

SUCCEED TOGETHER

Technology Leader of the Year Charles Jarrett of Cumberland Farms credits the company's team values for its tech success By Chelsea Regan

CHARLES JARRETT JOINED Cumberland Farms Inc. two years ago when the Westborough, Mass.-based convenience store retailer found itself in need of a technology overhaul. As the chain's senior vice president and chief information officer, he led a team that made that happen — and that's one of the reasons he is *Convenience Store News*' 2018 Technology Leader of the Year.

Thinking back on his time with Cumberland Farms, Jarrett is most proud of what "The Cumberland Team" managed to accomplish in the first year of his tenure.

"Both our POS [point-of-sale] hardware and software were end of life; our legacy warehouse management system and retail accounting functions were running on a 100 percent customized mainframe platform for which support was to be unavailable after 2018," Jarrett recalled. "The Cumberland Team rallied to implement these systems in about 12 months. It was really remarkable what the

various departments were able to accomplish together."

The Value of Teamwork

If not for the shared commitment of those around him to Cumberland Farms' values — particularly "Succeed Together" and "Own It" — such successes wouldn't have been possible, according to Jarrett. The culture at Cumberland Farms is something he believes makes for a unique experience that lends itself to the impressive accomplishments he's overseen.

"I've seen other organizations treat their values like window dressing; that's not the case here at Cumberland," he said. "Across the board, the teams have been phenomenal to work with. We acknowledged, collectively, what needed to be done, and everyone worked together toward that end. No question about it."

Cumberland Farms CEO Ari Haseotes also attests to the team-oriented mission of the company, as well as to Jarrett's "servant leadership" style that makes him so deserving of recognition.

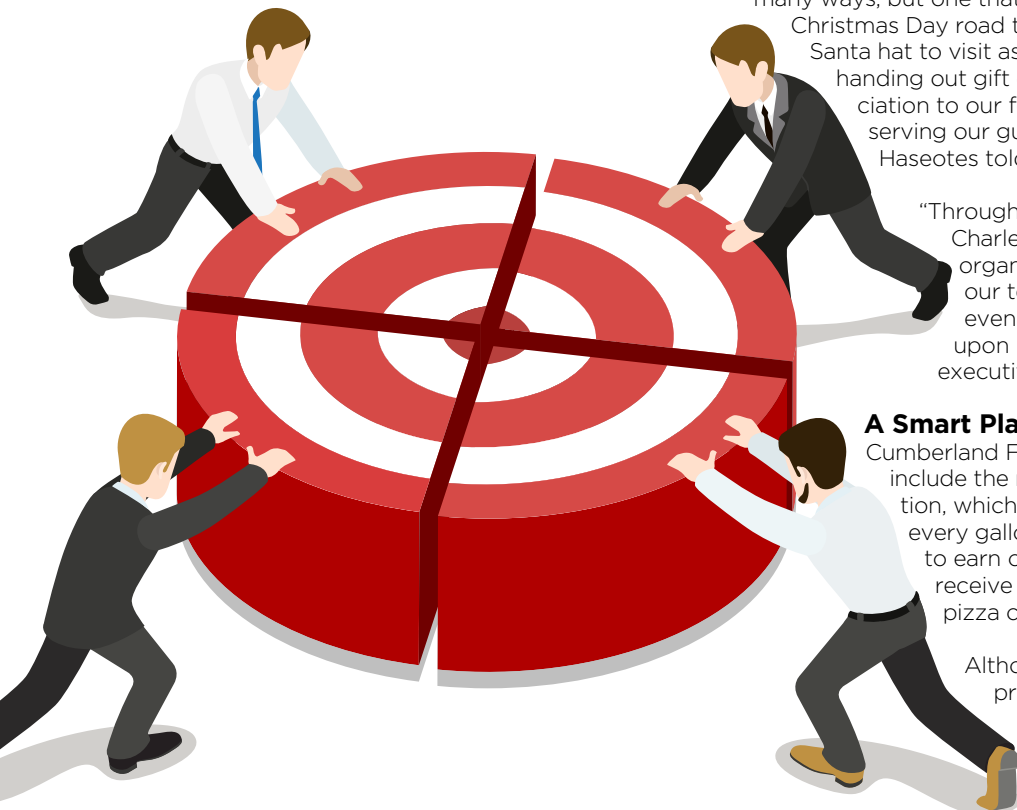
"Charles demonstrates his servant leadership mindset in many ways, but one that stands out in particular are his Christmas Day road trips, where he sets out with his Santa hat to visit as many of our stores as possible, handing out gift cards just to extend his appreciation to our fellow store teammates who are serving our guests through the busy holiday," Haseotes told *CSNews*.

