



GEORGIA Amusement JOURNAL

Dedicated to serving the Georgia COAM industry
Endorsed by the Georgia Amusement and Music Operators Association
paul@tashcommunications.com (406) 491-0100



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Paul Tash photo

BROOKS LEE of Banilla Games shows the Cutting Edge Award the company won last year at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment

Expo for its TICO (Ticket-In Card-Out) system. Banilla will return this year as one of about 50 vendors at the Expo in August.

Lockdogs can lock in protection

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Those involved in the amusement game industry understand the importance of protecting their investment – many have spent an enormous amount of time, energy and money to grow that investment.

Lockdogs is all about protection. The company offers a variety of locking products, including award-winning, high-security, key-changeable locks.

“Our locks are key-changeable in excess of 13,650 times,” said Lockdogs founder and owner Jeff Connor, “which means there is no ‘planned obsolescence,’ or counting of dimples. They require no maintenance such as graphite or lubricant.”

The high-tech locks can help licensees provide a level of protection to discourage location break-ins that lead to theft and vandalism, or worse, physical harm to someone. They can



Jeff Connor

Register now for Expo!

By Paul Tash

Georgia Amusement Journal

Registration for attendees and vendors is still open for the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo (SAEE), which is returning to the Gas South Convention Center Aug. 21-22 in Du-luth, GA.

“SAEE is the leading coin-op trade show in the Southeastern United States,” said Christina Kaiser, executive director of the Georgia Amuse-

ment and Music Operators Association (GAMOA).

“The brand-new Gas South Convention Center is a cutting-edge facility that promotes new product launches for our attendees and record sales for our exhibitors.”

The Expo allows attendees to see the latest in



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GACS convention all set for Aug. 16-18

Georgia Amusement Journal

It's coming up soon ... the Georgia Association of Convenience Stores (GACS) will host its 2024 Annual Convention, Aug. 16-18, at the Omni Amelia Island Plantation in Amelia Island, FL.

Registration is still available at www.gacs.com/events. This year, convention-goers will see several changes to the agenda based on attendee feedback that will enhance their experience: a welcome reception on Thursday night, recreation on Friday morning (when it's not so hot out-

side), musical entertainment after the awards dinner on Friday night, two legislative panels, a legislative reception – including special time set aside for Young Professionals with the legislators, a revamped beach party on Saturday, and a motivational speech on Sunday morning by professional speaker Tyler Enslin.

Now in its 51st year, GACS is continuing to celebrate with the theme “There's No Place Like GACS!”

“GACS is a unique combination of fellowship, family

See GACS Page 3



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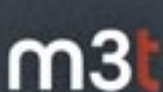


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GACS

from Page 1

and service to the industry, unlike no other organization in our state,” the convention brochure states. “Membership in GACS, with its advocacy platform, education and networking opportunities, and essential services, is becoming key to success in the convenience industry. There’s much to celebrate!”

The convention will not offer a formal teen/children's program this year. Should there be enough interest, GACS staff can assist in making arrangements for registered children.

GACS has negotiated special hotel pricing for attendees at the Omni Amelia Island Plantation, but reservations must be received no later than 5 p.m., July 12.

Email the GACS office, admin@gacs.com, for more information.



Schedule of Events

Thursday, August 15, 2024	
Time	Event
3:30 - 6:30 PM	GACS Registration Open
5:30 - 6:30 PM	Welcome Reception
9:30 - 12:30 AM	Hospitality Suite

Friday, August 16, 2024	
Time	Event
7:30 AM - 7:00 PM	GACS Registration Open
8:00 AM	Fishing Tournament
8:30 AM	Golf Tournament
10:00 AM - 2:00 PM	Table Top Set Up for Vendor Showcase
2:00 - 4:00 PM	GACS Board of Directors Meeting
2:00 - 3:00 PM	GACS Supplier Committee Meeting
3:00 PM	General Supplier Meeting (open to all GACS Supplier Members)
6:00 PM	Cocktail Reception
7:00 PM	Awards and Recognition Dinner/ Music Entertainment
9:30-12:30 AM	Hospitality Suite

