Issue 18: Spring 2015

The Perspective

Published By:
Pinnacle CORPORATION
www.pinncorp.com

A Publication for the Convenience Store and Petroleum Marketing Industries

Do Mobile Payments Fit Into Your Strategy?

Weighing the benefits vs. the risks

Is Switching To EMV Worth It?

What you need to know before this year's compliance deadline

Marketing Loyalty

The secret to keep your customers coming back

+

Vendor Contract Renegotiations

Balancing Your Fuel Inventory

Pinnacle Summit 2015:

Turning data into a competitive advantage

WHAT'S YOUR PERSPECTIVE?

Do you have an idea for a topic you would like to see covered in a future issue of *The Perspective?*

Let us know!

EMAIL TOPIC IDEAS TO:
cli@pinncorp.com

WHAT'S INSIDE...

FROM BOB'S PERSPECTIVE

I have long spoken of the Pinnacle way of partnering with our clients. This comes in many forms, and remains a persistent theme for us.

Certainly, one visible way for us to demonstrate this partnership is with the product maintenance releases that we turn out quarter after quarter! Some examples of enhanced features delivered to our clients with their maintenance releases include: Palm POS support of ApplePay and Google Wallet (to better prepare our clients for the impending mobile revolution); and a recent addition to the Manager Workstation product now provides the ability to scan lottery numbers into the daily paperwork, not only increasing efficiency in a painfully manual process, but also eliminating instances of human error.

Late last year, we received several calls from clients about a new incentive program being offered by Altria that required some detailed reporting of scan data. Quickly working with these clients, we realized that our BI tool, EPM, could be enhanced to deliver this important capability. It now has the ability to export scan data, allowing Pinnacle clients to qualify for various vendor incentives not previously within reach, such as the current program being offered by Altria Group.

Staying close to our clients' needs is critical, and again, we have many ways to do this. One is to attend the NACS SOI conference in Chicago, which we did again this year. It's a great time to visit with a number of our clients, attend meetings that outline the details of how the industry performed in the past year, and to get a refresh on the issues most important to our industry and clients. This year was one of the very best I've attended. If you were there, you know what I'm talking about. If you weren't, you should get it on your calendar for next spring!

Instead of talking about "peak energy", there was a discussion on "peak demand" for petroleum. How will that impact your business? Another topic was marketing to a broader demographic group – especially the Millennials. They drive less, get their driver's license later in life, and generally are more interested in their smart phone and iPad than horsepower and gear ratios. It's hard for me to relate to that, as when I was their age, my world revolved around driving the loop on Saturday night, as my weekly entertainment and escape from "old people". These Millennials look at the world as their "loop", have more entertainment options than we had baseball cards, and escape with their ear buds and Beats.

Robert S. Johnson
President
The Pinnacle Corporation

How will you change to effectively market to them? I certainly don't have the answer, but I do know that our clients will find a willing partner with Pinnacle to help them in this journey.

Best,

FROM OUR PERSPECTIVE

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PINNACLE CALENDAR

COME SEE US

MAY 5-8
SIGMA SPRING CONVENTION
http://exchange.sigma.org/2015springconvention/home
Amelia Island, Florida

MAY 6-8
SOUTHWEST FUEL & CONVENIENCE EXPO
BOOTH #906
http://www.sw-expo.com
Fort Worth, Texas

JUNE 10
CENEX BUYERS FAIR
BOOTH #40
http://www.cvent.com/events/2015-cenex-buyers-fair/event-summary-bd907e1e9d304691898f99d505eec623.aspx
Sioux Falls, South Dakota

SEPTEMBER 14-17
PINNACLE SUMMIT 2015
http://www.pinncorp.com/Summit2015
Southlake, Texas
Details on page 17

OCTOBER 11-14
NACS SHOW
BOOTH #4726
http://www.nacsonline.com/NACSShow
Las Vegas, Nevada

WHAT'S NEW?

Events:

Retail Operations Committee Meeting:

- The Pinnacle Retail Operations and the Fuel The Retail Operations group was hosted by Green Valley Grocery in Las Vegas, Nevada, this past February 24-25. The group reviewed progress since last year's 2014 event, discussed and analytzed topics related to current industry issues and trends, and prioritized pressing needs.

Fuel Solutions Committee Meeting:

- The Fuel Solutions Advisory Committee was hosted at the Pinnacle Corporation corporate office in Arlington, Texas, March 25-26. Similar to the Retail Operations Group, the Fuel Solutions Committee reviewed progress, discussed related topics to the current industry, and prioritized pressing and strategic needs into a top 5 list to be planned into upcoming projects.

POS Solutions Group Meeting:

- Hosted by CHS, Inc., The Pinnacle POS Solutions Group held its annual meeting in St. Paul, Minnesota in late April.

Retail Marketing Group Meeting:

- The Retail Marketing Group is scheduled to meet in St. Louis, Missouri in early May, and will be hosted by Western Oil.

WHAT'S NEW? *(continued)*

Pinnacle Solutions Updates

Fuel Smart v6.3 Product Update:

- *NEW Batch Validation Process to Post Payments:*
  - >> With this new validation process in place, an automatic procedure will run prior to posting a batch. There is also a manual process that can be run. However, the automatic process will always be run. This process will check that the payments and invoices processed in the specific batch do not have transactions out of balance or any other problems within the batch. If there is any transaction in the batch that does not look correct, then a report will show these transactions.
- *NEW Best Fuel Cost Report:*
  - >> A new report that will display the best fuel cost based off of contracted prices or predefined formulas.
- *NEW Screen for Fuel Cost Formula:*
  - >> In Maintenance & Setup>Fuel Cost, a new Fuel Cost Formula screen has been created. In this screen, you can define formulas that can be associated with a specific supplier or supplier/terminal/product. At this time, the formulas defined are for reporting purposes only, and will not be reflected in fuel costs. The new report in which these formulas can be reviewed is Fuel Payable>Reports>Formula Based.
- *NEW Driver Comment Importing:*
  - >> Driver comments that are entered in Andale` for pulled and dropped products are now being imported into Fuel Smart.
  - >> Driver comments entered into Andale` during the pulled and dropped process will now be available in the AOD Edit screen and in the AOD Import Report.
- *NEW AOD Validation Options:*
  - >> Fuel Smart users will now have the ability to determine which AOD import items they would like validated during the import process.
- *NEW Invoice Option:*
  - >> Ability to keep a sales invoice in sync when changes are made to the BL.
- *NEW Global Setup Setting:*
  - >> Added new configuration setting in the global setup. When configured to do so, Fuel Smart will keep the sales invoice in sync with all BL changes, regardless of what stage of the process the sales invoice is in. Meaning if it has been printed, you can still sync the changes.

Handheld Lottery Beta:

- *NEW Handheld Lottery Added to Manager Workstation™*
  - >> Currently in Beta testing, the new Handheld Lottery extends the existing Manager Workstation™ back office capabilities by providing a means to scan lottery ticket numbers into the daily paperwork. By replacing the laborious task of manually transcribing and entering the ticket data into their report, convenience store operators not only increase their efficiency, but practically eliminate any instances of human error in the data entry process.

