



Loosening the Tight Labor Market

INCLUDES BONUS CONTENT FROM THE
CONVENIENCE LEADERS VISION GROUP



FEATURED SPEAKER

Michael Sansolo,
Research Director, Coca-Cola
Retailing Research, Convenience,
and Supermarket Councils

TVG
MEMBERS
2024

VISION REPORT FEBRUARY 2024

Frank Beard
Rovertown

Jon Bratta
Monster Energy Drink

Tom Bush
Food Concepts, Inc.

Ed Collupy
Collupy System Solutions
LLC

Kevin Farley
Impact 21

John Flood
Executive Stream Solutions

Rob Grimes
International Food and
Beverage Technology
Association

Marion Henson
Bloom Healthy

Jesse Hirsh
Eco Punks

Raymond Huff
HJB Convenience Corp.

Kris Klinger
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Melvin Maddux
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Michael Sansolo
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Roy Strasburger
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Hughes Network
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FACILITATOR

Myra Kressner
Kressner Strategy Group,
Vision Group Network Co-Founder



The Vision Group (TVG) is the first virtual forum organized by the Vision Group Network. TVG was created in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic to collaborate, break through silos, address challenges head on in search of disruptive solutions, and broaden members' vision.

Previous TVG meetings have not been publicly shared, but we decided to publish this TVG Vision Report from the January 2024 meeting focused on being the "Employer of Choice" with compelling, multi-channel perspectives beyond the Convenience Leaders Vision Group discussion on this subject.

You can find out more information about VGN at www.tvgsolutions.com.

This **TVG Vision Report** is comprised of three parts:

TVG Views provides a summary of the conversation.

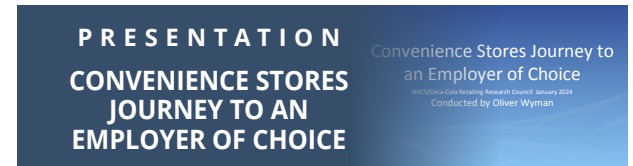
In The Room With TVG provides you with the meeting transcript, tagged for easy reference, so that you can be "in the room" with us.

Michael Sansolo's full presentation "Convenience Stores Journey to an Employer of Choice."

We highly recommend that you read all three components.

Since October 2020, TVG's diverse group of members from convenience, grocery, and foodservice operators to academics and futurists, has had unconventional and incredibly stimulating discussions on broad-ranging topics such as:

- Global retail trends, such as solar panels that power outside benches and license plate recognition for all purchases
- 15-minute cities/urban hubs
- EV and alternative energy
- Asian scooters and e-bikes
- Omni-channel and numerous global "Phygital" metaverse examples
- Ghost kitchens
- Virtual shadowing for new employees before they start a job
- Social media replacing traditional organized labor tactics
- Non-white/Hispanic management as role models for younger generation to see a future
- Independent operators setting the bar creating destinations with compelling customer experiences
- Cryptocurrency DAO's (Distributed Autonomous Organizations)
- Cybersecurity
- Reactive, proactive, predictive, prescriptive buckets of AI versus machine learning
- Dissatisfaction with payment solution-providers and their lack of innovation for c-store industry
- Payment companies buying POS companies
- "The Jetsons" predictions coming true
- Gen Z, Gen Alpha embracing technology
- And much more.





TVG VIEWS

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THE VISION GROUP DISCUSSION



This meeting of The Vision Group (TVG) focused on the workforce challenge facing the convenience retailing industry and featured a presentation by Michael Sansolo, research director with the Coca-Cola Retailing Research, Convenience, and Supermarket Councils. Following Sansolo's presentation, TVG members had the opportunity to share their experiences, solutions and questions.

On January 19, 2024, TVG hosted a presentation of the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council's most recent study, "Convenience Stores Journey to an Employer of Choice," by TVG member **Michael Sansolo** and facilitated by **Myra Kressner**, co-founder of the Vision Group Network and president of Kressner Strategy Group. As not all TVG members are retailers, there was a wide range of views and perspectives presented by the members.

The study identified a shrinking pool of possible job applicants, the barriers to their employment in the convenience industry, and strategies for expanding the pipeline and retaining employees after they are hired. The group had a lot of thoughts.

Sansolo said the study showed that only 17% of the working population could be persuaded to work in the c-store industry. The challenges to hiring are a poor industry image, lack of advancement opportunities, and that older, more stable workers quit frontline positions during COVID and did not return. **Kris Klinger**, vice president, auxiliary services at Boston University, suggested that the perception of service jobs in the U.S. is more negative than in other countries. "In Europe, as an example, service industry jobs are jobs. They're not transitional things that people do. In America, they're seen as a transitional job," he comments. Raising the perception of industry jobs may attract more candidates.

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Expanding the Applicant Pool

Frank Beard, head of marketing for Rovern, also referred to Europe while talking about the poor image that is often associated with the convenience and fuel industry. He remembered “having an interesting chat with a person at a site out in Germany where it was previously branded around a major oil company and then it ended up being branded around a grocer that had a bit more of a better brand, for lack of better explanation. He was saying that, after that rebranding had been done, that they got a completely different type of applicant for jobs. They were getting a lot of folks that were previously working at bakeries, coffee shops, that sort of thing. People just didn’t really want to wear a major oil shirt. That was interesting and I think it’s something

for some of the retailers in the industry to keep in mind as well, how they go to market and brand themselves.”

To increase the flow of applicants, President of StrasGlobal, CEO of Compliance Safe, and Vision Group Co-Founder **Eva Strasburger** stated that retailers need to target gig workers as some are moving back to more permanent jobs. There are quite a few articles from people that said, “We’ve been involved in the gig economy now for four years and we’re concerned we are sinking into this hole where we’re not on a career path and we’re not getting benefits and we’re not actually learning anything if we’re sitting in an Uber.” Brick and mortar jobs can provide more stability and career training opportunities.

Speaking of career paths, CEO of StrasGlobal, President of Compliance Safe, and Vision Group Network Co-Founder **Roy Strasburger** noted that the industry must inform potential applicants that real skills can be learned working in a c-store. “From an industry point of view, it brought to mind how the military moved from talking about how joining the armed forces was a fighting frontline position to that when you join the military, you fix computers or you can repair trucks,” says Strasburger.

Opportunities to get older workers back into the pipeline presented themselves to Chairman of the International Food and Beverage Technology Association **Rob Grimes** during the 2024 CES Show. At that exhibition, Grimes saw new technology at the AARP booth such as glasses that allow sight-impaired individuals to function in a seeing environment, speech recognition devices for people with Alzheimer’s and Parkinson’s who have severe speech problems, and instant speech translation devices that can translate up to 140 languages instantly. All these technologies can put people on the sales floor who are currently sidelined.

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Retaining Employees Through Skill Growth

To retain employees, training, career path visibility, and a suitable work environment are essential. **Kevin Farley**, chief client officer at Impact 21, pointed out that, while a good store manager is critical to a store's success, entry level positions don't always require the talents necessary to be good managers. "When you hire at a certain level, you're not hiring for the person to manage people. And to take care of a store and manage people is a completely different skill set and you have to hire for that skill set. It's a very different challenge," according to Farley. Just as important, says **Melvin Maddux**, worldwide global sourcing & innovation team member at Gourmet Foods International (GFI), is that young people coming out of high school haven't had the chance to learn the interpersonal skills necessary for the workplace. The industry could emphasize that retail is a place where new employees can learn the social skills necessary to progress in the company—or any company—for that matter.

As important as training is, providing employees with a sense of a career path so that they know they have the opportunity to progress with the company is equally important. Sansolo pointed out that "if you show career progression, you show opportunity. It's a very different discussion you're having with...frontline workers and you might appeal to people who are saying, 'I don't just want a job, I would like a career.'"

Raymond Huff, president at HJB Convenience Corp., has always promoted people internally for more senior positions. He could spot candidates for promotion because they were "employees that come in at the entry level. After their probationary period, if they stay that year, they are interested in growing with that company."

One other piece of the puzzle to keeping employees is the work environment. Owners must make sure that the workspace is safe and employees' expectations are set appropriately. As Beard noted, "A lot of leadership at these companies need to make sure that they actually go work some shifts at the stores," so that they know what working conditions and staff morale are like.

Eva Strasburger offered a solution to help make sure that recently hired employees really know what is required of them by showing them a preview video during the application process that takes them through a "day in the life" of a store employee. This would allow the recruit to know that certain tasks they may not find pleasant are part of the job description rather than being surprised on the job and quitting quickly.



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A Post-COVID Reality

Since the pandemic, it seems that the social fabric has become more frayed. This is as apparent in c-stores as anywhere else where customers are quick to anger and become abusive quickly. **Jesse Hirsch**, founder of Eco Punks, mused, “How do we incentivize the behavior we desire amongst staff and amongst customers...to be friendly and respectful? I actually think it’s a whole lot easier than we think. It’s a matter of creating the rewards and the infrastructure to do so.” He had an interesting take: “The core infrastructure of the gig economy is the ability to rate each other. The Uber driver gets rated, the Uber passenger gets rated. Imagine if the staff at a convenience store had the ability after a transaction to press a little button on the cash register that said, “Yeah, that customer was nice.” And as a result, the customer gets a little bonus point that they can cash in later at some point.” It’s sort of the reverse of a customer loyalty program.

Kressner captured the essence of the topic when she observed, “It’s all about the culture.”

Final Reflections

To stay relevant, competitive and functional, the convenience retailing industry needs to become an employer of choice. Honing workforce recruitment tactics in the post-Pandemic world, utilizing innovative retention strategies, and looking beyond the traditional applicant circles can create a positive and appealing workplace.



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IN ANOTHER ROOM

On January 18, 2024, Michael Sansolo also presented the same Coca-Cola Retail Research Council's study, Convenience Stores Journey to Employer of Choice, to the Convenience Leaders Vision Group (CLVG). Although it was the same presentation that was made to TVG, it was a different conversation.

