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The Benefits of a Common Database

Circle K execs detail move to single mobile-in-the-cloud database

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By [Angel Abcede](#), Senior Editor/Content Development Coordinator

PHOENIX -- Is there really an app for everything? Well, maybe not everything, but the operations team in convenience-store chain [Circle K's](#) Arizona region found an app for task coordination and accuracy, one that also lets them build a common, shared database across multiple departments.

Prior to incorporating a mobile operational solution, Heather Heller, regional operations director for Circle K's Arizona business unit out of Phoenix, said her team of 16 market managers would use Excel spreadsheets, go to 10 to 12 stores, check off items on the lists, go home to update computers and then send the information to their solutions provider. Now that effort goes away.

At the same time, four separate departments—procurement, operations, facility maintenance and marketing—now have access to a common database.

Heller's colleague, Terry Brown, advertising and brand manager for Circle K, is excited about the potential going forward. "We're wanting to get where everyone has access to it and is using it," Brown told *CSP Daily News*.

The solution is meant to be a "shared knowledge base" for the organization, said Nancy Carter, product manager for AccuStore and its provider, Clearwater, Fla.-based GSP. "What you get is real-time, shared access to that store data that's being updated and interacted with by all departments," Carter said. "Those things drive store performance."

Heller and Brown spoke about the AccuStore solution and how their implementation of a mobile, shared database has made a positive impact on their operations:

Q: What were some of the tangible benefits that you've seen?

Heller: Time savings is one. Eliminating the spreadsheets, the paper, collating data. It's a lot of man hours. The next thing was the timeliness of the updates. If marketing has a program to roll out ... now they'll have accurate data for point-of-purchase deployment and needs.

Brown: In our environment, so many things change quickly. You're adding new equipment, removing old equipment ... and if you want to go to market quicker, you have to know when those things happen.

Q: How has the mobile element of the solution worked for you? Any resistance to using a smartphone to update the database?

Heller: From our perspective, it's the first time we've done anything of this scale. But generally, it's easy, quick and logical for those who are technologically challenged. They have to have phones anyway. Now they just take them out, spend five minutes to enter the information and there you have it.

Q: How could things evolve for you in terms of efficiencies going into the future? Can you describe the potential?

Heller: It will help both marketing and our facilities team move much faster. We can do a survey [of our stores] and know exactly, for instance, how many need new signs. It'll help us be first to market. That should be huge. The second part is the cost savings from having old information. So Terry's group might have printed 200 of the wrong signs because they did not have accurate information.

Laval, Quebec-based [Alimentation Couche-Tard Inc.](#) operates a network of more than 6,300 convenience stores throughout North America. Its North American network consists of 13 business units, including nine in the United States (under the Circle K brand) in 40 states and four business units in Canada (under the Mac's and Couche-Tard brands) covering all 10 provinces.


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