



All's Wellness

By Barbara Ruhs



Reaching Millions

With the right tools, supermarket dietitians have the power to influence the health of scores of customers.

I had the pleasure of hosting 45 supermarket dietitians from 42 U.S. and Canadian retailers for the Oldways 4th Annual Supermarket Dietitian Symposium last month in Scottsdale, Ariz., sponsored in part by *Progressive Grocer*.

This symposium is a labor of love that began back in 2010, when I hosted my first event for this unique audience. Several years ago, when I started as a supermarket dietitian, educational and networking opportunities didn't exist for this audience, so I was anxious to learn strategies, skills, tips and tricks from my peers that would help me maximize my time and impact.

Making a Difference

As health care professionals first and foremost, dietitians can find working in the supermarket world both exciting and challenging. Defining success in this role can be enigmatic. Dietitians are on a mission to improve health, and supermarkets are focused on selling more groceries. How do you maximize the impact of a dietitian working in this environment?



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At the symposium, John MacDonald, the director of marketing and communications at Landover, Md.-based Giant/Martin's, a division of Ahold USA, along with in-store dietitians Mary Ann Moylan and Elisabeth D'Alto, shared some insights on how they're doing just that. The in-store dietitians are building the Giant/Martin brand by engaging store personnel and customers alike with free nutrition education services (screenings, counseling, classes), and have received national media coverage. Now customers seek out the chain's in-store dietitians, and health care organizations refer patients to the stores.

Measuring Success

Dietitians from Scarborough, Maine-based Hannaford Bros., a division of Delhaize America; Pittsburgh-based Giant Eagle; Denver-based

King Soopers, a division of Kroger; Grand Rapids, Mich.-based Meijer; Keasbey, N.J.-based Shop-Rite/Wakefern; Sunbury, Pa.-based Weis Markets; Rochester, N.Y.-based Wegmans Food Markets; and Canadian grocer Sobeys shared similar information on innovative nutrition programs and services offered in their stores.

These dietitians' messages reach millions of potential customers each week through ad circulars, in-store radio messages, scheduled media segments, in-store programs and community events. Supermarkets continue to hire dietitians, and many retailers are expanding their dietitian programs.

CPG sponsors of the event and dietitian attendees were equally invested in a discussion that I led, "Measuring Success and the ROI of Retail Dietitian Programs." During the discussion, I noted that retail dietitians rarely if ever employed sales data, and was confused by the lack of collaboration on the part of CPG companies. When I was a supermarket registered dietitian (RD), I regularly pulled point-of-sale data to measure the impact of my healthy product promotions, and I was always anxious to hear from vendors what metrics they were using to define success. It's not surprising, however, to hear that driving sales isn't always a top priority for dietitians.

Be that as it may, vendor partners should align category managers and expose RDs to sales tools, metrics and goals. I'd encourage CPG companies to invest in customized loyalty promotions that highlight the efforts of supermarket dietitians — it's a win-win for all parties involved. It's also important to share Nielsen, IRI and or SPINS data with dietitians. **PG**

Oldways is a Boston-based nonprofit organization focused on promoting good health through heritage. It's responsible for bringing the health benefits of the Mediterranean Diet to the mainstream. www.OldwaysPt.org

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