

Mobility Plaza®

Update from NACS 2021: How to engage EV consumers in the era of energy transition

It was great to finally see everyone again at NACS 2021 in Chicago. After almost two years of postponements and uncertainty, we finally had a chance to reconnect across the convenience retail world to celebrate the industry's resilience.



NACS Show is always a great place to take the industry's pulse on the hot topics of discussion. It wasn't surprising to hear everyone's lingering concerns around fuel volatility and what a rocky road we've travelled since the pandemic started. It was a bit more surprising to hear your concerns and questions about the looming fuel transition.

As manufacturers ramp up production and consumers make the transition toward electric vehicles (EVs)—and alternative-fuel vehicles in general—many of you are still unsure [how to prepare](#) beyond investing in EV charging stations. One of the primary concerns revolves around how soon (and how

much) to invest in trying to attract consumers who are shifting away from traditional internal combustion engines.

Attract EV Customers through Your Loyalty Program

If you already have an EV strategy for your business, or are starting to define one, identifying the right approach to ROI is crucial. Even though engaging EV owners isn't a short-term profit play, doing so can give you a unique differentiator for your business today. However, you'll need to adopt a strategic, long-term perspective to ensure a steady stream of customers, both at your forecourt and your store.

It's all about serving up convenience when they're deciding where to charge their vehicles. Fortunately, this is what separates convenience retail locations from other areas with EV charging stations: you have the experience and tools to make their stop more convenient.

Your big advantage is giving them the convenience they can't easily find elsewhere. With charging visits taking longer than traditional fuel fill-ups, you have a huge opportunity if you give shoppers a reason to exit their vehicles and visit your stores. Enticing them to stay longer is a great way to build deeper relationships and increase basket spend—as long as you can deliver what they want.

One of the easiest ways to achieve this is by including EV charging (and other forms of energy) in your current loyalty program and creating a branded mobile app. Consumers who gravitate toward EVs tend to be tech-savvy, and they expect connected experiences that include mobile apps, touchless payment, limited staff interactions, and flexible payment options.

Many make their convenience decisions based on store location, product selection, and rewards/loyalty savings. By encouraging app adoption, you can satisfy all three needs: displaying a convenient location, showcasing your product offerings, and tracking rewards digitally.

Focus on Location, Location, Location

As a convenience retailer, you already know how important location is for reaching your customers. However, as the world increases adoption of alternative fuels and EVs become more prevalent, consider the importance of promoting what products and services your location has to offer. In the future, the convenience of "location" will shift from physical locations on the corner of an intersection to online "locations" where a map indicates where the nearest EV charging station is available.

By preparing now, you can start building loyalty through a convenient app that shows EV customers how many stations you have open, how many spots are available, and how to reach your location. You can also add pricing to further entice customers to your store. Consider partnering with [third-party apps](#) that cater to all kinds of drivers and provide them with real-time data about stations and c-stores, regardless of brand.

Showcase Your Unique Products

Most EV customers don't want to just sit around and wait for their vehicle to charge. They want access to free [Wi-Fi](#) and convenience offerings. Your app can be the perfect way to highlight new products, specials, discounts, and offerings. This helps your customers see what they can do and buy when they arrive.

You can also leverage your app to get the right offers to the right people at the right time. Because your customers are tech-savvy and expect more personalization, make sure your app system is integrated with your POS system so you can capture data and run the proper [analytics](#). Doing so can reveal business insights that help you offer the right convenience and personalization to your customers.

Deliver Rewards in Real Time

The biggest indicator of loyalty adoption tends to be how convenient your program is. Customers want loyalty programs to be simple to sign up for and easy to use—without forcing them to change their behavior. Through a mobile-first loyalty solution, you can provide a convenient way for shoppers to find your location digitally, enhance their experience through unique products and services, and serve up real-time rewards balances to increase loyalty.

Integrating an EV strategy into your current loyalty program is essential to increasing the return on your investment in EV charging stations. Best of all, the core principles are the same as your standard fuel rewards program—they just take a little more of a digital-first mindset and a slight tweak in deployment.


When you're ready to make this strategic move and integrate EV into your loyalty program, PDI can help you increase your sales, operate more efficiently, and improve critical decision-making with deep industry expertise in loyalty and retail marketing. Look to PDI for marketing insights, robust analytical tools, white-label apps, and proven rewards programs to transform your business.

[Learn more about the PDI ecosystem for loyalty programs here.](#)

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