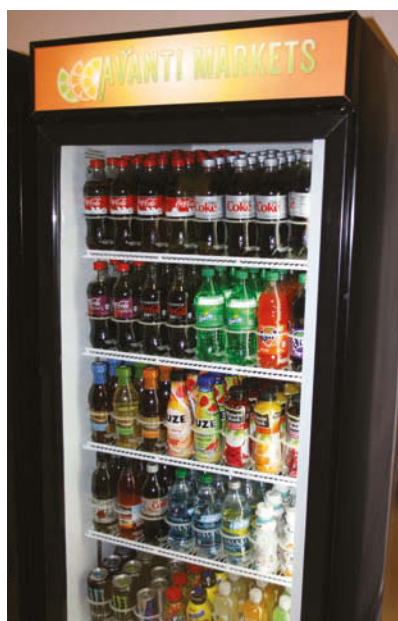
Calkins started with Vending Services of Richmond in 2006 after a career in sales and business management. He was attracted to the business after closely watching his brother-in-law build it over 28 years.

“The company always managed to do well and seemed like an excellent opportunity to own a business,” said Calkins. “There are not many businesses you can own that bring a smile to someone’s face,” he added.

In 2008, when his brother-in-law wanted to sell, Calkins found an interested partner, and bought the company. Almost immediately, he started making changes that would help the operation expand. The biggest change was to add vending management software to the entire operation. “It [vending management software] helps to give you control of the business,” said Calkins.

Wanting control of the business, and using technology to get it, was one of the things Calkins and Halloran had in common. They met in 2010 to discuss the latest exciting trend in vending — micro markets. As they talked it became obvious Halloran and Calkins valued the same business principles and were headed in a similar direction. “We both had Streamware, did OCS, vending and were going to jump into micro markets,” said Halloran. “It seemed to make sense to become partners instead of remain competitors.”

On July 1, 2011, Halloran Refreshment Services and Vending Services of Richmond merged to become Trolley House Refreshments. Halloran and Calkins appointed themselves managing directors and Calkins’ old partner went back into corporate America.



Micro markets allow a wide variety of different packages sizes and product brands.

Micro markets take off for Trolley

Before the merger, both Halloran and Calkins wanted to explore micro markets. They had each installed four Avanti Markets within a year and were seeing great success. Within two years of becoming Trolley House, they'd added 32 additional markets.

"Micro markets allowed us to expand our products," said Calkins. Trolley House could offer customers 400 products in the markets. And many of the healthier items also did well in vending, if the price point wasn't too high. The partners found products like string cheese, rice chips and protein bars crossed over well.

Markets increase food sales

Food items sold well in micro markets. For Trolley House, food represents 30 percent of micro market sales, while only 2 to 3 percent in vending.

"The huge increase in fresh food usage challenged us internally at first," said Halloran. Trolley House had to add large walk-in coolers, create refrigerated zones in the trucks and add systems and security to track food temperature. It does not operate its own commissary, instead buying food from a third-party.

Every month, Trolley House continues to add micro markets. Ideal locations include 150 or more people who work for one company within a semi-secure area. Public locations don't work well and increase shrinkage.

New location promotion

Promoting a new micro market is important to success. "We always hold a grand opening the first day," said Calkins. Trolley House sets the stage with balloons, flyers, raffle prizes and edible samples. The grand opening allows Trolley House to teach location employees how to use the micro market kiosk and put money on their Avanti card. About 50 percent of employees use the market cards to pay instead of cash or credit.



Trolley House management and staff work closely to keep operations running smoothly.

Operation Profile: Trolley House Refreshments

Owners: Scott Halloran and Michael Calkins	Founded: 2011
Headquarters: Richmond, Va.	Employees: 27
	Routes: 11
	Annual Sales: Not revealed

OCS Success



For Trolley House, office coffee service increases each year. It offers a private label, Trolley Coffee and Tea, as well as single-cup brewers like Keurig and Tassimo. "They are both excellent," said Calkins who likes taking specialty drink brewers to tastings. "People get very excited. The majority of Trolley House OCS business is still fractional pack coffee, however, two to one, versus single cup."

While Trolley House recognizes that micro markets have a place in the successful vending business model, vending is still a strong opportunity. "Vending is never going away, so we're investing big in vending too," said Halloran.

