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Marketing Reimbursable Meals is Key to Increasing Student School Lunch Revenues

by: Lukas Ercanbrack

Many schools do not fully realize how effective marketing can influence their students' view of school lunch. According to a study conducted in 2005, a sophisticated marketing campaign is one of the best ways schools can increase school lunch revenues.

Students are not to be underestimated. They are smart consumers, and in order to properly persuade them to purchase school lunch they must be marketed to in a way that they will effectively generate results.

When it comes down to it, districts are interested in generating revenue. While some schools have found signage and advertisements to be effective, most schools view flashy promotional efforts as futile and non-results oriented.

that reminds students of what they would see in their local mall. To the students, the layout seems natural and inviting, and the school continually puts up revenue numbers that show their redesign is paying off. The CCISD had been financially self-sufficient for years.

The district has also had success by altering its signage and menu to appeal to the ethnic character of any given school. Since not all schools have the same demographic breakdown, each school's marketing efforts are targeted and tweaked to match their specific student population.

The schools that are having the most consistent and sizeable success are those that conduct effective marketing campaigns targeted at increasing the number of reimbursable meals they serve. Tactics used by schools vary, but the majority focus on two broad categories: increasing awareness among families that are eligible for the free and reduced meal program, and taking steps to break down the barriers associated with the social stigma of being on the program.

Most of these schools have turned to advancements in free and reduced management technology to streamline the paperwork-heavy and time-consuming process. These systems are capable of organizing eligibility data and sending out notification to parents reminding them to submit their applications before the deadline. Most systems, such as F.O.R.M.S. software created by FSS, not only help schools bring in more revenue, but help schools significantly reduce the amount of man-hours associated with administrative oversight, and the time it takes to process the applications.

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Other schools have had success focusing on improving a la carte sales. This is not necessarily a bad thing, but doing so may mean losing control over what students are eating and in what quantity. A sizable portion of U.S. schools have removed soda and sugary items from their hallways, but many still feel inclined to provide a variety of non-nutritious items to their students in order to reach their revenue goals.

High school cafeterias in the Corpus Christi Independent School District, in Corpus Christi, TX, are arranged in food court style layout



For more information about FSS F.O.R.M.S. or to learn additional for improving your schools reimbursable meal revenue, contact an FSS customer representative at 800-425-1425.

Equipment Assistance Grants: Did You Second-Guess Yourself Out of the Game?

With submission deadlines looming or forgone, schools that may have had a chance to collect grant funding have effectively taken themselves out the game by not applying.

The deadline to submit paperwork for equipment assistance grant (EAG) funding in the state of Connecticut was moved from May 22 to June 2. "I wish I had known that earlier," stated Heidi Buchholtz, Food Services Director for Montville Public Schools in Monteville, CT.

Like many others, Buchholtz rushed to complete all the necessary paperwork by the 22nd, and even hand-delivered the bid to ensure it made it by the deadline. Unlike the others, Buchholtz represents a school district with a free and reduced student percentage much lower than the recommended 50% mark.

"Only 2-3 schools in my district have F & R numbers that even come close to 50%, with the highest being 30%," said Buchholtz, "Our district average is actually closer to 20%." However, those numbers did not dissuade her from applying for the EAG.

Buchholtz has had success obtaining grant funding in the past. She recently snagged a state-issued grant by rushing in a last minute submission. "Most other schools let the opportunity pass because of the grant's short submission deadline, but my

effort paid off big-time and we received \$21,000." If she is able to land her EAG request for \$25,000, Buchholtz intends to upgrade her POS systems as well as purchase a new stove and steamer.

While most schools with free and reduced numbers below 50% have chosen to forgo the lengthy processes of putting together a bid request, a few match Buchholtz optimism that they too may still end up with a piece of the pie.

"We only have one school that came close to qualifying for the EAG funding, with and free and reduced rate of only 27%," said Richard Kelleher, Food Service Director for Gloucester Schools in Gloucester, MA, "but that didn't stop me from submitting the bid."

The deadline for bid submission in the state of Massachusetts was May 15, and like Buchholtz, Kelleher made the drive to Boston to hand-deliver his bid. "Do I think I'll receive the funding? I have no idea. I put in for \$23,000, but I know another district that put in for over \$340,000, so I think have a shot," stated Kelleher. Gloucester Schools is in need of updated kitchen equipment, and the grant would go a long

way in helping them reach their goal. They should be receiving word the first week in June.

While deadlines for bid submission have passed in most states, there is still an opportunity for some schools to rush in a bid before it's too late. Some of the states whose due dates have not yet passed* are Michigan (March 29), California (June 1), Vermont (June 1) and Connecticut (June 2).

One thing is certain. Those schools with free and reduced numbers close to 50% that chose not submit a bid have taken themselves out of a game where millions of dollars in grant funding are at stake, and will never know if they may have obtained a piece of that enormous pie. "At least I'm in it," said Kelleher, "Even get a part of what I asked for, I'll be more than happy."

