

## Spirit® — The Right Direction in Tough Times

I don't know anyone who truly appreciates the unexpected unless it's a surprise birthday bash or a diamond watch. When I plan to get out to a meeting, and I'm greeted in the morning by several inches of snow keeping me housebound, I'm not a happy camper. When airport delays tangle up my travel plans, I'm not thrilled either.

But these are just minor inconveniences when compared with what so many of us have experienced this past year. I have friends and colleagues who have lost their jobs, one after more than two decades with his company. The shock of having financial security one day and near-bankruptcy the next is no small matter. We watch as our 401(k) plans are reduced to 201s. We all work so hard, and thanks to circumstances beyond our control, our security blankets have been unraveling at a frightening pace. And it only seems to get worse; every time I go to the grocery store, prices have gone up.

Many of our licensees have struggled this year with reduced margins, the climbing cost of doing business, and with difficulty, getting loans to make improvements from banks that just aren't lending. As sure as I am that our struggles are not yet over, I believe the economy will improve with time. When it does, we'd better all have our houses in order and prepare to compete in the new business environment.

Feeling anxious is normal under these circumstances; however, sitting back and waiting to see what will happen next is not an option. We must all take action. Spirit® promises a less-expensive alternative and one that makes sense today and for the future.

We at Spirit® are committed to continue to find lower-cost products and better deals on equipment and services and to negotiate with a variety of vendors to get the best possible arrangements for our licensees. Our mission and our goal have not changed, but we have. We have become even *more* committed to ensuring you have a better year ahead.



You can count on our quality vendors to best serve your needs:

- For nearly a year, RBS WorldPay™ has been the preferred credit card processing provider for Spirit® licensees. Reliable customer service, real-time fraud prevention, flexible reporting capabilities and state-of-the-art technology are critical to your success and profitability.
- Mountain Commercial Graphics is our vendor for pump and canopy graphics, helping individual branding efforts to go more smoothly for all our licensees. Admired industrywide, they develop solutions for their clients with durable long-lasting colors, indoor and/or outdoor applications, timely delivery and careful handling of orders.
- The Jones-Blair Company provides high-quality protective paints to Spirit® licensees. Highly respected throughout the oil industry, their attention to customer service is as highly rated as the strength and endurance of their coatings.
- Federal Heath Signs continually goes above and beyond to help licensees with their branding by meeting specific needs and helping make conversion to the Spirit® brand as economical as possible.
- Another Spirit® partner is Abierto Networks, a national provider of serial-to-IP and dial-to-IP conversion solutions used by c-stores nationwide. Abierto allows our licensees to use existing equipment — credit card, check, ATM, tank gauge, prepaid or private card — and converts these transactions from dial-up to high-speed, saving time and money.
- Lion Uniform Company offers competitively priced, quality uniforms and apparel, including aprons, smocks, shirts, caps and polo shirts with embroidered logos. Providing an additional way to brand your station at a reasonable cost, these attractive accessories offer one of the first lines of recognition for your customers.

We make exceptional efforts to ensure our vendors provide top-notch quality products and services to our licensees. And across-the-board, outstanding customer service is always part of the package.

Juggling our resources while facing business slowdowns and pressures is rough. But perhaps these tough times offer a different business perspective ... a chance to look beyond the challenge of today to the opportunities of tomorrow. Take a close look at our Web site to see what we offer our licensees, and discover that we provide an alternative, cost-effective way to do business. Now could actually be the best time in recent history to grow! Come grow with us. Join the Spirit® team.

**National \* Flexible \* Affordable**



by Vera Haskins  
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