Quick Conversion for New Palm Client:

- After acquiring 42 stores, a new Pinnacle client faced a compressed timeframe (less than 4 weeks) to convert the stores' POS systems. Pinnacle's Professional Services and Client Support groups went to work planning, configuring, and testing the POS system prior to an around-the-clock rolling conversion that took less than 1 week, which resulted in a smooth transition for their business. ℗

Accepting Mobile Payments

Weighing the benefits versus the risks

By Denise Lewis, POS Product Manager, The Pinnacle Corporation

You are likely to hear about new and innovative mobile payment options. Mobile payments are all over the news, and are now being advertised at many national retail stores. Loyalty programs are adding mobile options, and you may start to wonder: Should you jump on the bandwagon? That depends on how mobile fits into your overall strategy. At the very least, you need some facts to make an informed decision.

Let's start by describing what mobile payments are. As the name implies, 'mobile payment' refers to a method of payment that is associated with your mobile device, usually your cell phone, but it can also apply to tablets or other forms of portable technology. But, not all mobile payments are created equally. Some mimic the card-based transaction by scanning a barcode, some invoke an application that provides you a code to enter. And still, others offer a mobile wallet with an array of payment choices; all of which utilize standard debit/credit processing infrastructure, but vary regarding what data is exchanged during the transaction, or how it is presented.

All of these may be appealing to you for different reasons, and you may want to consider implementing one or more of them in your business.

Scan model

This model began with loyalty programs in the 1990s as a key fob scan to identify a loyal customer and give them a discount or let them apply earned rewards to their transaction. It evolved into a mobile payment model, where essentially the plastic card was replaced by a virtual card account that is represented by a barcode image which can be accessed on a smart phone. The barcode image can be read by a 2-D image reader when the barcode is displayed on the screen of a cell phone. ***Key to making it work: a Point Of Sale (POS) system that supports a 2D image reader.***

Code entry model

Also known as alternative ID, a numeric code entered at the POS, on the PIN pad, or at the dispenser is another emerging trend in mobile payments. The code can be a static number, such as your phone number, that is used by the processing host to identify and use your real account number for the transaction. The code can also be a dynamic one-time use code that will expire. What makes it 'mobile' is that the code is delivered to the consumer via an app on their smart phone. Other technologies may also be involved, such as beacons and GPS, to help identify the location of the consumer. ***Key to making it work: a POS system and a payment processor that supports alternate ID.***

Mobile wallet model

This is the model that Apple Pay and Google Wallet are utilizing, as well as many others who are jumping into the very fragmented mobile payments market. It basically uses your cell phone as a substitute virtual wallet, where you can register your plastic bank cards and select a card for payment with a touch of your phone. ***Key to making it work: a payment terminal or PIN pad that supports Near Field Communication (NFC).***

Now, let's take a look at the main benefits and risks of these options to help you make sense of it all.

Benefits

Consider some of the reasons you might be interested in supporting mobile payments in your c-stores. First of all, it's cool and trendy! It could help your brand image in being perceived as forward-thinking and 'in tune' with the Millennial Generation – that segment of 80 million consumers entering their prime spending years, that view technology as a time-saving convenience.

This leads us to the second important reason – convenience and ease of use. All mobile solutions claim simplicity and convenience among their main attributes. One thing they all have in common is that they remove the dependency on a physical payment, theoretically reducing transaction time by eliminating the need to reach for a wallet or purse, and then locating the desired form of payment. Whether or not you buy into the argument that it is easier or faster to use your phone rather than a plastic card for payment - all that really matters is that some portion of your customers believe it, and they will gravitate to stores that let them have the option to use their favorite mobile payment option.

The third, and perhaps, most significant reason you may want to support mobile in your stores is because it offers your customers a more secure form of payment. All the mobile payment models share the same benefit of not presenting a physical card to the cashier, which is an added security since any time you hand over your card to someone else, even briefly, there is a chance for fraud. In addition, both the code entry model and the mobile wallet approach limit fraud opportunities by transmitting a token rather than real account data to the host. Tokenization adds an additional layer of security to a mobile transaction. By replacing something of high value, which in this case is the account number, with something of lower value, such as a limited-time use code or "token," tokenization protects the original account number from misuse.

Risks

As with most everything, there are risks and challenges to consider. Chief among them are security and privacy. In spite of the security improvements that are inherent with mobile payments, consumers still have concerns that they could be the victim of fraud. The introduction of tokenization and biometrics should go a long way toward alleviating those fears. That said, if your phone is stolen, it can potentially be the same as losing your credit card. Another valid concern that has surfaced, mainly since the launch of Apple Pay, is a lack of strict processes and procedures by the banks to validate the identity of the person registering the credit or debit card on the device. Approval processes vary by bank, but some are not as stringent as they should be about checking the identity of the user adding the (sometimes stolen) credit card. To be sure, most banks are actively reviewing their processes and, although consumers will notice more questions being asked during the card registration process going forward, this isn't a risk that will be eliminated overnight.

Mobile payments can be used to attract Millennials, the segment of 80 million consumers that are entering their prime spending years and view technology as a time saving convenience.

Other obstacles that challenge adoption of mobile payments is the slow migration to next generation hardware that is often needed, especially NFC terminals needed to support the widely popular Apple Pay and Google Wallet solutions. Costs to upgrade can be prohibitive, but the good news is that many retailers are upgrading their PIN pads now, or in the near future, to support Europay, Mastercard, and Visa (EMV). Ironically, EMV chip technology doesn't really apply to mobile payments that use tokens, but in most cases, the same PIN pad terminals will support both.

Many mobile players

There are so many new mobile solutions in the market that it's hard to know which ones are here to stay, versus which ones are just the current fad. Certainly Apple Pay and Google Wallet are receiving the most attention right now, and rightfully so - with so many accessible devices available, and a surge in NFC-capable devices, the market is ripe for Apple and Google to take off. But there are a multitude of other solutions vying for your attention. Starbucks has had great success using barcodes, while PayPal and other retailers have been testing beacons in order to deliver a more personal shopping experience utilizing Bluetooth technology. Some are banking that tying in more value-added services and overlaying loyalty features into their programs will make their solution more appealing. Without a doubt, it has never been easier to find and implement a mobile solution.

Mobile payment solutions for C-stores

Many of the emerging mobile solutions are available to c-stores. Solutions that feature a code entry method are well-suited to the pay-at-the pump environment prevalent in the c-store industry. Leading software solution providers in the c-store industry are offering several mobile solution options that deliver a code to the consumer, who then enters it at the dispenser outside, or at the PIN pad inside, to initiate the transaction. One example is the Loyal Debit Mobile solution implemented by the National Payment Card Association, and featuring Automated Clearing House (ACH) transactions. Some mobile solutions also possess the ability to interface with POS. Sionic Mobile is one mobile provider that has taken this approach to extend their mobile payment and cross channel loyalty offering to the c-store industry. No account data is transmitted, making these solutions very secure.

NFC-capable PIN pads will be necessary to support Apple Pay or Google Wallet. For retailers who are deploying new PIN pads in preparation for EMV, they should be sure to enable the NFC contactless reader to be in position to be one of the over 220,000 merchants who are ready and able to support Apple Pay and Google Wallet. However, it is advisable to check with your provider to ensure that your hardware is indeed compatible with the payment applications and payment processors you intend to use.