Saturday, August 17, 2024	
Time	Event
7:00 AM - 7:00 PM	GACS Registration Open
7:30 AM	Breakfast and Education Sessions
8:00 - 9:30 AM	Speakers/ Education Tom Kloza, OPIS, <i>The Future of Fuel</i> Jeanne Amersen, Enmarket, <i>Marketing That Delivers Results</i> Jill Van Pelt, RaceTrac, <i>HR/ Employee Centric Culture</i> Stephanie Stuckey, Stuckeys, <i>Doing More With Less</i> Michelle Weckstein, SW Georgia Oil, <i>F&B Brands</i> Amy Wood, Friendly Express, <i>Designing the Next Gen C-Store Formats</i>
10:00 - 11:30 AM	Legislative Panel
11:30 AM - Noon	Association General Program
Noon - 1:30 PM	Lunch With the Vendors and Vendor Showcase
2:00 - 4:00 PM	Beach Party
5:30 - 6:15 PM	Young Professionals Reception with the Legislators
6:15 - 7:00 PM	Legislative Reception
7:00 - 7:00 PM	Legislative Dinner
9:00 PM	Hospitality Suite open until 12:30 AM

Sunday, August 18, 2024	
Time	Event
7:00 AM - Noon	GACS Registration Open
7:30 AM	Legislative Breakfast and Motivational Speaker
8:00 AM	Motivational Speaker Tyler Enslin
9:45 - 11:15 AM	Legislative Panel
11:15 AM	Closing Remarks
11:30 AM	Lunch "To Go"

(Note: Silent Auction will close at 11:30 AM)

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Journal Opinion

On the Road stops in Illinois Oct. 24-25

Lori Schneider
AMOA Executive VP

AMOA's On the Road program, this year titled "Powering Connections: Energize Your Network," is set for Oct. 24-25 in Itasca, IL.

The popular event will provide presentations on a variety of timely industry-related topics, including:

- "Dominate Your Competition," featuring keynote speaker Tony Leone, creator and CEO of Whole Brain Selling
- "Navigating the Interview," moderated by long-time AMOA-Notre Dame program HR expert Bob Abel
- Diversify into Retail Sales
- High-Performing Arcades
- ... The Street Footprint
- What's Hot in Redemption
- Optimizing Connectivity
- What's New and How to

Get More Out of Your ATMs

AMOA's On the Road program also features an area factory tour; legislative luncheon and election preview from AMOA legislative counsel Dentons Global Advisors; and the Associate Member Product Spotlight event.

Registration and specific



Lori Schneider

AMOA's On the Road program also features a factory tour, legislative luncheon, and election preview from legislative counsel.

program details will be available in the coming weeks at amoa.com. The event will be held at the Westin Chicago Northwest. In addition, AMOA's On Campus program will be held Oct. 24-26 at the same location.

Mark your calendars for

these other events sponsored by the AMOA.

Tech School lineup

The AMOA Regional Tech School is scheduled for two more locations for 2024:

- September – Denver, CO
- December – Orlando, FL

The one-and-a-half day school features tech sessions by both TouchTunes and AMI on the jukebox, as well as sessions on pinball, cranes, ATMs, payment systems and more. Be sure to visit amoa.com for a full synopsis on each tech session and registration information.

State Council meeting

Jan. 23-25, 2025
 Marriott San Antonio Riverwalk, San Antonio, TX



Amusement Expo

March 17-20, 2025
 Las Vegas
 Education Program – March 17-18, Westgate Las Vegas
 Trade Show – March 19-20, Las Vegas Convention Center, South Hall

For more information, visit www.amusementexpo.org. Be sure to engage with AMOA at www.amoa.com for details on these and many other AMOA programs.

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Georgia Amusement Journal Business and News Office:
 P.O. Box 4307, Butte, MT 59702
 • TEL: 406-491-0100 • E-MAIL: paul@tashcommunications.com

Paul Tash, Editor/Publisher
paul@tashcommunications.com
 Phone: 406-491-0100

Ad Production • paul@tashcommunications.com

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COAM calendar

— REPORTING DATES —

July 20: Each monthly report should be submitted by Location License Holders in electronic format via the www.gacoam.com website as required by the GLC by the 20th of each following month.

