

# E-Z STOP FOOD MARTS, INC.



## *A PDI Case Study*

### *Executive Overview*

In 1957, the Calloway Oil Co. was founded in the foothills of the Great Smoky Mountains of Eastern Tennessee. In the decades that followed, as the once ubiquitous service station began disappearing from the American landscape, convenience stores, offering a new and improved customer experience, took their place.

Calloway Oil joined the fray, and in 1984 created its own line of convenience stores called E-Z Stop Food Marts. “Our goal is to have clean, bright stores with an open layout and friendly cashiers that immediately make customers feel welcome,” says Donna Perkins, pricebook manager for E-Z Stop.

Nearly 30 years later, the E-Z Stop chain is more than 20 stores strong with locations throughout the Eastern Tennessee region.

### *Business Challenge*

In 2008, several things prompted E-Z Stop’s search for a new software provider chiefly, a long-held philosophy regarding the treatment of its employees. “People should be able to have a life outside of work” says Perkins. Due to the inefficiencies of the previous system, that was increasingly impossible. “Many of us were working 50 or more hours a week just to fulfill the responsibilities of our positions, and that was after maximizing the software’s automation capabilities,” she explains.

As E-Z Stop’s pricebook manager, Perkins saw the opportunities for improvement firsthand in her own department. Quite simply, she needed something that

worked. “On my old system, the price rules never functioned correctly,” she says. “I had to manually change every Universal Product Code (UPC), so the possibility for human error was substantial. It just wasn’t a very efficient way to operate.”

In addition, E-Z Stop wanted a software solution with better integration tools. “Our previous system wasn’t built on a Windows-based platform,” Perkins explains. “Consequently, our ability to interface with third-party products and systems, like Excel, was severely limited. This especially affected our ability to import and export information.”

### *PDI Solution*

Built using the latest Microsoft.NET and SQL Server technology, PDI/Enterprise was exactly what Perkins needed to streamline her pricebook operation. “My goal was to get a system that provided incredible functionality and efficiency, and PDI/Pricebook did just that,” she says.

PDI/Pricebook facilitated centralized, electronic control of retail pricing and vendor costs to help E-Z Stop maximize margins and improve accuracy. Perkins was an immediate fan. “I’m a huge proponent of the centralized pricebook, and any retailer who’s not using one is absolutely losing money,” she states emphatically. “When we implemented ours and started scanning, we found out that every store had discrepancies. The system just catches a ton of holes you would otherwise miss.”

PDI/Pricebook also addressed E-Z Stop’s efficiency issues by improving the performance and reliability of two crucial business tools. The first was price rules. “In my previous system, the price rules failed so often that I no longer

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— Donna Perkins, Pricebook Manager, E-Z Stop Food Marts

trusted them. So, every time a product was added or a price changed, I had to manually add it to a spreadsheet,” Perkins explains. A PDI consultant worked with E-Z Stop’s pricebook team to implement more than 600 rules for the company’s complex retail operation. “The set-up involved in PDI/Pricebook is intensive, and it requires a lot of planning and foresight,” says Perkins. “In the beginning, having the correct sizes, packages, brands, and manufacturers is essential. You also have to closely examine each vendor relationship so you can tailor your price rules accordingly. It’s quite a bit of heavy lifting, but when you commit to the process the results are worth the work.”

Of the four types of price rules – fixed markup, percent markup, target margin pricing, and specified pricing – E-Z Stop predominantly relies on the latter. “The price rules in PDI/Pricebook work like a charm,” raves Perkins. “Specified rules are perfect for our stores because they allow me to make our margins without a lot of reactivity in the system. All I have to do is select the group of items and sites that the rule applies to, and the change is implemented. It’s infinitely better than having to change every UPC.”

PDI further increased E-Z Stop’s efficiency by improving its integration with third-party systems, allowing the c-store chain to easily import and export important information. It was a change Perkins welcomed. “Currently, I have three imports from my grocery supplier: a price file, an invoicing file, and a pending invoice file,” she says. “But that’s not even the best part,” she continues excitedly. “PDI/Enterprise automates the entire process by scheduling my imports.

It logs onto my grocery supplier’s FTP site, picks up the file, and has it waiting for me to verify in the morning. The system alerts me to any exceptions, which also saves me time.”

Perkins’ workload is not the only one that has been lightened. With access to over 100 import profiles, E-Z Stop is importing everything from DTN fuel cost data to everyday general ledger transactions.

### *Customer Results*

Since switching to PDI/Enterprise, Perkins has cut her work hours in half, enabling her to focus on activities that, as she puts it, “move the company in a positive direction.”

“Time is the most significant advantage PDI/Pricebook has given me,” she says. “I used to work 50 hours a week just for our pricebook to be good. Now it’s great, and I only dedicate 25 hours a week to it. I’m doing more with less, and that’s what Doing Business Electronically is all about.”

She concludes by saying, “We wanted a company and a product that had the ability to carry us into the future. PDI is that company and PDI/Enterprise is that product.”