Denise Lewis is the POS Product Manager at The Pinnacle Corporation. She makes regular editorial contributions to the Perspective on topics related to the point of sale, as well as payments. To learn more about Pinnacle's POS solutions, or to contact Denise regarding this article, send correspondence to dlewis@pinncorp.com. ℗

THE PINNACLE CORPORATION

BALANCING YOUR FUEL INVENTORY

The science behind minimizing inventories, while maximizing gains

By Lonnie Buerge, Fuel Solutions Engineer, The Pinnacle Corporation

Fuel inventory is a major investment for any fuel marketer, and a constant source of concern in three primary areas; (1) managing cash flow, (2) managing margins, and (3) limiting liability stemming from leaks or contamination. These areas are enough to keep you awake at night worrying about your inventories because inattention to any one of these concerns can be costly; far outpacing any strategic margin plan.

In today's marketplace, the effective management of inventory will mean the difference between a profit or a loss - which is difficult to overcome. In addition to managing the profit on a sale, the liability that in-ground tanks of fuel create can easily eat up any profit in an instant.

Inventories sitting in a tank represent the opportunity to make a profit, and therefore, are a vital part of the plan for any fuel retailer. At the same time, that same inventory is a burden on the cash flow of the business. It is essential that all the components of the process are managed accurately and efficiently, so that the retailer can have the least amount of cash flow burden, while still engaging in sales with the highest possible profitable margin.

So, how can you move from being reactive to being proactive?

There are four steps to a proactive approach for your inventory:

BALANCE
Reconcile both volume and margin

PLAN
Project the needs based on history

KNOW
Know the market direction and factors that will move the markets

CHANGE
Be flexible and adjust as needed

"The old adage of "Plan your work and work your plan" can help a fuel marketer make more money with the same amount of staff time."

Step #1: BALANCE

In order to ensure you are in compliance with EPA guidelines, and that you meet company standards to diligently manage costly inventory, the first step is that you should reconcile "book" inventory with "calculated" inventory.

The second step in 'Balancing' is to consider margins. With consideration to recent sales and deliveries for a specific site, you can determine profitability. When margins are in the 'expected' range, it gives further confidence that the inventories are correct. When the margins are not in the "expected" range, it may be a good indication of either a cross-dump of fuel, theft, or perhaps leakage.

The key to balancing your inventory is to have timely, accurate, and relevant data. With systems in place to manage fuel, you can set acceptable thresholds, and quickly identify tanks outside of defined tolerance levels. Users can focus on quickly responding to those critical exceptions - not only for EPA compliance, but also for the company's overall benefit.

The critical requirement of balancing inventories is that it be done as soon as possible; certainly within hours of the close of any business day. It provides little or no value to balance inventories days or weeks later. So, the first step in inventory management is to BALANCE volume and margin, and get it done quickly.

The liability that in-ground tanks of fuel create can easily eat up any profit in an instant.

Step #2: PLAN

Once inventories are in balance as soon as possible, it is important to look at the next 24-48 hours and see what demand is expected, and when replenishment will be needed. Good planning will allow the retailer to utilize delivery resources (company operated or common carrier) to the best advantage. The recommended window is to plan up to 48 hours, since beyond that is simply too far in the future with today's fickle marketplace.

The best plans are made from an understanding of the company's values in inventory management; i.e., either "keep it full", "maximize margins" or "just in time." Any of these philosophies have merit, but it is important for the entire company to have an understanding of the company goals.

In addition to the overall philosophy, there may be differences in how to approach the various grades of fuel sold at any one site. The setting of rules can be difficult, but it is imperative if the company is to be successful in the management of fuel inventory.

If the company has more than a handful of sites, it is important to utilize some form of automation to do this planning, since each site likely has multiple tanks. When considering these factors, even a company with 10 sites will have 30 or more tanks to plan. Automation may just be a spread sheet that can look at history, or it might take the form of sophisticated algorithms provided by software designed to provide a projected run-out, based on a variety of historical views. Ideally, that software will also provide a suggested replenishment, in order to aid the dispatcher to make decisions early.

Step 3: KNOW

No matter the philosophy in terms of inventory levels, it is still the goal of every fuel marketer to make a better margin. Therefore, it is necessary to have direct access to market directions. This should take some form of real-time view of the applicable price control markets, such as NYMEX or PLATTS. By knowing the market, the dispatcher can alter the plan in order to purchase fuel on either side of price changes.

Of course, this might require having flexibility from the company rules for inventory management, but it will result in better margins. While it may be the philosophy to keep inventories low, any extra margin created by buying smarter will go straight to the bottom line.

One way that marketers can know the value of responding to markets is to know their cost of funds. For example, if a dispatcher has a chance to buy product for $.02 less, with inventory likely to last an extra 3 days, and the cost of funds being 5%, then the answer is easy:

Extra Margin on 8000 gallons:	$160.00
Cost of funds at $2.10/gallon:	- $6.90
Gain:	$153.10

(No marketer will resist that!)

Step 4: CHANGE

Planning is only good for the moment in which the plan is made. The world changes quickly, so it is important to stay in tune with the current situation in all tanks, and to be ready to make an adjustment. By having a good plan in place, the changes will be easier and more understandable than if you are simply trying only to react to emergencies.

It is important to have the ability to know the current status of inventories, along with the sales volume and projected run-out times for tanks. Any good plan can be obsolete when a competitor suddenly changes prices, a road is closed, or the weather makes a shift. As fuel marketers, we are at the mercy of many factors, but we don't have to be a victim. We need to have the ability to see what is happening, as well as the ability to change.

So, the old adage "Plan your work and work your plan" can help a fuel marketer make more money with the same amount of staff time.

Lonnie Buerge is the Fuel Solutions Engineer at The Pinnacle Corporation. Lonnie makes regular editorial contributions for the Perspective in the areas of retail and wholesale fuel management. To learn more about Pinnacle's fuel solutions, or to contact Lonnie regarding this article, send correspondence to lbuerge@pinncorp.com. Ⓟ

Vendor Contract Renegotiations

What's your secret weapon?

By Tracie Nall, Retail Solutions Engineer, The Pinnacle Corporation

Vendor contract renegotiation is a customary practice for convenience store retailers. Periodic meetings occur between the two parties for the purposes of discussing historical campaigns, new product releases and promotions, and optimizing product mix; all with the goal of maximizing profits (revenue and margin) in the future.

Ultimately, the vendor and retailer engagement results in a contract or product agreement. As with any contract negotiation, both parties do their homework and analyses. Vendors often come to the meeting equipped with detailed purchase history data and competitive analyses, which is all used to assist in forecasting futures. Nevertheless, this is only a subset of the necessary data required to make an informed merchandising decision.

The responsibility for completing this analytical equation relies on the retailer to gather and consolidate item-level **sales *and* margin information.** Unfortunately, for many, that is easier said than done as incomplete or inaccurate data often leaves retailers frustrated and unsure of their results, many times causing them to default to the vendor's recommendations.

So how can retailers have any confidence signing on the dotted line, when they question their own analysis, and the vendor's view and data is limited to half of the supply chain and merchandising equation? That is the question William Baine, CEO of Git'N Go Markets found himself asking when it came time for contract renegotiations. However, William unveiled a secret weapon during recent Pepsi Contract renegotiations.