— MEETINGS/OTHER —

July 16: COAM Advisory Board, GLC headquarters, Atlanta
Aug. 16-18: GACS Convention, Omni Plantation, Amelia Island, FL
Aug. 21-22: Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo, Gas South Convention Center, Duluth
Oct. 8: COAM Advisory Board, GLC headquarters, Atlanta
Oct. 7-10: Global Gaming Expo (G2E), Venetian, Las Vegas

Write us
 The Georgia Amusement Journal welcomes letters to the editor. Letters must include the writer's name and address. The word limit is 300. Mail to Georgia Amusement Journal, P.O. Box 4307, Butte MT 59702, or you can email us at paul@tashcommunications.com. The Journal reserves the right not to print letters it finds objectionable.

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Expo

from Page 1

technology and offers operators and others a chance to compare products side-by-side, talk to manufacturers, and actually play the newest games available. The Expo show runs 10-5 on Wednesday, Aug. 21, and 10:30-2 on Thursday, Aug. 22. “Some exciting high-dollar giveaways” are planned for Thursday beginning at 11 a.m. for attendees who are present, Kaiser said.

The Expo will feature several new exhibitors this year, and attendees can expect to find some exhibitors debuting new products at the show. In addition, Kaiser said, some will be offering special pricing during the show.

Attendees and vendors throughout the Southeast can register for the Expo at www.sae-expo.com. Kaiser urged people to register now to receive a discount. Onsite registration at full price will be available during the Expo.

“Don’t wait,” she said. “This year’s Expo is a can’t-miss.”

Kaiser said an education day is set for Tuesday that you will want to attend. One session will feature Paul Jenson with Taft Law Firm, who will lead an interactive pres-



2024 SOUTHERN AMUSEMENT & ENTERTAINMENT EXPO

Agenda



Tuesday, August 20 th		
8:00 am – 11:30 pm	Exhibitors Move in	GSD Hall A&B
1:00 pm – 2:30 pm	Gift Card/TITO Systems	GSD Magnolia A&B
3:00 pm - 4:30 pm	Legislative Update with Paul Jenson	GSD Magnolia A&B
5:00 pm – 7:00 pm	Sponsor/Exhibitor Appreciation Seminar Attendees Welcome	Westin Rooftop Bar
Wednesday, August 21 st		
10:00 am – 5:00 pm	Expo Open	GSD Hall A&B
5:30 pm – 8:00 pm	GAMOA Awards Banquet	Westin Amethyst Ballroom
8:00 pm – 9:00 pm	Live Auction <i>Everyone Welcome 50/50 Drawing Held</i>	Westin Amethyst Ballroom
9:00 pm – 11:59 pm	Reception	Westin Amethyst Foyer
9:00 pm – 11:59 pm	Ginger Foshee Casino Night <i>Benefiting Bert's Big Adventure Everyone Welcome Silent Auction ends</i>	Westin Amethyst Foyer
Thursday, August 22 nd		
10:30 am – 2:00 pm	Expo Open	GSD Hall A&B
11:00 am – 2:00 pm	Giveaways <i>Operators only you must be present to win</i>	GSD Hall A&B
2:00 pm – 3:30 pm	COAM Seminar <i>GA Lottery, Intralot & InComm Officials</i>	GSD TBD
3:30 pm - 4:00 pm	GAMOA Annual Business Meeting <i>GAMOA Members Only</i>	GSD TBD

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GAMOA. Attendees can purchase “fun money” for Ginger Foshee Casino Night at the event.

The GAMOA Awards Banquet will feature presentations of several awards: the Coin Operator of the Year Award, the Lifetime Achievement Award, and the Cutting Edge Award, which honors the developer of a top new product or service for the Georgia COAM market. In addition, Betson Enterprises and Goldfinger will present the Marshall Hartmann Technician of the Year Award at the dinner. The application for this award can be found at www.sae-expo.com. Manufacturers interested in vying for the Cutting Edge Award can contact Kaiser.

Following dinner will be the traditional live auction featuring donations from GAMOA's biggest sponsors and managed by spirited auctioneer and manufacturer Jonathon Culverhouse. Proceeds from the auction, always a highlight of the Expo, will benefit GAMOA and its

mission to promote and serve the state’s COAM industry. GAMOA's annual meeting is Thursday afternoon following the presentation by GLC's COAM Division and Intralot.

Special pricing – \$204 per night, plus taxes – is available for lodging for those who act quickly.

