



Nick Pitre

has worked in the c-store sector for 21 years
City Limits Convenience & NJ Convenience, Mirimachi, NB



Rothmans, Benson & Hedges Inc.

Creating a powerful customer experience in the c-channel



“The way to get customers to keep coming back is to make them feel special.”

When looking at product selection, how do you involve your customers in making decisions?

This really is a community store. We ask customers to let us know if there is a particular product they want us to carry. We have a “Want” book in the store that they can write their requests in, and we will do everything we can to get the products they are asking for.

Do you utilize any technologies to help grow your customer base?

I still build personal connections with customers the good old-fashioned way – face-to-face. I know our regular customers by name.

How does your RBH rep help?

Our RBH rep has been very helpful in recommending specific products to carry for our area, and also informing us about special deals. He has the qualities that I want to see in my staff – he’s knowledgeable and personable and he has built a good relationship with me and my staff. When he comes in, he doesn’t get right down to business. Sometimes it feels like more of a social visit. One thing I really like about him is that he is very respectful. There have been times when he’s had to point out something I should be doing differently, and he always gives that feedback in a nice way.

Any recommendations for other retailers?

I’ve been in this business for 21 years, and I’ve found that every convenience store is the same. The way to get customers to keep coming back is to make them feel special. It’s important to have good front line staff who greet customers with a friendly smile and get to know them on a first-name basis.



Alain Nader

has owned his store for 16 years
Pointe Claire Epicerie Prette, Lakeshore Pointe Claire, QC

When looking at product selection, how do you involve your customers in making decisions?

Because I spend so much time in my store I don't often get out to see what new products are out there, so I rely on my customers to tell me if there is a particular item they want me to carry. If they ask, I will bend over backwards to get it.

Do you utilize any technologies to help grow your customer base?

This is a small owner-run business in Lakeshore, which is a quaint little village in the older part of the city. The village draws a lot of tourists in the summer, so business is very seasonal. I spend about 70 hours a week here and I know my regular year-round customers. Keeping my customers happy is more about one-on-one, personal, face-to-face relationships. I will always point out bargains and help them in whatever way I can.

How does your RBH rep help?

My RBH rep is a great asset. He will often call or drop by if I need help, and he will suggest items that might be comparable to what my customers are looking for. I feel like he really cares about me and my business. RBH is a great help in providing product information and letting me know about sales trends. When there is a new product, they will organize an event where they will introduce information about it, but in a social setting. They always thank me for supporting them and their products.

Any recommendations for other retailers?

In this business the most important thing is to provide good service to your customers, and to establish good relationships with them.



“Eighty percent of it is providing good customer service and a good price, and always having their products in stock.”



Scott Fraser

has owned his c-store for 10 years; it was established by his grandfather, Lawrence Milne, in 1929
Milne Court Petro Canada, New Minas, NS

When looking at product selection, how do you involve your customers in making decisions?

In 2001, when we were developing our differentiation strategy, we did market research and talked to customers. From that we decided to put in a deli and bakery to make fresh subs and other food daily, plus cookies, muffins and other baked goods, a lot made with my grandmother's recipes. And we carry fair-trade, organic coffees. We are constantly communicating with our customers, and updating our products based on their feedback. We want to be completely flexible for them.

Do you utilize any technologies to help grow your customer base?

We are just launching a website, and we're looking at setting up social networking tools as well. This business has quite a history – my grandfather started it in 1929. Our website will have information about us, our location, our team members, our products.

How does your RBH rep help?

Our RBH rep is wonderful. Her parents were in the c-store business, so she has a deep understanding of our needs. She's always coming up with something, and it's always worthwhile. She comes up with great staff incentive programs. I always make sure any RBH rewards and incentives are spread among my team members, because in a dark market, the cashiers who are talking to the customers are the ones making the suggestions and helping us reach our sales targets.

Any recommendations for other retailers?

The HR part of this business is key. The place is bricks and mortar, tar and tiles. What brings it to life is the human capital, the people who work here. They are the ones who are creating customer loyalty.



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Happy Dhillon

has worked in the c-store sector for 11 years
Husky Montgomery, Calgary, AB

When looking at product selection, how do you involve your customers in making decisions?

A few years back when it became illegal to sell tobacco products in pharmacies, we had a lot of new customers coming here specifically looking for tobacco. At that time we had a sheet where people could write down the products they wanted us to stock. We no longer have that sheet, but there is a space on the shift sheet and the cashier will write down any specific requests there. There are two kinds of regular tobacco customers. Some want to know, "what's cheapest?" and that's what they'll buy. Others have their specific product and brand, but if there is a new product that's comparable they will often try it.

Do you utilize any technologies to help grow your customer base?

No. Eighty percent of it is providing good customer service and a good price, and always having their products in stock. We make sure the store is always clean and welcoming, and we treat our customers with respect.

How does your RBH rep help?

It's complicated these days to keep up to date on everything. Our RBH rep is well informed and really good about keeping us informed about new products; he'll tell us what is comparable to existing products. Our RBH rep comes in regularly, and he is always very helpful. He goes over our sales data with us, shows us where our growth is coming from, and provides information to help us make sure our pricing is in line with pricing in our area.

Any recommendations for other retailers?

Always be in stock and customers will keep coming back. If they come twice and you are out of their product both times, they probably won't come back. To keep your customers happy, offer the stock they want at a good price, and provide good customer service.



"Always be in stock and customers will keep coming back. If they come twice and you are out of their product both times, they probably won't come back."