



Sunshine Ace, Wynn's adopting texting

By LAURA LAYDEN

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In 1938, the Wynns were considered pioneers when they bought the Bayview Hotel near the Naples City Dock and opened a grocery store there.

As the grocery store, now known as Wynn's Market, celebrates its 70th anniversary this year, a third generation of Wynns is pioneering a new text-messaging technology to connect with customers in new ways.

The Wynns will officially introduce the new technology to customers this weekend during anniversary celebrations for the grocery store and their other longtime family business, Sunshine Ace Hardware, which turns 50 this year.

"It's definitely the future, but not a lot of the major retailers have started to move forward with it," said Michael Wynn, president of Sunshine Ace Hardware. "We saw an opportunity to be on the cutting edge."

The hardware stores will use the texting first. Later, it will be rolled out to customers of Wynn's Market.

Initially, Sunshine Ace customers will receive coupons and information about special promotions and new products. But the Wynns see more offerings down the road.

"We want to be able to build on this so that, hopefully, in the near future as cell phones evolve to larger screens, we will be able to send out an option for customers to watch a do-it-yourself video on their phones," Wynn said.

Another possibility is to use the technology to inform customers about the availability of hurricane supplies as storms approach. A text message could be sent out as soon as a truck arrives at a store with more generators, Wynn said.

The plan is to provide customers with valuable information, without bombarding them with messages, he said.

Neighborhood America Inc. in Naples developed the mobile marketing technology, which is Web-based, allowing companies to manage their own campaigns by the minute.

Last year, sports giant Adidas used the same technology in a massive citywide campaign to reach out to the nearly 500,000 fans visiting Las Vegas during NBA All-Star Week. The marketing blitz created a lot of buzz and helped drive sales.

"They saw their revenues increase 20-fold just because of the campaign," said Kristi Grigsby, Neighborhood America's marketing director.

An e-mail blast has been sent out to Sunshine Ace customers to let them know the texting is available. Demonstrations on how the technology works are planned for today at the hardware stores in Naples, Bonita Springs, East Naples, Golden Gate, San Carlos Park and Marco Island.

"A lot of people have already opted in, just from the e-mails we have sent out," said Peggy Sealton, Sunshine Ace's marketing director.

To register for the new Mobile VIP Club, text the word "ACE" to 247365. Anyone who signs up will automatically be registered to win a Weber grill valued at \$299, a promotion that's part of the hardware store's anniversary celebration this weekend.

More anniversary events are planned throughout the year for the hardware business and grocery store, located at U.S. 41 North and First Avenue North in Naples.

"There are certainly not many (businesses) that have been around for 70 or even 50 years," Wynn said. "Naples has a very rich history and we are proud to be a part of it."

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