



AHT Paris island solution used by Piggly Wiggly can be adjusted to any length and provides the flexibility to either extend an island or relocate units as needed with minimal cost. This picture shows a 26.5 ft wide island.

Display Cases Turn Green

'Green' as in 'environmentally sustainable,' and 'long green' as in 'saving those dollar bills.'

By **Cathy Sivak**

Rising energy costs, attention to global sustainability and slim retail margins continue to drive retailer case investments, says Jim Knudsen, vp of sales and marketing at Kysor//Warren, Columbus, Ga.

That view is shared by other vendors of refrigerated and frozen display cases, who say they are also focusing on more efficient packout, store image and product integrity.

"Reducing energy use and waste loads cuts retailers' costs and positively impacts the bottom line. It is the two

shades of green – environmentally green and financially green," says Knudsen.

Technical innovations support retailer differentiation, improve merchandising and reduce shrink. In choosing cases, it's more important than ever to consider shopper demographics, service levels, overall marketing and image, floor-space availability and store operational/mechanical needs.

"Some demographics may suggest use of lower-profile cases so the

product is easier for customers to reach, others may suggest altering the ratio of service to self-service needs within a store," says Jack Sjogren, case division product manager at Hill PHOENIX, Colonial Heights, Va.

Expanded and enhanced cases increasingly are being used to draw and retain shoppers. "Retailers all want to keep the food cold, but they are also all looking for something special," says Knudsen. Whatever the case type, "Consumers are ultimately interested in the food product," he adds, noting

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Adjustable Merchandising Trays in cases at Gerrity's Supermarkets, Scranton, Pa., "make it easy for our customers to find what they want as they shop the case," says Ron Godowski, dairy and frozen food supervisor. (Photo courtesy of Trion Industries, Inc.)

Kysor//Warren will showcase new décor, specialty merchandising and lighting options this year.

"Retailers are looking for new and innovative ways to merchandise product throughout the store, particularly in service departments," says Howell Feig, director of sales at AHT Cooling Systems, North Charleston, S.C.

Collaborative planning between retailers and case vendors can help retailers get the case that best fits their merchandising strategies, notes Dave Martin, director of retail product management for Bridgeton, Mo.-based Hussmann Corporation (sister company to Ingersoll Rand Climate Control Technologies).

Reaching Goals

Sjogren agrees, noting, "We work with customers to select display case options that help them reach their goals whether it is energy efficiency, pack-out, or department visibility."

Tight retail floor space is behind new taller units that increase product

facings. "Some of these vertical cases require help to get to the top shelf; our retailers tell us that they don't mind helping their customers," says Knudsen.

With an eye on floor space, AHT introduces both the Boston, a narrow (2.5-ft.-wide) specialty freezer with a domed top, and double-decker coffin systems that increase facings and storage. AHT's self-contained island service cases are designed to fit retailer display and floor needs. The anchor is often a 20-foot island, with flexibility to add 7- to 14-ft. sections. The multi-temp cases feature a curved modern design with internal lights and a high load line for optimum stocking and display, Feig notes.

New specialty merchandising from Hussmann includes the ultra-low-front dairy case, a standard merchandiser dropped six inches at the front to "minimize the case itself and maximize the product and pack-out capability," Martin says.

The new Hussmann Q series of service merchandisers feature curved

glass displays that provide dramatic merchandising for specialty departments while maximizing capacity, Martin says.

New takes on fixtures are helping retailers upgrade merchandising efforts. "By keeping the display space well organized and well stocked, you can increase sales," says Tony Kadysewski, marketing communications manager for Trion Industries Inc., Wilkes-Barre, Pa. "These days, fixtures are not a shelf that just sits there statically; these fixtures are designed to do more."

The Trion WonderBar merchandiser innovation creates a case billboard effect that can increase sales by up to 20%, Kadysewski says.

WonderBar lifts in and out

of the case, and offers infinite adjustments via saddle mounts and expandable wire tray and basket systems – components interchangeable with older systems that screw into case uprights. The tray system hangs on the bar and adjusts to package size; a spring-loaded push system automatically feeds product forward and maintains facings.

Organizing Cases

For shelved cases, Trion's adjustable merchandising trays (AMT) or expandable wire tray (EWT) systems can likewise organize cases and reduce labor. AMTs are designed to contain small tubs, bottles and packages such as yogurt. Split-design molded plastic AMT product lanes have adjustable width and allow single or multiple stacking, and manually self-face via retractable, pull-out arm mechanism. EWT systems are suited for larger packages and support case air flow.

Food safety concerns increasingly top-of-mind. "Consumers are more aware of and concerned about food

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Hill PHOENIX doored case lends a dramatic look to this seafood set.

safety, and the stores continue to pay close attention so they don't lose customers," says AHT's Feig.

Self-contained AHT islands help retailers "maintain food quality and safety at the highest levels," Feig says, noting AHT's technology and case lids help control temperature and minimize risk of bacteria growth. The islands generally provide a minimum of 30% electrical savings compared to similar set-ups. The near-silent, virtually maintenance-free operation of AHT cases have minimal chance for costly gas and refrigerant leaks; each holds less than 8-oz. of 404-A, with no soldered joints or pipelines to remote/track compressor/condenser equipment.

Case load limits are as critical as ever. "It is important that cases keep cycling their own

air for performance since they are removing heat. When load limits are violated, ambient air is allowed to enter the refrigerated cases' air curtain, leading to efficiency and temperature losses," Sjogren says. He adds that air currents, control of store humidity and store light placement also impact case integrity.

For increased product visibility and



Kysor Warren cases efficiently show off products in this refrigerated aisle.

integrity, Hill PHOENIX Coolgenix service cases use conduction cooling in lieu of convection for chilled products. Its Second Nature system, adopted in Wal-Mart's 2008 second-generation energy efficient Supercenter design, uses glycol to feed the cases versus refrigerant. This improves temperature control and case coil utilization and reduces the chance of refrigerant leaks, since there is much less refrigerant in the system. The net effect is better temperatures with lower maintenance.

LED lights cut electricity used for lighting in freezer case doors by more than 40%, Hussmann's Martin notes. The company will debut LED lights for reach-in cases and multi-deck under-

shelf/canopy use this spring, along with the Protocol SP (small platform) unit, an extension to its widely-used Protocol green refrigeration system.

Another energy saver: Trion's WonderBar. It increases shoppers' through-door view, cutting energy costs by 7.9%. Labor savings are sizeable, reducing weekly store labor to organize and stock shelves by up

to 10 hours per 8-ft. section, with 48-facing planogram resets accomplished in as little as 15 minutes, Kadysewski notes.

Despite worries about energy costs and efficiency, there is room for optimism. Supermarkets, mass merchandisers, C-stores, dollar stores and home improvement chains "wouldn't all be clamoring to sell refrigerated and frozen foods if it didn't contribute to the bottom line," says Kysor//Warren's Knudsen. ■