Vending management and prekitting

It wasn't just micro market technology that helped Trolley House grow, but also vending management soft-

ware and prekitting. Both Halloran and Calkins added Streamware VendMax software to their operations. It helped the two owners develop route efficiencies and save on labor. Halloran calculates the return on investment, with just those benefits, was 24 months. There are also other efficiencies that are harder to measure, such as the benefits and savings related to prekitting.

Halloran started prekitting in 2009, while Calkins didn't start until the two operations merged into Trolley House. Prekitting had many benefits, including allowing Trolley House to customize products by location. A location could make special requests and have unique products, rather than what was available on the route driver's rolling warehouse. "It becomes the customer's machine," said Calkins.

A year after the merger, Trolley House took its prekitting program to the next level by installing LightSpeed Automation, a pick-to-light system for the vending warehouse.

"It was one of the easiest technology roll outs I've ever experienced," said Halloran about LightSpeed.

Not only has LightSpeed allowed Trolley House to prekit products more quickly, but it created a centralized point where all the data is funneled. The Avanti and Streamware data both funnel into the LightSpeed system.

"We even created a committee where the warehouse manager meets monthly with the vending manager and micro market manager to discuss issues," said Halloran. Issues might include bad data, shrinkage or slow

selling products. The managers analyze the bottom selling units for vending and micro markets on a month to month basis and change out the slowest moving products to provide better variety to the customer. “We’re finally catching up to retail,” said Halloran, “we’re going to do a much better job moving forward.”

Halloran and Calkins have found their employees very helpful throughout the technology rollouts. “We’ve got a really good team,” Halloran said. Trolley House has almost zero turnover with most drivers working 5 to 20 years. It offers drivers full benefits and competitive salaries.

Adding the cashless component

While Trolley House has always been an early adopter of technology it didn’t add many cashless payment

Staying in touch with customers

Trolley House has a Website it uses to communicate with customers. It presents contest winners and lots of information about the different services Trolley House offers. Next year, Halloran hopes to add online ordering capabilities and connect it to social media.

Besides the Website, Trolley House regularly emails its clients, and employs a customer service representative to answer calls. It also does local radio ads to stay in the clients’ awareness.

options to its machines. “I was never excited about cashless platforms,” said Halloran, “until VendScreen.”

Halloran likes that VendScreen is built on an upgradable Android platform, it’s interactive, unlike traditional electronic payment options, and it links back into Trolley House’s back-end management software. It will even allow Trolley House to display calorie and nutrition information necessary to meet the pending calorie disclosure rules. “Finally, there was a value added. I’d be a fool not to do this,” concluded Halloran.

Trolley House is the story of unlikely partners. Both Halloran and Calkins are vending industry veterans and forward thinkers who were able to set aside being competitors and become co-owners. By embracing new technologies from management software to micro markets to new payment platforms, they’ve reaped the benefits with higher profits and tremendous growth. | ◀

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A well-structured service card ensures product sales match money collected.

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How to maintain inventory and pricing controls

By Dominic Finelli, Contributing Editor

Focusing on asset management is a must, even if the small vending operation isn't yet ready to invest in vending management software.

I have always believed that there is no right or wrong way to operate a vending company, but only whatever way works for each particular operation.

However, after more than 40 years of running my own vending company, I have found there are a number of things that everyone should do to make their company successful. One of the most important aspects to success is to have inventory controls in the stockroom, in the route trucks and in the vending machines. Moni-

toring these areas allows operators to control waste, cash and the number of SKUs they carry.

Technology is not a one size fits all

We have been bombarded in recent years with all kinds of new technology to help us achieve proper inventory, reduce waste and create cash accountability, but there are vendors who can't afford the upgrades or have volumes half a million or less, which might not warrant the investment. This article is for them.

If an operator is planning to continually grow his or her business, then technology is great, and he or she should get on board now and make handhelds, machine monitoring and other innovations part of the strategy for growth. For those finding it hard to grow, or who can't afford to incorporate all the new technology yet, it is still possible to have very tight controls of inventory and cash by doing some very basic things.

How to start asset management

The first thing an operator needs to do is to take inventory of the stock room every week, on the same day, by product and price point. Make sure the route drivers are charged with the product they take out of the stockroom on a daily basis by product price point. Operators should also make every route driver take inventory of the product they have on their trucks on a weekly basis, on the same day as the stockroom, also by price point.

Understanding price points

What do I mean when I say 'by price point'? Start by taking a look at the vending product list. Let's say there are five different price points. For example, all gum and mints are one price, all candy (and I would include

crackers in this category) are another price, all same-size chips are a price, all long shelf life snacks like cookies are one price, and all fresh pastries with a short shelf life are one price. That's a total of five different price points. When buying new products, operators can choose those that fit into these price point categories.

