



THE C-STORE EVOLUTION: HOW TO BECOME MORE THAN A GAS STATION



Gas stations today are more than just a place to top off the tank. Over the years, convenience stores have evolved to provide more of exactly what the name implies — convenience. Not only can customers fill up on gas, but they can oftentimes pick up a quick dinner, wash their car, grab a few household items or even sit down and connect with friends.

In today's fast-paced society, consumers are looking for a one-stop shop to satisfy all their needs in one visit. Now store owners may ask, "How can I transform my c-store to be more than just a gas

station?" Cenex®, the energy brand of CHS, can help you get there.

Thanks to the Cenex LIFT initiative, a lighting, image and facilities transformation program, Cenex retailers can revamp their stores to best serve their community. Through a multitude of interior and exterior upgrades, Cenex store owners can become their community's number-one c-store destination. Best of all, store owners have the freedom to choose which renovations are best for their location — all with resources and support from CHS.

As you think about ways to transform your c-store to meet the needs of today's consumers, consider the benefits that come with partnering with Cenex to help create the store of your dreams.

Select Local Vendors and Partners

As a locally owned and operated business, you understand the importance of shopping local. Cenex values the power of supporting local businesses, and because of that, they make it easy for you to partner with business owners in your area.

Through LIFT, Cenex retailers can choose which vendors they'd like to work with when building or revamping their store. Synergy Cooperative in Cumberland, Wis., didn't skip a beat when the opportunity to partner with local businesses presented itself. As part of their interior upgrades, the Synergy Cooperative team chose a total of four area vendors to provide various meats and cheeses in-store. But they didn't stop there. Locally made honey and syrup are also offered at their location.

"We wanted to incorporate upgrades that not only benefit the store itself but the Cumberland community as well," said Kyle Knutson, CEO of Synergy Cooperative. "When we decided to partner with small businesses in the area, we were confident that we were doing our part in making a positive financial impact for our neighborhood."

It's important to embrace partnership rather than shy away from it. Joining forces with neighboring companies can be extremely important because it has the potential to provide your town with the momentum it needs to reach heights that you never imagined.

Attract Customers Through Exterior Upgrades

What your store looks like on the outside is arguably just as important as the offerings you have inside. The reason being if your store's exterior isn't appealing to consumers, how will you ever draw them in to see all that your store has to offer?

Knowing that curb appeal is usually the first reason that customers want to stop by a store, the new Cenex image upgrade called Halo elevates the appearance of Cenex branded locations and drives consumer preference. Take Orton Oil Co. in Audubon, Minn., for instance. Just months after implementing the Halo image upgrade and finishing renovations, store owner Frank Orton saw a substantial increase in traffic and business. The team at River Country Co-op in Merrill, Wis., also saw a difference after the Halo renovations were complete. Once the main entryway was modernized with stone siding and improved LED lighting was incorporated in the canopy and forecourt, they saw over a 30% increase in in-store sales.



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“The Halo image upgrade helped us to create a more approachable, inviting atmosphere. The improved lighting in the forecourt and canopy have especially made a difference,” said Bruce Mlsna, general manager and CEO of River Country Co-op. “Thanks to the Halo image, customers are drawn in to see our many great features, like the beer cave and in-store bait shop.”

Incorporate Features Your Community Will Appreciate

No one knows your community better than you. So when it comes to selecting the right upgrades for your store, the choice is yours. Whether that means partnering with a local restaurant chain or incorporating special offerings that align with your community’s interests, LIFT gives you the freedom to choose what items and features make the most sense for your store.

Several retailers, including those below, took it upon themselves to identify their customers’ needs and worked to satisfy them by adding various features throughout their stores.

- Petro Serve USA in Harwood, N.D., went all in on in-store upgrades, focusing on their customers’ needs to expand their food and beverage offerings. Upgrades included new coolers with LED lighting, an assortment of refrigerated products and a walk-around deli counter with a Hot Stuff line of personal-sized pizzas, cheese bread, croissant sandwiches and more. The team at Petro Serve USA also knew that their location was a common meeting place for the community. So they made sure to include an improved seating area where customers could sit down and chat over their morning coffee.
- Then there’s Northern Star Coop in Grand Rapids, Minn., which embarked on a new build, wanting to create a store that reflected the town’s rich history. This included a log cabin theme with wooden beams and hardwood flooring, along with four murals that represent significant Grand Rapids landmarks.
- Sioux Valley Coop knew that Harrisburg, N.D., was a small but rapidly growing town that had limited





food options. So they partnered with Godfather's Pizza, Flyboy Donuts and Caribou Coffee to give the community more food and beverage options.

"We encourage all of our retailers to go all in when deciding on which upgrades to include in their stores," said Erin Wroge, senior director of energy marketing at CHS. "We know every community is different and has its own distinct needs. The store owners know best, so we leave it up to them to decide what makes sense for their community."

If you're thinking about taking on a renovation project, you can rest assured that when you partner with Cenex, you'll be provided with the freedom to choose your upgrades and the support you need to see the project come to fruition. ■



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