

Flash Foods Successfully Revamps Go Blue Loyalty Debit Card

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By Tammy Mastroberte

In the February 2010 issue of *Convenience Store News*, a feature on loyalty programs entitled "Mastering the Art of Loyalty," included information on Flash Foods Inc. of Waycross, Ga., and noted the company's plans to revamp and relaunch its GOBLUE loyalty debit card, which is an automated clearing house (ACH) card.

On May 17, 2010, the new program launched and by the end of the year, the company increased its GOBLUE cardholders from 4,000 to 16,000. Jeannie Amerson, Advertising & Loyalty Manager at Flash Foods credits in-store signage and extensive employee training to the successful signups.

"We did more training internally for the relaunch than we did when we initially started our loyalty program over 6 years ago," Amerson explained. "We had to completely reeducate our employees and customers on the values of our loyalty program. We realized early on in the process that many of our employees were only giving information on the fuel discount and not the in-store rewards. Many customers didn't realize the loyalty card had additional values."

Previously, both Rewards in a Flash and GOBLUE members could take advantage of the cents-off fuel discount -- with GOBLUE members saving 3 cents per gallon and regular loyalty card holders saving 2 cents per gallon. However, with the reintroduction of GOBLUE, only these members get a fuel discount, which the company raised to 5 cents a gallon.

"When we started our loyalty program 2004, we had no intention of implementing a debit card option at a later date, but when interchange fees continued to increase, and the ACH feature became an option, we had to react," Amerson noted. "We knew eliminating the fuel discount for regular loyalty card holders would be a difficult task, so we initially kept the 2 cent discount and offered an additional penny for GOBLUE customers." With the new debit card option in place we began a year-long effort to completely restructure our loyalty program. The challenge was to retain our existing loyal customer base using the loyalty card for the fuel discount only.

To curb the angry customers who were loyalty members and lost their discount, Flash Foods decided to increase the percentage back on in-store purchases from 1 percent to 2 percent, which "means more to those buying inside, and they can use it toward a fuel purchase," Amerson said.

The next step is to promote the GOBLUE card to the company's fleet customers, which includes approaching businesses to sign on to the card, said Amerson. "That will have a huge impact on the amount of money changing from the credit network to the ACH network because in terms of total dollars, fleet customers have more revenue flowing through our stores than the average person filling up every week," she noted.

Additionally, the company is in the process of redesigning its Web site, which came to their attention while relaunching the loyalty side. The goal is to continue expanding social media and to start targeting specific loyalty customer segments with e-mail marketing, according to Amerson.

She said Flash Foods has a lot planned this year, and she is most excited about interacting with customers outside of the store through social media. "We have big plans for social media as a means to drive people to our Web site, which will be launched during the first quarter of this year," she said.