Price points at the point of sale

If not already doing so, operators must simplify the vending machine and create the five price points out on the street. For instance, let's take a machine with five shelves each with 35 slots, including five for gum and mints. In our example, an operator could divide the slots this way: eight spirals for chips, seven spirals for long life, five for fresh pastries, five for gum and mints and 10 for the candy category, which includes crackers. Have each category filled to capacity.

Also, don't neglect the changer fund. Create an inventory for that in each machine as well. At each service, the changer should get filled to that pre-determined level.

Creating a service card

At this point, I recommend using a service card. It should have six columns, one where the driver can write the date the machine was serviced and then one for each of the different price point categories along with the inventory for that price point in that machine. When the machine is serviced, the driver will fill in the date and how much of each product (based on the price point category) was placed into the machine to completely fill it. These numbers are considered the sales for that service. The money collected should equal those sales figures. In order to make sure that the sales figure equals the cash collected, the driver needs to put money back into the coin box for any slots left empty so it will equal the selling price of that product.

CREATE a culture of accountability for employees.

Operators will be able to easily checkout the routes. Start with the truck inventory, add the product requisitioned during the week, next subtract the ending inventory and finally, multiply the amounts used by the price points to match against cash collected. It also makes it easier to check the machines behind the drivers to see if they are filling the machines correctly and if the cash in the machine, at the time it's checked, matches the sales.

Adhering to this method will produce not only better control of product inventory, but also create a culture of accountability for employees.

Vending management software certainly has a place in the vending operation, but even without it, it's possible to have tight asset control. Categorizing products by price is an essential piece to keeping a well-run stockroom and vending machine, as well as making sure there's cash accountability at the point of sale. ◀



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

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

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CTW grows 15 percent

The 2012 National Automatic Merchandising Association CoffeeTea&Water event in New Orleans Nov. 13 to 15 centered around coffee service specific education.



▲ Ric Rhinehart of the Specialty Coffee Association of America reported on trends in coffee over three decades. He showed that after 1975, when bad weather in coffee producing areas drove coffee price increases, consumption decreased as manufacturers introduced less expensive coffee types. In 2011, consumption levels are nearly as high as in 1975, according to Rhinehart, thanks in large part to chains like Starbucks who educated consumers about coffee quality. However, Rhinehart claimed a dark cloud is on the horizon as cheaper coffee types, like Naturals and Robustas, are increasingly imported to the U.S. and served to consumers. "The long term impact is that people will stop drinking coffee," Rhinehart said.

▶ Eric Watts of Royal Cup Coffee in Birmingham, Ala., shared his experience of implementing coffee service installation standards to avoid leaks in equipment.



▲ Jeffrey Maloof of Isuzu Commercial Truck of America discussed Coffee Service Trucks with attendees at the 2012 CTW. He reported that gasoline engines have really improved. Alternative fuels, in his opinion, need more time to evolve to be a truly viable option, while hybrids present more opportunity. He encouraged operators not to skimp on truck accessories like the radio and air conditioning as they can use these as perks to retain employees. Additionally, Maloof reminded operators about the importance of proper maintenance, to strictly follow Department of Transportation regulations and the benefits of telemetrics, like GPS units in trucks.



◀ Jerome Gray of Impact Office in Beltsville, Md. discussed the best practices of a service department with CTW attendees.



▶ Ken Shea of DS Waters and 2012 co-chair of the CTW show reminisced about the OCS business in 1992, comparing it to the OCS business of today.



▲ Attendees of CTW and the co-located International Bottled Water Association show shared success stories at a reception on Tuesday evening of CoffeeTea&Water 2012 in New Orleans, La.



▲ Mike Dabadie of Heart+Mind Strategies presented NAMA sponsored research on the office coffee service strengths and opportunities. After a quantitative online survey of coffee service consumers and decision makers, seven strategies emerged.

1. Opportunities exist to broaden beverage offerings, such as with iced coffees.
2. Recognize single-serve systems are increasing, whereas pour-over brewers are decreasing.
3. It's time to expand on benefits of coffee beyond productivity as its seen by consumers as reinvigorating.
4. Look to raise location's expectations of coffee service, as expectations are currently low, and higher expectations mean it's a greater value.
5. Solidify relationships and leverage industry knowledge to tell accounts about their employees.
6. Link water service more strongly with tea and coffee.
7. Make a business and personal case for sustainability.