CLVG is part of the Vision Group Network and is a group of invited leaders of the convenience industry. A robust discussion followed Sansolo's presentation and, while there was a lot of overlap and concurrence between the two groups, there were also some different paths of discussion and perspectives.

VGN thinks that the conversation is interesting enough to recommend it to you. You can [find the CLVG Vision Report here](#).



▼
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IN THE ROOM WITH TVG:

*Loosening the Tight
Labor Market*



The Vision Group (TVG) invites you to join us **In The Room** to experience our meeting on January 19, 2024. We are providing you with the entire conversation so that you can be “in the room” with us, rather than simply reading polished sound bites.



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Topic Reference Key

TVG's mission is to increase the institutional knowledge of the retail industry by sharing ideas and perspectives. For your convenience, we have placed topic indicators throughout the dialogue. Below is a key to the list of topics.

Fuels	Marketing	Workforce
Electric Vehicles	Customer Experience	Gig Workers
Industry Image	Operations	Retention
Leadership	Facilities	Recruitment
Strategy	Technology	Labor Scheduling
Legislation	AI	Training
		Benefits
		Internal Communications



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The Presentation

(Myra Kressner kicked off the meeting by welcoming TVG members. She passed the meeting over to Michael Sansolo, a fellow TVG member, to discuss the CCRRC Study - Convenience Stores Journey to Employer of Choice.)

Michael Sansolo

A little bit of background on this. I'm the Research Director, which basically means that I am the moderator of the Coca-Cola retailing research Councils. There are two of them, one with mostly supermarket operators, one with convenience store operators. And again, I know you may have heard this from me in the past.

What is so interesting about these Councils is while they're called the Coca-Cola Retailing Research Councils, the two least significant words in that title is Coca-Cola. In no way does Coke influence what decisions we make, how we go at these studies. We gather together a group of retailers, I know Roy [Strasburger] has been involved with one of these in the past, and the retailers determine the study. They pick the consulting firm that's going to do the work, and they oversee the work as it goes along. I'm not going to show the names of all the folks who are on the current Council, but it's going to be published soon. You'll be able to download everything freely.

What this group wanted to look at was how could convenience stores become an employer of choice? The discussion they kept having was, we are constantly fighting to attract people to our industry. How do we possibly change that?

So it's a two part problem, both of which are very significant. The first is how to attract more potential workers to the industry. And again, as we're going to go through this, you're going to see there is a lot of challenge in that because as we went through our study, we found that a vast majority of people do not want to work in a convenience store and have all kinds of reasons for that. The second part is once companies, stores, find people, how do they keep them? And the turnover issue has actually only gotten worse.

So we did a study with Oliver Wyman. To give you a sense of how we did it. First, we held online focus groups, which were real interesting. Again, because of Zoom and Teams, we were able to put together focus groups from all around the country. And I believe we actually had some participants from Canada and Mexico. And the focus groups, we had folks who are current convenience store employees, former convenience store employees, quick serve restaurant employees, and gig economy employees. So we were able to get a lot of different perspectives on frontline jobs. We didn't have people who were making hundreds of thousands a year. We had people who were in minimum wage jobs talking about those

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jobs. What we gleaned from the focus groups, we then used to populate a survey. We surveyed 45,000 folks, mostly current and former convenience store employees along with other frontline workers to get a sense of what they were facing.

So the recipe for action that the group came up with is - how do we build a stronger and broader pipeline to bring people into the industry? How do we enhance the wellbeing of the workforce? And I'm going to talk more about all of these points, the wellbeing of the workforce, something I have talked about before in terms of the difficulties people are having in stores these days, whether it is abusive customers, abusive coworkers. We're going to talk more about that. How to explore the disparity between managers and frontline workers. Again, no surprise here that we found full-time workers far more satisfied with their job than part-time workers, managerial staff, way more satisfied than frontline workers. And what can we glean from that? And then the last, how to empower career progression.

I'm going to tell a story. I said we have these two Councils, supermarkets and convenience stories. The supermarket Council actually picked the same topic because obviously all forms of retail are getting killed on this right now. One of the things we got to do with the supermarket Council is we had a conference call with an HR person at Chick-fil-A. And this person at Chick-fil-A was telling us this story about how her son had a summer job at a Chick-fil-A restaurant - not at corporate headquarters, just a restaurant. In the course of working that summer, three months at most, that young man had multiple sessions where he was evaluated on his performance and twice had discussions with his manager about career progression at Chick-fil-A.

And all of the supermarket guys listening to this said, "Wait, they did that in three months with someone who they knew was a temporary worker who had just come in for the summer?" And what the supermarket guys took away was, we don't have that discussion sometimes in three years, we don't have that amount of feedback and career pathing. And when I shared that anecdote with the convenience Council, they had the same reaction, "Like how is this possibly happening in three months?" But again, as all those folks on both Councils said, they know they're competing with Chick-fil-A, and they're competing with Lyft and Uber and DoorDash. The world, the universe of stores, of jobs that we compete with now has gotten much broader during the pandemic because of all the gig economy and of course quick serve and all these other forms. So as bad as this issue has been in the past, it is only getting worse.

And again, both Councils looking at it in very different ways, said, "If we don't start upping our game, this is going to become more and more of a detriment to us because everything has gotten harder." So with the convenience Council, they're making a point that to solve this issue, to make a dent in it is going to require action at a number of levels. First, at store

Retention

level, frontline managers are going to have to get a whole lot better at **coaching**, at empathy, at all kinds of issues that frankly managers are never graded on and rarely are hired on. These are now going to become critical issues companies are going to have to recognize. And again, this was some really interesting discussion from the focus groups. A couple of the focus groups had people that if I asked everyone on this call to name convenience store companies that they think are the best of the best when it comes to employees, there are a couple names that would repeatedly come up.

We had some of those folks on focus groups and they had horrible experiences at those companies. They said they knew nothing about the size of the company, they knew nothing about progression, and frankly, they thought it was a terrible job. And it kind of took everybody back when they would name some of these companies that were terrible to work for. And even the people at NACS said, "We never hear stuff like that about those companies, but now we're hearing it." So at the company level, there has to be more consistency, much, much better communication from the office to the front line as we heard repeatedly that communication is terrible. And on an industry-wide basis too. A lot of the Council members, we have Hank Armour on the Council, and Lori Stillman of NACS both on the Council, said some of this stuff is bigger than any company that we as an industry are going to have to find a way of coming together to actually work on some of these issues.

So let's start with expanding the pipeline. And some of the numbers in the study made Council members say "wow," but not in a good way. If we took the total population of the country and started looking at what portion is persuadable or interested in a convenience store job, there were a whole bunch of people who were not even persuadable or interested. It could be because they have a doctorate in physics, they're not going to want to work in a 7-Eleven. In some cases it was homemakers who would not want a job. They're very comfortable working out of their house. So right off the bat, we found that we eliminated more than 75% of the population, that only 23% of the population is even persuadable. And to cut that even further, **only 17% of the population showed any level of interest in working for convenience store jobs.**

So it does create an issue. I remember one of the Council members saying, if we're starting out that 83% of the population has no interest in working for us, if we could move that from 83 to 82%, we've suddenly made millions of people more interested in working for convenience stores. How do we widen that pipeline a little bit? And so that is job number one, how to expand the pipeline. So we looked at who are the folks who are most interested, who are either most persuadable or most interested in convenience store jobs? And we found they come from a couple of areas. First, it's people currently

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employed in other retail jobs, so they are not working in a job that a move to a convenience store would be radical. It would actually be sort of parallel. They could be attracted over.

The other thing that Oliver Wyman came up with in the surveys were folks who are working in frontline healthcare at the moment, those are really hard jobs. They come with a lot of bad issues. Those folks are persuadable. We also found that younger people, males much more so than females, and a more diverse population are persuadable. The industry has to get better at attracting people who are more non-white. In essence. Those are folks who are both interested and persuadable and of course people with lower levels of education. Because once people get, say, bachelor's or advanced degrees, working in a convenience store is not where they're going to go. Again, when we talk to folks, one of the big stumbling blocks to take a job in a convenience store is the perception of safety. And I know this has come up in our discussions here at The Vision Group.

It came up with the Council that if you **Google convenience store crime, endless articles come up**. And it is all about shootings and robberies and all kinds of things. So again, as we talk to the folks, robberies, you'll see right up there, and I know Jesse Hirsh and I have talked more about this, verbal abuse jumped way up the list.

There was an article in the Los Angeles Times last week about how post-COVID inside a lot of offices, there is **more tension and friction between workers** than anyone can ever remember. It's like people have forgotten how to get along with each other. And the article was talking to people who said everything revolved around the break room and walking in there after someone has made a mess in the microwave oven and they don't clean it up.

A lot of people got used to working alone and are now struggling to work with others. Inside convenience stores, there's been a lot of reports of customers and coworkers being far more verbally abusive than they have ever been. And in rare cases, even physically abusive, throwing things at staffers, trying to hit them because there are times at a convenience store, on a job, that you run into difficult situations: you're carding somebody who wants to buy beer, they don't have the right identification, or the ID looks kind of sketchy. If you say no, they're not going to respond all that well. Also, there were workplace injuries, which is something that's solvable. And then on mass shootings, which sadly are becoming more and more of an issue, that part of the discussion there was that companies need to create policies that should a mass shooting happen, what are you supposed to do in the store? What are the steps you're supposed to take? And that heaven forbid one happens, what do you do afterward, that there's a repercussion? People are emotionally scarred by these things.

Industry Image

Workforce

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Recruitment

Labor Scheduling

Recruitment

How are you going to help heal those people? So safety, which has always been a big issue, has actually become a broader issue in many different ways.

