

Trouble Staffing Events

By Chris Lauber
 Concession Manager
 Ralph Engelstad Arena
 President - NACC

Here in sunny and warm Grand Forks, ND (ok it is actually overcast and 1 degree above zero) we have been struggling to get the concession department fully staffed for the past couple of years. Every business in town has a "Now Hiring" sign in the window. We even have starting pay above minimum wage. As I talk with fellow concession managers around the country I hear the same thing. They can't get people hired. Not only are we struggling in hiring people, but we have found it hard to get fundraising groups to sign up to work events. Again, I have heard this too from around the country. What are our options in this environment?



At Ralph Engelstad Arena we have to be fully staffed for every hockey game as we are pretty consistent in attendance at each game. When we run short on staff and fund raising groups we had to turn to a

temporary staffing agency to help us out. Yes they are expensive (\$15.99/hour) however without them we would be losing thousands in sales and we would not be offering the level of service needed for our fans. If you are having trouble finding workers you may want to consider a temporary staffing agency to help you out. Here are some pros and cons to the idea.



The best part of using a temporary staffing agency is that you can fill your open spots in your operation and sometimes you can get them filled last minute. When we had some games around

Thanksgiving and needed a lot of help (over 50 people) the staffing agency was able to work with their Fargo, ND office and bus people up to our arena. The



best part of using this system is you get to see people work and if you like their work ethic and so on you can then hire them onto your staff and you already know what you are getting. However please be aware of the contract and the rules to hire a person away from the temp agency.

Sometimes the cons to using the service outweigh the pros. The cons include that normally a large amount of workers they send are not the best workers. We have had some let's say sketchy people work for us, but we have had a lot of great people too. When you do find some you like and want to hire them, the contract you sign usually has a large buyout and timeframes that are ridiculously long to get that amount reduced.

We were able to negotiate our timeframe down to 15 worked shifts and after that we could hire that person away from the temp agency at no charge.

If you are having trouble staffing your events and have not tried a temporary staffing agency, you may want to consider it as an option. I have heard that other concession operations have been doing the same thing as we are for the same reasons so give it a try.

Save the Date!

See you at Penn State University for the 2019 Conference! Mark your calendar June 17-20, 2019. www.nacc-online.com



Strawless Lid

By Joe Blando

Director of Sales

Dynamic Drinkware

Allied Board Member - NACC

Throughout the past year concessionaires have felt the pressure to eliminate straws from their venues. They are getting the pressure from customers, local municipalities and peers in the industry.

You want to do your part but simply removing straws from your concession stands is no easy task. You have much to consider in making this decision and ensuring you continue to offer the fan experience your customers have come to know. To date, I have only seen the issue come up at the professional level and not collegiate markets but am certain that will change with the college football season this year.

In the spring of 2018 I had a MLB venue reach out to me about removing straws from their venue. They specifically wanted to get rid of straws, disposable lids and plastic coffee stir sticks. He asked if I could supply him a compostable strawless lid or reusable strawless lid. I told him I did not have either of these available but would certainly look into sourcing them. My efforts quickly led me to learn that the industry was not prepared for straws going away from venues and the products this venue was looking for just did not exist for a standard souvenir cup. I reached out to several other venues to see if they were getting the same guidance to remove or reduce the use of straws. In most cases the answer was yes, which led me to believe the trend was gaining momentum.

At Dynamic Drinkware we did extensive research with concession companies, municipalities, and lid suppliers to truly determine if removing straws from sports concessions was something that would continue to gain momentum or pass as many of these initiatives have in the past. We did this research because the investment into new products to include lids is always costly. After months of research, we made the decision as a company to move away from disposable lids with straws and go to a new strawless lid. We made this decision based on a couple factors. First and foremost was that we wanted to do our part to reduce waste. We didn't want to just talk about it, we wanted to have an impact even if it was in a small way. The second part of our decision was price. Could we supply a new strawless lid that was affordable for our customers? Too often these initiatives are pushed by groups of people who aren't accountable for costs and margins. The good news in the case of our strawless lid is that we can accomplish reducing the amount of straws while adding dollars to our customer's bottom line.