Rooms have been reserved at the brand-new Westin Atlanta Gwinnett that adjoins the Gas South Convent Center, the Embassy Suites by Hilton (Atlanta NE

Gwinnett Sugarloaf), and the Home2 Suites by Hilton. The deadline to receive the preferred rate is July 30.

The Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo has become a regional show with attendees and exhibitors from all over the Southeast encouraged to attend. GAMOA is again hosting the event with two other organizations, the North Carolina Coin Operators Association and the North Carolina Citizens for Free Enterprise, a group of business owners and supporters working to create a fair skill-based game environment in North Carolina.

For more information, contact Kaiser at (770) 284-6593 or christina@sae-expo.com to register. “It’s going to be a great show.”

entation on state gaming laws. A panel discussion on player tracking and automatic redemption systems is also scheduled for Tuesday, and a presentation by the Georgia Lottery Corp. (GLC) COAM Division and Intralot is set for Thursday. Go to www.sae-expo.com for the full itinerary.

“This is our largest show ever,” she said.

The event will also feature an online silent auction, a live auction, a reception, the GAMOA Awards Banquet, and a charity casino night on Wednesday. The casino night will again benefit Bert’s Big Adventures, a non-profit organization that sends chronically and terminally ill children and their families to Disney World for a “magical” five-day vacation, all expenses paid. For more information on this organization, go to www.bertsbigadventure.com.

“Casino night has become a really popular event,” Kaiser said. “We hope everyone stays after the banquet to play, have fun, and support a great cause.”

The event has been named the Ginger Foshee Casino Night in honor of the late wife of Butch Foshee, a former COAM operator in Georgia and past president of





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Lockdogs

from Page 1

also protect the machines themselves so that only those authorized to open them can do so.

“Because of the locks’ unique and patented design, operators don’t have to wait for the locks to be ‘pinned,’” Connor said. “The locks can be coded to operators’ specifications in seconds.”

No sorting by application means that operators can have their locks installed by manufacturers on their assembly lines, resulting in potential savings “of hundreds of thousands of payroll dollars,” he added.

Lockdogs also provides lifetime warranties on keys, meaning that an operator will never have to pay for keys again.

“If a key breaks,” Connor said, “they simply send us the serial number and we send them a replacement, eliminating another unnecessary expense.”

Lockdogs will feature the locks at this year’s Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo (SAEE) next month (see story on Page 1).

In addition to the key-changeable lock, Lockdogs will also feature a number of products at SAEE that address issues faced by amusement and route operators, including a pick- and tamper- proof padlock with no key way and over 250,000 key combinations.

“It has to be seen to be believed,” Connor said. “It also boasts a five-second shackle change, which eliminates the need to buy multiple locks.”

Additionally, Lockdogs will feature a number of covers that protect operators for vandalism or lock picks that are currently available online.

In his 30-plus years in gaming, Connor has worked in every aspect of the industry, including brick and mortar casinos, online casinos, and machine and systems sales. He was also an announcer for Sugar Ray Leonard Boxing and was featured on “The Contender,” a reality TV series from 2005-2009 on NBC and ESPN that followed a group of boxers as they competed in an elimination-style competition.

Chief Compliance Officer Rachel Loudon is also vital to Lockdogs, Connor said. She is a gaming industry professional who specializes in finance and compliance with an emphasis on policies, procedures and internal controls.

Connor added that Lockdogs will have a special guest at its SAEE booth this year. With 2024 marking the 50th anniversary of the classic TV show “Good Times,” Connor said, “our friend Jimmie ‘JJ’ Walker will be joining us at our booth #231 signing autographs and



Photo courtesy of Lockdogs

JIMMY “JJ” WALKER of “Good Times” fame will be joining the Lockdogs crew at the company’s

booth at the Southern Amusement & Entertainment Expo next month in Duluth.

taking pictures with fans.” Walker currently has a casino game show called “Dynamite Dollars” that he’ll be performing in Montgomery and Birmingham, AL, later this

summer. He will also throw out the first pitch for the Birmingham Barons as they celebrate ‘70s night.

Readers of the Georgia Amusement Journal will receive an addi-

tional 10 percent discount on any orders placed during the show.

For the complete list of Lockdogs products, go to www.Lockdogs.com.