Git'N Go renegotiates their full line Pepsi Contract annually. Over the years, Coca-Cola has maintained the market share at the Git'N Go Markets, located in and around Clinton, TN. Hence, the Pepsi contract has been somewhat passive. This year, all that changed. William's secret weapon was having more timely, accurate, and relevant information than the supplier.

Prior to the Pepsi meeting, William did some research. Using Pinnacle's Business Intelligence tools, William was able to do an analysis of the Packaged Beverage category with a concentration on Pepsi products. What he discovered was that Mountain Dew produced a whopping 76% of all sales of Pepsi products. With accurate sales and margin information in hand, William was prepared to ask for a specific Pepsi contract based on Git'N Go's sales volume.

It was no surprise that on meeting day, Pepsi wanted to continue to lead with their traditional full line Pepsi set in all stores. William had another idea. Armed with his newfound information, he explained to the Pepsi representative that in Git'N Go Markets, Mountain Dew controlled the majority of market share of Pepsi products with 76%, and his store set should support what his clients buy, not what the vendors want to sell.

Pepsi was impressed by the level of information that William was presenting in the meeting. They explained that while it is a surprise to learn that Pepsi Products play a tiny role in Git'N Go's overall success in Packaged Beverage sales, it is extremely beneficial to understand exactly what products are moving and which ones need to be reassessed.

Upon completion of the negotiation process, not only was William able to enter into a Mountain Dew-specific contract that would optimize revenue and margin, but he was also able to eliminate some of the Pepsi products from the store set, eliminating costly slow-moving inventory. What began with a contract renegotiation had evolved into a lucrative partnership for both Pepsi and Git'N Go. Their success has allowed them to expand their discounts into other Pepsi segments, such as Gatorade. With detailed business intelligence data, William was able to understand true item velocity, sales, and gross profit margin, thus allowing him to repeat the vendor renegotiation process with Coke and other vendors. The result equated to an astounding 18% increase in 2014 Packaged Beverage sales.

Data gathered during each sale provides much insight into customer preferences, such as time, tender, and other items purchased with that transaction.

Since the retailer records every single sales transaction with the consumer, the data gathered during each individual sale gives much insight into consumer preferences, not only on a single item, but things like the time, tender, and other items purchased during that transaction. It's not surprising that vendors like Altria are willing to pay for this information, through the form of discounts/incentives, since this information has tremendous value for retailers in how they merchandise, market, and staff their stores as well.

The primary goal of this exercise was to increase revenues, and with the assistance of Pinnacle's Business Intelligence tools, Git'N Go has been able to increase overall sales and margins, while reducing Packaged Beverage inventory. Most importantly, William accomplished this without relying on the vendor's claims. He will tell you that data accessibility and usability is extremely powerful for any retailer, and with ready access to relevant data, the CEO was able to take back control of the stores and no longer needed to rely on the vendor's information. William holds the keys to a profitable outcome by using tools that allow him to make lucrative buying decisions. He claims that reliable business intelligence is vital to ensure that negotiating demands are met, as well as the ability to leverage technology and produce maximum results in a highly competitive market.

Tracie Nall is the Retail Solutions Engineer at The Pinnacle Corporation. She makes regular editorial contributions to the Perspective that relate to the retail and convenience store environments. To learn more about Pinnacle's retail c-store solutions, or to contact Tracie regarding this article, send correspondence to tnall@pinncorp.com.

THE PINNACLE CORPORATION

PINNACLE SUMMIT CONFERENCE 2015

September 14-17 • Southlake, Texas

Registration Now Open! www.pinncorp.com/Summit2015/Registration.html

Summit 2015: Turning Data into a Competitive Advantage

Last year's Summit was the biggest yet, and we're looking forward to Summit 2015 being even bigger. In addition to compelling speakers and targeted breakout sessions, Summit is an opportunity to connect with fellow Pinnacle clients, share your ideas and experiences, and take home ways to use Pinnacle technologies to innovate and increase efficiency within your company. It is the chance to build relationships and discover how to extend the power of your Pinnacle solutions across all areas of your business.

Client attendees from across the United States and from all professional backgrounds (IT, executive level, marketing, accounting, operations) attend Pinnacle Summit. Through educational sessions, networking opportunities, open forum discussions, and general sessions with industry and technology leaders, Pinnacle Summit serves as a platform for growth and insight into how others in the industry gain efficiencies in their organizations through the use of Pinnacle software.

Why Attend?

- Network with fellow Pinnacle clients and learn how they use Pinnacle solutions in their operations
- Participate in open forum discussions and share ideas and experiences with fellow clients and Pinnacle employees
- Participate in roadmap sessions to see how Pinnacle is responding and planning for changes in our industry
- Meet with Pinnacle employees who are experts on Pinnacle solutions
- Discover Pinnacle solutions you may not be as familiar with and learn how others are using these solutions
- Get the latest industry updates straight from NACS and PCATS representatives
- Meet with Pinnacle partners, ranging from hardware providers to PCI experts in one of our largest partner showcase yet
- Discover new ideas from engaging speakers that present on the topics that matter to your business
- Have fun - Summit is a great forum for building relationships

2015 Agenda*

To see more detailed information, visit www.pinncorp.com/summit2015

Monday, September 14

7:00-9:00 pm	Welcome Reception

Tuesday, September 15

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast
8:30-11:30 am	Summit Opening & General Sessions
11:30-12:30 pm	Lunch & Networking
12:30-5:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
5:30-6:30 pm	Partner Cocktail Hour/Partner Showcase
6:30-10:30 pm	Evening Event

Wednesday, September 16

7:30-8:30 am	Breakfast
8:30-11:30 am	General Sessions
11:30-12:30 pm	Lunch & Networking
12:30-5:30 pm	Breakout Sessions
5:30-6:30 pm	Partner Cocktail Hour/Partner Showcase
6:30-10:30 pm	Evening Event

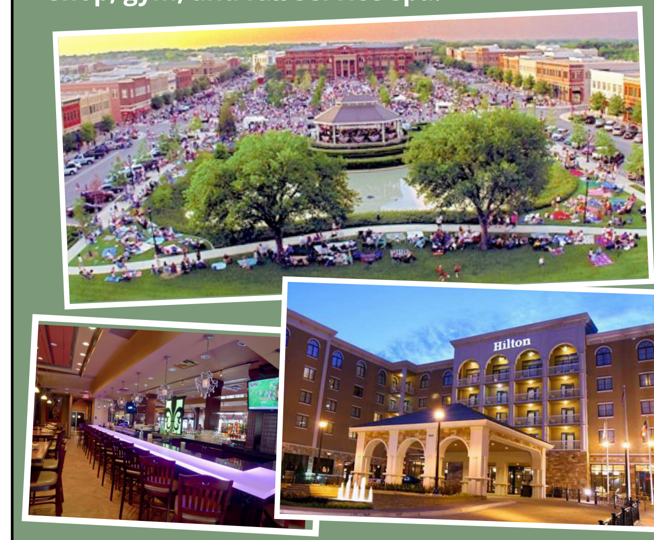
Thursday, September 17

8:00-9:00 am	Breakfast
9:00-10:00 am	Speakers
10:00-1200 pm	Client Panel & Closing Comments

* Subject to change without notice. See online agenda for the most current information.