Over the past year several sports venues have implemented procedures to reduce the use of straws. I want to share a few of those procedures as they can be implemented with little effort. The first is to simply stop offering lids and straws with drinks. Only provide them when requested. With this option you will want to post signs in and around the concession stand mentioning your efforts to reduce the use of straws. Another option is to serve drinks with a lid but do not offer a straw. Only provide one when

asked for it. Most fans will simply take the souvenir soda to their seats and remove the lid to drink. A third option would be to remove all lids, straws and coffee stir sticks from those areas where fans typically pick them up. Keep all of these behind the concession stand counter and offer only when requested. Again, it would be wise to post signs when going with this option.



As of today several venues across the country have either gone strawless or have plans to do so in 2019. Those include just about every sports venue in New York City. The west coast starting with the Angels and Dodgers for MLB will also go strawless this year. I personally have traveled to several MLB venues in the past six months and just about everyone is looking to remove straws. There's no doubt this trend is going to hit you at the collegiate level this year.

At Dynamic Drinkware we have you covered when you make the decision to go with strawless lids. We will continue to carry the reusable straw and lid for those venues that are currently using those or for those of you who decide to offer our premium lenticular 3d souvenir cup that calls for a higher quality lid. When you make the decision to remove straws from your venues make sure you do this for your souvenir cup as well as your smaller size paper cup. You will want to keep some straws available at all times as you will have some special needs fans who will require them. Place a bag at each concession stand and mark it as such so your volunteer groups understand the straws are only for specific fans.

New NACC Executive Director

By Chuck Aldridge, CCM, FMP

Concessions General Manager

University of Maryland

Executive Director – NACC

In September 2018, I was selected as the new Executive Director of the NACC. It is an honor to have been chosen for this awesome organization. I have been a member of the NACC for a long time with my first conference at Penn St. over 20 years ago. For those that may not know me, I have served on the board 2 different times for a total of 6 years. I am also the Concessions General Manager

for the University of Maryland with over 25 years of experience. I have enjoyed attending the NACC conference for a long time. I have met so many wonderful people and learned so much from everyone. No matter how big or small your operation is, you may have something that may be of interest to other



members of the NACC. Please reach out to your colleagues and vendors and tell them about our great organization. Hope to see you all in June at Penn State!!

It's Not Just "Any" Tradeshow

By **Theresa Traulsen**
Owner/President
Concession Solutions, Inc

Sometimes it's inevitable that as vendors we have to rush in to a trade show and rush back out as soon it closes to hit the next show on time...been there. However, I have to say that when it comes to attending the NACC conference, you are doing yourself and your company a huge disservice if you don't attend the entire 3 day event!

The NACC is one of the few organizations that encourage conference participation by their vendor attendees. Even if your company is not a sponsor, your booth fee includes all dinners, activities (pre-conference outings & membership is extra), and education sessions for up to two company representatives. What a value!

The 2018 University Arizona conference was my nineteenth year of participation with NACC. It has been a gratifying experience both personally and professionally, and it is a conference I look forward to each year! Besides the obvious reason to attend the entire conference (selling your product), there are peripheral benefits that will eventually make you much more successful in this venue:



- **Education Sessions** - Regardless of whether you are new to the college concession environment or have been selling to them for years, there is always something to be learned. These sessions provide a glimpse into the issues, goals, and challenges common to the category.
- **The Host Campus** - Most of the conference activities take place on the host campus, and the agenda always includes various tours providing attendees with a "behind the scenes" view of their concession operations.
- **Networking** - This seems obvious but think beyond the relationships and rapport you will build with the concession members. You may meet or get contacts in Purchasing, Dining Services, Auxiliary Services, etc. for the various schools attending and at the host campus.
- **Hospitality Room** - It isn't uncommon to have an after-hours meeting location at some conferences but I doubt you will have a better time than at the NACC Hospitality Room! It is a great way to get to know your fellow conference attendees in a fun, casual atmosphere.

As vendors we are all aware of how important relationship-building is to the success of our business. The NACC conference provides an environment for vendors to network and socialize with members and have shared experiences, like last year's pre-conference trip to Tombstone and Kartchner Caverns, which was so much fun!

A trade show is meant to showcase your company and your products, use the rest of the conference to promote yourself and make some connections. If you believe that "people do business with whom they like", then invest the time to let them get to know you!