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Travelers pay for preferred convenience

Danielle Romano

Convenience Store News

Convenience store retailers are gearing up for busy summer travel as a record-breaking 70.9 million Americans were projected to travel more than 50 miles for the Fourth of July holiday.

As summer travel heats up, a new survey from global industrial technology company Vontier revealed time-pressed drivers are not only prioritizing convenience and a one-stop-shop experience when making on-the-go purchases, but they're willing to pay more and even drive a little out of their way to get it.

The data reveals that drivers place a significant premium on convenience stores that offer diverse food options and additional services that make their stops more productive and efficient.

The convenience premium

Nearly 60 percent of respondents said they would be happy to pay a markup on c-store products if it meant making only one stop. On

average, American consumers are open to a 10 percent to 11 percent price increase for items like made-to-order meals and snacks, and as much as a 9 percent increase for household essentials if it meant cutting out multiple stops on their journey.

According to Vontier, consumers' willingness to pay a premium for convenience is particularly interesting in light of ongoing concerns about rising food prices, and the cost of basic goods and services in the United States. The survey suggests that while price remains a factor, consumers increasingly value the time-saving benefits of convenience stores.

"With half of Americans visiting convenience stores at least once a week, this willingness to pay more for convenience is not just a vacation road trip splurge, but a purchasing decision that's being made frequently," Vontier said.

Sixty-one percent of respondents said they have a favorite convenience store, and nearly 80 percent are willing to drive out of

their way to visit their preferred store, even if it means passing other options.

Additionally, a significant portion of respondents (almost half) would be willing to delay a restroom break to ensure they could shop at their preferred store. Forty-three percent said they would risk driving on empty to get to their preferred store.

Services that matter

In a show of changing consumer behavior, tastes and expectations, 62 percent of respondents said they have gone to a c-store specifically for food, and one-third said they go to convenience stores for hot, fresh restaurant-style food. Forty-seven percent said they have chosen c-store food over other nearby options.

Convenience stores are not only hot new dining destinations, but they are also incorporating new technologies and services to drive productivity and meet consumer demands:

- Sixty-two percent of respon-

dents said they value mobile ordering during the purchasing process.

- Seventy-three percent said they appreciate it when a convenience store offers additional services (for example, car washes).

- Nearly half of Americans wish there was at least one charging station at every c-store.

"The landscape of convenience stores is undergoing a significant transformation," said Mark Morelli, president and CEO at Vontier. "Our research underscores the growing consumer demand for convenience and efficiency like mobile ordering in their day-to-day lives. New technologies and services are raising the bar on the convenience store experience, making it more than a stop on the journey but a destination in itself for everything from an amazing meal and a car wash to EV [electric vehicle] charging."

Vontier is a global industrial technology company focused on smarter transportation and mobility. Its clients include 7-Eleven Inc., Circle K, Wawa Inc., Buc-ee's, Speedway, Chevron Corp. and Shell.

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C-store gum sales bubbling up

Danielle Romano

Convenience Store News

The COVID-19 pandemic burst gum's bubble. In a time marked by masks and social distancing, bad breath was less of a worry and fewer consumers spent on impulse purchases. The number of packages of gum sold dropped by nearly a third in the United States in 2020, according to market research firm Circana.

Over the last few years, some manufacturers responded by leaving the market altogether. In 2022, Chicago-based Mondelēz International Inc. sold its gum business in the United States, Canada and Europe to Perfetti Van Melle Group, a leading European gum and confectionery maker. Brands sold included Trident, Bubblicious, Dentyne and Chiclets.

Other American confectioners cut slow-selling gum brands. Ferrara Candy Co. confirmed that it quietly ended production of Fruit Stripe and Super Bubble gums in 2022 after more than 50 years, citing consumers' changing preferences.

Today, however, gum is making a comeback as consumers are increasingly resuming their normal routines, which include stops at

convenience stores on the way to and from work and school. Gum category sales grew in the convenience channel for the 52 weeks ended Feb. 25, with unit sales up 4.4 percent, Circana data showed.

"Consumers are often purchasing gum both through planned and impulse buying. Previously, gum was all about freshening breath. Now, consumers turn to gum in different ways and for different occasions," Maria Urista, vice president at Chicago-based Mars Wrigley, told Convenience Store News.