Hilton Dallas Southlake Town Square

The beautiful Hilton Dallas Southlake is centrally located within the upscale Southlake Town Square, with over a 100 high-end retail shops and dining options. Guests will be able to enjoy all this within walking distance at their leisure, no need for transportation! On site, the hotel has a full service restaurant/bar, coffee shop, gym, and full service spa.



A few traveling tips for Pinnacle Summit 2015...

Accommodations: Summit has a block of rooms at a discounted rate for its attendees at the Hilton Dallas Southlake Town Square, mentioned above. The rooms can be booked online at www.pinncorp.com/summit2015 or by phone at 800-445-8667. Mention the "Pinnacle Summit room block" for the discounted rate.

Transportation: DFW Airport is only 6 miles from the hotel, and since it is conveniently located in the Southlake Town Square, you should be able to easily walk for food, drinks, and entertainment. For ground transportation to and from the airport, Uber (www.uber.com), SuperShuttle (877-770-4VAN) or Yellow Checker Shuttle (817-267-5150) are ready to meet your transportation needs. The Pinnacle Corporation will only be providing free shuttles from the hotel to the DFW airport on Thursday, Sept 17th.

Websites: Visit www.visitsouthlaketexas.com to find out all about Southlake, Texas, or www.southlaketownsquare.com for info about the Southlake Town Square and what it has to offer!

Weather: The average temperature for mid-September is around 90° during the day with the weather cooling off to around 72° in the evenings.

Reducing Inventory Woes:
How to plan stock around your customers

By Melissa Fox-Hadley, Director of Product Management, The Pinnacle Corporation

For the convenience store merchant, standing apart from the crowd can be tough. Consumers are looking for the cheapest prices, and convenience stores that don't set themselves apart from the competition won't win repeat visits. In order to improve your business, you must be able to provide the products that they are looking for, with quality service that your customers will remember. To do so requires having an understanding of who your customers are, what they're looking for, and what their expectations are regarding their purchasing experiences. Attempting a one-size-fits-all merchandising approach to satisfy everyone will likely result in carrying an inventory mix that leads to overstock of items that are not selling, and under-stock of those that are.

There have been many studies conducted to answer these questions and the majority of the results indicate that there are primarily four different types of convenience store customers:

The Regulars – Those customers who are brand-loyal, looking to satisfy a specific urge or desire – a pack of cigarettes, a soda, a snack. They know you will have what they need, when they need it.

The Neighborhoods – Much like the regular, this customer is a frequent visitor, but they know the cashiers, they enjoy knowing who's who in the store, and they frequent the same store to and from home. Your store is in their community, and they feel a sense of connection to it and to the people who work in it.

The Urgents – These shoppers need a last minute item - a gallon of milk or a jar of mayo to complete a recipe at home, or the like. They want to get in and out of the store quickly.

The Adventurers – This group likes new stuff. They like new products and new product placement. Purchases are made based on a desire to fulfill an emotional need. They crave modern formats, a social media presence, and promotions delivered directly to them, so they can experience immediate gratification related to their purchases.

What all of these types of convenience store customers have in common is that they expect the convenience store owner and operator to know and understand their unique needs and desires, and to provide for them in the way that they expect. Simple right? To do this, you'd simply need to carry all products, all brands, and have unlimited shelf space. Run regular promotions that are targeted specifically to each individual, and get them in and out of the store quickly and without hassle. If the prospect of having to do all of this sounds like something out of your worst nightmare, you're not alone.

While it may sound like a daunting task, many retailers already have the tools in place today to efficiently manage inventory. They can use a price book item catalog, and scan out merchandise at the point of sale. By conducting regular inventory audits and training programs for store managers and cashiers, they can more effectively articulate the overall store vision. But is this enough to ensure that you have the proper inventory mix of products and brands? Will it ensure that you have the correct quantities of the products you should have in stock? Will it ensure that you are offering effective promotions, and that you understand the needs of your unique mix of customers that frequent one store vs. another?

It's no secret that c--store operations can be quite complex, with varying factors acting very much like the necessary cogs that may run a complicated machine. So what are the components of your machine that need to be well-oiled and maintained? Below is a list of things that you that you should have in your toolbox if you're attempting to make things run as smoothly as possible.

- ✓ Staffing and vendor relationships
- ✓ Capable software solutions
- ✓ Business intelligence tools that analyze your operations, and provide insight to decision making
- ✓ Advanced inventory applications which use intelligently collected data in order stock the right products at the right time
- ✓ Tools to manage shrink and bring awareness to potential problems

All of these things contribute to the many parts that must be effectively coordinated; not only so that you'll be able to meet your individual customers' needs, but also to ensure that you are profitable at the same time.

The most vital part of effectively managing your inventory is stocking the right items in the right quantities. To do this, you need to understand who your customers are and what they buy.

Take cigarettes as an example. The cigarette category has traditionally been a cash cow for retailers in the convenience store industry. But, over the past several years, the combination of new regulations and the emergence of competitive products, like e-cigarettes and vaping products, have all played a role in the shifting of customer buying habits, causing both sales and margins to fall steadily.

> "Cigarette margins are lower than they have ever been, mainly due to certain manufacturer's programs that tie promotional dollars to a stated market retail. While margins have actually been somewhat stable over the last 6 months, we have seen good trends in volume over the last year by leveraging a multi-pack offer within our Rewards in a Flash program", said Phil Settle – Flash Foods, Inc.

You can't make money off what you don't sell.

To be profitable selling cigarettes, you need to carry brands and flavors that fit your customer's preference. It only makes sense to have the biggest selection in town if they're all selling. It does no good to stock a brand or flavor that doesn't sell; even more so if you're missing out on revenue by reducing inventory in a strong-selling brand to free up capital to pay for a larger variety of brands that are less likely to move. Make sure that revenue is being generated by having the brands in stock that people actually buy.

Phil Settle continues by saying "Using sales data to maintain proper inventory levels by store is crucial to the accuracy of orders and inventory. Using Pinnacle's computer-assisted ordering system allows us to offer many brand styles that most competitors don't carry. We have 300 brand styles available in our warehouse, but our average brand style mix in the store is about 160. Using the suggested ordering application allows us to stock a custom brand style mix for each store based on sales."

Many retailers, operations staff, and store managers have been wary of computer-assisted ordering systems, choosing instead to rely on gut instinct and experience to decide what products to order and when to order them. But this method has proven to be time-consuming and inaccurate. Typically consisting of manual inventory checks, staff members walk the aisles looking for "holes", then place orders by phone or via multiple antiquated hand held devices. Then, they negotiate with suppliers without the benefit of accurate, real –time sales data to back up their demands.

> "Today's computer-assisted ordering systems are winning over these retailers, as their transaction and historical data-based orders – many which might have been counter intuitive to "gut" decisions – are boosting sales, enhancing inventory control, and freeing up managers to spend more time with customers." Said Mike Asher, COO of Rollin' Oats Market & Café in a webcast hosted by Progressive Grocer.

What controls should you put in place to ensure that you have exactly the right inventory mix based on your unique store's customers?

Understanding inventory levels can decrease the cost of inventory by removing slow-sellers and non-sellers, thus helping to free up capital that would have been tied up in inventory.

Overstocks can cause major problems in terms of the cost of storing products that aren't moving. However, out-of-stock items can cause consumers to go elsewhere to spend their dollars with a competitor who does have what they're looking for. Understanding what you have and what you should have is critical, and has a noticeable impact on customer satisfaction.