2018 Tradeshow Attendees

SPONSORS

- **Bar Leans**
- **By Pass Mobile**
- **Cres Cor**
- **Churchill Container Co**
- **Dynamic Drinkware**
- **Gehls Foods LLC**
- **Iowa Rotocast Plastic**
- **J&J Snack Foods**
- **Partners By Design**
- **Pratt Industries**
- **Whirley Drinkworks**

VENDORS

- **Ali Group North America**
- **B&D Foods**
- **Blackboard**
- **Cintas**
- **Con Agra Brands**
- **Copa Di Vino**
- **Dippin Dots**
- **Exadigm**
- **FC Meyers**
- **Future POS**
- **GFF Inc. / Girards**
- **Gills Onion**
- **Golden Krust**
- **Hormel Foods Corp**
- **Paradise Tomato**
- **Partner Tech Inc.**
- **PB Crave**
- **Real Rewards Café**
- **Sabert Corp**
- **Simplot**
- **Stalk Market**
- **Sugar Foods Corp**
- **The JM Smucker Co**
- **Visstun**
- **Vistar**



The Lighter Side Revisited

By John Gibson

*Director of Concessions
University of North Texas
Vice President – NACC*

The 2018 North Texas Football Season brought Mean Green fans big non-conference wins, national media attention and record home crowds for several of our games. Our Concessions Operation benefitted from the success and exposure of the Mean Green Football team as well. We enjoyed back-to-back games with record breaking sales and observed our highest recorded food and beverage sales totals for a completed season! Our concourse was bustling with activity for a majority of our games keeping our team on our toes throughout the season.

Our team also launched a new Food and Beverage Concept at Apogee Stadium, featuring healthier and fresher Concessions items. As mentioned during the July 2018 NACC Newsletter, “The Lighter Side” stand was an attempt to meet the requests of our fan-base by offering non-standard Concessions faire, such as Salads, Hummus, freshly made Fruit Cups, Veggie Dogs and Veggie Burgers. These two stands were located in areas of the stadium with lower Foot Traffic. The plan was to offer these specialty items for each of the six home football games, regardless of anticipated attendance. This would ensure that the healthier menu items would be available for all interested Mean Green fans every home game.

Overall, results were mixed. While the locations enjoyed high traffic and solid sales during our three heaviest attended games, sales were almost non-existent during the three remaining home games. To be fair, two of these dates featured continuous monsoon like rain while the final home game did not kick off until 8:30 PM local time. Sales of the healthier items were interesting to watch from week to week. The breakdown of these items as a percent of overall Food sales is as follows:

| Menu Item | Sales as % of Food Group |
|---------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Black Bean Veggie Burger | 10.15% |
| Veggie Dog | 8.68% |
| Fruit Cup | 6.81% |
| Hummus | 2.68% |
| Chicken Caesar Salad | 2.62% |
| Spinach Salad | 2.12% |

However, the most popular items offered in these locations remained Concessions staples; Nachos, Pretzels, Candy and Popcorn.



| Menu Item | Sales as % of Food Group |
|--------------------------------|--------------------------|
| Nachos | 16.56% |
| Pretzel with Cheese Cup | 15.05% |
| Regular Popcorn | 12.82% |
| Souvenir Popcorn | 11.35% |
| Candy | 10.9% |

While fan feedback was generally positive regarding this stand and its menu options, the number one request fans would like to see next season is the ability to purchase our All-Beef Hot Dogs along with the Veggie Dogs. We were unable to serve both items from the “Lighter Side” stands this season, as we could not prepare All-Beef Hot Dogs on the same roller grills we used for the Veggie Dogs. However, we plan to adjust our back-of-house operation and supply our regular hot dogs in this stand, in addition to the Veggie Dogs, next season.

While sales of the healthier items were not over-whelming, our team is committed to pushing this menu concept for another year and seeing where it takes us. Go Mean GREEN!

The Concessionaire VS The sports Property Company

By Heather Ivy Miranti

*Concession Coordinator
Southern Illinois University Carbondale
Secretary – NACC*

One of the challenges we face as concessionaires is dealing with the sports property company. Nothing is more frustrating than being told you cannot offer or advertise certain menu items because the sports property company does not have an agreement with the company you want to promote. We all know that advertising your brands can increase sales.