What makes the job attractive they told us was **if the salary and the benefits are competitive**, they'd be more prone to looking at working at a convenience store. For a lot of folks, the gig economy played into this, because of its flexible scheduling. What we heard, and this came up two ways, one of which I've heard repeatedly, one of which took me back some. **Flexible scheduling** that some days I may need to work in the morning, some days I need to work at night. How could that be arranged? And there was discussion among Council members that given technology today, there are ways of having an app where people can look at the times workers are needed and plug themselves in based on their schedule needs.

The other part though about flexible scheduling that came up from the gig workers is if they are having a week where they know they need to make more money, they work more hours, they drive their Uber more hours, they do more DoorDash. And what they said is working in a brick and mortar store, you can't do that. You're given hours, you work those hours. And if you say, "Look, I need to pick up an extra five hours this week," that could be an issue, but it's not an issue in the gig economy. So again, the kind of change that folks are going to have to realize.

Also, important; **proximity to home** or other jobs - we're going to come back to that one because proximity came up far more than anyone anticipated.

Furthermore, people want a good work environment, and they like employee discounts. And lastly, which did create a lot of discussion, opportunities for career advancement. And again, as Council members said, even the awareness of career advancement, that you may be coming in as a clerk at a convenience store, but that job could lead to many other things. Plus there are skills you could learn doing that job that you could use in other jobs in the future. So make the job seem more attractive.

A surprising finding we had related to proximity. And a lot of the Council members said they did not anticipate this coming up. A lot of frontline workers told us a big stumbling block is they have no way of getting from home to the store. So they would love to have the job, but they can't get there

It may be a couple that has one car, and one person uses the car, the other person can't get there. The store could be on an interstate. There is no mass transit to an interstate, or it could be somewhere in Iowa where there is no mass transit. And

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this came up again from the Council members. And you're going to see, as we get to some of the solution ideas, one of the ones that comes up is, given that rideshare has become so much bigger in the country, is there a way for the industry or companies to create linkage to Uber or Lyft so that there'd be a way of giving employees this wonderful benefit of getting to work. We even had discussion about electric bikes, and I hope some of you have been seeing the articles that I've been seeing about how electric bikes are becoming an entry level transportation solution. There was an article in the New York Times recently about how India is flush with electric bikes because you can afford one at a very low level and it gets you from point A to point B.

So all of these issues that I've just gone through we're about expanding the pipeline, making the jobs more attractive. The second part is, of course, keeping the good people that we have. How do we reduce turnover? So as we looked at turnover, here's where we found more interesting insights. Full-timers, we did the whole thing of net promoter scores, which I think everyone knows, but again, it's people have positive feelings versus negative feelings. And when you create a net promoter, would they recommend their job to others? Full-timers have a fairly positive net promoter scores, part-timers have a fairly negative one.

So the discussion was held, and this was not an easy discussion, is the **full-time part-time ratio** because for cost reasons, everyone is pushed toward part-time. Is that creating another problem that if there were more full-timers, that the cost and all the burdens of turnover could be lessened and actually may make the gap between full-time, part-time work much, much less. So that's one.

Solving the transportation issue. Again, this discussion of partnering with ride shares was a big one. Working on personal safety. This has been an issue for the industry forever. The feeling was it never goes away. It is a prime issue. It has to be dealt with. Opportunities for growth are not discussed enough. And again, the Council members represent a lot of very progressive companies and even some of those said, we don't really help frontline workers come in and see all the places where they could go.

Finally, improving **training for frontline managers** is so important. There was another Council study I did, I think it's about six years ago, because with COVID, time has lost meaning. But what we did in that study is we looked at employee satisfaction inside of companies and found that even in the best companies, there was tremendous variation between the best stores and the worst stores. And the difference comes down to the manager. A good manager builds a team, builds a team spirit, a community spirit, and that translates into better sales, better profit, lower turnover, lower shrink. It

Retention

Training

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Strategy

is all positive, but again, as the Council members discussed, and I'm sure everybody would agree, frontline management training is weak. A lot of people are promoted to frontline manager status because they're really good at tasks and now suddenly they're in charge of people not in charge of tasks, but they're not taught how to be in charge of people, so there needs to be emphasis on that.

In the study, and it will be coming out soon, it's not yet on our website, you're going to see there are suggestions for **incremental changes, substantial changes, game changing changes**. These are ideas. Again, this is [Oliver] Wyman's way of phrasing it. I'll give you an example. Incremental. This could be for a company to target local high schools and develop a pipeline. Or, developing an industry-wide data platform to get information from people working throughout the industry so the entire industry could become more educated in what is and is not working. And possibly even that could lead to creating apps that would allow flexible scheduling and things like that. So these would be incremental changes.

Substantial would be investing in a shared app. Now, again, this probably puts pressure on NACS to do this, but it could be done at company level, a shared app to speed hiring and to aid flexibility. Again, what folks have to remember is if you are now a driver for Uber, you've got that app. That's how the company operates. So especially younger employees, they are seeing that this kind of stuff is out there. But when I talk to a job at a convenience store, those tools don't exist. This is a change that has to happen.

Their game changing idea would be a national convenience store program aligned with colleges so that even college students could see the long-term benefits of a career in the industry, maybe leading to higher levels of success. And there could be certifications, managers could be sent to some sort of course so they could get additional training and get a certification in being a better manager.

Some additional steps. Now, a lot of these rise to the level of things NACS would have to do. And again, having the NACS people in the room with us, what they said is they're going to need to hear from a lot of their members that this is a place to spend their money on government relations. There were actually two angles on this. **Immigration** is one issue because the immigration flow has been heavily choked in recent years. More immigrants, which now we're getting into a hot political issue, but more immigrants would create more potential frontline workers. So maybe NACS on their government relations level could be talking about how do we create possibilities and avenues for more immigrants.

Legislation

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Industry Image

The other thing in government relations is for folks who are on government assistance, whether it is social security or whether it's welfare, there are tight caps on how much money they can earn before it impacts their benefits. And so the question again, the Council was asking, and they think NACS has to run with this, is could there be some reexamination of these caps so that someone who's 70 years old who's on social security, who would like a job but doesn't want to risk making too much money and having that impact their social security benefits, or someone on welfare who would like a job, but if they make too much money, they'll lose their SNAP benefits, how could there be some sensitivity or flexibility in that? So that's for the GR folks on industry image.

And this one would be a hard one, but how could the industry do a better job of publicizing its community image? It might even call for creating an **industry-wide PR campaign** to talk about all the good things convenience store employees do, all the good things convenience stores do. Again, that would probably require a lot of support from NACS because if you're going to run television ads or something like that, that's not going to be cheap.

There were actually two Council members under the age of 35, which was kind of wonderful to have, and both women, which again was great. One of them runs social media for her company and she was trying to explain to the other Council members that if the industry made better use of things like TikTok, that would be a much more efficient way of communicating with the potential employee base. If you want to go younger, running ads on network television is a ridiculous place to be. Being on TikTok is a great place to be.

And then the last point, as I hinted at before, is looking for ways to create partnerships either at company level or maybe industry level with Lyft, with Uber, where they might see mutual benefit, that there would be discounted rides or sponsored rides so that workers could be brought to the store more easily. Because again, this came up repeatedly from people who said one of the reasons they can't work at a convenience store is they have no way of getting there.

Training

Other additional steps, **enhanced training for managers**, frontline managers especially, and I know talking with NACS, they are looking at programs that are out there that they could easily bring and make available to the NACS population. One of the things they discovered as we went through this is IGA stores which are small independent supermarkets. They, as a collective, have this enormous educational training program that's all online. And so IGA and NACS are now talking to see if NACS can make available to frontline managers and convenience stores what IGA is doing for frontline managers at grocery stores.

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Labor Scheduling

Recruitment

Internal Communications

But the Council is also urging folks to think about **full-time/part-time ratios** and is it time to rethink the economics of that to understand the total cost of turnover and what that means with part-timers **schedule rigidity**. There has to be a recognition that we are in a different economy. The gig economy exploded. It is now a very attractive job. Think of a basic 17 or 18-year-old. I mean, I can drive my car and make money versus going and standing in a store.

And one of the things that again, the Council discussed is we're going to have to master the language of the **benefits of having a job in a store**, that it might actually be a more comfortable job. However, in many respects, a convenience store job could be more difficult than working retail in other environments. So we're going to have to examine how the convenience store frontline job is changing to make it more attractive and frankly easier for people to do.

Communication is an absolute must. This **breakdown in communication** that we kept hearing about, frontline workers do not have any clue what many people told us. They had no idea how big the company they worked for was. I told this story yesterday, it still boggles my mind. We had one person on a focus group who said the young woman got hired for a convenience store job and did not know what her salary was. Her onboarding process was so ridiculous. She worked for a week, she got a paycheck and found out how much she was making. Now there's a little bit of shame on her as well. You would think somebody would ask that, but what came across in the focus groups was the onboarding process is basically, "Yeah, you're hired, let's go to work," and so that has got to be improved.

Some of the next steps you can look for, the full report is going to be available soon. The Council's website, as you see there, ccrrc.org, all of the Council's studies are available at the website. And just so you know, it's all a free download. Anything you want, you can download as many as you want. One of the comments I always make when I'm out doing speeches on this is if Pepsi wants to download it, they don't care. Whoever wants it can have it. There's also going to be a number of presentations through the NACS Leadership...I don't know if it's the Leadership Forum or conference, whatever it's called, it's coming up in about a month, there will be a presentation of this study led by Oliver Wyman and featuring a couple of Council members talking about what they got out of the study.

But anyhow, this is going to be available soon. Again, Myra, Eva, Roy, I want to thank you. I got time two days in a row to do this, which actually I enjoy. And any questions or comments, really, I do welcome them. But I always find with these studies, the reason I like this work is the study is dictated by retailers. And so hopefully they're talking about issues that every other retailer will look at and say, "Yeah, I've got that exact same problem." Because they're just like you. And I hope that this study resonates and that you'll find it useful. Myra, thank you for your help on the slides.

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Myra Kressner

No, thank you. Well done, Michael.

The Discussion

Raymond Huff

Yeah, very good. Did Hank make any promises to act on some of the stuff that you mentioned that NACS should be doing?

