

Plaid Pantry Secures Competitive Edge With Tidel

Plaid Pantry

Running a retail business is a challenge these days. Thanks to the Internet, customers have more places to spend their hard earned dollars than ever before, intensifying competition. To survive, retailers need every edge they can get—especially when it comes to operating brick and mortar stores profitably.

Tidel provides retailers with a competitive edge. That's why more and more of them are installing Tidel cash management systems in their stores. They increase productivity, enhance customer service, and boost security—all while cutting costs and increasing profitability. For many retailers, they're game changers.

Plaid Pantry is one retailer where Tidel is providing a competitive edge. This Oregon-based convenience store chain has 112 stores strategically located throughout the northwestern United States, with the majority of stores situated in and around metropolitan Portland, Oregon.

Known for their specials, Plaid Pantry stores carry all the usual convenience store items, including tobacco and alcohol. Plaid Pantry's stores also sell money orders, which can only be purchased with cash. During busy times, particularly at the beginning of the month, money order sales pump additional cash into already cash-heavy environments.

Making Daily Cash Runs

Before adopting smart safes, Plaid Pantry's stores handled cash manually and made bank runs to deposit the day's receipts. This approach had its drawbacks. For one thing, Plaid Pantry's managers had to bring in another employee to cover the stores while they were out, boosting labor costs.

Managers also had to provide personal information on deposits over \$10,000, which, at times, proved problematic for the manager and caused unwanted delays in getting the deposit processed.

Realizing that there were better and more secure ways to manage its cash, Plaid Pantry looked for ways to streamline and automate cash management while boosting security. After researching different solutions, Plaid Pantry installed smart safes from a Tidel competitor. When the contract for these safes concluded in 2014, Plaid Pantry made the decision to upgrade their stores to Tidel's Series 4 smart safes.

Replacing the competitor's safes with Tidel was an easy choice for Plaid Pantry. It had installed Tidel TACC III cash systems in its stores in 2008, so it knew about Tidel's reliability and state-of-the-art design and construction. Featuring an easy-to-use interface, programmable time delays, and an integrated tube vend module, the TACC III is the industry standard for retailers looking for a proven solution to manage the in-store change fund and deter robberies.

"Bringing in the TACC IIIs worked well for us," says Mark Conan, Plaid Pantry's vice president of Finance/CFO. "They provided store managers with peace of mind by boosting security and were more reliable than the safes they replaced. More importantly, they streamlined cash handling at the point of sale, letting employees focus on providing the kind of efficient customer service that give us a competitive edge. Adding the smart safes provided an additional layer of security and efficiency."



Plaid Pantry

Not Your Typical Configuration

Having an integrated change management system and a smart safe in one store, as two separate systems, is a bit atypical. However, Plaid Pantry found that this setup works perfectly in their stores. Since the TACC III systems were already in place and driving efficiencies for their in-store change management process, upgrading to the Series 4 smart safes in 2014 was a seamless endeavor, as both systems complement one another.

“At one point we tested a combined note deposit and change management safe,” says Conan. “But we passed on that option and went with two separate units instead. Eventually, we realized we liked having the redundancy of two systems, especially during busy times. If one goes down we have the other as a backup. Of course, breakdowns rarely occur with Tidel’s smart safes.”



The Tidel Series 4 smart safe is offered as a standalone system or with a storage vault (includes drop slot), mailbox drop vault, or pedestal. It features a 7-inch color screen, support for a single or a bulk note validator, and a note validator maintenance door that enables the clearing of note jams by preauthorized personnel, without the need for a service call. The Series 4 also features support for up to two standard (1,200 notes) cassettes or the larger XL (2,250 notes) cassettes.

Installing the Tidel Series 4 systems in the Plaid Pantry stores took about six weeks to complete. Installation went smoothly, as did the transition for store employees. Plaid Pantry also installed Series 4s and TACC IIIs in three new stores in 2015. The company plans on installing them in any new stores it opens in 2016. And since the Tidel systems are simple to use and work with, training new employees on them is quick and easy.



Providing Numerous Benefits

Together, the Tidel systems have streamlined, automated, and secured Plaid Pantry's cash management process. They also provided key benefits to the store, some of which were unexpected. Plaid Pantry wasn't surprised when the systems increased productivity, reduced downtime, and cut operational costs, including the cost of armored car pickups.

"When we upgraded to Tidel, we added XL cassettes to some of the safes in the higher volume stores," says Conan. "By doing this, we were able to reduce the frequency of picking up our deposits to just once per week during the slower times of the month. While this reduced cash availability, this was more than offset by the lower operational costs we realized by having less frequent armored car pickups."

But Plaid Pantry wasn't expecting two other benefits it received from installing the Tidel systems. Having the smart safes in the stores meant managers no longer needed to make bank runs.

Eliminating bank runs makes a real difference in our stores," says Conan. "It not only gives managers an extra hour or so to get things done, it also frees them up to deal with more important issues that might surface and to focus on customer service. In addition, our managers don't have to bring in another employee while they're making the bank runs, which reduces our labor costs, or provide personal information on deposits over \$10,000."

The other benefit was staff-related. Since using the bus to make the bank runs wasn't an option, store managers had to have their own cars to perform this task. That meant Plaid Pantry couldn't promote assistant managers that didn't have their own vehicles.

"Portland has a very mature and expansive mass transit system," says Conan. "So a lot of our employees don't own cars. But since managers had to have their own cars to make the bank run, we couldn't promote assistant managers who didn't drive or own a car. Now we can. This turned out to be an unexpected but welcome benefit to installing smart safes," he adds.

Tidel Is Making a Difference

Tidel is making a difference at Plaid Pantry. It helps Plaid's employees better manage their tills, increases security, reduces operating costs, and improves customer service. More importantly, it helps Plaid Pantry retain valued employees. In short, it gives the retailer the competitive edge it needs to thrive in today's hotly contested retail marketplace.

"We have a lot more cash volume in our stores today than we did eight years ago," says Conan. "We couldn't handle today's volume as well as we do and provide exceptional customer service without Tidel's help. In addition, employing Tidel's systems enhances store security—something our managers really appreciate. We can't imagine going back to the way we did things before."