**This information was accurate at the time the article was written. These states may have made adjustment to their due dates, and other states may have extended their submission dates as well. Check with your state offices for accurate EAG timeline information.*

IdentiSys Inc. Announces Food Drive to Celebrate 10 Year Anniversary Serving the ID Systems Market

Leading identification, tracking and access control provider extends support to communities in the Midwest, Texas and Hawaii

To commemorate its 10 year corporate anniversary today, IdentiSys Inc. launched a 10 day food drive to benefit select communities it serves locally. IdentiSys sales and service offices are located throughout Minnesota, Wisconsin, Illinois, Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan, Ohio, Texas and Hawaii. Founded on June 1, 1999, IdentiSys is North America's largest sales and service integrator of identification, tracking and access control security products.



"Our customers have been the key to our success over the last decade," said Michael R. Shields, founder, CEO and chairman of IdentiSys. "And we wanted to give back to communities where our local sales and service personnel live and work as part of our celebration. Our Eden Prairie, MN headquarters colleagues will support People Reaching Out to Other People (PROP)."

PROP is an Eden Prairie-based nonprofit human services agency serving local families during emergencies and times of temporary need until they can attain self-sufficiency. Additional non-profit agencies will be determined by IdentiSys local sales and service teams.

"We know from our experience in delivering K-12 food service solutions that when the school year ends, food shelf and food

bank requests increase. Our 10 year corporate anniversary is a significant milestone for us, and we wanted to observe it memorably," added Debra R. Ferril, president and COO of IdentiSys.

IdentiSys specializes in identification technologies and applications, including photo ID systems, access control, tracking and first responder accountability systems, metal plate and tag systems, positive patient ID, document destruction, digital color press and varnishing, card personalization and mailing, and fulfillment systems. Gebco of Hawaii, a division of IdentiSys, is the leading supplier in the Hawaiian Islands of photo ID systems, binding, lamination and shredders.

Mr. Shields and Ms. Ferril have overseen the company's expansion, including five acquisitions: CompuCard, SouthWest

Datacom Systems, 4Site Systems, Gebco of Hawaii, and CardSmart Systems. Each acquisition expanded IdentiSys' local sales and service operations and offered end users an expanded portfolio of products and systems.

"Each acquisition not only increased our product offerings, but also our local sales and service expertise, professional services and support capabilities," stated Mr. Shields. "Our sales, service and support personnel are industry veterans, and we are committed to delivering excellent customer support to help organizations and schools improve their security programs. I am very proud to commemorate 10 years with our 10 day food drive

and look forward to exceeding our customer expectations for many more years."

About IdentiSys

Founded in 1999, IdentiSys Inc. offers complete identification solutions, including most applications that utilize a plastic ID card or ID badge, metal tag, metal plate, biometric or other form of ID. The Eden Prairie, Minnesota-based company is the largest supplier of identification solutions to end users in North America, representing over 60 identification, production printing and access control suppliers and providing superior service and support to thousands of customers in corporate, education,

healthcare, financial, government, gaming and many other markets. IdentiSys is a member of Identification Systems Group (ISG), National Association of Campus Card Users (NACCU) through ISG, Specialty Graphic Imaging Association (SGIA), and BindRite Dealers Association (Gebco of Hawaii).



President's FY 2010 Budget for FDA Invests Substantially in Food and Medical Product Safety

\$3.2 billion request reflects a 19 percent increase from FY 2009

The U.S. Food and Drug Administration is requesting a budget of \$3.2 billion to protect and promote the public health as part of the President's fiscal year (FY) 2010 budget — a 19 percent increase over the current FDA fiscal year budget.

The FY 2010 request, which covers the period of Oct. 1, 2009, through Sept. 30, 2010, includes increases of \$295.2 million in budget authority and \$215.4 million in industry user fees.

The FDA budget proposes two major initiatives for FY 2010: Protecting America's Food Supply and Safer Medical Products. It also includes increases for current law user fees and for infrastructure to support critical agency operations. The FDA is also proposing four new user fees to facilitate review of generic drugs, register and inspect food manufacturing and processing facilities, reinspect facilities that fail to meet Good Manufacturing Practices and other safety requirements, and issue export certifications for food and feed.

"This historic increase in the FDA's budget is a great investment in public health,"

- Joshua Sharfstein, M.D.
acting commissioner of food and drugs

The following are the FDA's key proposed budget increases:

*** Protecting America's Food Supply** (\$259.3 million) – The goal of this effort is to protect American consumers by preventing intentional and unintentional contamination. This effort invests in priorities that strengthen the safety and security of the supply chain for foods. Supply chain safety and security relies on the principle of risk-based prevention with verification. Under this principle, the FDA holds all segments of industry accountable for ensuring that their products meet U.S. safety standards. The Protecting America's Food Supply initiative focuses on foreign and domestic sources of ingredients, components, and finished products at all points in the supply chain, including their eventual use by the American public. Within this initiative, the FDA proposes to collect a total of \$94.4 million in new user fees to register food facilities and increase food inspections, issue food and feed export certifications, and reinspect food facilities that fail to meet the FDA's safety standards.

