

MERCHANDISING INNOVATIONS



Adding LED lighting to front-end fixtures is paying off for retailers in sales lifts that last.

Displays Illuminate Front-End Sales

AS THE LAST POINT OF CONTACT with shoppers, front-end merchandising is a make-or-break proposition. According to a 2011 shopper penetration study by the Wm. Wrigley Jr. Co., 80 percent of front-end confectionery purchasing decisions were made in the store, and 62 percent of those were spontaneous.

"We asked ourselves two questions: Why consumers buy our products and, when they don't, what gets in the way," explains Susan Gwinnett-Smith, Mars vice-president of grocery/retail. "It came down to inattention and visibility: They didn't see the items."

That's when a light bulb went on.

According to the Lighting Research Center at Rensselaer Polytechnic Institute, adding under-shelf LED lighting to front-end fixtures captures attention, increases conversion and enhances the shopping experience.

In addition, because LEDs are directional, they produce more light in the same area than conventional bulbs and tubes without the need for ballasts and reflectors. According to Wrigley Vice-President of U.S. Grocery David Kennedy, the result is crisp, bright illumination and color fidelity at the key point of contact with consumers.

In addition, the cost of adding LED lighting is offset through their lower energy usage — the energy draw is roughly that of a 60-Watt incandescent bulb — and they last up to 25 percent longer.

Mars and Wrigley consulted with display vendors to develop illuminated fixtures that could be customized to give retailers their most effective combination of assortment, shelving and shelf pitch.

Retailer Giant Eagle participated in a 52-week test of customized fixtures developed with Mars and Wrigley representatives and vendor partners. Displays were installed and sales data monitored.

Kennedy explains because about 20 percent of cashier displays need to be replaced every three to four years, the opportunity to test the

new fixtures was attractive.

In addition to Giant Eagle's successful trial, other retailers tested the concept, including SuperValu, Inc., an Eden Prairie, MN-based grocery retailer and distributor with 3,420 company-owned, licensed, franchised and independently operated stores across the U.S., including the Cub Foods, Farm Fresh, Hornbacher's, Shop 'n Save, Jewel-Osco, Shoppers and Save-A-Lot chains.

The decision to be part of the test came easily, according to SuperValu Vice-President, Health, Beauty and General Merchandise Patty Fishman.

"We hadn't replaced front-end racks in a few years, and it had become a priority," she explains, adding the new displays had to reflect the category, adapt to changes in products and allow SuperValu to accommodate customer requests for front-end beverages, king-size and hand-to-mouth candy, nuts, nutrition bars and meat snacks.

Fishman's team had begun developing designs incorporating LED lighting and in the course of research and planning, they contacted Mars and Wrigley. Discovering they were working on a similar concept, the teams combined efforts to produce a display that met all of the retailer's criteria.

"Once we saw the first prototype in a Cub Foods store, we definitely decided to go ahead with this," Fishman tells **Candy & Snack TODAY**. The retailer currently has the units in 950 SuperValu stores, both independents and company-owned, as well as modified versions being used in self-check lanes and as lane blocks, as well as LED-illuminated coolers.

RESULTS ARE DURABLE, REPLICABLE

"The immediate reaction of shoppers was very positive, both in comments and sales results," Fishman says, adding that purchases from the displays have remained strong since the initial installation. "Unit sales are up dramatically, and typical items haven't taken a hit."