While reviewing the results after implementing CAO and item level inventory in the cigarette category, Flash Foods found that the estimated dollars invested in unnecessary overstock of inventory was on average of $82,000 per store. The cigarette category, by itself, was 44 percent of retail inventory, or $36,080. When analyzing these numbers, Flash Foods discovered that the average cigarette inventory pulled from each store was $9,000, which at 180 stores, is equal to a $1,620,000 investment.

How do you ensure your store and operations staff is on board with your inventory goals and objectives?

There are certainly a fair number of challenges related to managing store inventories. But that also means there is great opportunity to make operational changes and to implement solutions that will enable success. To do so requires that everyone in the organization, from executive management to cashiers, understands the goals and metrics that will be used to determine success. If store managers are to be held accountable for their store's profitability, they must understand and buy in to the company's business processes, and communicate these goals to their staff. But most importantly, detailed business intelligence, such as the type typically collected from capable back-office management software, will be instrumental in identifying patterns in buyer activity, which will influence more responsive inventory planning. It is only by analyzing this data that you will you be able to accurately identify what products you need to have on hand for your customers, and what you don't -- greatly reducing instances of inventory under and overstock.

Melissa Fox Hadley is the Director of Product Management at The Pinnacle Corporation. She makes regular editorial contributions to the Perspective that relate to the retail and convenience store environments. To learn more about Pinnacle's retail C-store solutions, or to contact Melissa regarding this article, send correspondence to mfoxhadley@pinncorp.com. ⓟ

IS SWITCHING TO EMV WORTH IT?

What you need to know before this year's compliance deadline

By Christopher Li
Staff Writer
The Pinnacle Corporation

With 1.5 billion cards being used in over 120 countries worldwide, the United States is the last major economy to adopt EMV. Whether it's the cost of migration, or just a genuine disinterest in moving away from magnetic strip technology, why are we choosing now to make the switch?

> "As a c-store retailer, you will need to be poised to accept your customers' choice of preferred payment, or risk losing them to a competitor that can."

In order to answer that question, we must first understand how EMV is different. The short answer is that EMV provides a host of new security technologies that add additional layers of protection for the user. One such feature is a dynamic cryptogram that generates a unique authorization code for each transaction. Magnetic strip cards, by comparison, store information statically, and are susceptible to skimming and other relatively low-tech and simple methods of fraud. By updating our standard of card security, the U.S. hopes to replicate the resounding success EMV has had in other markets, such as in Europe, where EMV is credited with reducing card fraud by as much as 70%.

With the rest of the world following closely behind Europe's lead, most criminal organizations responsible for perpetrating mag strip fraud are finding themselves with fewer and fewer vulnerable targets. Left with few other viable options, these criminal organizations are turning to the U.S. in droves to cash in before EMV takes full effect. Recent reports indicate that card fraud in the U.S. has doubled since adoption of EMV in other parts of the world. With 72% of all U.S. consumers having at least one credit card, the bounty is even greater than in the home countries from which these criminal organizations originate from. Combined with the voracious purchasing habits of U.S. consumers, and each purchase constituting a potential opportunity for fraud, the flames of the fire are being fanned at an exponential rate. These factors, among others, have all contributed to the United States being named the most preferred country to be targeted by perpetrators of card fraud.

The reason the United States has moved at such a glacial pace in adopting EMV can be attributed mainly to the monumental costs of replacing every piece of plastic owned by 167 million card-toting Americans. However, as the costs of overlooking evolving global security trends became more evident, the situation quickly escalated into an issue that could no longer be ignored. In 2011, the United States finally decided to begin the shift to EMV technology.

As the years passed, most parties involved in the transition remained relatively inactive on the EMV front, choosing instead to focus their time on more pressing issues. It wasn't until a few years after the decision to adopt EVM was made that banks, acquirers, and merchants began putting the wheels in motion. As additional details emerged, these parties were further incentivized by the revelation of a liability shift that was a stark departure from previous years.

Word quickly spread that merchants who had not yet made the transition to accepting EMV payments after an October 2015 deadline would assume liability for any fraud committed at their location that could have been avoided using EMV technology. Of course, certain rules and exceptions apply, but the very thought of being liable for fraud, which had typically been covered by the banks issuing the card, was enough to motivate some to take action.

Fuel retailers were given an additional 2 years to comply, partially to manage the huge upfront costs of updating their

What's an EMV chip card?

We all use our debit and credit cards for shopping, eating out and buying groceries. Soon you can do so with the added security benefits of an EMV chip card. The new cards are nearly impossible to counterfeit, and travel will be even easier in more than 130 countries where chip cards are already used. EMV chip cards do everything magnetic stripe cards do but even more securely; plus, you are still protected from fraud by Visa's Zero Liability policy.

How It Works

Smarter Technology

Computer Microchip. A computer chip securely stores the card data that currently resides on the magnetic stripe. This makes it nearly impossible for a criminal to create a counterfeit EMV chip card.

Unique Cryptogram. The computer chip enables more secure processing by producing a one-time use code for each transaction.

Mobile Shopping. EMV technology will also enable a one-time use code for mobile transactions and support other security innovations like tokenization.

Used Worldwide

130+ Countries. There are approximately 2.4 billion EMV chip cards in circulation and 36.9 million terminals active worldwide, ensuring you can use your account conveniently wherever you travel.

Added Security

Difficult to Counterfeit. Because EMV chip cards use cryptograms that are unique to each transaction, stolen chip card data cannot be used to create counterfeit cards.

Less Risk of Fraud. The added layer of security provided by EMV chips makes debit and credit card data much less valuable, decreasing incentive for fraudsters to steal data.

Zero Liability. With EMV chip cards, cardholders are still protected from fraudulent purchases with Visa's Zero Liability policy*.

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Pay

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pump terminals, but many doubt this is enough time. In fact, the costs are projected to be so great for some, that many fuel retailers are putting off the transition for as long as they can. Some companies are even planning to go as far as opting out of EMV compliance altogether. For the larger national petroleum retailers, it is expected that complete EMV implentation could cost them as much as $20-25 million dollars.

So the question that remains is whether the cost of EMV migration is worth it. Many may say no, but given the increase in frequency and severity of data breaches within the past year, the importation of fraudulent activity is evident and becoming more rampant. To make this point, one would simply need to look at some of the more infamous data breaches of 2014: Target (110 million affected), JP Morgan Chase (76 million affected), Home Depot (56 million affected), The State of New York (23 million affected) Neiman Marcus (1.1 million affected), Staples (1.16 million affected), as well as Sony, Michaels, Sally Beauty, PF Chang's, Albertson's and SuperValu Stores, UPS, Dairy Queen, Jimmy John's, and Kmart, to name a few.

Rather than be reassured about our fears, government officials and industry watchdogs warn us to expect cases of fraud to grow in numbers and magnitude. Even after the compliance deadline, fraud will continue to be perpetrated, as those who have not yet made the transition will be increasingly singled out and have their vulnerabilities exploited.