▲ Female professionals working in vending networked over breakfast as members of the Women of the Industry (WIN) – National Automatic Merchandising Association networking group.



▲ Fred Steiner, founder of Imperial Coffee and Services in Toronto, Ontario, Canada, and the 2012 Coffee Legend shared his philosophies on business with CTW attendees. First, OCS is a service business, not a coffee commodity selling business, so never lead with price. Second, don't be afraid to raise prices. Third, coffee in the workplace is a viable business, and it will survive. And finally, hold fast to selling quality.

"How did I become a coffee legend?" asked Steiner. "By getting to the top and staying there," he told attendees.



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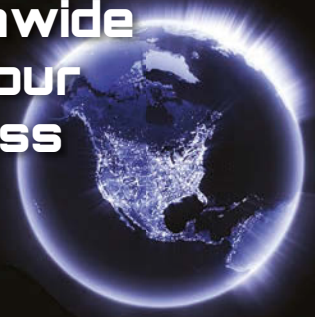
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2012



2012 ROUTE DRIVER OF THE YEAR
QUARTERLY WINNER

Jim Milton, **Fox Vending, Inc., Bridgeview, Ill.**

By Emily Refermat, Editor

He's now working for the second generation, but is as thorough and adaptive as ever.

IF A JOB makes you happy you never work a day in your life. That's the motto of Jim Milton, a route driver at Fox Vending, Inc. in Bridgeview, Ill. and the fourth quarter winner of the 2012 Route Driver of the Year contest.

Milton has worked for Fox Vending for 36 years. In fact, the current president Jennifer Fox, remembers seeing him in the warehouse when she visited the family business as a young child. Now at the helm, Fox is grateful to have a dedicated, loyal and hard working employee whose customers never complain about him. "From the day I started working here 12 years ago Milton is the guy that I can always count on to take care of our customers and get the job done," said Fox.

Milton was offered management positions in the past, but he loves what he does — working with people. He also has a great sense of product inventory needs. "He goes out in the morning, and comes back without a case of pop on the truck," said Fox, "because he knows his customers."

Great customer service includes communication

It's not just Milton's dedication to the job, but also his attitude. Milton doesn't call in sick, is always on time and is loyal. "(He) is proactive at solving problems," said Fox, "(and) makes suggestions on how we can do better."

If he sees an issue at an account, he keeps Fox updated, instead of being passive and waiting for management to notice. A recent example was a location that kept unplugging a soda machine. Milton brought it to Fox's attention and based on the location's profits, they decided to move it.

Milton is methodical and thorough, but can still adapt to new technology, such as when Fox Vending added MEI's EASITRAX vending management software. "Going to handhelds from paper tickets was intimidating for some drivers," said Fox, "Milton could have pushed back, but he was onboard and willing to learn."

“Milton is the guy that I can always count on to take care of our customers.”

Fourth quarter vending route driver award

Milton is being recognized by Kraft Vending & OCS as well as *Automatic Merchandiser* as the fourth quarter 2012 winner with a chance at the Route Driver of the Year finalist spot and trip to the National Automatic Merchandising Association OneShow in April. 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.

"Just his long term dedication to our company is an example of how he's gone above and beyond," added Fox, who was thrilled to hear he'd won. "Honestly? I have no idea what we'll do when he decides to retire." ◀

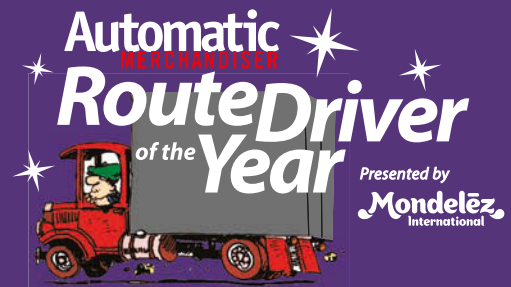
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Visit vendingmarketwatch.com/awards/route-driver-of-the-year to nominate a driver or view complete contest rules.



Nominations must include route driver name, company name, address and telephone of the nominee as well as the name, company name, address and telephone number of the person submitting the nomination. Nominees must be employed as a route driver of a vending operation on April 20, 2014. Entries will be reviewed by Automatic Merchandiser personnel ("the Judges"). Determination of the winners shall be made by the Judges in their sole and absolute discretion, and such determination shall be final and binding.

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