



by Vera Haskins
President of Spirit® Petroleum

Taking the Initiative: Marketing the Spirit® Brand

For those who routinely read this column or personally run into me at trade shows or conferences, you have certainly heard me *talk and talk and talk* about Spirit® Petroleum's affordable credit card processing agreement with RBS WorldPay, turnkey business solutions through such partners as CMi Solutions and Abierto, our national red-white-and-blue image and flexible options. Although I, of course, love hearing my own voice, I am pleased that as the brand continues to grow, marketers are taking the initiative to create their own buzz for Spirit®.

According to Bill Fagan Jr., general manager of Prestige Petroleum Corporation, "The way we've spread the word about Spirit® certainly doesn't qualify as innovative marketing, but it has managed to excite dealers and consumers who are looking for something new."

Based in Mahwah, New Jersey, Prestige licenses numerous Spirit® locations and is actively seeking additional sites. In just over a year, Fagan and his team have managed to "take Spirit® to the street" with a variety of simple, tried-and-true marketing initiatives.

"Most of the dealers we come across want to be branded and understand the importance of curb appeal and consumer recognition. They only went unbranded because they couldn't compete and were losing market share. Spirit® offers them a tremendous brand image with the price they need. That's the story. It's not just a sales pitch. It's real. We're just walking in the door and offering them what they want."

It sounds basic, but for Prestige the first step was to secure great photographs of their Spirit® sites. Next, they purchased a direct mailing list and sent an introductory letter along with a promotional photograph to every station owner in New Jersey. Layering upon that approach, Fagan took out advertisements in New Jersey's state retailer association publication. In efforts to reach an even wider audience face-to-face, Prestige represented the Spirit® brand at a booth at the Northeast Automotive Trade Show and are currently following up on a number of strong leads.



From left to right: Bill Fagan Sr., founder and president of Prestige Petroleum, and Bill Fagan Jr., GM of Prestige Petroleum, promote Spirit® at the Northeast Automotive Trade Show.

"Most importantly," Fagan adds, "we told the Spirit® story to everyone who would listen — and the short version of the story is that Spirit® provides everything a dealer wants. We've found that some dealers want price and some dealers want brand. We just simply asked the question, 'Why wouldn't they want both?' With the pricing program we've put together, Spirit®'s a home run. It's a national brand that can compete in a tough economy, while waving a flag that dealers and marketers can be proud of."

Don't get me wrong — as president of Spirit® Petroleum, I will continue to do my own song and dance whenever the opportunity presents itself, but I want to encourage marketers to get out on the dance floor with me! If you have a new idea for spreading the word, we might have the appropriate marketing tools to complement your approach. We are also always on the lookout for professional-quality photographs and testimonials. Let's work together. Share your outreach ideas and personal anecdotes with me at vhaskins@spiritpetroleum.com.