So how do we find a balance in sales numbers and keeping the Learfield/IMG’s off our backs? You build a relationship. For many years, I resisted my sport property company because I did not understand their purpose. In my eyes, I was trying to make money and they were hindering that. I eventually started to understand it was a give/take situation. So I started to comply with their request with little push back. They would ask questions on usage and or products and I would answer. We eventually got to a point that we could sit down, have a conversation, and we actually heard each other. They never put me in a deal that truly hurt my business. I started to realize that we were on the same team. We both wanted what was best for Athletics.

Now that we have built this relationship, I have more freedom. Last Fall I wanted to try an ice cream product to try to capture those who did not prefer Dippin Dots. I started out with a local shop but once it took off Learfield was able to take that opportunity and turn it into a sponsorship with Culvers. It was a win win. I was able to offer a nationally recognized product and they were able to sell a sponsorship. In the end, I have learned that if the products you are required to sell is not selling the sponsorship will not last anyway. Therefore, I encourage everyone in this same situation to be open and to build a relationship it definitely makes the job easier.

Hosting a NACC Conference

By Larry Jones

*Assistant Director of Facilities and Concessions
University of Arizona*

When the opportunity to host the 2018 conference came around I was excited to be selected, and the planning began. The primary theme was to give you a true western experience.

The biggest hurdle we faced was finding activities for the conference, but the on-site visit from the NACC Board helped iron out the kinks. As a host school, you should brainstorm with your staff about all the activities in your area and prioritize based upon providing different experiences.

In 2018 Tombstone/Karchner Caverns trip we enabled our guests to live in the past. Both activities provided two distinct memorable experiences. Our night at Old Tucson was more of a trip to a working studio set but provided a rich and entertaining western experience. The gunfight was especially fun for me as I really love this period in history. The night was truly culminated with the catered dinner in Sands Club. Judy Stoudt and her Arizona Catering Company team were truly fantastic and handled all our last minutes requests in an exemplary manner.

In terms of the trade show, this was the easiest for us to plan because adjustments to booth layouts was minimal. The key was to get vendors to provide power requirements in advance to the NACC Executive Director, so you can fully accommodate their needs. We were fortunate to have access to a kitchen area nearby that simplified the process.



We also hoped you enjoyed our Breakfast in Bear Down Kitchen and the lunch experience at McKale with our newest concession stands. This was a lot of fun for our staff! We hope you appreciated it as well.

Our closing dinner at the Pima Air and Space Museum was intended as a relaxing finale with the back drop of vintage aircrafts. This, with the drive by of the Air Force “bone yard,” allowed guests to see something not common in most regions.

The biggest opportunity we saw and experienced was the team building aspect. This was a challenge, but our teams were excited to engage since it allowed them to do something new and participate in ways that were utilizing their skills. It was work, but the Arizona Concessions Team was very grateful for the opportunity to exceed our guest expectations. I also enjoyed the process, as it allowed me

to branch out and be a different person during the event.

My role in facilities is completely different than the concession environment. Several times my facilities team, who also were key to all the setups, AV, and special requests, commented that I was a different person throughout this event and appeared comfortable in this group of great people. I believe the NACC Board was the reason for this, since they gladly accepted me back to the group after a 15 year hiatus from the industry.

On Behalf of the Arizona Concessions team we fully enjoyed providing you with what we hope was a safe, comfortable and high-quality environment for our guests. See you in 2019!

Key things to consider:

- Transportation: Have extra van available beyond your anticipated need.
- Get your menus done early: This will allow you to focus on more logistical items so only need to revisit for final counts.
- Show diagrams of the rooms you will use and adjacencies: This helps the board visualize what they will see.
- Select facilities that don't require a lot of time in transition between sessions.
- Simplify your plans: Use the KISS principle.
- Build your support team early and assign them specific tasks.
- Trade show needs: Obtain power requirements early and designate a space to sort incoming shipments nearby the tradeshow floor location.
- Contact vendors if items shipped are not clearly labeled: i.e. booth number, hospitality, or session donations.
- Show off your strengths in your city: Remember the sunsets here at Arizona?

NACC Celebrates its 25th Year

This year the NACC celebrates its 25th year since it incorporated and will celebrate that milestone at Penn State from June 18-20. The NACC and the Penn State staff have been working hard to provide a great conference and to celebrate our past. We are inviting our Past Presidents and board members to help us in the celebration.

We have two full days of educational topics and our popular tradeshow! We kick off our celebration on Tuesday night with a reception and dinner at Beaver Stadium. I'm sure lots of great stories will be told!