All-age appeal

According to Circana, all demographic groups are contributing to gum category growth in the convenience channel but, in particular, the three largest demographic cohorts are providing the biggest boosts: Generation X (aged 44-59) contributed 18.2 percent growth, followed by boomers (aged 60-69) at 15.7 percent growth and millennials (aged 28-43) at 15 percent growth.

To usher in a new era of gum chewers, Mars Wrigley earlier this year announced the most significant overhaul of its Orbit, Extra, Freedent and Yida gum brands in more than 100 years. The goal is to captivate and recruit the next generation of chewing champions: the coveted under-25 demographic, which is the most likely to chew gum of any age group.



The overhaul includes the launch of a new global brand platform, "Chew You Good," which repositions the Orbit, Extra, Freedent and Yida brands from an occasional freshening fix to an essential everyday chewing companion that delivers a refreshing and unconventional me moment for consumers in an increasingly chaotic world.

"Chew You Good, three words that remind us that no matter where you are or what you're doing, there's a simple way to take a bite-sized me moment ... because sometimes, that's all you need," said Alyona Fedorchenko, global gum and mints portfolio vice president for Mars Snacking.

Getting a refresh

As part of the category's revival, Mars Wrigley has a multi-year effort in place to attract 10 million new U.S. chewers by 2030. A key piece of that strategy is shifting the focus from solely breath freshening to other benefits in the wellness space, Urista explained.

The company's gum brands such as Extra have started to explore this territory for work and study occasions, specifically when it comes to moments of focus, since studies have shown that chewing gum can help maintain focus and attention.

Another way Mars Wrigley is elevating usage occasions in the wellness space is through innovative products such as Respawn by 5 Gum, which is aimed at gamers. The product is infused with B vitamins and green tea extract, which have been shown to help maintain focus – ideal for elevating gameplay.

With consumers shifting their focus to health and wellness, one area where gum took a hit was in consumers' desire to cut back on sugar. Now, thanks to innovation in the category, growth in the convenience channel is being driven by sugarless gum.

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Retail Matters

Small stores have labor advantages

Renee M. Covino

Convenience Store News

You don't need a big human resources (HR) department to win over employees. Granted, running a small business in an industry with thin margins and high overhead can be tougher without the backing of a large parent company, but experts say smaller operators should focus on their local advantages in today's dynamic labor market.

"Small businesses might not be able to offer as high of pay or as rich of benefits as chain stores, but what they do offer is the ability for employees' voices to be heard and more autonomy," said Heather Whitney, HR services senior advisor at Paychex Inc., a provider of integrated solutions for payroll, benefits, human resources and insurance services. "Employees have a greater sense of belonging at small stores where they know each of their coworkers vs. in chains where they may never see or know who upper management is."

Additionally, single-store and small operators should realize they are often viewed with a certain sen-

timentality and contribute meaningfully to the character of the community, according to Whitney. "As a result, employees at these types of establishments often see more meaning in their work than their counterparts at national chains, contributing not just to the business' revenue, but to the community as a whole," she said.

Smaller retailers would do well to know who they are – and who they are not.

"This is about focusing on the fundamentals, using your resources and not trying to compete with the bigger players in ways you cannot win," said Aaron Sorensen, partner, chief behavioral scientist and head of transformation at Lotis Blue Consulting.

Based on his company's recently released "Future of Retail Workforce" study, there are three major factors that are among the top drivers of engagement and retention:

- Interesting and meaningful work;
- Relationships and camaraderie with coworkers, or a sense

of team; and

- A high-quality manager/managers.

"Winning on these aspects of the work experience doesn't require big budgets or large corporate HR departments," Sorensen told Con-



venience Store News.

Labor experts offer the following tips for small operators looking to wow their workforce:

Pay sufficiently. Whitney believes that cost-of-living raises and merit-based adjustments aren't just for corporate roles. The way she sees it, if smaller retailers want to keep good people around for the long haul, they must reward tenure with some level of increased wages.

"Pay sufficiently by scanning local pay practices, but recognize

that pay isn't everything. Specifically, competitive pay matters, but paying the most doesn't lead to attracting more talent and lower turnover," Sorensen added, noting that it would be best for small operators to focus on the aspects of their employee value proposition that are more desirable.

