

## MARKET OF CHOICE MANAGES THEIR ENERGY RIGHT

Market of Choice is managing their energy right. Through a variety of strategies they have reduced their energy consumption an estimated 15-20%.

President and CEO Rick Wright says, "We're committed to energy efficiency because we really want to be more sustainable, and because it's smart financially; natural gas and electricity aren't going to get any cheaper. Whatever we can do to offset our carbon emissions, through efficiency and solar energy, has got to help. We'll spend the extra money up front to get the most efficient stores and reduce the stores' demand for energy. The payback in reduced carbon emissions is immediate."

Wright took over the business from his father, Richard Wright, who ran Price Chopper and Thriftway stores from 1978 to 1997. Rick Wright reorganized the company and created Market of Choice to appeal to customers who want high-quality natural and organic foods as well as their favorite conventional items.

Market of Choice has seven stores—four in Eugene, and one each in Ashland, Portland and West Linn. They range from 10,000 to 44,000 square feet, and are from one to seven years old.

The company's energy efficiency efforts hinge on the dedication, expertise, and hands-on management of Wright and Vernon Ferguson, a refrigeration contractor who has worked with the Wrights since the 1970s.



*The newest Market of Choice store, on 29th Street in Eugene, Oregon.*

Refrigeration accounts for about half the electrical energy use in a typical grocery store in the Northwest.

Their approach includes important elements of any successful energy management strategy:

- buy-in at the top
- performance tracking
- employee training
- regular maintenance
- timely equipment upgrades
- integrating energy-efficiency in new construction

### TRACKING

Wright and Director of Operations Heinz Beierling evaluate per-store energy use quarterly and track the cost of energy per dollar of sales for each store. Wright

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*Rick Wright, President and CEO, Market of Choice.*

says he also plans to analyze energy use per square foot of floor space using a spreadsheet-tool developed by BetterBricks, because he feels it will pinpoint other opportunities to manage energy use.

### **TRAINING**

Ferguson trains store managers, department managers and maintenance staff in the proper operation and maintenance of store systems. Managers also welcome employees' tips about all aspects of store operation, especially waste reduction.

### **PERIODIC MAINTENANCE**

Employees' and managers' bonuses are tied to performance, which includes managing the store's energy usage. "Electricity and gas are one of the top five line items in each store's profit and loss statements, so our managers become conscientious about energy cost," Wright says.

Regular maintenance catches problems, such as malfunctioning controls and ineffective strip curtains.

Refrigeration accounts for a large part of each store's energy bills, so staff frequently check for blocked airflow and accurate set points.

### **EQUIPMENT UPGRADES**

An effective energy strategy also includes maximizing the resources and incentives offered by the local utility. Market of Choice has worked closely with the Eugene Water & Electric Board (EWEB) to replace older, inefficient refrigeration, lighting, and heating and cooling equipment in three of its Eugene-area stores.

### **REPLACING INEFFICIENT EQUIPMENT**

Wright says that upgrading or replacing aging refrigeration equipment has the best rate of return of all energy-efficiency measures. "New cases are about 58% more efficient than the old," he explains. "The power savings, utility incentives and tax credits can yield two- to three-year paybacks. Changing out our old five-deck coolers pays for itself in two to three years."

### **HEAT RECOVERY FOR HVAC AND WATER HEATING**

Like most groceries, Wright's stores reclaim heat from the refrigeration system for water heating. Market of Choice's new stores also use reclaimed heat for space heating, which reduces gas bills significantly.

### **CEILING FANS**

Ferguson installed ceiling fans in most stores to bring warm air at the ceiling down to floor level, which reduces heating bills and improves customer and employee comfort. He sizes and locates the fans so they don't disturb the air curtains in the refrigerated cases. "Fans cost \$5,000 to install and pay for themselves in about three months," Wright notes.

## EFFICIENT NEW CONSTRUCTION STRATEGIES

New construction projects offer a prime opportunity to lock in energy savings from the get-go. Market of Choice has taken advantage of this by considering energy early in the design phase. Wright is actively involved in new-store design, paying attention to details that impact cost and performance. Designers also include ideas from maintenance staff about efficient equipment, store layout, and green building materials. Some of the energy-saving design strategies in their stores include:

### DAYLIGHTING

In the newest store, at 29th Street in Eugene, a large south-facing clerestory lights the entry area naturally; sun shelves control heat gain and deflect additional light into the store. Two large skylights illuminate the other two-thirds of the store.

### SOLAR ELECTRICITY

The 30.8-kilowatt photovoltaic (PV), or solar electric, system on the 29th Street store's heat-reflective white roof is one of the largest PV systems in operation in Eugene. Through a direct generation contract, EWEB buys all of the electricity produced by the system, which is equivalent to the power needed for the store's lights and computers. Wright is considering expanding the system to 58 kilowatts, and installing PVs on all Market of Choice stores. "The PVs will pay for themselves in the long run," Wright says. "And we have many customers, particularly in Eugene, who appreciate our investment in clean energy."

## OTHER GREEN ACTIONS

Market of Choice stores compost their organic waste onsite and donate the material to local community gardens and food banks. They also use the most Earth-friendly packaging they can find. These and other "green" practices further reduce the stores' energy footprint.

## DOING MORE

Market of Choice already has done plenty to save energy, says Dan Morehouse, Energy Management Engineer at EWEB. And Larry Giardina, Conservation Analyst with the City of Ashland's municipal utility, agrees. "Market of Choice is a high-end business that is both efficient and effective."

Nonetheless, Wright and Ferguson always are looking for additional opportunities. "I'll bet we still can find 20% more savings in our older stores," Wright states. "Anywhere we can save money helps us be more competitive. We can put that money into other things, such as customer service."

