

MOVING MORE TONNAGE THROUGH THE CHAINS

by

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Four years ago, the Potato Board instructed an independent research firm to do a national survey on potatoes. Hundreds of housewives were interviewed. They were asked to tell all of their feelings about potatoes.

When the report came in, many valuable facts were discovered. But possibly the most startling was this. When asked their opinion of potato displays in stores, these were the words many housewives used: "messy, dusty, dirty and soggy."

Because of this problem, the Potato Board decided a merchandising program was needed, to improve displays. I was selected by the Board to spend one full year in research. I talked to top executives in 30 major food chains all over the country. They told us what they felt was needed from the potato industry. We did our "homework".

Following this year of research, we created what we call the "7-Point Plan." These are the seven basic points a chain needs to follow in order to have a first-class, successful potato program.

So here are the 7 points:

1. Large, well-stocked displays.
2. Rotation.
3. Variety of Packages.
4. Separation of types of potatoes.
5. Identification - price cards.
6. Recipe leaflets.
7. Effective Advertising.

Now let's take a look at what we do, to merchandise potatoes. There are just two of us, Gene Blish and myself, and between us we cover every state in the Union.

Seminars

National Tea Co. - Denver Division
 Tradewell - Seattle
 Malone & Hyde - Mississippi
 A & P - Meadville, Pa.
 A & P - Cleveland, Ohio
 A & P - Philadelphia
 A & P - Altoona, Pa.
 A & P - Boston
 A & P - Albany
 A & P - Hartford, Conn.
 Kroger - Columbus, Ohio
 Super Valu - all 10 divisions

For this program to operate successfully, you have got to "get the word down to Charlie" -- the individual produce manager in the store. Because that's where it all happens. Seminars do that.

Merchandising Bulletins

There is another way to "get the word down to Charlie." That is, by means of the weekly bulletins to the produce managers. Every chain uses these bulletins. Let's look at some examples. When we started out 2-1/2 years ago, these were some typical bulletins. We felt they made pretty dull reading.

So we created our Clip-Art Brochure -- filled with successful ideas and text, which we learned from people in our program. We also included drawings and cartoons, so that these bulletins could be illustrated.

Let's see what happened, as a result of our clip-art brochure.

I. G.A. Bulletin

Safeway-Landover:

It's a Spud-tacular
Large, Well-stocked Potato Displays
Mr. Spuddy's Back in Town
Potato Display Kits are on the Way
The Mis-Understood Potato
I'm the Fresh Guy
Harvest Festival

A & P - Pittsburgh

These are excellent bulletins. They help to make our program work in every store.

Store Displays

When we started, 2-1/2 years ago, we saw some pretty sloppy displays around the country.

Today, as chains use our program, we are seeing large, good-looking potato departments. Here are some examples.

Fred Meyer	Ralph's
Colonial	Pathmark
A & P	Stop & Shop
National Tea	Jewel
Kroger	Potato Patch
Potato Barn	Potato Shed
ShopRite	Chatham

Ad Features

There is one thing that is true of every successful chain in our program: a strong schedule of potato ad features. Here are some examples: 2-1/2 years ago, when we started, most of the potato ads looked like this. Small and insignificant. We have actually revolutionized the advertising of potatoes. Here are some examples of what they look like today:

Kroger
A & P
Alpha Beta - 300-500% increase

- National Tea-
National Tea- These two ads, in several divisions, increased tonnage for one week by 700-900%.
- Fred Meyer - Eleven potato items in one ad . . . now we have taken these ad concepts of National and Fred Meyer, and introduced them into the East! Here is what has happened.
- Grand Union - This ad turned their program around.
- A & P - Baltimore - Whitney Ziegler, the first millionaire at A & P.
- Safeway - San Francisco - big program on Washington russets: 1,400 tons in one week.

Testimonials

The men who use our program in their chains, are excited about it. They are proud of what they are doing. So some of them decided to tell the world about it. These are ads that ran in the Packer and Produce News.

- Al Ponte - Stop & Shop
Sol Waltman - Pathmark - tonnage up 50%.
Herman Fadem - ShopRite - all-time records for potato tonnage.
Andy Zankas - Allied - up 30% in one year.
Hymie Grappel - Waldbaum's - up 30% in one year.
Martin Costello - Gristede's - tonnage up 100%.
Mal Ellison - Super Valu - up 40% in one year.
Blaine Lawrence - Colonial - up over 100%.
Bob Backovich - Safeway - up 40% in one year.

So there you have it -- our merchandising program. It is now operating in 51 of the largest food chains in the country. Over 18,000 stores. Every one of these chains is selling more potatoes because of our program. In fact, in the past two years, these chains have had an average increase in potato tonnage of over 40 percent.