



HOW YOUR BUSINESS CAN BE A LOCAL CHAMPION



Personal connections, superior customer service and community-focused offerings are just a few perks of shopping local. Among all the benefits locally owned businesses offer, one unique advantage rises to the top — a true understanding of the communities they serve. As a local business owner, you know the ins and outs of your community and have the opportunity to serve them in a way they can truly appreciate. Incorporating quick-service restaurants, a hot food station, dining areas, and inviting interior and exteriors are just a few ways local businesses can build and maintain the connections needed for lasting success.

That's why Cenex®, the energy brand of CHS, created the LIFT initiative: a lighting, image and facilities transformation. The LIFT initiative was established to help Cenex convenience store owners best serve their communities through a series of customized interior and exterior upgrades. Most importantly, Cenex retailers who participate in the LIFT program are given the opportunity to renovate their stores how they see fit, providing them with all the resources and support they need to get the job done. No matter the size or location of the store, any retailer can be a champion for

their community. When considering a renovation, there are a few key elements to keep in mind.

Cater to Your Community's Unique Needs

As a store owner who's ingrained in the community, you're already an established local pillar. By actively engaging with the community, you hear their needs directly from the source. With the help of the LIFT program, you can act on those needs in a way that's truly meaningful to your customers. Whether installing LED lighting, offering better food options

or remodeling your bathrooms, catering to the unique needs of your neighbors is critical.

Knowing that there's no one-size-fits-all approach to revamping Cenex locations across the footprint, LIFT gives each owner the flexibility to add whichever elements they feel will best benefit their customers. General manager of Northern Resources Cooperative, Kelly Christianson knows this all too well. During the rebuild, Christianson kept his community top of mind and implemented features that enhanced the functionality, safety and in-store customer experience. This included an expansion, making the store more accessible to all community members. Other upgrades consisted of reach-in and walk-in coolers, self-checkout stations and a self-serve craft soda station with products sourced from a Milwaukee-based brewery.

"Cenex gave us the freedom to incorporate all the elements we wanted, so we took that and ran with it," said Christianson. "We felt comfortable going into the project knowing Cenex had our back. They were there every step of the

way, making sure we had all the tools we needed for a successful rebuild."

Not only does LIFT help you make the store improvements you need most, but it gives you the freedom to choose the upgrades that are perfectly suited for your store location.

Prioritize the Customer Experience

Throughout the renovation process, putting yourself in your customers' shoes is a key step to overall success. Thinking about how you can provide the best possible customer experience is essential to obtaining consumer preference and loyalty among your community members.

The LIFT program helps store owners make the necessary updates to create a premier c-store for their community. Both interior and exterior enhancements need to be considered to create an ideal experience for your customers and get them to drive the extra mile to stop at your store time and time again. For many, curb appeal is the deciding factor when choosing where they stop



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– KYLE KNUTSON, CEO OF SYNERGY COOPERATIVE





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– WADE GRIFFIN, RETAIL MANAGER OF SOUTHERN VALLEY TRAVEL CENTER

along their route. So as part of the LIFT initiative, Cenex incorporated a new forecourt image for all locations known as Halo. Knowing that the exterior of c-stores is a big driver for consumer preference, Halo enhancements focus on forecourt and canopy upgrades to elevate the appearance of Cenex branded locations.

With the resources and support of CHS, you're equipped with the tools needed for a superior convenience store and an ideal customer experience. For instance, the retail manager of Southern Valley Travel Center in Wahpeton, N.D., Wade Griffin knew that his location was a popular stop for travelers and truck drivers, so curb appeal and ease of access was of utmost importance to draw in potential customers.

“The substantial increase in foot traffic reassured our confidence in Cenex and its LIFT initiative,” said Griffin.

“Thanks to this program, we were able to become the successful business we are today.”

During the rebuild, the team decided to create more space, not just in the forecourt for travelers and truck

drivers but in the interior as well. The renovated store is large enough for a Caribou Coffee and gathering area, making Southern Valley Travel Center a community favorite.

Support Neighboring Businesses

Embracing other local businesses is a major way to truly become a local champion for your community. By bringing in local artists, vendors and contractors, you're not only providing opportunities for other small businesses but establishing valuable connections as well.

Northern Star Co-op and Synergy Cooperative are just two of the many Cenex locations that have already partnered with local organizations to help their dreams of the perfect c-store come to fruition. The crew at Northern Star Co-op in Grand Rapids, Minn., had no hesitations about partnering with local construction company Casper Construction. Because of this new-found relationship, Casper Construction and Northern Star Co-op retail manager Sarah Bellefy, were able to keep in close contact throughout the entire





building process to ensure things were moving along smoothly. As for Synergy Cooperative in Cumberland, Wis., store owner and CEO Kyle Knutson took it upon himself to partner with four local food vendors to provide his customers with a variety of meat, cheese, maple syrup and honey products in-store.

“We felt there was no better way to uplift our community than to work with as many local vendors as possible,” said Knutson. “Because our store is member-owned, we wanted to do what we could to support our community while providing our customers with a c-store that caters to their needs.”

Joining forces with neighboring businesses creates a mutually beneficial relationship that helps more than just your business and those you choose to partner with. These business partnerships also promote a healthy local economy and contribute to a thriving community.

“We know that in rural America community means everything, and with the LIFT initiative we hope to be a part of keeping those community connections alive,” said Hussain. “As a trusted partner, it’s our goal to help our retailers achieve the ideal c-store.”

By partnering with Cenex and its LIFT program, you get the tools and resources you need to make a meaningful impact in your community. For more information or to join the Cenex family, visit cenex.com/lift. ■



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