Make sure you have great store leaders. Hiring and developing store managers is the single greatest opportunity for small operators, according to Sorensen, because great

managers create great experiences. He suggests that when hiring, small operators look for leadership experience in sports, military or previous (perhaps competitive) companies.

Emphasize flexibility and accommodation. Small businesses are inherently more flexible than large corporations, which means small operators have a unique advantage to prioritize employee input and communication regarding aspects about the job that really
(Continued on next page)





**WEDNESDAY, AUGUST 21ST
THURSDAY, AUGUST 22ND**



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- Panel Discussion on player tracking and automatic redemption systems.

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Retail Matters

(Continued from previous page) matter to them. "Consider letting employees weigh in on decisions around scheduling, opening on holidays and other [things]," Whitney said. "This helps them feel more connected to the business' success and more valued in the workplace."

Along with that, small operators should recognize that circumstances are always changing for employees and if they want to keep them on board, it will help to roll with those personal life punches. "Accommodating changing employee needs – whether long- or short-term – by allowing flexible schedules, adjusted responsibilities or other shifts in their work arrangements can help keep the team strong," Whitney explained.

Provide a strong sense of safety. Small operators have a good opportunity to maintain strong rela-

tionships with local law enforcement, both by bringing them in-store with discounted or free food and beverages and by doing outreach to community organizations, law enforcement and civic groups to strengthen connections and collaboration.

A recent study conducted by the NACS/Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council (CCRRC) found that maintaining strong community ties allows individual retailers to access police, first responder and social resources more effectively and can serve as a natural deterrent to safety incidents, while bringing peace of mind to employees.

Promote "good news" community stories. The NACS/CCRRC study also found that smaller operators have an excellent opportunity through social media and local media to promote

community angles and celebrate local employees as heroes. Individual retailers can – and should – make a more concentrated effort to tell their own stories to improve customer interactions and establish a sense of pride with employees.



Plan to invest in labor management technology/services. This can help significantly as it allows the small operator to outsource administration, payroll and compliance-related tasks to experts, according to Whitney. "That gives them what everyone needs: more time in the day. Small operators who use that time to focus on the things that make their store special

– to employees and patrons – will see their labor challenges become more manageable."

In the coming years, success will be all about playing to strengths and focusing on what makes your local business attractive to customers, Whitney said.

"A small business that is more active in the community and knows itself as a company is more likely to attract and retain the right employees," she said. "Sometimes, it is as simple as acknowledging your employees' needs within their communities and figuring out how the company can take part in growing that."

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LOCATION SWEEP AND MASTER PUSH CALENDAR**

 **JULY-DEC 2024** 

ACCOUNTING WEEK START	ACCOUNTING WEEK END	LOCATION SWEEP DATE	MASTER PUSH DATE
30-Jun-24	06-Jul-24	10-Jul-24	16-Jul-24
07-Jul-24	13-Jul-24	17-Jul-24	23-Jul-24
14-Jul-24	20-Jul-24	24-Jul-24	30-Jul-24
21-Jul-24	27-Jul-24	31-Jul-24	06-Aug-24
28-Jul-24	03-Aug-24	07-Aug-24	13-Aug-24
04-Aug-24	10-Aug-24	14-Aug-24	20-Aug-24
11-Aug-24	17-Aug-24	21-Aug-24	27-Aug-24
18-Aug-24	24-Aug-24	28-Aug-24	04-Sep-24*
25-Aug-24	31-Aug-24	04-Sep-24	10-Sep-24
01-Sep-24	07-Sep-24	11-Sep-24	17-Sep-24
08-Sep-24	14-Sep-24	18-Sep-24	24-Sep-24
15-Sep-24	21-Sep-24	25-Sep-24	01-Oct-24
22-Sep-24	28-Sep-24	02-Oct-24	08-Oct-24
29-Sep-24	05-Oct-24	09-Oct-24	16-Oct-24*
06-Oct-24	12-Oct-24	16-Oct-24	22-Oct-24
13-Oct-24	19-Oct-24	23-Oct-24	29-Oct-24
20-Oct-24	26-Oct-24	30-Oct-24	05-Nov-24
27-Oct-24	02-Nov-24	06-Nov-24	13-Nov-24*
03-Nov-24	09-Nov-24	13-Nov-24	19-Nov-24
10-Nov-24	16-Nov-24	20-Nov-24	27-Nov-24*
17-Nov-24	23-Nov-24	27-Nov-24	03-Dec-24
24-Nov-24	30-Nov-24	04-Dec-24	10-Dec-24
01-Dec-24	07-Dec-24	11-Dec-24	17-Dec-24
08-Dec-24	14-Dec-24	18-Dec-24	24-Dec-24
15-Dec-24	21-Dec-24	26-Dec-24*	02-Jan-25*
22-Dec-24	28-Dec-24	02-Jan-25*	08-Jan-25*