*** Safer Medical Products** (\$166.4 million) – This effort provides targeted resources to improve the safety of human and animal drugs, medical devices, vaccines, blood, and other medical products. It will allow the FDA to strengthen safety and security of the supply chain for medical products. The initiative also includes \$46.6 million in new user fees for generic drug review and new fees to reinspect medical product

facilities that fail to meet safety standards.

*** Current Law User Fees** (\$74.4 million) – In addition to the new user fees proposed for FY 2010, the FDA request also includes inflationary and other authorized increases for fees that support FDA review of applications for new human drugs (+\$67.5 million), animal drugs (+\$2.3 million), and medical devices (+\$4.5 million).

*** Follow-on Biologics & Drug Importation** (\$5 million) – Within the Safer Medical Products initiative, the budget proposes a new authority for the FDA to approve follow-on biologics through a regulatory pathway that protects patient safety and promotes innovation, and includes \$5 million for the FDA to develop policies to allow Americans to buy drugs approved in other countries.



www.fda.gov

For more information on the President's FY 2010 budget for the FDA, visit FDA's Web site.

Checkout the New FoodServe.com!!!

It has been a long time in the works, but the all-new FoodServe.com has arrived! Those of you familiar with the original FoodServe.com website will be happy to know that new site comes with variety of improvements.

• Simplified Navigation

The new FoodServe.com is a breeze to navigate. We have organized the different features into an easy-to-understand tabbed interface. Categories, such as "Biometrics" and "POS" can be accessed with a single click. For a more specific search, the left-hand column allows visitors to directly access individual product and support pages.

• Improved New Look

The "pre-dot-com boom" appearance of the original site did not go unnoticed. The all-new FoodServe.com boasts a vastly improved look, and will eventually include more high-resolution photos, rich content and interactive web demonstrations.

Upcoming Additions:

• More Information

We will soon be adding more information and supportive documentation on what

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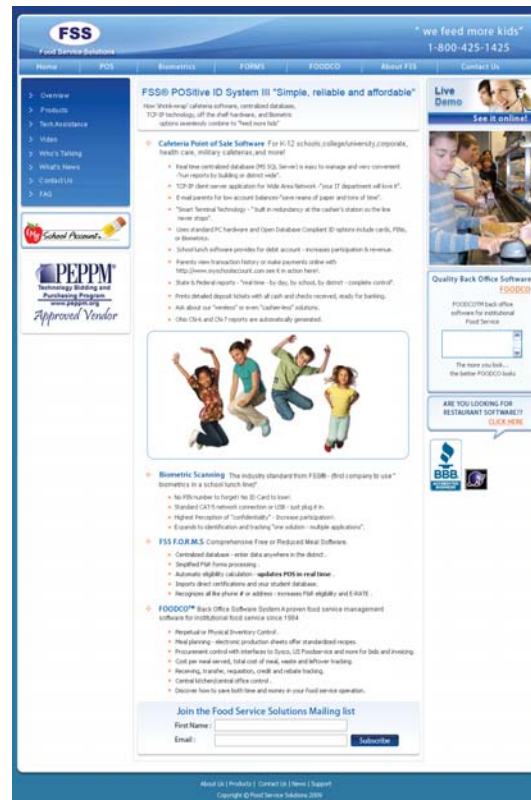
makes our POS and biometric systems different than the rest. This information will be able to be easily accessed by clicking the links in the left-hand column.

• Testimonials

At FSS, we do not claim to provide the most reliable technology and highest level of customer support in the school food service industry—our customers do. The new site will soon include an abundant list of testimonials from our valued customers across the U.S., and across the globe. In order to save visitors time, we have grouped the testimonials into specific categories.

In addition, for those schools interested in FSS customer references, we have compiled and categorized over 30 different reference lists that will be available upon request.

We invite you to visit the new FoodServe.com. Come see what's new and learn more about FSS' ability to streamline and speed up your lunch lines, save you and your staff hours of work time each week, save you money as well as increase school-lunch revenue, and most importantly, help you to Feed More Kids!



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SIMPLE, RELIABLE, AFFORDABLE

Food Service Solution's ability to develop creative solutions to make our customer's job easier, more profitable, and better managed has made us a leader in our industry. With over 85 years of combined experience in institutional food services, our staff is dedicated to providing our customers with state-of-the-art software & hardware systems that are fully integrated to meet the unique needs of food service professionals.