

Future Connect 2013
Notes – Deep Dive Idea Exchange Session
Leveraging Your Industry Experience and Expertise

Recruiting and Retention

- Look at your assessment tool. Is it too strict? Are you weeding out people who don't test well?
- Promote from within.
- Turnover is an issue and many times because of low starting wages in our industry. We need to pay better.
- Drug testing is a good idea. It makes people feel comfortable where they work.
- Your line-level employees are often your most challenging. You need to get the word out in different ways: job fairs, career days, chamber of commerce, hiring signs in the store, have current employees recruiting and pay them to do that, go to schools, tie into school organizations like ACT.
- Share success stories of employees on your Facebook page and website.
- High schoolers like to work in things like electronics at Target. Can you find areas for them in your store they would be interested in?
- Job fairs, promote from within, only hire full-timers from the street as a last resort. Post full-time positions at other stores in the area so you can promote from part-time to full-time and people can see it.
- Consider a referral bonus.
- Consider a moving bonus for new areas.
- Hire a leader from an ethnic community.
- Put your forms on-line. Make sure that orientation includes time with the store director.
- Check in with new employees after 60 days. Do something called a scavenger checklist they can turn in at 60 days which helps keep them engaged during that period.
- Let employees view their schedule and make changes and requests via cell phone.
- Consider using Craig's List as a recruiting tool.
- Don't be afraid to allow cellphones at some levels within the store. Make sure they have the tools for immediate access to help the customer.

Employee Engagement

- There is an advantage to doing annual surveys. They give results that help you build programs.
- Consider things like a chairman award, highlighting employees and recognizing those employees.
- Financial results are directly about employee engagement so you have to pay well. The biggest cancer in our stores is we are not considered careers in the retail and grocery industry. We are a place people go when they can't get a job elsewhere. We need to make the retail industry a destination for a career.

- Consider quarterly a “meet the owner” conversation so employees have a place to voice concerns and you have a chance to emphasize what it means to be an employee-owner.
- Focus on customer service no matter what the size of the store.
- Employees and customer service, use that as a base for a financial compensation matrix. Helps make everyone feel responsible for the success and provides opportunities.
- Consider non-financial motivations such as attending a conference, scratch-off lottery style tickets where they get \$25 off their next grocery order.
- Try to engage them one-to-one, text, Facebook, Twitter for store events. Make sure they know what’s going on, don’t just put up a sign.
- Training – send the deli team to a training to make cheese. Think about training other than a specific on-boarding tool. What do you do for the person who has been with you one year or two years?
- Consider Burgers on the Boss, employees and family with the boss cooking the burgers.
- Hold a friendliness meeting. Service and friendliness are your number one priorities. Have comment boxes not just for customers but for employees too. Those who write the best comments get lunch.
- Consider having a morning huddle with department with news of the day, opportunities, sales numbers, etc.
- Department managers conduct associate surveys on an annual basis.
- Hold annual meeting for the store to help the employees feel connected and talk about being owners, address each person by name if you can. For that type of meeting, don’t use nametags as you should know everyone in your store.
- Consider reward programs, tuition reimbursement, exercising, meals.
- Recognition wall for people who have been with your company for a while.
- Health and wellness initiatives to encourage better eating; create an incentive to get to know their biometric numbers. Lunch and learns to educate on health and wellness.
- Face-to-face recognition; phone calls versus email and Internet.
- Don’t let your employee engagement surveys focus on the negative, instead look at all the things that are positive and emphasize them.
- Talent, attracting and retaining good employees is tough. Tough to maintain steady, capability, reliable employees.
- Look at your 16-25-year-old assessments. Is your initial screening weeding out too many people?
- Create a succession plan. We know it is difficult to attract and retain because of long hours, it’s not a sexy industry, and inconsistent schedules. Many people don’t see the long-term benefits/opportunities and don’t feel like they have a work/life balance. You must address each of those things.
- Consider training, not just for new employees but the person who has been there one, three, or five years.
- Talk about your financials. The average employee needs to understand how they impact the bottom line.

- Have a representative of each generation on your management team so that it doesn't look like it is just the "old guys."
- Consider cross training, if you feel like it's going to impact your store's bottom line, make it a corporate program so corporate shares in part of the cost.

Challenges and Opportunities

- Large communication, need more two-way web-based conversations.
- Quarterly newsletters and with Q&A.
- Monthly conference calls and in-person meetings.
- Consider Yammer as a way to post.
- Have the store director host meet and greets with their customers.
- Consider a paid day off for birthdays and anniversaries, especially for entry-level people.
- Share groups help with best practices.
- Use Adobe forms, you get real-time retail feedback.
- Use Skype.

Change Management

- Retail landscape will change. We will see smaller stores. Wal-Mart seems to have the biggest spend in the market currently, but the influx of the dollar stores is huge.
- You need to work with vendors to help with change management. Ask them to be advocates for you.
- Find your niche and don't be too many things to too many people.
- When changes happen, you need to help recognize there is a need for change. Use the following steps: 1) Recognize need for change. 2) Get implementers involved as early as possible and ask for their opinion. 3) Make sure you have trust all the way through, if trust starts to suffer, go back to the beginning and rebuild. 4) Show benefits of change rather than just telling them. 5) Create a plan. 6) Provide the resources so the plan can be carried out effectively. 7) Measure to make sure everything has happened and the change has been a fit in your culture.
- Be the cheerleader, go in every two weeks to talk to your independents.
- Constantly communicate the value to your team and customers.

