

Nooner's: Beyond Brick and Mortar

By Jesus Azanza, Director of Communications and Marketing, Texas Food & Fuel Association



Since the age of three, Sean Nooner has been in and around convenience stores. Sean's father, Sammy Nooner, owned and operated a handful of convenience stores before selling all but one located in San Antonio, TX.

With deep San Antonio roots, Sean decided to return to his hometown after graduating from Texas A&M University. He spent the next 5 years building and supplying convenience stores with pump equipment, and he also worked with his father on the jobber side of the industry. Soon after, he followed in his father's footsteps and started building his own convenience stores.

Over the years, Sean remained sensitive to industry change and consumer demand. Dramatically reduced fuel margins, technological advancements, and shifting consumer trends drove him to re-examine what customers wanted in a

convenience store experience. For Nooner's to remain relevant, one thing was clear, they needed to think outside of the box.

"For a convenience store to survive in today's market it needs to be flexible and have multiple profit centers. Quick Service Restaurants (QSR), ATM, retail space, post offices, and most importantly, the ability control costs are essential to keeping the Nooner's ship afloat" – Sean Nooner, President, Nooner's Corporation. "When customers enter a convenience store they want to feel welcomed. It's all about appealing to your customers through modern design concepts and incorporating open floor plans that are not only inviting, but a practical use of space," he added.

Nooner's has expanded beyond the traditional convenience store model and incorporated rental space—or QSR franchises—into its four sites. As a Church's Chicken franchisee Sean tries to build the two together when possible. Much has changed since Sean first stepped foot in a convenience store at the age of three. Chanel blurring between convenience stores and QSR's have created new opportunities and competition to satiate the consumer's appetite –an opportunity Nooner's has serviced well.

All four Nooner's gas stations have embraced the energy of the sun through solar panels perched atop canopies and rooftops.

"As part of our cost-control measures, Nooner's has added solar panels to each location and, when fit for replacement, we change light bulbs out with LED lighting" commented Sean. Nooners' first convenience store is located at the corner of Judson and Stahl Road in northeast San Antonio; it has 100% LED lighting inside and out. With the addition of solar, Sean has seen his electric bills shrink by half.

Although the initial costs of solar panels may appear financially unfeasible for some, Nooner's has successfully leveraged government programs to minimize up-front expenses and expects to see a payback within 5 years.

Sean has received nothing but positive feedback, adding that customers "like the green approach and aesthetics of the solar panels." Many of his competitors have begun to see the benefits of clean energy and are adding solar panels to their stores.

So why solar panels now? Staying in front of the consumer, competing with big convenience store chains, and industry-wide consolidation are difficult challenges, fortunately for Sean, solar panels and the implementation of 'green' techniques have helped stabilize his energy costs.

This year Nooner's plans to build three stores on three-acre sites, all different profit centers, all 100% LED.



What began as a plan to return to the convenience-store industry, transformed into an inspiring vision. That vision today does more than just serve vehicles, attend to customers, and employ Texans, it lends Mother Nature a hand by leveraging solar power and embracing change to remain relevant in an industry and consumer base that is in a continual state of transition.

Sean's out-of-the-box perspectives , and his progressive approach to customer satisfaction extends well beyond brick and mortar, beyond dollars and cents, and beyond what ends up in your tank or on your palette . To get a sense of what sets Nooner's apart, you'll need to look towards the sky!