"Through this type of exemplary behavior, Charles has helped to set the tone for our organization and, while his impact upon our technology initiatives is profound, even more so is the impact he has had upon his fellow teammates," the chief executive continued.

A Smart Play With SmartPay

Cumberland Farms' recent technology initiatives include the relaunch of its SmartPay application, which not only gives users 10 cents off every gallon of gas, but also enables them to earn credits toward free beverages, receive free offers, and join sandwich and pizza clubs.

Although the retailer's original loyalty program app had a high rate of consumer adoption, the reviews for it were less than stellar, and





Charles Jarrett joined Cumberland Farms two years ago and has since overseen a major technology overhaul throughout the company.

the “underlying platform had become less stable and the user interface a little stale,” Jarrett acknowledged.

Following the SmartPay app relaunch in February of this year, which included new features and benefits, Cumberland Farms customers have been more than pleased with it. As of Aug. 1, the app had a 5-star rating on iTunes with more than 4,600 reviews.

As Cumberland Farms’ “de facto loyalty program,”

Jarrett wants to boost SmartPay’s popularity even more across its customer base. The goal is to quadruple the active user base in five years. More features are also in the app’s future.

“We envision making SmartPay a function within a larger app. We have a three-phase launch planned beginning this winter through spring 2019,” Jarrett reported. “Some of the features will include parent/child accounts with allowances and category restrictions, mobile self-checkout — which we’re piloting in two stores today — and targeted offers.”

While Jarrett is keen to keep the SmartPay app and loyalty program simple, he also wants it to provide a way for customers to meaningfully interact with the brand. One idea is to have a “commercial-quality game that our guests could engage with us through.” Cumberland Farms even hosted a program in which high school students competed in a game design contest.

Technology Yesterday & Today

Back when Jarrett was first starting out in the convenience and fuel retailing industry in the late 1990s, it would have been hard to imagine where retail technology is today.

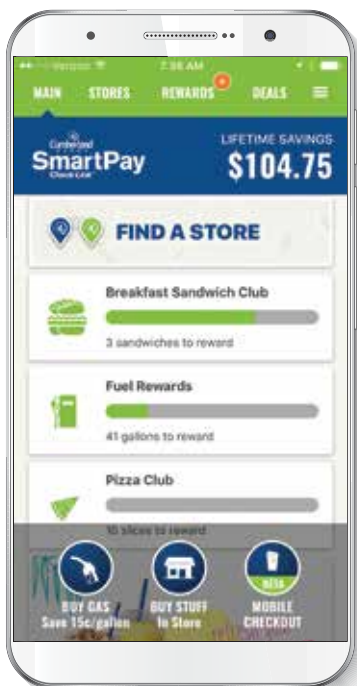
“Many of our team members in the stores didn’t know how to use a mouse,” said Jarrett, speaking of his time at Pilot as a programmer analyst. “None of us had cell phones and we passed an on-call beeper around each week for after-hours support. There were very few enterprise web applications; ecommerce wasn’t a thing and Amazon was a jungle.”

Now, technology is front and center when it comes to making things easier and more convenient for convenience store customers.

“Today, we are much more focused on consumer experience. We need to be as convenient as possible. Everything needs to be simple,” said Jarrett. “Kind of challenging, keeping things simple, when everything has gotten more complicated.”

But Jarrett and The Cumberland Team are more than up for the challenge. **CSN**

The 2018 Convenience Store News Technology Leader of the Year award is sponsored by NCR Corp.



Cumberland Farms’ SmartPay loyalty app relaunched in February, ushering in new features and benefits.