Sustainability at service stations: What can fuel retailers do to contribute to global sustainability?

Today, we're living in a society where the focus on environmental protection and the cultivation of a more sustainable future are ever present. The fuel industry, in particular, has come under scrutiny in recent years, with people looking to business leaders to make drastic changes to their day-to-day operations in order for them to provide more accessible, eco-friendly solutions for global transportation.

Not only are fuel retailers seeking to support alternative energies such as electricity, hydrogen, Compressed Natural Gas (CNG) and Liquid Natural Gas (LNG), but they are aiming to pivot their fuel businesses to one that is environmentally sustainable.

The challenge facing forecourt retailers and convenience stores (c-stores) today, however, is that sustainability is not always as straightforward as it may seem. For example, 95% of a c-stores

greenhouse gas emissions are likely to come from the products they stock; however, fuel retailers don't necessarily have control over all aspects of their supply chain. Similarly, fuel has an impact on the environment, but fuel retailers don't choose what kind of cars their customers drive, they service the market to meet demand. do not necessarily have control over all aspects of their supply chains.

Fuel retailers are examining areas where they can have an impact, become sustainable, and contribute to a reduction in greenhouse gases. In this article, we investigate some ways in which fuel retail businesses can do this effectively, while improving business and their customers experience while on site.

Helping to Support a Sustainable Future

Fuel retailers are under no illusion that clean energy vehicles will become the "norm" overnight, with many having the understanding that Internal Combustion Engine (ICE) vehicles will still be in operation long after 2030. Some studies suggest many motorists will more than likely buy their last petrol or diesel car in 2029 with the intention of running it for the next 15-20 years. The Christie & Co Business Outlook Report (Retail section) highlights that it will take until mid-2040s before electric vehicles (EVs) start taking up 50% market saturation, but that doesn't mean fuel retailers should wait until then before making investments into sustainable options.

There are a few ways in which service station owners can support customers now, while still preparing for a future fuel shift. In fact, it should be treated as a two-pronged approach. On one hand fuel retailers should continue to support conventional fueled vehicles while providing options to make them more environmentally friendly; on the other hand, they should start to think about making investments in alternative energy solutions to support growing demand and meet global sustainability targets.

When it comes to conventional fueled vehicles, what many don't realise is the introduction of AdBlue® helps to convert harmful nitrogen oxides (NOx) from diesel vehicle exhausts into water and nitrogen, considerably reducing greenhouse gas emissions; thus, making it more environmentally-friendly than diesel alone. Having this available on site, either via a dispenser or from the c-store, can make a big difference towards sustainability objectives, long-term.

On the flip side, if a forecourt starts to incorporate clean energy solutions such as EV chargers, hydrogen dispensers and LNG dispensers, customers gradually become more aware of the fuel options available to them.

Alternative fuel vehicles produce fewer emissions than ICE vehicles. EVs do not emit carbon dioxide emissions, CNG reduces harmful emissions, LNG produces 40% less carbon dioxide than coal and 30% less than oil, and hydrogen is clean, safe and all around us – making up 70% of matter in the universe. So, are fuel retailers ready for this new wave of consumers?

Below Ground is Just as Important as Above

Another area where service station owners can influence sustainability on their forecourt is through fuel protection. Now, fuel protection packages are not new to the fuel and convenience retail industry – in fact, it has been a key aspect of the fuel monitoring field since the early 90s; however, fuel management is now much more advanced.

Fuel management and monitoring can transform fuel retail businesses while providing a whole new world of environmental protection for the future, significantly reducing the risk of fuel loss to ground. In reality, a great wetstock management solution can prevent instances of fuel leaks to the downstream fuel industry, with experts recognizing the importance of “watertight” wetstock management services to make sure the environment is as protected as possible when it comes to conventional fueling solutions.

The detrimental and potentially negative effects of fuel leaks are well-known to not only the fuel industry, but to the public as well. The need for systems that prevent or reduce the probability of fuel leaks to the environment have long been a necessity for fuel retailers of all sizes, yet many sites don't realise the positive impact wetstock monitoring can have on both fuel retail business and sustainability objectives. The lack of a wetstock management system may be a missed opportunity for many retailers when it comes to ESG strategies.

Wetstock management solutions not only help to protect the environment but end-to-end Wetstock management can also enable fuel retailers to have a complete enterprise-view of their fuel inventory. This means that not only are they more in control of their fuel at each and every site they own, but they also only have to reorder deliveries when absolutely necessary – thus reducing their carbon footprint, as they are able to order the right amount of fuel at the right time to sustain business.

Everyone Has a Part to Play When it Comes to Sustainability

The United Nations (**UN**) defines sustainability as *"meeting the needs of the present without compromising the ability of future generations to meet their own needs."* Many people think about sustainability by looking at ways in which they can reduce their individual carbon footprint such as by recycling, reducing single-use plastic, investing in alternative ways to generate power (solar panels, wind farms, etc.), and utilizing electric and alternative fuel vehicles rather than relying on ICE vehicles. Although these are impactful ways for individuals to become sustainable, these tend to be *small* in the grand scheme of things. But what if fuel retailers made a conscious effort to roll out a series of sustainable initiatives across their network of service stations? Not only would this positively impact their carbon footprint, but it would encourage their customers to think, and possibly become

more sustainable.

According to the Kantar Sustainability Trends report, the majority of people expressed a desire to pursue some form of environmentally sustainable objectives, **yet** only a small percentage of are systematically changing their This is mainly due to three factors: the options available, knowledge/awareness and cost. By increasing sustainable options on and off the forecourt, fuel retailers can start to take the right steps towards sustainability, making the investment required so their service stations can provide future services and products, and adapt to the changing consumer dynamic – a dynamic that means customers can use their purchasing power to change and drive corporate behaviour linked to sustainability.

If fuel retailers diversify the energy options available to consumers, they can *check* the "options available" box from the reasons why many individuals do not change their behavior. They also tick the box of "knowledge/awareness". Fuel retailers have an important role to play when it comes to global sustainability.

The final box to check is "cost". Fuel poverty is a real problem all over the world, so providing affordable alternative energy is critical. LNG can help with the cost of living as there is a global market providing a choice of supply – meaning users benefit from price competition, which can lower costs and make refueling more affordable. When it comes to EV, filling up on petrol or diesel is still up to 80% more expensive than recharging an EV, again making it more affordable for drivers.

There is a clear and accelerating demand for climate action in the fuel and convenience retail industry, partnered with transportation, and this represents a significant opportunity for fuel retail businesses. Sustainability should no longer be a question but a signal for action.

To learn more about DFS' clean fuel products and solutions, visit:
www.doverfuelingsolutions.com/clean-energy

Contact information

Dover Fueling Solutions
Unit 3 Baker Road, West Pitkerro
DD5 3RT Dundee
United Kingdom

www.doverfuelingsolutions.com

Last update: February 22, 2023 | Advertorial