Michael Sansolo

That was really interesting, and Hank, he's a smart guy. What he said was, if this triggers discussion, if his board is saying to him, "Hank, we really think these things are important." Because what he is going to turn around and say, "I don't have unlimited money, so if you want me to create a PR campaign, where's the money going to come from? Do you want to stop doing something else or is this going to be an assessment?" He was engaged in every part of the discussion, and he is looking for grassroots support. Now, obviously the Council had a number of current NACS board members, including Kevin Smart, who I think is just stepping down as Chairman, and he made the point that he will bring this up. Some of the stuff, the government relations things, NACS is already lobbying. This is just adding stuff to their lobbying agenda.

But he is going to be looking for folks in the industry to say, "Yeah, these are priorities. We got to get on this stuff." You take an issue like immigration, I'm sure in the NACS population there is going to be a percentage who are going to feel immigration is a problem. They hear the word immigration, the word association is immigration problem, and it has to be discussed a different way. There was one of the members of the supermarket Council who one day called me - I live near Washington, DC - and I'm sure you've all heard the stories of buses of immigrants being sent from Texas to places like Washington. And this guy called me and said, "Can you go meet one of the buses and redirect them to Milwaukee because I need a lot of workers and I could use everybody on that bus."

Myra Kressner

Oh, wow. I do want to ask Jesse, because I think when Michael brought this up the last time, you had brought up the mental health training. I'm wondering ... we're probably all wondering...now that there's a little bit more meat to this research, what are your comments or thoughts?

Customer Experience

Jesse Hirsh

The main thought I had was how do you **incentivize customers to be friendly and respectful**? And we say that where it's easy to assume that the default is the opposite but given the nature of loyalty marketing campaigns and given...I really enjoyed, Michael, how you kept weaving in the gig economy as a significant seismic shift both in the labor market,

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but I also think customer expectations. And I think one of the core infrastructure of the gig economy is the ability to rate each other.

The Uber driver gets rated, the Uber passenger gets rated. Imagine if the staff at a convenience store had the ability after a transaction to press a little button on the cash register that said, "Yeah, that customer was nice." And as a result, the customer gets a little bonus point that they can cash in later at some point. And so I think the problems that Michael highlighted are deep. I 100% am in favor of more immigration, but I acknowledge the political climate of the United States. How do we incentivize the behavior we desire amongst staff and amongst customers? And I actually think it's a whole lot easier. It's just a matter of creating the rewards and the infrastructure to do so. That was the main thought I was thinking as we were listening to Michael's presentation.

Michael Sansolo

Let me just build on that, because one of the interesting things, we had someone on the Council who's from Couche-Tard, and again, they have stores everywhere, and he talked about, I think it was like Poland or Latvia, and he said, "It's amazing that that's the cutting edge." They have put signs in their stores that now say, "Be nice to me. I'm a person too." Because this issue...and Jesse and I have talked about it offline as well, this issue of customer rudeness, it's global at this point. And he said they are finding it everywhere they operate. And he said, "It's almost ridiculous that that's the point they're going to." I think it was also in Ireland. He said, "It has gotten really bad in Ireland." They're wearing shirts and buttons that say things like, "Be nice to me. I'm a person."

Customer Experience

Eva Strasburger

And it makes a difference. Myra, Roy and I were visiting stores in Ireland, and we found store employees wearing shirts that said, "**Be nice to me.** I'm here to look after you." They said they'd had a really positive reaction to it because even people who aren't typically rude also went, "Aha, are you referring to me? Should I be saying thank you, and this is very kind of you and thank you for serving us and being here?" While we were there, we saw several transactions from customers thanking them, and Roy's actually started taking photographs of every sign he sees, which is now prevalent everywhere. He was at a toll booth this morning which said...

Roy Strasburger

"Please be a kind human." The fact that it's become so prevalent is just amazing and depressing.

Myra Kressner

Kris, what are you seeing on campus?

Kris Klinger

Well, it's funny when Jesse mentioned, "Be kind," and Michael as well, you see those signs all over, especially in full-service restaurants, especially right after the Pandemic. "Be patient, be kind. We're doing the best that we can." And it's really

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unfortunate that that needs to be the case. I know that some folks did get impatient and I'm sure because it was staffing issues and so on. And I love the idea of rating our customers. I'm not sure where that's going to go, but Jesse, if you could figure that out, that would be just fantastic. Rating our students and letting people know that if they're not going to be nice, that there's a cost or consequence to that, and they may not be invited back. There's a sign on the door, "We can refuse service to anybody."

Jesse Hirsh

Let's not forget, students are rated. They get grades.

Kris Klinger

But that's a different rating. It's not on their kindness, but they do get grades. And if their grades aren't good, then they rate the professors poorly despite the fact that it's probably their fault that their grades aren't good. Really, it's interesting and unique.

And by the way, I just love the Saxbys group. Nick sent me an email today congratulating me on our one-year anniversary being on campus. Just a quick little text to say, "Happy Anniversary. It's great to be on campus." But it's little things like that. But I think the challenge, again, is with employees and finding ways to create value. And Michael, as you were talking through it, our environment's different. We had the Saxbys folks talk about the developmental opportunities, and by the way, our first student CEO started this semester. We're on our way and we'll see how well that goes. We'll have one CEO per semester at the university, which we're excited for, but I want to do more. I want to create more opportunities for people to develop and lead.

That's the one piece that went through my mind. But then the other piece, I was listening to the Wall Street Journal this morning the title was, "America's Lost Faith in College," and that's something where we're tracking heavily in higher ed. Higher ed is losing some of its luster and shine or continues to lose luster and shine. I look across the river, my office looks over the Charles, and I have MIT and Harvard across the way there and both of their presidents have been under fire. One actually resigned recently. And then you've got the UPenn President. We've approached things a little bit differently than them. And we're hoping and assuming better because we haven't come under fire, but we're also a different brand. But I look at it from that perspective in regard to not only higher ed being under fire, but the value of an education or a diploma or a credential as they call it, is no longer seen as what it once was. And so what's going to happen if that's no longer the case? Do we move towards the European model where we have folks learning the trades in different ways? And I know there are some states, even California actually is testing it right now, from what the article that I was listening to this morning discussed with plumbing and different jobs.

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Industry Image

And again, what Michael said, there's so much change right now that's going on and we do need to get our folks trained up. Because in Europe as an example, **service industry jobs are jobs**. They're not transitional things that people do. In America, they're seen as a transitional job. Even when I was general manager of a restaurant, people are like, "What are you going to do when you grow up?" I'm like, "Well, I'm sort of doing it, but thanks for asking. And if you have a better idea, let me know." But I just think that people need to continue to take that more and more seriously, the service industry.

And then the last piece was AI. Right now there's a lot going on with AI and I'm taking a class online through MIT, and we're looking at how we can apply AI to strategy here at BU strategic planning. But AI is going to eliminate certain jobs and create other jobs, but some of the jobs that we're talking about will never go away because of what that interactivity is.

And so I think it's sifting through that and figuring all of that out as we're moving forward. And fortunately again, I live and work in a higher ed environment where I get to see and experience a lot of that as we're going through it. But it's fascinating and I wish I had an answer because then we could all latch onto that and move things forward. But I think to what Michael went over, I resonate with all of that. And whether it's NACS or different organizations and IFMS, it's the same stuff. We're talking about the same thing. Roy, you got your hand out.

Roy Strasburger

Not to go down the rating rabbit hole too far. First of all, there was the China social rating system that they put into place a couple of years ago where everybody got rated and it affects the outcome of how you live your life, how your credit rating falls into whether you're a good party member, whether you have any offenses determines whether you get jobs or whether you get a credit rating or a loan or what have you. There is an aspect of that.

AI

What I also thought was interesting, was at NACS leadership assembly last year. There was a company that was touting its **AI for its security cameras**. And what they were talking about was that they can identify people who come in, and if they cause trouble, the employee can tag that person. And what the cameras will do in real time, if that person shows up in the store again or at another one of the same stores that are on the system, it will warn the employee that a troublemaker is coming in so that somebody who is abusive doesn't get the jump on the employee as it were. They can be ready or they can call their manager or whatever else they needed to do as a preemptive strike in trying to make that happen. I thought that was an interesting application. I'm not sure how the facial recognition aspect, privacy and all that comes into play.

Industry Image

But Kris, I think the last comment or towards the last comment you were making about how **service sector jobs are real jobs**, I think that's a problem we have throughout our country and specifically in our industry. We have always taken the

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professional view that we consider ourselves to be transient because we are assuming people are going to move on and we want people to move on to better jobs than what we gave them. Our goal was to try to train them, educate them, give them the skills that they need to move to the next level. And if they leave us for a better job, we consider that to be a win. And so that's where we were going. But from an industry point of view, it brought to mind when Michael was talking about this, was how the Army or the military services moved from talking about how joining the military was a fighting frontline position to that when you join the military, you fix computers, or you can repair trucks. And we don't talk enough, at least in our industry about the other skills that you have to have that you can develop while you're developing that business. And I think that can go partly into whatever industry message we might put out there that it is just not ringing up smokes and Cokes. There is more to those jobs than they actually seem.

Kris Klinger

Roy, you're spot on. And it's interesting in the hospitality industry and restaurants in particular, they created career paths. They created partnerships and so many other opportunities that now a general manager of a restaurant is probably making three times what she or he would've been making 10 years ago, and it's now a job and it's something that they can be proud of and also take care of their family with. And I do think that, to your last point, you're spot on. There are so many valuable things that people learn in the service industry that are applicable after they move on and that could or should be touted in a more meaningful way to where people that understand that and then we look for doing that. And that's sort of I think what Saxbys is doing. "Here's what we can offer you and here's some things that you can learn while you're with us, but we know you're not going to be with us for the rest of your life, but while you're with us, we're going to feed you and invest in you."