Wednesday morning starts with a welcome from Penn St. Then Bruce Leith of the Philadelphia Phillies will provide us with a lot of great information on their concession operations and much more. Additional education sessions, arena tours and the popular vendor tradeshow will cover the remainder of the day. The evening finishes off with the vendor appreciation dinner at CHAMPS in downtown State College!

Our final day finds us with additional education sessions and tour of the ice hockey arena and the football facilities before ending the conference at a State College Spikes baseball game. They are a Class A Short Season affiliate of the St Louis Cardinals. If you're interested in the conference please go to our website, nacc-online.com and sign up. We hope you will join us to celebrate 25 years of the NACC. See you in June!

Reduced Price

By Alex Terranova

Concessions Ops. Supervisor
Michigan State University
Treasurer – NACC

A hot topic right now in the concessions industry is pricing. Everyone is asking if we are going to reduce our prices like a few of our concession counterparts. I am very weary of drastically reducing our prices for many reasons.

The main obstacle we at Michigan State University face is the infrastructure of our football stadium. Our stadium was built in 1923 and has a few upgrades here and there, but still about half of MSU concession stands face structural issues. We currently boil all of our hot dogs and bratwurst in stock pots and can barely keep up in some locations. The fear here at MSU is we wouldn't be able to handle things on the production side without compromising the quality of our product. Since we have changed to a larger pretzel, it has been a challenge to ensure we have enough prepared for our halftime rush. Power is also a concern. With power maxed out in each location and to add power to a stadium as old as ours would be very costly. So we do not have the ability to add more equipment or change the current equipment in most of our locations. Currently we only have one full service kitchen in the building and that is 100% dedicated to the Catering department. Our production mainly comes directly out of the stands. We can only cook so much product at once and don't have the capability to have a commissary cooking back up product for us.

I believe to be truly successful with drastically reducing concession menu prices, you must make sure that you have the proper storage, power and infrastructure. Everyone wants to talk about the Atlanta Falcons, but I do not think that is right. Very few University campus venues, if any can compare to a professional venue.

I know some of our members have opted to reduced pricing this past year. I would be very interested in hearing their experience. Did you sell more? Did you make more profit? How did you pay your non-profit group members? I think eventually we will all be tasked with lowering our concession prices to enhance the fan experience. We have to do our part to enhance the experience, so guests keep coming to our stadiums and arena for every event. But if you offer reduced pricing to enhance the experience but cannot properly handle the sales volume; are you really enhancing the experience for the fans?

If you are reading this and offer reduced pricing, I would love to hear from you. One way to share your reduced pricing story with other NACC members is to submit a short story to the NACC Executive Director to post on the home page of the NACC Website. The story will be posted on the home page with other Concession Tips.

New Back-of-House Nacho Chips From Sugar Foods!

By Brian Ward

Director – Non Commercial
Sugar Foods
Allied Board Member – NACC

Premium back of house nacho chips are joining our Sugar Foods' family of tortilla chips (tortilla strips and inclusion nacho chips). We're making adding flavor, texture and crunch easy by adding to our ready to use tortilla products. No frying required...but Operators get the same great taste and look as refrigerated or frozen nacho chips, which are fried back of house. Our premium chips taste as good as the chips Operators have been frying up in-house. Never burnt or over-salted, these ready-to-use dippers and toppers feature a just out-of-the-fryer look and hold their crunch.

ANSWER EVERY OPERATIONAL NEED:

- Save Space: No need to refrigerate
- Reduce Labor: No need to de-clump and sort
- Operational Ease: Eliminates risks associated with in-house frying
- Versatility: Easy to incorporate into a wide variety of menu offerings



New Fresh Gourmet Crispy Garlic Toppings

New Crispy Garlic pieces pack a powerful flavor "punch" and are perfect for pasta, topping baked potatoes, veggies, burgers and poke bowls! These round little toppers are shelf-stable and ready to use right out of the bag. They add the unique crunchy flavor Operators are looking for. These crispy garlic pieces have been featured on national chains burgers as well as offered at poke bowl regional chains. They are so good, they can't be contained to just one type of cuisine. Since they are made from fresh garlic, they deliver an intense garlic flavor along with a crunchy texture.

Unique toppings like these are what help Operators set their menu apart and drive additional profits.