Company and Personal Career Development

- In smaller companies with less structure, leadership planning and attending conferences is much more important to learn and network from others.
- Look at NISH, weekly webinars on their company, talking about their core competencies.
- In our industry, a multi-faceted blended training approach is critical. On-the-job training, e-learning, management training, conferences, webinars.

Store Formats

- Develop your growth strategy to be the best at what you want to be and build your floor plans around that platform.
- Be fluid and nimble in pursuing the role you have chosen.
- Do not ignore your .com. It can be one of the best formats you have; adapt its role inside your box and work it.
- Look at Amazon as not being the great disrupter but just as another competitor and attack as you would any other competitor. Consider pick-up at the store and how to make that work. Like a members.com from your site where you deliver to the home or to the store and they pick it up.
- Consider small format stores, not a limited assortment but just as a change from what you normally do. Think of them as a place that co-exists with dollar stores because dollar store shoppers will trade up to your brand and your name. Don't forget your core business model inside those small formats. Stick to your core and your platform.
- Don't be afraid of having different store formats for different environments and demographics.
- If you are not cannibalizing, you are being cannibalized.
- Believe that people, no matter what you do with a .com, still want the touch and feel of product and the overall grocery store.
- Total shopping experience is important.
- Community gardens can be a part of the total experience.
- Consider an interactive program where you get kids involved. Not really in it to make a profit but more for the touch and feel experience.
- How large is too large, seeing Wal-Mart addressing aging customers who don't want to walk through great big stores.

Technology/Social Media

- Use social media to promote new products and educate customers.
- Ask customers what they would like to see sold in our stores or what specials they would like.
- Put on QR codes that talk about the product and pairings with that product such as wine and food pairings.
- Use your QR codes as a marketing tool. Capture who is scanning those codes and try to respond in real time offering items specific to that customer.
- Email and/or coupons and deals.
- Have giveaways and contests on your website and Facebook page that are relevant to the customer and drive traffic digitally.
- Suppliers could give links to retailers with information that customers are looking for, recipes, pairings, product story.
- Facebook page for employees so they can communicate with each other; who can cover my shift, pick up extra hours, etc.

- Tweeting a welcome to a new employee is even better than a card (a card to employee's parents is a good idea). You will have many people know you have hired that person rather than just one.
- Have a team of employees listening to all social media so they are able to answer and react to customers quickly with any concern.

Shopper Diversity

- Develop Hispanic foods and products, Hispanic displays and new aisle placements. Develop new brands for variety and pack-size the work with ethnic groups. For example, Hispanics prefer fresh baked to pre-packs. You have to change the way of presenting breads.
- Move gluten-free products to their own section.
- Assimilate into the market. Market to them products and people who speak their language.
- Sets that have cultural appeal. Be careful, there is a line on being too authentic and too mass market. Too one-sided will cause a loss of customers. Campbell's has created products to meet the needs of retailers and shoppers based on retailer requests with some Campbell's and some private label products.
- Look at ways to attract customers – displays, discounts, sales. Have cuisine-based themes.
- Social media devoted to the ethnic customer.
- Do demonstrations.
- Hold special events, shopping is a social event geared to Hispanic culture. Consider Zumba class in parking lot.
- Show care for the family when doing sampling.

Marketing and Merchandising

- Use social media to get conversations going back and forth; it allows for changes more quickly.
- Do text offers.
- Leverage loyalty program data to understand what your guests are buying.
- Do online surveys to talk about things like how to utilize clubs (baby, pet, wine).
- On-line push to get more people to on-line formats. Allows for better access for shopping trends.
- More cross-merchandising and more touch points.
- Have digital board up-front in your store that has messages (Martin's does this; Harris Teeter has Scopix program).

Store Management Issues

- Challenges apply to both business and staffing. Staffing is a primary concern.
- Share your company's values with both the customer and employee.
- Decide what you want to be and then go for that, don't try to be everything to everybody. Have communication on what you have decided with your future leaders so you protect your culture and people don't go off on tangents.
- Have career path planning and talk about it; don't be afraid to let people know how they can get from point to point and the pay range of those points.
- Have diversity conversations so you can deal with generational gaps and views. Leverage the experience between younger and older employees and pair them in a mentor relationship.
- Be competitive with pay. Make compensation a non-issue in your company.
- Look at who your primary competitors are and figure out the specific things you can attack.
- Build and retain department managers. Let them know they need to put in the time; don't let them have unreachable goals; don't let them go outside the store to look around, try to develop them within the store. Talk to them about a career, not just a job.
- Create a positive environment.
- Establish a mentoring program.
- Do cross-training among departments; even build into a game and create a challenging environment.
- Employees may lack self-confidence and fear the unknown. The more you can explain and give information, the more confidence they will have and the less they will fear.
- Have time in your store when you sit down with anyone who is a student about what they want to do upon graduation.
- Don't be afraid to do some job shadowing and spend the money to let your people explore other opportunities within the store.
- Have a Career Day.
- Your customers want to see the store manager, you need to do things like sack groceries. You need to be out in the community. They want to see you.
- The standard you set for yourself may not be attainable by others. The best person in your store may not be the best at managing, but they may be the person you need as a go-to. Pay them well so you can keep them.