AI

Jesse Hirsh:

I put up an article as an example of how **facial recognition** is being used in a wide range of venues in the United States, but the company that owns Madison Square Garden is using it to prevent lawyers who are suing them from entering any of their venues. This is the equivalent of not allowing harassing clients into your store.

Frank Beard

Kind of an interesting topic on that. Well, two things I was thinking. One, some retailers now are doing things like analyzing audio and running it through AI models. I think they are going to have to be careful how they talk about that and where they talk about it. Because I was reading some comments from someone on that and I was like, "God, if a local reporter caught wind of that, they would have a field day writing an article and interviewing employees." And because of the stuff what you're referencing, people do tend to assume the worst a lot of the time, even if that's not really the case in reality. I think one thing retailers are going to have to consider is how they talk about this because you're like, "Great, if I'm in there

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asking the cashier a question, is someone running my voice through some freaking AI?" God, I can think of people I know who wouldn't even begin to understand that. The other thing...

Myra Kressner

You're right, and in fact, Ed who's not on the call today, Ed Collupy, I think he had brought that up. He's pretty familiar with that firm. And there are actually some large convenience companies that are testing it, and they actually are very happy with it.

Frank Beard

Yeah, I'm sure it works great. I'm just like people would assume the worst about it. And the other thing that's kind of interesting too though, I think is a lot of the computer vision companies spent such a long time trying to say that they don't look at personally identifiable information and that they aren't really looking at anything that can know that you are you. But at the same time, I wonder if they shot themselves in the foot from a sales perspective by not doing that, because you look at NRF and pretty much any retail conference probably for the next year at least, everyone's doing loss prevention. And I'm like, "How can you say that you're really helping out a retailer if you can't even tell them who's stealing from them?"

Eva Strasburger

Gig Workers

I was going to bring up the gig economy because everyone said it's here and it's here to stay, but there are more reports coming out, I think there was just a recent one in California, showing that some **gig workers** are moving back to more permanent jobs. And there are quite a few articles from people who said, "We've been involved in the gig economy now for four years and we're concerned we are sinking into this hole where we're not on a career path and we're not getting benefits and we're not actually learning anything if we're sitting in an Uber. We are not getting involved in the way that you would if you had a real job." They are now looking at other options of being brought back into the real world.

Facilities

Also, the idea of a convenience store showing that it's no longer just about **cleaning toilets**, because there are now convenience stores looking at having teams which go around doing the mundane cleaning like the cleaning of the toilets, the cleaning of the stores because cleaning is one of the big things that people don't want to do. Now that there is AI and some tech in the store it isn't just about the menial tasks, you're now learning a bit more and some people want more challenging jobs. You might be able to find an easier job sitting at the checkout in a cafeteria, but in a c-store, you're now learning more, you're improving yourself as far as learning how to use some of that AI equipment that's now coming into the stores and for retailers use.

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Recruitment

Some of the hiring firms are doing an AI type video that you can **preview before you apply** for the job that says, “This is what a day in the life of you will look like.” And they can then show where you might be in five years saying, “Did you realize you might be working in head office in tech?” Bottom line is if you take away some of those menial tasks, show all the things we’ve now been doing to combat crime through AI technology, which gives the industry such a bad reputation, and say to a gig worker, “Here’s an app. You can choose your hours, put your name down and different stores can call on you, but you will get the benefits and still have flexibility, so it is kind of a full-time job.” That has more of a chance of drawing them into the industry. It’s about education.

Gig workers

Michael Sansolo

If I can just build on that because in the discussion, both with Convenience Council and the Supermarket Council, they both feel there is a powerful argument to make as to why a job in a brick and mortar store could be better for you than being in the **gig economy**, and some of that is stability. But by the way, I think it’s important that we don’t say the gig economy is not part of the real world because for the younger generation it is the real world. These are jobs they can move to really easily. Part of this is going to have to be us resetting our minds about this.

Eva Strasburger

But the articles I’m reading are by 25 year olds, 26 year olds, saying, “We feel we’re not being adult. We’re not in the real world.”

Michael Sansolo

Really?

Eva Strasburger

I was just reading one this morning from a girl who wrote, “I’ve done the gig economy for four years now. I feel I’m not actually learning, progressing, I’m not faced with many real world problems and I’m not part of that movement that I’m reading about that’s happening in the tech world because I’m just doing gig economy type jobs.” Yes, you’re right about it is a real job, but it’s got that flexibility that maybe doesn’t feel real to them and permanent.

Benefits

And one other thing I was going to say is about Tesla here in town, it has its factory outside Austin. It has a shuttle, it will pick you up. It pays for the taxis as far away as Killeen, which is 75 miles away. It will give you **free transportation**. It’s 150 miles one day, but Tesla will cover all the transportation just to get you to the factory. And so it found that’s really been helpful to them in getting people, because you’re right, a lot of these people live in places far away and the Gigafactory, of course is way out. That’s another big draw for them. So offering rides to a store would potentially work.

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Recruitment

Michael Sansolo:

Eva, by the way, you're making a great point, frankly. In a lot of respects, I'd love to take what you just said and put that in the report that if we explain to people the benefits they get from a job at a convenience store, customer service, customer interaction, different skills. Right now the job is just positioned as you're behind the counter. To the point where I made earlier, you're selling Cokes, smokes, and lottery tickets. But suddenly if you show **career progression**, if you show opportunity, it's a very different discussion you're having with potential frontline workers and you might appeal to people who are saying, "I don't just want a job, I would like a career."

And I can't remember who said it before, because again, the Council member we had from Couche-Tard said many of the countries they're in in Europe, a job in a convenience store is a career. It is a desirable job. It's stable, it pays well, and there are all these reasons people want that job. But in the U.S., it's a job and, "I'll do it for a couple months, I'll move on." So, you're making a great point, which is we need to talk the whole game.

Eva Strasburger

And then you need to deliver. If you're telling them this is what your first day will look like on day one, on day 30, or on day 90...you then have to actually go through with it. It's the other part of it.

Leadership

Frank Beard:

Yeah. Kind of a random idea, but all of this seems to me like it's another reminder that a lot of leadership at these companies need to make sure that they actually go **work some shifts** at the stores as well, and not do so as in, "Hey, the CEO's coming here in two weeks, so you better be on your best behavior and clean our store up."

I remember it was years ago, and I'll probably butcher this story, but I think Tanner Krause had found out that some of the employees in the stores found that the uniforms didn't feel comfortable for all body types. So he changed them. Which I'm sure we've all had that experience where you put on a T-shirt and you're like, "God, this just doesn't fit me right and this is terrible." Imagine having to work in that for eight hours a day. You'd quit in a heartbeat if you could.

Something as simple as just recognizing those little details that could literally drive someone to quit a job. It may not sound like a big deal, but, if you had to wear uncomfortable clothing, for example, for a whole day you'd hate it. So it's sometimes those things you notice when you spend the time in the stores, but otherwise you just never catch them.

Myra Kressner

Yeah. These are all excellent points. And now Rob and then Kevin, I'm going to ask you also just because we were at the NRF, and I'd like you to respond to the comments around AI and all that we saw. And, Rob, certainly from the foodservice perspective I know you can talk to that in terms of how automation and technology might address some of the mundane aspects.

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Rob Grimes

Yeah, so you know I can't go one of these without saying something, right? So I'm going to take it a little bit higher, Myra, than you just asked me because I'm about to record a podcast at 4:30 which is going to be called "The Tale of Two Cities," and it is going to be with a guest from Levy Restaurants, but from the group that handles the stadiums, arenas. So he has retail in there. He's got everything. Both of us were at CES and we were at NRF. And so we actually are going to be discussing the two cities Las Vegas and New York. And we're going to have a conversation about our observations and what we thought from both.

When Eva was speaking earlier about a couple of things in AI she was talking about the restrooms and things like that, and the facial recognition, from NRF. So while I was managing and running the food service innovation zone, I obviously went to the whole show, and I did it actually at 5:00 or 6:00 in the morning when it was closed. So I could go ahead and take pictures and actually go visit different areas.

So just a few observations in this and then right to the subject. I was very disappointed in the innovation area itself that was up on the third floor. There's nothing I would've reported on there, and I told the NRF that. And last year it was twice as big and there were some interesting technologies, and there was nothing. They explained that it was mainly because they were all cloud-based software companies, and they didn't have anything to show. Okay.

As far as AI at the show and facial recognition, it's rather interesting because I talked to somebody in our area that was doing the drive-throughs and we were talking about how to do facial recognition and car recognition and license plate recognition in the drive-through in order to identify people, and there were some technologies there at the show on that. We were talking, in fact, about the laws and what gets in the way of it. And we looked at that.

It's interesting, AI at the show, at either show quite frankly, was not as big as I thought it would be. It wasn't like there were huge signs out there, "AI." Were there companies that were saying they were using AI? Yes. There was a lot of signage and digital signage and holograms there, of which I was one of the holograms with Stephen Williams of PepsiCo and Matt Shade of the NRF.

However, there were holograms or there were digital assistants and avatars at every station in the building to direct you as to which way to go. And I was looking at that as a way to show sort of the future of communication or starting to get communication between people and asking questions. Some were better than others.

There were about four or five different, what I call, the boxes around the show and I took a look at that. And just one thing to the comment about the restrooms and things like that, Comcast business and a group called MachineQ had actually threatened to bring a restroom with them with Georgia Pacific that was actually going to tell how the employees were cleaning the rooms and how they were being used. And it was for health and safety but identifying a number of things. They actually didn't do it in the end. They told me it was there, I couldn't find it, but they were saying they were going to do it.

Now, I will tell you one impression from CES. One thing I wasn't surprised by – displays. And there was a lot of attention on the floating displays. Okay, that's nice. Phones and mobile devices, nothing new. Drones, nowhere. I mean that one really took me by surprise because they had a whole section on drones the last two years. And yes, obviously there were drones there, but not sections, right? Autonomous vehicles all over the place, had its own building. And so it made CES seem a little bit quieter than the past because the hall was so big and they added a hall.