*Indicates sweep or push date has been changed to accommodate holiday
Note: Holidays on a Thursday and Friday may delay the availability of the Location Period Accounting Report on the following Monday

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Dirty restrooms may flush store profits

Danielle Romano

Convenience Store News

Nearly 70 percent of Americans recall having a particularly unpleasant experience in a public restroom due to the poor condition of the facility.

The top restroom aggravations include clogged or unflushed toilets; an old, dirty or unkempt appearance; and unpleasant smells, according to the annual "Healthy Handwashing Survey" by Bradley Co.

This means convenience store retailers that neglect restroom cleaning and maintenance are jeopardizing customers' repeat business and sales. Almost 60 percent of respondents believe an unclean restroom shows poor management, 56 percent are left with a tarnished opinion of the business, and 50 percent vow not to return or will think twice about doing so.

On the other hand, 62 percent of Americans make a point to stop at businesses with clean and well-maintained bathrooms when they need to use the facilities, and nearly 60 percent willingly spend more money there.

"While 43 percent of Americans believe the overall condition of public restrooms has improved

over the past 15 years, that leaves 57 percent who remain unimpressed," said Jon Dommissie, vice president, business development and strategy at Bradley Co. "Our research shows that business owners with subpar restrooms are leaving untapped sales opportunities on the table."

This year's findings pinpoint key consumer pain points, and preferences and behaviors in restrooms, providing insights on ways to improve retail washrooms for repeat business.

Some of the study's biggest takeaways are:

Misbehaviors spoil the restroom experience. Sometimes it's the lax or poor behavior of other restroom users that irks restroom users, which can still reflect poorly on the business. Top restroom pet peeves include:

- Used paper towels left on the floor or sink;
- Water splashed around the floor or sink; and
- Careless or reckless behavior that results in damage.

The survey also enquired about participants' attitudes when they observe someone in a public restroom not washing their hands be-

fore exiting. Almost 70 percent of Americans recall seeing somebody use a restroom without washing their hands, which creates a negative impression about that person. Men (79 percent) are more likely than women (59 percent) to witness others skipping the suds.

Post-COVID sensitivity. Since the onset of COVID-19 four years ago, people remain in an elevated state of germ consciousness, causing sensitivity to the cleanliness in restroom spaces. In fact, 80 percent of Americans say they are now more conscious about coming into contact with germs because of the coronavirus – particularly retail establishments. The facilities that cause people the most concern about germs are:

1. Stores
2. Health care establishments
3. Restaurants
4. Gas stations

"Like the iPod forever changed music and 9/11 changed air travel, COVID will forever change public bathroom design," Dommissie said. "People want clean, well-stocked restrooms that they don't have to touch."

Hands-off. People go to great lengths to avoid coming in contact with germs in public restrooms. Al-

most 70 percent of Americans use a paper towel as a barrier between themselves and flushers, faucets and doors. Nearly half (46 percent) use their foot to flush a public toilet – much to the dismay of building maintenance staff responsible for fixing broken flushers.

With so many people cautiously avoiding contact with restroom surfaces, it follows that 86 percent believe it is important to have touchless fixtures in a public restroom, and 70 percent are more likely to return to a business that offers touch-free technology like faucets, flushers, soap and towel dispensers in its restrooms.

Restroom Wish List. When asked about the most important improvement they'd like to see in restrooms, respondents cited cleaning them more regularly and keeping them better stocked. Next on the wish list is making everything touchless.

"Even if it means investing in an additional staff person, our survey responses tell us you should make restroom cleanliness and proactive maintenance high priorities at your business," added Dommissie. "It's an investment in customer satisfaction, brand image and health and safety."

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