Critics of EMV argue that some of these data breaches may not necessarily have been avoided by EMV. While true, it would have made the process a lot more difficult -- and this might be just what we need to deter those responsible. Most criminals are looking for an easy score, something that doesn't require a lot of time, resources, or effort -- but delivers a big pay off. With the additional safeguards that EMV provides, we may have just that obstacle to make it no longer worth their while. As a matter of fact, that's exactly what the data in other markets suggest.

It may be possible that many companies that oppose EMV adoption are looking at the situation with blinders on. If the only factor they are considering is the upfront cost, then they are missing the bigger picture. In most cases, upgrading your equipment to accept EMV also allows you to accept many other up-and-coming payments. Recent developments in technology are giving birth to a veritable payments revolution. Host Card Emulation has breathed new life into NFC payments, and updates to Google Wallet and ApplePay have placed mobile payments at the forefront of the discussion in the future of payments.

Most non-EMV terminals still lack the features required to process mobile, contactless, or tap-to-pay transactions. So, if this conversation wasn't about EMV, it would still exist in the form of some payments witch hunt directed towards another form of payment. It therefore appears that the argument before us is not one against EMV, but rather one against change. And while it is no revelation that change breeds antagonism, the benefits of EMV certainly seem to outweigh the disadvantages.

Whether you're a fan of EMV or not, mag strip technology is entering an era of obsolescence. Banks have already begun issuing EMV cards to their customers by the millions, and within a matter of years, mag strips will begin disappearing from the back of payment cards completely. At that time, customers will be visiting retailers across the country, and paying with their EMV credit cards, their mobile phones, or some other method that has filled a particular need. As a c-store retailer, you will need to be poised to accept your customers' choice of preferred payment, or risk losing them to a competitor that can. Choosing not to upgrade your equipment could actually be viewed as a tactical disadvantage, and work against your best interests as a convenience retailer. When considering all that is at stake with EMV adoption, a more fitting question would be "Can you afford not to upgrade?".

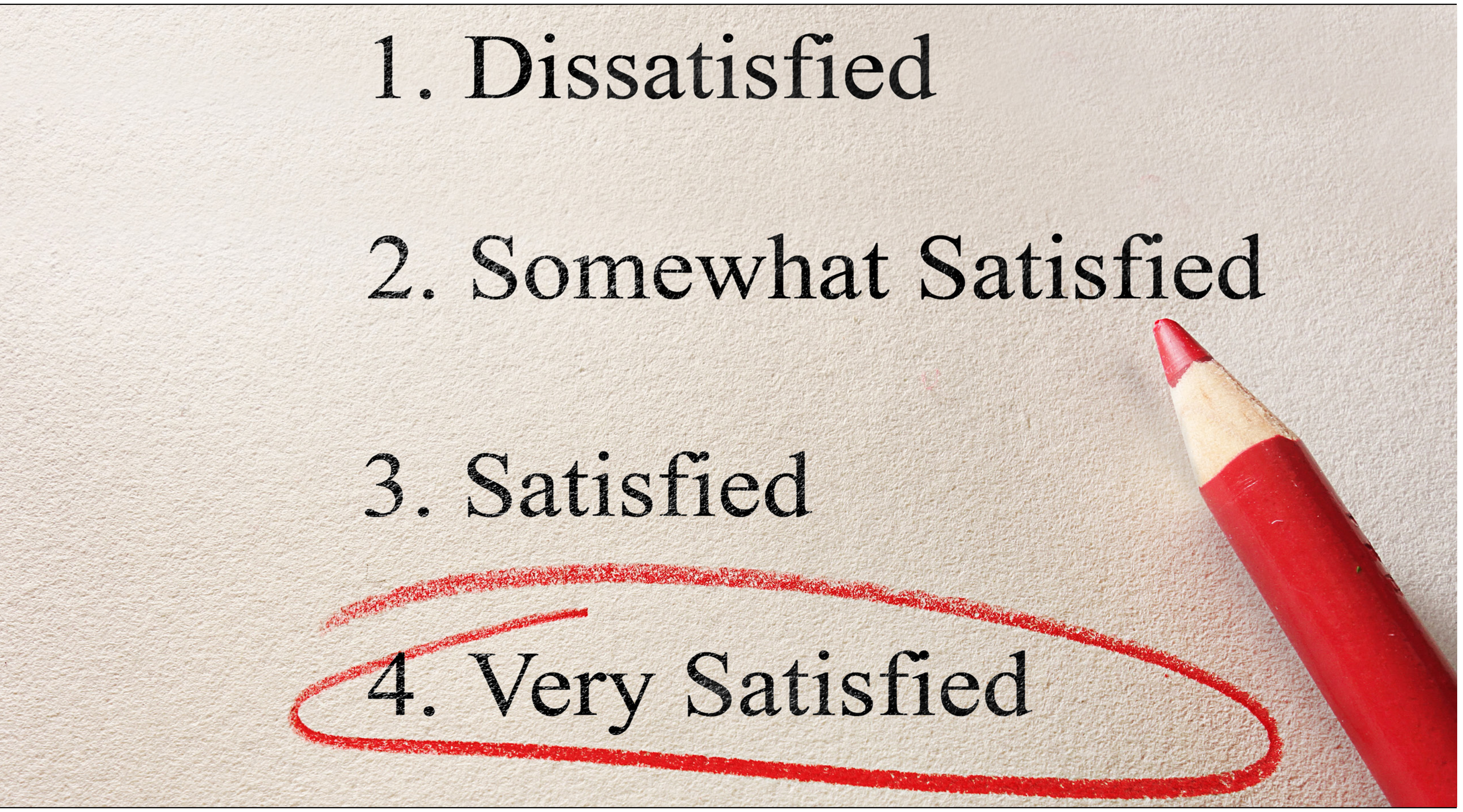
"Whether you're a fan of EMV or not, mag strip technology is entering an era of obsolescence. Banks have already begun issuing EMV cards to their customers in the millions, and within a matter of years, mag strips will begin disappearing from the back of payment cards completely."

Chris Li works for The Pinnacle Corporation as a staff writer for The Perspective. He produces regular editorial contributions and commentaries on current events and general industry topics within the retail and c-store environments. To learn more about Pinnacle's data solutions, or to contact Chris regarding this article, please direct correspondence to cli@pinncorp.com. ⓟ

THE PINNACLE CORPORATION

The Secret to Keep Your Customers Coming Back: Make them LOVE you

By Jane Sinn Gabriel, Retail Solutions Product Manager, The Pinnacle Corporation



With over 700 stores in 11 states, there is a decent chance QT is in your neighborhood. They have a familiar name. Their customer base is large, and their customers and employees love them.

They, or someone like them, is your competitor, and you have to figure out how to beat them at their own game. What is their game? Their pricing is good, but your pricing is competitive. The merchandise they sell is comparable to your merchandise. They have a loyalty program, but you also have a loyalty program.

So, what is it that makes them the go-to store? They've built a brand and everybody, EVERYBODY, knows what that brand stands for. It's a brand that consumers want to be associated with, and they have built consumer loyalty.

So what was their strategy? Businesses that have built successful brands, like Apple, Starbucks, or Quik Trip, have all differentiated themselves from their competitors. They have developed a set of priorities and standards, as well as a consistent message by understanding their customers.

