

News Article from October 5, 2002 Daily News**Convenience Insights to Give Retailers Insight Into Industry Trends**

ORLANDO, FL -A new information service has been launched by Gerke & Associates and CSP Information Group Inc. in association with its consulting partner b2b Solutions LLC.

The new service, Convenience Insights, will use online surveys to monitor convenience store retailers' key issues and future directions. The professionals involved in Convenience Insights will analyze the survey results and, combined with other relevant data, use their industry expertise to bring insight and understanding to the data. Convenience Insights' initial project analyzes the cold-vault section of the store. Research with retailers will provide key insights on market conditions and expected shifts in behavior for the packaged beverage, beer, wine and the fluid-milk categories. Their perspectives on current conditions and trends for category management, shelving and space allocation-including anticipated changes, new product activity, out of stocks, display space, merchandising activity and private-label programs-will be reported by Convenience Insights.

NACS Daily interviewed Gene Gerke, president of Gerke & Associates, about this new information-mining service.

Q. What is the goal of Convenience Insights?

A. To provide convenience store industry decision-makers with insight into retail issues and directions. Such insight should help suppliers better serve the industry and help retailers better understand and address key market issues.

Q. Where did the idea originate?

A. We have done some online surveys of business executives, including a technology survey sponsored by Professional Datasolutions, Inc., Paul Reuter of CSP and I have been discussing for a year how we could implement a low-cost/low-hassle system to survey retailers on key marketing issues. We, Gerke & Associates, are good at insightful retail research. CSP has a phenomenal database of online industry contacts. Combining those resources makes sense for the industry.

Q. What does Convenience Insights offer to convenience store retailers? A. There are several benefits including:

Convenience Insights is a no-cost/low-time commitment method for retail executives to communicate their issues with suppliers. This communication will help suppliers provide better products, services and programs.

Over time, we will be able to develop trends and benchmarks on such critical areas as retailer satisfaction with supplier products, promotions, service, etc. This will give suppliers some measure of performance and areas for improvement.

Retail executives who participate in our surveys will receive a summary of the results. This summary will help retailers fine-tune their strategies as they get a sense of the total industry mindset.

Q. Why do you think such an offering is relevant in today's market?

A. There are numerous factors that make this service relevant in today's market including:

The number of new products and services being offered by suppliers is forcing changes in how people go to market. But suppliers often have to rely on anecdotal information about how their strategy will "play" with convenience retailers. Convenience Insights will help bring clarity.

Many suppliers have or are looking at restructuring sales and marketing efforts. It would be beneficial to suppliers and retailers if those changes were based on sound market insight.

Retail competition is more aggressive and more complex. It is important that the convenience store channel have relevant information to keep the channel competitively viable-maybe even become a consumer-preferred channel.

The technology is in place to implement the Convenience Insights online system to poll convenience store executives about trends and issues.

For more information about Convenience Insights, visit www.gerke.com

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