

NEWS ANALYSIS

First Look at Neighbours

Petro-Canada's new foodservice-oriented concept bundles convenience for consumers

Petro-Canada's new Neighbours retail concept goes far beyond the traditional c-store.

In explaining how the large Canadian oil and gas company conceptualized, built and tested the new retail concept, Ed Burcher, senior director of foodservice, said the company looked for inspiration from great retailers outside the convenience store industry, such as The

“One of our goals was to be an ‘indescribable’ store,” said Burcher. “We have achieved that goal based on our research.”

The layout is designed to force the traffic flow through the food section where workers dressed like chefs all face the customers from the kitchen area. (No actual cooking is done at the store. The workers reheat and assemble “restaurant quality” sandwiches, grilled paninis and other dishes.)

The store also employs touch-screen video ordering terminals and a pour-your-own coffee program (a rarity in Canada). Other non-traditional c-store touches include a drive-thru window and outside patio for diners who want to stop and eat.

More traditionally, the company put in 16-foot open refrigerated cases



Neighbours is Petro-Canada's answer for on-the-go consumers.

Apple Store. “You can't copy because you don't have the same systems and culture, but you can look at other retailers for inspiration,” said Burcher.

Petro-Canada, which bills itself as “Canada's Gas Station,” had to decide where its capabilities overlapped with its opportunities. This meant “being brutally honest about what we do well and what we don't,” said Burcher.

Neighbours represents a solution for consumers, according to Burcher. The whole design and planning process required the petroleum company to change its product focus “from impulse to destination” and change its customer focus from the road warrior to the customer on the go.

in its larger stores to make room for more alternative beverages. Traditional gondolas though were removed in favor of four-way merchandisers. “They provide a more open look,” said Burcher. “We lost some shelf space but we're getting higher sales since putting in the four-ways.”

There's another dining area in the store that accommodates as many as 15 seats in larger stores and as few as four seats in smaller stores. “We don't want people to stay all day like at a Starbucks, but we do want to offer a place to sit and eat,” said Burcher.

There are currently 15 Neighbours in Ontario. ■

Now Hiring

PCATS Seeks New Executive Director

The Petroleum Convenience Alliance for Technology Standards (PCATS) is looking for a new executive director for the association, as John Hervey will retire from his position as executive director and CEO at the end of this year.

PCATS is incorporated as a membership-based, non-stock corporation in the state of Virginia, and the executive director is an ex-officio member of the board of directors.

Under the board of directors, the executive director is responsible for overall daily management and operation of PCATS and protection of the organization's financial assets, while ensuring compliance with board direc-



tives and applicable federal, state and local requirements.

While the organization is headquartered in Alexandria, Va., it is flexible regarding future locations. There are no specific education requirements for the position, however, the executive director must possess the knowledge and qualities, which may result from formal education or at least three-years experience in business, non-profit operational and financial management, or similar relevant experience, according to PCATS.

For more information, contact Jenny Bullard at (912) 490-2316 or jbullard@flashfoods.com. ■