> *"Loyalty programs in the convenience store sector aren't really built to engender consumer loyalty, it's built to match the competitor offering."*

Their loyalty program IS their marketing program, and it goes way beyond the framework of a rewards program. It is a top down, bottom up marketing strategy. In the Harvard Business Review, Alexander Jutkowitz said it in more dire terms when he titled his article, "Marketing Is Dead, and Loyalty Killed It".

Obviously, Mr. Jutkowitz is a marketing writer, employing one of those statements meant to set your hair on fire, but, his point is valid. Consider the companies that are at the top of the heap today, such as the aforementioned Apple, Starbucks, and QT. They boast near mythological levels of consumer loyalty, and that doesn't happen by accident. That happens by design, by marketing design.

It's time to reassess. Consider reducing your focus on traditional product marketing, and give more emphasis to building consumer loyalty.

THE PINNACLE CORPORATION

The kind of loyalty today's most successful companies enjoy isn't built on the price of a soda or on the back of a rewards program. It's built on understanding, a passion, even love, for those you serve.

Interestingly, loyalty programs in the convenience sector frequently fall short of meeting the consumer's expectations. This could be because, in many instances, the program isn't really built to engender consumer loyalty; it's built to match the competitor offering, often put into place and left, unaltered for many months or even years. Many times the offering is limited to fuel discounts and club card rewards. Consumers like those benefits, but if new promotions and exiting benefits aren't designed for increasing membership and loyalty, you're really giving revenue and margin away, not marketing your brand or building a larger, more loyal customer base.


Before attempting to change your marketing and loyalty program, be sure to review your current strategy to identify opportunitites for improvement.

You can, however, design a customer loyalty program to woo consumers to your stores. Once they're hooked, you can continue to hold them in your thrall. Your loyalty program can be used to reinforce your company brand, while delivering unique services and benefits to loyal members. Use your program to offer very special deals to very special types of customers, on products that they actually purchase. Make sure your rewards and discounts work in conjunction with your other efforts to boost your company profile and reputation.

All of us know that there's always more to be done. You can do more to refocus your marketing on building customer loyalty. But before you start taking swats at the fly, it's a worthy exercise to review your current strategy and identify opportunities for improvement. Once you have a good handle on how your current marketing strategy is working to build loyalty today, you can identify some new tactics for establishing your brand.

This review doesn't entail the running of reports and looking at statistics. It's meant to focus on the actions you're taking or not taking to build your brand, and along with that, customer loyalty.

Do potential customers think your company...

Boasts cachet?

- What's the buzz about your company?
- You may already have a long history in the area you serve, but is your brand message up-to-date and a reflection of current efforts?
- Do you have a high profile in the communities you serve?
- Does your marketing speak to your current customer base or your potential customer base?
- Are you hosting or sponsoring community events and programs?

Offers unique value?

- Your stores sell gas, snacks, cigs, vaps, and alcohol. Your customers all know that.
- What do you offer in your stores that sets you apart from other convenience retailers?
- What could you do to polish the apple a bit?
- Is there some unique service or product offering that you could highlight, possibly by promoting it through your loyalty program?

- Could your store associates engage your customers' interest in the 'goings on' of your company?

Cares who they are?

- Are you sure your customers know you care about them as much as you care about their money?
- How do you tell your customers that you'd like them to make your stores their stores?
- How do you thank your customers for their business?
- Do you surprise customers with a free item or a $1.00 discount off their ticket?
- Do you recognize frequent shoppers with a nice discount and a big loud "Thank You"?

Listens to their concerns?

- Who do they have to talk to in order to get some satisfaction?
- How can a customer tell you what they think?
- Do you offer a variety of touch points like social media, email, direct mail, telephone contact?
- Do you talk to your customers when they aren't in a store?
- Do you ask your customers what they like or want?
- Do you respond directly to a negative post on your Facebook page or Twitter feed?
- Do you have your customers' street and email address?

If you want to compete, you have to understand what makes your competitor successful, and take steps to put yourself ahead of them. What is your strategy for making your company and stores show up on consumer favorites lists?

Make your loyal customers members of your team. Engage them in your business. Make shopping at your locations quick and easy. Make it fun…maybe even meaningful. *Make these people love you.*

Acknowledge your customers with a thank you every time they visit a store, and even throw in a special treat once in a while. Let customers know that you appreciate their loyalty.

Make it easy for them to participate in your incentive programs. Make your special offers really special, yet simple. Clutter and complication are off-putting, no matter how big the prize at the end.

Build customer loyalty with special events and services for members; raise the ante for those who come by more often. Make it easy and cheaper for your customer to buy gas and lunch at your stores.

You'll quickly find out that by attempting to better serve your customers, you'll begin to have a more thorough understanding of who they are and what they need. This vital information can then be used to plan everything in your business from what and how much inventory to stock, to demographic segmentation for expertly targeted marketing campaigns. By knowing who your customer is, you'll have a more thorough understanding of how to attract more like them; and by understanding their buying habits, you create a customized experience specifically tailored to their preferences.

Jane Sinn Gabriel is the Retail Solutions Product Manager at The Pinnacle Corporation. She makes regular editorial contributions to the Perspective that relate to the retail and convenience store environments. To learn more about EPM, or to contact Jane regarding this article, send correspondence to JGabriel@pinncorp.com. ℗

Pinnacle Employee Spotlight

Jim Walther

Training & Documentation Manager

While at Pinnacle, Jim Walther has revised the standards for Pinnacle's documentation, and recently started revamping the training program. His department is recreating classes to be more aligned with the Professional Services team and thinks these classes will better serve clients. Additionally, the training department is setting up progressive training options where clients can see which courses (besides a basic core class) will help them better use their products/solutions.

Jim has received the Manager of the Quarter honor three times over the past three years for his work with the team, with Pinnacle Summit, and with interns.

When did you join The Pinnacle Corporation?

May 2002

Products You Work With:

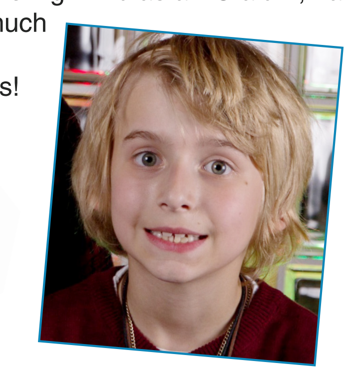
I manage the Training and Documentation team. Together we are responsible for all product and solution documentation and training, plus we provide content for breakout sessions at Pinnacle Summit.

About Jim:

I have worked as a writer, trainer, and teacher since 1991. I took several writing classes during school and found that technical writing was something I could do well. Since then, I have documented and trained for various companies, usually on Enterprise Resource Planning software. I joined Pinnacle as a Senior Technical Writer and began revising our writing requirements based on best practices I had developed.

What do you like to do when you're not at Pinnacle?

During my time off, I like to see my son. We eat, play games, and plan our yearly vacations when we are together. He is getting more and more into video games, which I am terrible at, so I try to get him to play something else around me—that way, I have a chance at winning. Also, aside from writing, I enjoy playing cards and darts with my friends, watching action movies, and traveling. And as a KU alum, I am required to watch as much college basketball as possible. Go Jayhawks!



Favorite Aspect of Your Job?

"I think my favorite aspect of my job is working with different people. I like to teach one on one and help them become better at whatever task it might be. I think we have a great group here in the T&D Department, and at Pinnacle in general, and I really enjoy working with the people here." ℗

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