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For CITGO Petroleum Corp., 2012 has been a year of new programs, promotions and offers aimed at helping the brand’s marketers and retailers increase customer visits, along with in-store purchases and fuel sales.

In the beginning of the year, the company laid out plans to introduce marketers to its new offerings through a series of roundtables, allowing them to provide input and ask questions. In fact, many of the new programs and changes to existing ones came about through feedback from its marketers, according to Alan Flagg, general manager of lights oils marketing at Houston-based CITGO.

“Some of these new initiatives have included an enhanced mystery shopper program that introduced new rewards for compliance, and a new microsite — myCITGOStore.com — that gives retailers access to information on the mystery shopper program. Retailers who registered at the site were entered into a monthly drawing for a tablet, and the grand-prize drawing for a $2,500 Visa gift card.

NEW LOOK
Additionally, CITGO continues to roll out its new Centennial Image, with more locations sporting the new, updated look. “So far, 48 percent of CITGO retail locations have or are in the process of upgrading to the bold, updated look,” Flagg noted. “Many are reporting robust increases in volume and sales.”

CITGO also launched a customizable loyalty program called Loyalty Bucks, partnering with Centego, Outsite Loyalty Networks and FIS Loyalty, in February of this year. The brand’s marketers and retailers can now participate in an approved, out-of-the-box program, or build one customized specifically to their needs.

“CITGO contributes up to $2,000 per location toward the technology and service costs associated with implementing the CITGO Loyalty Bucks program,” Flagg explained. “The program definitely increases repeat traffic for our local marketers and retailers, and they, along with our customers, have told us how pleased they are with the promotion.”

Currently, 5 percent of CITGO locations are participating in the
CITGO’s new programs and promotions are aimed at increasing customer visits.

loyalty solution, and in May, the company expanded the solution even further by partnering with The Pinnacle Corp. to add its Loyalink program to the offering.

This summer, CITGO ran a Good Rewards promotion where customers could earn $15 CITGO gift cards by making eight minimum purchases of $20 or more using a Visa card enrolled in the Loyalty Bucks program. From June 1 through Sept. 20, customers were allowed to register up to three Visa cards at a special website, www.CITGOGoodRewards.com, and consumers also provided their mobile phone numbers to receive text message updates.

“In addition to the complete results of the promotion, the data shows consumers who enrolled in the program increased their spending by 67 percent at CITGO locations, while spending at other locations decreased,” Flagg reported, noting that the promotion exceeded the benchmarks the company set in the beginning of the program.

Further building on the loyalty theme, in September, the CITGO Rewards credit card in partnership with Citi Retail Services entered the market, allowing customers to earn five-cents-per-gallon credits on gas purchases using the card. Rewards appear as rebates on the credit card statement, according to Flagg.

“We realize in this marketplace, consumers have come to expect incentives for their patronage, and so we created a program that offers them some of the best rewards in the industry,” he said.

GIVING BACK

In addition to the various programs offered to marketers and retailers, CITGO also works with them to support the local communities they serve. The company focuses on four pillars of good: Environmental Protection and Restoration; Education and Social Investment; Energy Assistance and Conservation; and Health and Well-Being.

CITGO’s 2012 Fall Fueling Good program, designed to recognize and reward local heroes who improve their communities, kicked off with two past winners — Diane Nilan of HEAR US Inc. and Jennifer Frances of Bess the Book Bus — speaking to employees about how the program continues to affect their companies.

“It was definitely a new way to make the program come to life, and it received rave reviews from CITGO employees,” Flagg said.

CITGO also brought back its Energy Efficient Lighting Program this year, supplying approximately 50,000 low-income households in 17 U.S. cities with 500,000 energy-saving compact fluorescent light bulbs. The program is expected to save $18 million in energy costs.

Additionally, the company continues to support the Muscular Dystrophy Association (MDA), with funds from golf tournaments, mobile sales and social events going to support research. This year, funds also sent 3,500 children to MDA summer camp for a week.

“In addition to raising funds, CITGO employees give their time and energy volunteering for the association,” Flagg added.

Looking toward 2013, the company’s Fueling Good initiative is set to evolve even further by becoming more “grassroots” and creating more activity at the pump and inside the store, he said, and CITGO will continue assisting retailers with updating to the Centennial Image.

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