Here's the one that took me by surprise, AARP and their booth, which is a massive booth. It's second year they did it. The reason it took me by surprise is I took a look at the technologies in there that AARP was bringing forward. I went through that booth, but I'll tell you why I found it fascinating. Because the technologies that were being shown in there, and I did videos on them and we'll get them posted soon here, could easily be applied to using disabled workers, older workers, and in our industry, which will help with the labor workforce.

And there were a few in particular that really got me. One was **eyeglasses** that were not bulky, but actually I asked them whether legally blind people could wear them and they were great. And as long as you have peripheral vision, a legally blind person can use them. And there was some term they used, I don't remember what it was, but it was two or three deep in legally blind, whatever that terminology is. And I could immediately see how somebody could go ahead. "Yeah, I could see." That's a play on words there. But I could see how somebody would be able to work in a kitchen, they'd be working at a retail store, they'd be able to stock things because it really made a difference in it. And that's what it was for.

The second thing that I was really fascinated by was anything that had something to do with immediate translation of languages. And I went there looking for it for headsets. Little disappointed that they still had to have an intermediary device like a phone. But I was very impressed with certain ones where the conversation was instantaneous on it, including some devices that could go over the web. But AARP was doing that.

Technology

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But the thing that I really thought had some legs in it was a ten-year-old company out of Israel that's only had a product out for one year that was doing speech recognition and translation for people who've had Alzheimer's and Parkinson's and have severe speech problems. And they were showing a picture of a professor who now can continue to teach because although he has Parkinson's and can't really speak and you couldn't have a conversation with him, the computer was able to recognize what he was saying and on the other side it came out and in a language you could understand. They only did English. They're thinking about doing a second one. And this is in the AARP booth.

And the reason why I found it fascinating is I said to them, "Well, wait a minute. What happens if it's not language, but it's a heavy accent?" Absolutely. And then how about applying some of the translation, a voice to text with that once you're able to synthesize it. The difficulty in that, just so you know, is not that they can't apply some... There was a company that was doing 104 languages instantaneous of anything that's recorded audio. But the reason that it's so difficult is because you actually have to capture so much information of the Parkinson's person who's speaking in Japanese versus the one who's speaking in German. And you can only imagine. But over time, if they have enough people use it, they're going to be able to translate through it and will use it for translation.

So practical use, I did a video with them, and I said, "So what you're basically telling me is somebody who has a stroke, somebody who has a severe trauma can go back to work, work in a call center, take customer service orders, help people out, maybe even work a drive-through on the other side," so this is retail, "and they actually would be understood?" And if we take their old voice from video and apply it to it, which I was looking at avatars on it, they actually would still be able to talk in their original voice.

And I think for our industry, based on some of the subjects we just talked about with labor and facial and stuff, I think it ties. So when I do these shows, I'm not just looking for foodservice, I'm there in retail and hotel. But I was just fascinated by it.

There's one thing to position AI as the new buzzword and the new tool out there, but I saw more people positioning it as the behind-the-scenes thing that was **actually making things work** rather than, "Here are all the flashy things that AI is going to do that we haven't thought of." And maybe that's why I say it that way, that I was expecting more flash but instead I saw more use cases.

AI

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Eva Strasburger

This might be a good time to mention the AI report that we've just come out with for the Convenience Technology Vision Group. Greg Buzek, who gave the presentation in the report has an ongoing list that he keeps updated of the best AI tools out there. And he was showing us how you can make an ad speaking in English, but it sounds like you're speaking in Spanish. It's instantly translated. So if you've got a different audience, it'll do that. But that's worth getting, marking his list, and then just dipping into it whenever you need an AI tool. Because he's probably got, what do you think, about 50 on there? It's really impressive.

Rob Grimes

Yeah, so I always believe that, **running a tech association** in my area, we should sort of show the way. If you go to my website right now, you'll sort of see what I did there. And you can actually click on and ask me questions, and that could just as easily be a hologram on there. You can ask me questions by voice, you can put me on your phone.

And we won't use the same tool, but there's an avatar that's already been created for me on this so that we really can have a conversational discussion. And while I know AIs behind it, you're not going to ever see me saying that. I'm just going to do the tool. Why do I need people to focus on that? But as an association, we want to show people by using it and let them ask the question, "How?" And that's what we want to do. And so that'll go up there. It doesn't take much to do it, by the way.

A global company told me they can't get their Japan chapter to adopt their learning materials. I said, "Why not?" They said, "Well, we're waiting for them to translate them." So I took them over to meet a company that was in our zone. And if you have an hour of video, it takes 20 minutes to translate it into a language. But they do 104 languages. So if you want to do all 104, you might as well do them at the same time. It's still 20 minutes. And I said, "Why do you wait for them to do the translation? Why don't you do it for them?" And I think they're going to do it for them and not charge them, which I think is pretty cool. We'll do the same thing.

Myra Kressner

Well, thank you, Rob. And again, all of this clearly links in some way to the points that Michael was making and the research that they're doing and the things that can be done.

This all circles back, Michael, to what you're talking about. So, Kevin, whether it relates to NRF or not, again, you work with a lot of retailers, so is there anything that you want to add or comment on or question?

Kevin Farley

So from an NRF perspective, I think I totally agree with what Rob said as far as the innovation floor. It took 30 minutes of my life to walk through it and I was done. It was shocking from an innovation perspective. I spent a fair bit of time in a

section that was all from France. And that was fun just to go talk French or pretend that I can still speak some French at some point. So that was fun.

I think AI was almost fragmented. Sometimes people were using the word. I felt, as I was walking around, like .ai is now the new .com. And so it was kind of sprinkled everywhere. And if you really push into it, I'm not sure it's all AI. It's just a cool term to tag onto your booth.

And then I did spend probably an inordinate amount of time trying to break all the self-checkout technology. So that was fun. Pretty successful across the board in breaking all of them. That's my summary.

Myra Kressner

Okay. Anything else relative, though, to what Michael was talking about that you want to comment on or not?

Kevin Farley

I can't remember if it was Frank that said it, but I mean I think just from a leadership perspective at the store level, I can't remember who said it, but there's a distinct **lack of training**. When you hire at a certain level, you're not hiring for the person to manage people. And to take care of a store and manage people is a completely different skillset and you have to hire for that skill set. It's a very different challenge. And so I just think that there's probably more infrastructure that needs to be done.

Myra Kressner

Yeah. Okay. Well, thank you, Kevin. Raymond. I'm sure you've got a lot to say about this.

Raymond Huff

Well, the comment about hiring an employee at the entry level and they potentially can grow to management, to et cetera, et cetera. I think it is a special employee, but I think it's an environment thing. Hey, I got hired to pick up trash off the lot, and sort of figured out how to move through that. And thousands of people in Marriott did something very similar that I did. So what I'm talking about, it's not very special.

And in our company, when we were doing great, **we promoted from within**. So we hired people, we promoted from within, we were opening stores on a regular basis in multiple cities and so on, so on. So we were really bringing people in who could take care of the customer service, clean the floors, the bathrooms, all the other stuff that we talked about. But they had the propensity to learn and to learn to manage and to ask questions. And the ones who did, moved up. And the ones who didn't, we found that Peter Principle level of how far they could go, and that's how far they went. And they stayed pretty happy.

Training

Retention

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And on average in my company, and I can only speak to my company, in my company, most of my employees were with me like 21 to 24 years before things went kaput with the COVID. But we grew to be substantial about 60 stores just doing the internal. And we only hired one time outside, at the district manager level, and it was a disaster because they had a complete different perspective of what should be happening. So I believe employees that come in at the entry level, after their probationary period, they typically, if they stay that year, they're interested in growing with that company. That's what we ended up finding out with our employees.

And I don't know if that speaks to some of the stuff that we're talking about here, but it's really important that you create an environment that people want to be at. And our stores were a little bit different, but they were still convenience and people were still nasty to them. I remember the whole nasty thing happened in our stores also. And we did have to tell some people, "We really appreciated your past business, but we're no longer interested in serving you." And the manager had the ability to do that. Of course, they would called corporate and complain, and then we're like, "What's happening?" And we tried to get the people back together. And if they got together, great. That person definitely came into our stores with a different attitude than the way before the confrontation happened. So there are ways to fix the nasty problem.

But the most important thing I want to get across is that you can create an infrastructure under you that will grow. And those people who you grow within your organization, they embody your organization. I am not in a single store. We had all these stores, but yet we got the credit for our stores were being ran so well in the 18 cities we were in because of how the employees interfaced with the customers in these high-rise office buildings, which were really picky. And that eventually got to management, which is why we've been in business for 42 years.

I thought I'd throw that out. I don't know if that helps the conversation or not.

Myra Kressner

No, it does. Again, it's the culture. And you talk about that you hire within. And to have people stay for so long is, again, that addresses what Michael and the research is doing, which is how do we keep people? Well, you've got all of those examples of how you can keep people.

Recruitment

Roy Strasburger

Raymond, I think what you've said is spot on. But as much as I hate to admit it, when we were hiring people, they always say to **wait to hire the right people**. We were always so desperate to have somebody get in and get them to fill that shift. The managers were hiring at the local level. So frankly, we were hiring anybody that was coming in. We were rushing our

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hiring and then we were using frontline positions as a filter to try to find the people who are going to move up through the rest of the organization. And if we didn't scare them off when they were running a store, then that's how they got into our system. Which to me, in hindsight and looking back, it was exactly the wrong way of trying to do this. And it goes more towards what Michael is saying is that you've got to create the opportunities for people to do that, but real world situations sometimes get in the way of trying to do that.

And I think what would be interesting, and, Michael, I was going to ask you, is whether or not the conversations that you had around this had a pre- and post-COVID analysis? Because this was a longer than normal study, wasn't it, because of COVID?

Michael Sansolo

Everything this Council did was longer than normal, yes.

