



Radiant Banks on Relationships

By Jerry Soverinsky

“Welcome to Radiant.”

It’s a familiar greeting that never grows old for customers of Tampa’s Radiant Food Stores, a 14-store retail network run by Radiant Group LLC and the Capitano family. Now in its third generation of Capitano family ownership, Radiant qualifies as a bedrock of stability in an industry marked by change and consolidation.

For more than 75 years, Radiant has maintained a familiar presence in the Greater Tampa area, with its 14 company-operated Radiant Food Stores community fixtures. It is one of Tampa Bay’s oldest businesses.

While Radiant is more than just a retailer (it operates a real-estate division and dispenses fuel through more than 100 agent and dealer locations), it has developed a strong reputation as a premier c-store operator. And understanding Radiant’s success is not difficult, says Ken Villei, retail supervisor for the chain. With a family management team deeply committed to its loyal, local client base, everything starts—and ends—with the customer.

“Every customer is a part of our Radiant experience,” says Villei, offer-

ing a distinction between Radiant and its competitors. “[It begins with] a ‘Welcome to Radiant’ greeting every time they visit our locations.”

For Radiant, it’s not enough to offer “bright, clean stores,” says Villei. Establishing a relationship with customers is paramount. And to ensure the edict is applied consistently across all locations, a dedicated manager oversees training at each of the stores.

No Generation Gap

Founded in 1931 by Nick Capitano at the height of the Depression as a home-heating-oil supplier (the original company name was Radiant Oil Co. of Tampa), Radiant expanded over the years into commercial fuel delivery, gasoline-convenience store marketing and commercial real-estate development. While enjoying successes in each of its specialties, Radiant has developed a strong industry reputation for c-store marketing excellence.

Radiant’s retail network is all company-owned, and it distributes Marathon, Shell and BP gas. Most of the stores include a Subway sandwich shop, and many soon will be adding Dunkin’ Donuts. The fast-food additions are part

IT RUNS IN THE FAMILY: Frank David (from left), Joe Sr. and Joe Jr. are second- and third-generation Radiant owners.

of a retailing evolution that began in 1996, when the company introduced two deluxe facilities. The brightly lit 3,000-square-foot (minimum) stores included a car wash, extensive lineup of fountain drinks and coffees and quality fast food. Their successes have led to an additional six stores incorporating the concept.

Today, Radiant is managed by Nick’s two grandsons, Joe Jr. and Frank David, who continue to seek innovation and creative retailing solutions.

“We ... feature new items in our stores that a lot of larger chains are unable to implement,” says Villei. “We also utilize our great staff to conduct suggestive-selling contests monthly and upsell whenever we are able to, raising our sales and providing the customer with an added value.” ■

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