

BY JAMES FISHER

Nurturing the Goose...

Not smashing the egg

IN STEPHEN COVEY'S MUCH ACCLAIMED BOOK, *7 Habits of Highly Effective People*, the axiom of "the goose and the golden egg" is pronounced. Most of us have heard some version of the story and can relate to its significance and relevance in terms of its application to our business and professional lives. Without writing about the entire fable here, all that needs to be written is that each of us must guide our decisions in terms of ensuring that we are nurturing that very special goose.



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So, we say that each of our individual retail facilities when combined give us a "gaggle of geese." We, as retailers, must ensure that each goose is nurtured to produce as many golden eggs as possible within the expected life of that goose.

In our real world application, it is the retailer's responsibility to constantly appraise and evaluate the retail units to guarantee they are offering the most updated, modern and relevant operation to each and every customer every moment of every day. It is this truism that stands paramount in terms of importance as to how each and every retail offering establishes itself relative to its

position within the targeted trade area.

It is the fact that proves so elusive in many cases, and a recent industry survey proves this fact very clearly. The question that was asked in the survey was, "How often do your stores get a complete makeover?" The five possible answers were, "every year or two; every three to five years; six to 10 years; 10 or more years; it's never happened."

What is surprising is the fact that 35 percent of respondents' votes were in the "10 or more years or it's never happened" choices, and 48 percent responded positively to the "six to 10 years" choice. A total of 83 percent of respondents do not reinvest (nurture) in the properties to any significant level for at least six years after a store is opened; whereas virtually every retail indicator suggests that retail operations must be refreshed and updated at least every two years.

Two great examples of opposite extremes are reflected in the pictures contained on this page. The first we will call the Nurtured; it is located in a small hamlet in northern New England and along



an interstate highway. It has a combined customer base of local, commuter and transient. The facility is six years old and extremely successful in terms of revenue and profitability. However, this fact alone is not enough to satisfy the young owner. He wants to ensure that he continues to expand the retail offering and continue to solidify the location's dominant position in the trade area. To achieve this, the owner has committed to an expansion and upgrade of his fuel installation and will offer a major branded foodservice offering (in addition to his current/large proprietary program). Nurturing the goose to ensure the golden eggs will be produced for many years to come.



The opposite example is exemplified by the other facility — we will call it the Neglected. This unit is in excess of 25 years old and virtually nothing has been done to it since the day it opened. Its trade area is the international airport of one of the largest metropolitan trade areas in the Midwest and all of the activity associated with it. Add to the fact, the facility is the only on-premise fuel facility allowed. As the airport has grown over the years, nothing has been done to the unit. But what is worse is that six months ago a new multi-million dollar central rental car facility was opened. It is located directly behind the pictured facility. The new center handles tens of thousands of rental cars annually. Those returning vehicles have this to service the needs of this special population. No better example of smashing the egg and not looking to the future.

Relative to our business, each of us must be the nourisher ensuring that we are creating the healthiest geese that can produce the largest eggs. Go harvest! **NPNI**