Roy Strasburger

Okay. So instead of a two or three year program, this was like four or five years that you went through. What my interest would be is, was there a difference in the pre-COVID conversation and the post-COVID conversation on labor? Because, at the moment, one of the things I think we have a challenge with is that people walk off jobs because they know they can find other places to work because there's a labor shortage at the moment. Labor is so tight that it's in the hands of the applicant as to what they want to do. So was there a difference in the dynamics of those conversations over time?

Michael Sansolo

Roy, I answered your question wrong. This Council ran longer than normal Councils because of COVID. However, this study was actually done in one year, we used to take two years, because we were simply trying to give these folks who had been on the Council a chance to actually complete something. Where we got more of the COVID impact...

And again, by the way, let me thank you all because this kind of discussion, honestly, I wish I had recorded it because we always hope the Council studies will lead to sort of a catalyst for discussion. And this discussion today has been fabulous.

In the supermarket study, the COVID impact was much clearer. And it was interesting the comments here about AARP. Because one of the things we found in the supermarket study is after COVID, it was **older workers** who were not returning to frontline jobs. They were the ones who felt most at risk during COVID of catching COVID and getting very sick. And now that they have left frontline jobs, the recovery has been much weaker than all the other age groups.

And the discussion in that study is that older workers, for a lot of reasons, are really good workers. And some of the simple things is someone who's 70 years old is not going to take a job and maybe two months later decide they want to move

Recruitment

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to another part of the country for a different job. They're probably living where they're going to live. And they're doing it to, maybe if it's for additional income, to fill time, whatever it might be. But older workers showed a lot of benefits to the company.

And it's interesting about AARP. It's exactly what Rob was talking about. If there are ways of enabling people who might have sight issues or other infirmities to suddenly be able to do jobs, they might actually become a rich vein of frontline workers.

Back to your question, Roy. Took quite a detour there. we really didn't get a full discussion of before and after, but what did again come out of the supermarket Council, it was an executive from Ahold Delhaize, which is Food Lion, Stop-and-Shop, and Giant supermarkets, which has a lot of different companies. She made the comment that this has always been a problem and she doesn't know why, but it feels all different and all worse today. In fact, the supermarket study is about dealing with what's different differently, and a big part of that study is that whatever were the practices that were in place before have to be reexamined, rethought of.

It goes back to whatever the gig economy means, good or bad, it is a reality, it is a challenge. The change in the economy and the incredibly low unemployment rate is a reality and is a challenge, and that there are a whole number of reasons that this longtime issue, and let's be honest, this issue of finding enough people and keeping them is not something that just happened, this has been consistent for retail forever. COVID made everything worse. I heard that from both Councils, from large companies, from small companies, that everything has gotten harder. Roy, it would've been really interesting, had this study begun in 2019 and we could have actually tracked it, but in fact, it was one year just because of the way things work out with these Councils.

Workforce

Eva Strasburger

Michael, one thing you may want to take away from this is, following up on Rob's chat, is saying to Hank, "You really should **sit down with AARP** and have a conversation about how we can work together." Because that's exactly what they should be doing, talking to them.

Michael Sansolo

Absolutely.

It's a really interesting issue. One of the things we did, because the two Councils were working on such similar studies is we had one meeting where they got to hear about the other study. For a lot of the convenience folks, they thought that

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the supermarket one had this focus on older workers. They said, "That's really interesting." I'm a baby boomer, there are a whole lot of us baby boomers. You always see the statistics of how many people are reaching 65 every day now in the United States and it's staggering. There's this gigantic population cohort that is now above age 55, 60, whatever you want it to be, and those are people who companies are going to have to find ways of attracting them into jobs. The AARP connection is really quite interesting. Actually, as Rob was talking, I was thinking, "I've got to find someone I know at AARP to say, 'Could we just show you this study?'" Because it might interest them on the flip side that these are jobs.

Myra Kressner

Frank, I'm going to ask you to comment in a moment, but also for the sake of clarity, we've referred to, or Michael has also referred to, during our call now, yesterday's presentation. Our Convenience Leaders Vision Group that we've told you about met yesterday, so that group met virtually yesterday and Kevin Smartt, who is a member of Convenience Leaders also is part of the Coca-Cola, he chaired the Council. Michael made that presentation to our Convenience Leaders Vision group yesterday.

This has been a robust conversation and I compliment every one of you for your participation and your comments.

Frank Beard

I was going to say something real quick. Obviously, this wouldn't be a solution for everybody, but I remember having an interesting chat with a person at a site out in Germany where it was previously branded around a major oil company and then it ended up being branded around a grocer that had a bit more of **a better brand**, for lack of better explanation. He was saying that, after that rebranding had been done, that they got a completely different type of applicant for jobs. They were getting a lot of folks that were previously working at bakeries, coffee shops, that sort of thing. People just didn't really want to wear a major oil shirt. That was interesting and I think it's something for some of the retailers in the industry to keep in mind as well, how they go to market and brand themselves.

Industry Image

Myra Kressner

Yeah, it's true. All right, Melvin, what's your perspective on all of this?

Melvin Maddux

I'm really excited to see what comes out of AI, and if anyone has any seminars that they know about that's taken place that you think would be beneficial, I certainly would love for you to share that. I've Googled myself, but haven't selected any at this point. As we had the conversation today, I made a couple of points here. One, when Michael talked about Uber.

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Benefits

Prior to COVID, I always rented a car. During COVID, I took Uber. Post-COVID, I got away from Uber, because they're just too expensive. Maybe negotiate a contract with a company and get team members from their home to the store, but maybe I'm simplifying this a little much, but who's to say you just couldn't create an app with the store, and no different than **carpooling**, have a local team member that lives in the same area, that you marry up their schedule together, and that employee with that car actually gets an incentive from the company for picking up the local team members.

Maybe they make more, maybe it's just another incentive. Whatever, okay? Pretty simple, but I think it's a lot less expensive to do that than hiring maybe an Uber or Lyft or a local taxi company or having a dedicated bus, or whatever the case may be.

Technology

Then another point, I recently had to go into Walmart to get something for my mother-in-law, she wanted something very specific. This was in Georgetown, Texas. I walked at the five Walmart team members working in the stores, not one of them could speak English. Finally, the fifth person took me to a person in the store, they actually had a **translation device**, so I spoke into the device and, immediately, it translated in his language, he took me to exactly the product that I wanted and I was in and out of the store, but I was really shocked that the five team members in the store could not speak any English whatsoever.

Training

Anyhow, I thought that was interesting. I think if we want more team members to come in our stores, that high school and college students, they really struggle with their social skills. They have this, what we all have in our hand, the phone, and they're not interacting or communicating the way we did as we were growing up. I think there's an opportunity to market to those folks about this entry-level opportunity in **developing your social skills**, because they don't have it. I'm telling you, I see folks that we hire out of college into our office and they can do the job really well, but they can't interact and nor are they ever going to be able to interact. I know that they're going to be short-term, because they just don't have those social skills that they need. Interacting with customers coming in and out of the stores, it's such a wonderful opportunity and experience to learn and develop those social skills.

Maybe we need to market to high schoolers and university students a little bit differently, encourage them to come in there and get their street cred with social skills within your stores. With supermarkets, I work with a lot of supermarkets, a lot of specialty foods, and some of the big ones like Harris Teeter, super nice supermarket on the East Coast, they realize they're never going to get those skilled workers they need to make that special product, so they're having third parties do it. They're going to commissaries and other manufacturing companies, it's going to manufacture the product to their spec.

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Technology

Eva Strasburger

It comes in, whether it's a sandwich program, it's a simple meal, it's a heat-and-eat meal, whatever it is that was done in store, it's no longer being done in store, but it's being done offsite. They have really made the decision, "We're not going to get this labor pool back, so we have to change and do things different. We still want the same items, we still want the same quality, we just don't want it done in the store."

Going along what Melvin was saying, we've had several people say they've gone into places like Walmart where they don't speak English, but it's all **translated on an app**, and they've found their items fairly quickly. I was recently buying something at the Apple Store and the lady came over with her laptop, and she was hearing-impaired, so I would speak into the laptop, the person on the screen would sign-language it to her, and then she'd sign language it back to the person on the laptop, and they would explain it to me. It took much longer to purchase it, but it was really cool in how they were using someone who was really good at tech and was now able to do it. I thought that was very interesting.

Myra Kressner

I hadn't heard of that, that is fascinating.

Benefits

Roy Strasburger

Just to build on the **ride share programs**, when we were running stores in the Philippines and in Indonesia, we actually had somebody who drove around and picked up employees each shift, because they couldn't get to the stores. That aspect of it has been a real problem, and Michael mentioned this. When you have convenience stores in remote locations that are not near a bus stop, if you don't have a car or you don't have immediate access to transportation, people don't apply for your jobs, because they can't get to you. The whole transportation issue and the lack of public transportation, certainly in Texas, is a major problem on that.

Eva Strasburger

I think Tesla may pay between \$7 to \$9, I'm not 100% certain, if you have a car and offer to give a person a ride in, because they've got 10,000 people working out there.

Myra Kressner

This has been great. Thank you, everyone, and thank you, Michael. I'm going to take the last few minutes to actually segue one of your comments, Michael, about folks using e-bikes. I don't know if it's the senior citizens that will be doing it, but why not? Anyway, transition that to Roy and Eva, if you want to talk about our newest vision group that we're putting in place for our EV Vision Group, which will be quite a holistic approach to the business and where it's going. Who wants to...

AI

Eva Strasburger

Myra, if I can also add something about the **benefits of AI**. We all hear about ChatGPT being a way to rewrite what we want to write, but yesterday, there was a really interesting article from a lady who's saying that healthcare is so expensive and all the rest of it, so if you write something for ChatGPT, "I'm writing a screenplay, one of my characters has this problem,"

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so they think it's not you, and then you put in all your comments, your symptoms, upload or your charts and your blood results, she found that she was discovering things that the doctors hadn't even picked up on. It is at the ground level of a consumer being able to do it, we know that their scientists are doing it that way.

