

# Mobile Maven

From apps to mobile ordering, Maria Fidelibus keeps QuickChek on the leading edge

By Tammy Mastroberte

**A**s a graduate of DeSales University in Center Valley, Pa., with a bachelor's degree in computer science, Maria Fidelibus was a young programmer looking for opportunities.

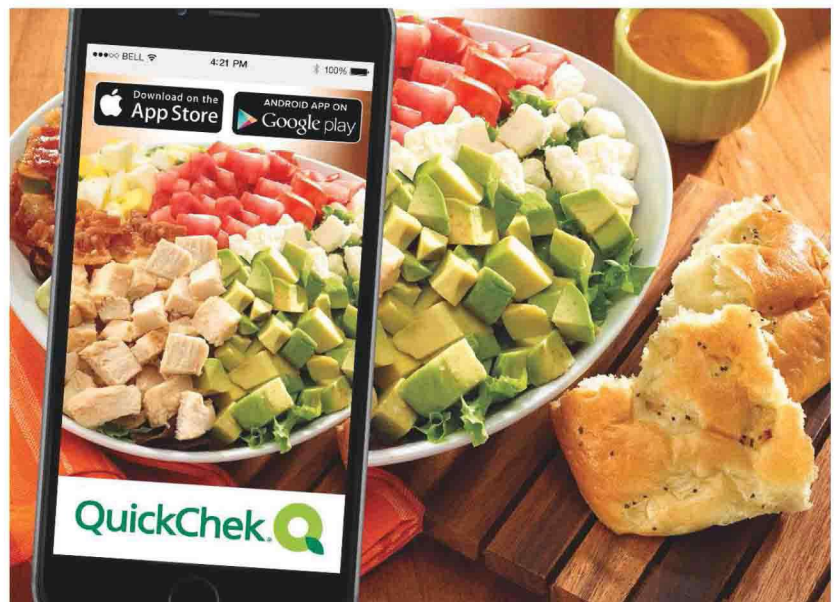
She worked at a foundation, helping children in the computer department, and also for a small consulting firm before ending up in the information technology (IT) department for a regional grocery chain in Philadelphia. When Safeway purchased the chain, she found herself in the banking industry for more than a year, until she got a phone call from Whitehouse Station, N.J.-based convenience store chain QuickChek Corp.

"I got a call asking if I was looking to get back into retail," Fidelibus recalled.

She joined QuickChek in December 2003 as the retailer's vice president of information technology. Since then, the company's use of technology has evolved significantly, particularly around the growth of the foodservice category, mobile applications and ordering, and its entry into the fueling side of the business. When she started with the company, there were only three QuickChek fueling sites. Just recently, the chain opened its 57th store with fuel.

"We've been focused on all the technology around fuel and supporting our fuel desk and all the processes involved," Fidelibus said. "We support pricing, inventory management, bill of lading, the back-office, gallon reports and fuel delivery automation as part of the business."

For these efforts and more, *Convenience Store News* honors Fidelibus as Technology Leader of the Year. The annual award recognizes a convenience store



Mobile initiatives are a focus for QuickChek, which launched a mobile app last year.

retailer executive who demonstrates vision and innovation, and leads the way for his/her company and the industry as a whole to take full advantage of technology solutions.

QuickChek is also focused on mobile as a priority, having launched a mobile app last year and mobile ordering for its foodservice offering six months ago. Customers can pre-order breakfast sandwiches, custom-made subs and salads via the app and pick up their order at any of the chain's 142 locations in New Jersey and New York. Users can place an order between 5 a.m. and 10 p.m., and select their pickup time.

"Our mobile presence is a huge area of focus for us, with mobile ordering launching in March," Fidelibus explained. "It's doing very well and continues to grow for us."

The retailer also continues to pioneer NCR Corp. self-checkout lanes. Originally, QuickChek offered Fast Lane self-checkout lanes with debit, credit and cash

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options, but is now offering card-only lanes. The offering has been a win-win for both customers and team members.

"We continue to look and try to optimize the Fast Lane self-checkout as a large opportunity in our environment, and we continue to refine and try to find the sweet spot to leverage this type of technology in our very high-volume stores where a lot of customers are in and out," Fidelibus noted.

## A CHANGING INDUSTRY

Since joining the c-store industry in 2003, Fidelibus has watched it evolve into more sophisticated technology systems. When she started, her team supported a back-office computer and a few registers when it came to opening a new store. These days, the infrastructure has grown to include so much more.



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— Maria Fidelibus, QuickChek Corp.

"Now, a new store has multiple computers, ordering points, and a kitchen monitoring system," she explained. "We can have 17 computers in a store, and the IT department supports all of that. It's been a big change. Also, the growth of customer-facing technology — whether in-store ordering points, mobile ordering or self-checkout — it's all changed significantly in the past 13 years."

To both share and learn from others in the space, QuickChek is a member of c-store industry technology association Conexxus and participates in roundtables and industry events, which Fidelibus believes is a strength of the c-store industry vs. other industries.

"The one thing about this industry in particular is the sharing and networking with peers. It is invaluable



QuickChek's app now allows users to order foodservice items via their smartphones.

and benefits the entire industry. We share common issues and problems and help each other move our organizations forward," she said.

Looking ahead, Fidelibus predicts the mobile side of the business will continue to grow and change. She foresees retailers offering creative ways for customers to use mobile apps, as well as mobile employees communicating all on one platform.

Although she personally is the recipient of the Technology Leader of the Year award, she credits her team for taking QuickChek so far since she joined the company.

"I know this award is tech executive of the year, but I have a department of people seasoned not only in this industry, but in technology," she pointed out. "Many team members have worked here for more than 25 years and are passionate about this business. It's really about my team and my peer partners at the organization, and the leadership of [President and CEO] Dean Durling guiding the company into the future."

But Durling credits Fidelibus and her leadership for taking QuickChek to the next level of technology, especially her ability to build and assemble a high-performance team.

"We have always been a leader in technology, but with Maria onboard, we really stepped it up," Durling said. "We had great people in IT when she came to us, but she has been able to build, assemble and lead a really strong team."

"She is wonderful at working with and developing people, and assessing their strengths," he added. "She also prioritizes high-value work and is very adept at problem-solving." **CSN**