

A More Tech-Savvy, Convenient Future

Eby-Brown previewed its new mobile app during Eby-Expo 2016

By Angela Hanson

Ahead of the peak summer selling season, Eby-Brown Co. LLC brought convenience store chain operators, single-store owners and supplier partners together at its annual trade show to show off the hottest trends, newest products and biggest areas of opportunity for c-stores. The Naperville, Ill.-based convenience distributor focused particularly on advances in foodservice and technology solutions.

Eby-Expo

April 28-29, 2016
Michigan City, Ind.

For the more than 1,200 retailers and suppliers that attended the two-day 2016 Eby-Expo, held April 28-29 at the

Blue Chip Casino, Hotel & Spa in Michigan City, Ind., Eby-Brown laid out a path to an even more tech-savvy and convenient future for c-stores.

The company previewed its new mobile app, which did not yet have a final name. The app combines the functions of three existing Eby-Brown programs and increases the flexibility with which c-store operators can make product orders and returns.

The app also offers in-depth data points and information about specific products, and lets operators see a lifetime review of their order history, according to company executives. Users can set standard order benchmarks for certain items to facilitate proper in-stock levels.

Eby-Brown expects the app to be more heavily used by single stores and small c-store chains, Joe Roenna, executive vice president of merchandising and procurement, told *Convenience Store News*. Accordingly, the company focused particularly on ease of use and flexibility during the development process, acknowledging that to be effective, the app has to be helpful to less tech-savvy users and an overall time-saver. The company's goal is to have all of its customers who order via mobile devices using the app within approximately 18 months.

Foodservice is also a major priority for Eby-Brown



and its customers. The distributor's proprietary foodservice offer, which includes the Aroma Bay Café, Savory Corner Cafe, Wakefield Sandwiches and Crisp Acres initiatives, was prominently displayed at the expo.

"Our parents believed in delivering solutions to their customers more than 50 years ago when they had the foresight to begin this Eby-Expo trade show," remarked Tom Wake, co-president of Eby-Brown. "We are a multi-generational family business that has grown through a focus on delivering excellent service, innovation and solutions to our customers. Eby-Expo conveys these concepts that result in our vendors and customers coming together, all with a focus of helping our customers grow their businesses."

Having recently acquired Liberty USA, a fellow convenience distributor based in West Mifflin, Pa., Eby-Brown is currently focused on self-improvement and integrating the businesses with an eye toward identifying best practices.

"We're in full-blown integration mode," said Roenna, explaining that Eby-Brown is examining how it can best incorporate what Liberty does well into the newly combined business. The acquisition of Liberty, the largest independently owned c-store supplier in Pennsylvania, strengthened Eby-Brown's presence in the Keystone State along with extending its distribution network into the Northeast. **CSN**