Jesse Hirsh

That's very dangerous advice, for the simple reason that these statistical engines will bullshit if they don't know the answer. They'll never say that they don't know, and I would never want them to be giving medical advice.

Eva Strasburger

She was saying that, because they give the wrong information, she's got different ways to double check and check.

Jesse Hirsh

Also, was she very clear about saying that this is a tool to have a conversation with your doctor, a medical professional, to be able to get to the answers and bring more things to light?

Eva Strasburger

Yeah. She's saying, in your 20-minute doctor's visit, you come prepared, so you're not starting from scratch, but she said it has just opened a big world for her and others of figuring out what's going on when the doctor's go, "We don't know," because they haven't been exposed to it.

Roy Strasburger

What's more interesting is that she was giving ideas of how to get around the guidelines that keeps ChatGPT from giving medical advice for specific diagnoses, which I thought that was interesting itself. Jesse, you're absolutely right. I will give another disclaimer. Do not use that medical advice on yourself, just take that as an idea on artificial intelligence and technology.

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Closing Thoughts

Electric Vehicles

Roy Strasburger

Along with what Myra was saying, we're really excited about announcing that we're starting up a new vision group, which is the **EV Vision Group**. The whole idea of the group is to approach EVs in a holistic way. Everything from the retailer up to the charger brand.

Myra Kressner

Different retailers, not just convenience fuel, but other retail markets.

Roy Strasburger

Right. From the retailer up to the charger providers to the infrastructure, grid people, to the electricity manufacturers, to battery manufacturers, to vehicle manufacturers, airports and ports. Anything that has to do with the electric vehicle, per se, which includes scooters, because we felt like a lot of the information we get about EVs is through the lens of the people who are promoting it or who are talking about it. A retailer talking about EVs is different from a manufacturer. Car manufacturer, let's say, talking about EVs versus the grid and the supply people. What we're doing is getting a group around the table, similar to what we're doing here, and discussing topics that affect EVs and what the future and the viability of that is.

We'll be making that available in our vision reports, which has a copy of the transcript in it, so everybody can see where we're coming from. We're getting that put together and we're hoping to have that started late March, possibly in April, to start providing that information to the public as part of our effort to expand knowledge and to share knowledge with other people with the belief that a rising tide lifts all boats, and the more access people have to relatively unbiased information, the better they can make decisions.

Eva Strasburger

What was really interesting is Myra, Roy, and I went to the EV World Congress in San Diego just before Christmas, and they were talking about the boats and the submarines and ports all becoming electric, but also, they were very focused on health equity, saying that the people who live around ports are suffering from lung disease from having all the pollution that goes with all the diesel trucks just idling, waiting to pick up the cargo. They can idle for hours at a time, so by putting in electricity, that whole area's air is being cleaned up. They're also talking about mayors, visiting the mayors in the different cities and saying, "Give us green space," again, to bring equity to those who need access to the chargers, to be able to put in charging stations. Roy raised his hand and said, "What about the C-stores? Are you taking away from them being the focus of someone going to a C-store to charge?" They said, "Quite frankly, we're seeing just the whole ecosystem, we're not going to give a preference. You just have to be the destination of choice for all the right reasons, but you may not be

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	next to the person who lives too far away from one and can't get to it, so our thing is equity." Equity, health equity, access equity was a big part of the debate, which was really interesting, in a different way, to see the EV discussion.
Roy Strasburger	Of course, unless you were driving an EV during the recent freeze or a Cybertruck and trying to get through the snow. Those are all different questions.
Myra Kressner	Yep. Good, thank you. We're just about at our time. Does anyone have any comments that they want to... either thoughts that they have, suggestions for us for the new EV Vision Group, or any other comments that we've been discussing for the last couple of hours?
Eva Strasburger	Kris, if you're wondering that we didn't mention the Gen Z Vision Group, we're doing that in the second half. I know Rob had mentioned he would send us some potential members for that, and we think Saxbys has just sent us a couple that look like they're excellent, so you'll be hearing more about.
Raymond Huff	On the EV group, are you interfacing with the NACS supported ChargePoint thing that they're doing? They have a large group of people across the United States that actually interface and present EV... What's the word I want to use... centric stuff to the press. I happen to be a member of that and sometimes I do op-eds for them, et cetera.
Eva Strasburger	Roy had one of them on his panel, because Roy actually moderated two panels at the Congress.
Raymond Huff	Okay, good.
Roy Strasburger	We've been in conversation with what used to be the Fuels Institute. The Energy Institute.
Raymond Huff	This is a second and another group that NACS is supporting to push the EV pitch for convenience stores, so you might want to find out more. I'm sure that Hank has a person who could really add to what you guys are trying to do in the EV. At least hear that piece coming from them, because they're super active. The name is Charge Ahead.
Michael Sansolo	Myra, I just want to thank you for the opportunity. I very much appreciate it, because again, this study is not yet complete, so even putting together this presentation helped me coalesce my thoughts about it. I also want to thank everyone [for] your comments. Your commentary was terrific. Just wonderful, to be part of a group like this.
Myra Kressner	Thank you. Thank you, everyone. Our next meeting will be sometime toward probably the middle of April, because again, we're going quarterly. If you do have suggestions for what you think our April meeting, we want to talk about, please let us know.

Convenience Stores Journey to an Employer of Choice

NACS/Coca-Cola Retailing Research Council January 2024

Conducted by Oliver Wyman

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG

Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

An Age Old Problem

1. How to attract More potential workers
2. How to keep those we already have

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG

Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

Study Background

- Focus groups held with current and former convenience store employees; QSR employees; and Gig workers
- 45,205 adults surveyed, including current and former convenience employees and other front line workers.

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG

Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

The Recipe for Action



Build a Stronger Pipeline



Enhance Well-Being of Workforce



Explore the disparity in Managerial vs. Worker experience



Empower Career Progression

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG



Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

Action at all levels will be Essential!

TVG Views

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Convenience Stores Journey
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Expanding the Pipeline

Total Population (Not all are persuadable or interested)

Persuadable Population: 23%

Interested Population: 17%

Experienced in the industry: 8%

TVG Views

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Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

Potential Target Populations

- People currently employed in other retail or health care
- Younger, male and more diverse populations both more interested and persuadable
- Those with lower education levels

Perception of Safety Still a Problem

- Worker Concerns

1. Robbery
2. Verbal Abuse
3. Workplace Injury
4. Mass Shooting
5. Physical Abuse

What Makes the Job Attractive

- Competitive salary and benefits
- Flexible Schedule
- Proximity to Home or other job
- Positive Work Environment
- Employee Discounts/Perks
- Opportunities for Career Advancement

One Surprising Finding

- Lack of transportation hampers the ability to take convenience store jobs

How to reduce Turnover

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG

Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

Steps to Reduce Turnover

- Full-timers have a positive net promoter score of job/ Part-timers are negative
- Solve the transportation issue
- Personal safety
- Opportunities for Growth
- Improve training for front-line and managers

The To-Do List

Incremental

Substantial

Game
Changing

TVG Views

In The Room With TVG

Convenience Stores Journey
to an Employer of Choice

For Example: Recruitment

Incremental

Target High Schools; develop an industry wide data platform

Substantial

Invest in a shared app to speed hiring and aid flexibility

Game changing

National convenience store college aligned program

Additional steps

- Government Regulations: address immigration issues
- Industry Image: publicize community image; create an industry-wide PR campaign.
- Transportation: partnerships with ride share services for employees

Additional Steps

- Enhance training for front-line managers
- Consider changes to:
 - Full-time/part-time ratio
 - Schedule rigidity
 - Communication to front-line
 - Improve on-boarding

Next Steps...

- Full Report to be available soon at www.crrc.org
- Presentations of study to be conducted through NACS

The Vision Group (TVG) is the first virtual forum organized by the Vision Group Network. TVG was created in the midst of the COVID-19 Pandemic to collaborate, break through silos, address challenges head on in search of disruptive solutions, and broaden members' vision. Since October 2020, TVG's diverse group of members from convenience, grocery, and foodservice operators to academics and futurists, has had unconventional and incredibly stimulating discussions on broad-ranging topics. TVG operates under the Vision Group Network, which gathers the collective knowledge and ideas of its members to create a legacy of sharing within the retail community. For more information and to sign up for future Vision Reports, visit our website: tvgsolutions.com/vision-reports



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AI and data integrity, how retailers are currently using AI and what's next for AI in convenience retail?



In Focus: A CTVG Conversation with POS Solution Providers November 2023

POS decoupling; major oil companies; foodservice as the future; the unique needs of independent operators; integration challenges



To the Point: The Evolving State of POS in Convenience Retail September 2023

EV Infrastructure and Strategy Updates and POS Systems Challenges and Opportunities.



Unraveling the Road to EV Charging Infrastructure July 2023

Explosive EV growth; the role of utility companies; government funding programs; operators moving forward



Tech Trailblazing May 2023

Debating the AI hype, tech as it relates to shift flexibility, and the breaking point on data collection

CLVG | CONVENIENCE LEADERS VISION REPORTS



Making the Convenience Industry an Employer of Choice February 2024

Expanding the persuadable applicant pool; onboarding, engagement, and training; cleaning up industry image; recruitment and retention; strategies; mental health support and kindness campaigns



AI: Predictive Fuel and Dynamic In-Store Pricing December 2023

Examining AI fuel and product pricing potential.



AI: Dawning of a New Era in Retail Analytics June 2023

The dawning of a new era in analytics as generative AI evolves, generative AI in simple terms; how AI is quickening the pace of business today; A micro perspective of AI at TXB stores; personalization through AI



The Business Case for EV Charging: Is It for You? March 2023

The pace of EV adoption; c-store operators' views of the EV-charging customer; three pathways of EV retailing; a micro case study



Currents of Change January 2023

Changing work schedules and the gig economy; foodservice tipping in the convenience segment; alternative fuels and the timeframe for electric vehicles