

Innovative store design boosts sales

Store builders choose EasyFill and SCHOTT for new refrigeration system in German gas station at Burgdorf-Westerlinde truck stop.

Even gas stations need to be renovated regularly in order to live up to current customer expectations. In such cases, the entire store is often revamped. This was also the case at the Shell gas station at the Burgdorf-Westerlinde truck stop near to Hannover, Germany. An important aspect of the renovation is often the replacement of the refrigeration units for drinks. Read on to find out how the retrofit was realized and which new innovations the new store design features.

As of 2018, there are 14,478 gas stations on roads and highways in Germany.¹ Most of these are brand-name gas stations, which means they are affiliated with a particular chain. Above all, German consumers will be familiar with the "big six": Aral, Shell, Total, Esso, Avia and Jet. Shell operates almost 2,000 gas stations in Germany, which makes it the second most frequently encountered brand on the German gas station market.² The company MHB Mineralölhandel GmbH from Braunschweig operates a total of 27 gas stations; 13 of these under the Shell brand. Like most oil companies, MHB also leases many of its gas stations to experienced gas station operators on site who take care of staffing, running the stores, and the safe and professional sale of motor vehicle fuels.³ This is also the case at the MHB Shell Station at the Burgdorf-Westerlinde truck stop in Lower Saxony, which is operated by Löwentank GmbH.

It now shines with new splendor after a complete renovation in spring 2018. In addition to the bistro expansion, particular attention was also paid to the presentation of products in the refrigerated section. In this regard, the store outfitter Strake strove to achieve the following goals: For improved visibility, fully transparent floor-to-top glass doors from SCHOTT were used, and in order to avoid gaps in the shelves and to make refilling as easy as possible for the store employees, rotating shelves from EasyFill were installed. Furthermore, the new cooling system also needed to save energy and be quiet.

Renovations without a hitch

Like supermarkets, gas station stores also aim to keep up with the times and are regularly adapted to live up to the latest customer expectations. The Shell gas station at the Burgdorf-Westerlinde truck stop celebrated its topping-out ceremony in 1990 and received a number of minor renovations since then. The major renovations began with the complete refurbishment of the shower facilities in⁴ 2014. After that, it was the store's turn. For this purpose, the store was completely gutted such that only the outer walls were left standing. "Even the floor screed was removed. In order to allow the gas station to continue operating even during the renovations, the adjoining room of the building was used to set up an interim store", recounts

¹ <https://de.statista.com/statistik/daten/studie/2621/umfrage/anzahl-der-tankstellen-in-deutschland-zeitreihe/>

² <https://www.mwv.de/statistiken/tankstellenbestand/>

³ <https://www.mhb-mineraloel.de/ueber-shell>

⁴ The shower facilities here refer to the sanitary areas with individual showers at truck stops which are often utilized by truck drivers.

Maik Strübing, a technician at MHB Mineralölhandel GmbH who supervised the remodeling. Along with the refurbishment, MHB also enlarged the bistro which now seats 16 customers, allowing it to offer more dishes and drinks. The tenant Löwentank and the operator MHB were highly satisfied with the renovations: "There were no major difficulties, incorrectly performed construction work or deliveries — everything worked out really well. We began with the renovations on January 15, and by 03/26/2018, we were already celebrating our reopening", reports Strübing. Since then, business at the 24-hour gas station is better than ever, which is in part also due to the new refrigeration equipment.

Logistics and the presentation of cold drinks

Cold drinks are highly profitable goods in gas stations, and play a major role for turnover. To satisfy this need, EasyFill AB developed the "ColdFront", thereby creating an energy-efficient cooling unit with a smart shelving system as an alternative to conventional refrigerated wall shelves. It consists of floor-to-top, fully transparent glass doors from Schott and shelf systems from EasyFill. Cooling is supplied via commercial refrigeration systems from Daikin. The smart shelf solutions work according to the "first in, first out" principle. As a result of this, the removal sequence of the products is predefined, thereby drastically reducing refilling times as well as the disposal of expired products. Thanks to the inclination of the shelves, the products automatically slide towards the front. Hence, the system ensures that the front of the shelves is always fully stocked for the consumer. This brings more order to the shelves and provides a better overview, which also boosts sales. "In the past, it took 1 hour to fill the old fridges, but now the employees require significantly less time to do so", explains Strübing. "Furthermore, our system also ensures that the coldest product is always located right at the front, because the unrefrigerated products from storage are simply refilled from the back", explains Oliver Eischeid, managing director at EasyFill GmbH. The entire shelving unit can be rotated or swiveled out, providing access to the rear of the shelving unit so that it can be refilled with new products. Thanks to the continuous glass front design, the refrigerated section appears fresh and inviting. A three-piece refrigeration unit was installed in the Shell gas station by the operator Löwentank.

Increase in sales is already perceptible

The seven full-time employees and the other temporary staff in the gas station are impressed: "The new refrigeration unit has many advantages. The position and presentation of the products is much more effective. The shelves rotate, allowing them to be easily refilled from the rear. The products with a shorter expiry date are therefore always at the front, and not hidden somewhere in a corner. And because the products slide forwards thanks to the inclined shelves, the shelf always looks full from the front — there are no more gaps where products should be", says Strübing. Furthermore, the new system is very quiet because the refrigeration system is located outside the store, on the roof. Unlike plug-in refrigeration units where cooling takes place directly in the display case — and the waste heat therefore remains in the sales area, the store is not heated up by the ColdFront. For commercial refrigeration needs, EasyFill has always relied on its international partner Daikin, as they have developed a standardized system specially for EasyFill: "Our ColdFronts always have specific lengths. The Daikin systems have been adapted to them in a standardized manner. This makes Daikin the perfect partner for us", says Eischeid. "The tenant is also impressed and says that the new refrigeration units are a hit with the customers. Even though the new store concept has only been in operation since late March, he was already able to observe an increase in the sales of

drinks. Above all, more energy drinks are being sold, which definitely has to do with the significantly improved view of the product presentation", explains Strübing. The employees are also pleased, as refilling the shelves with products is now much easier. Thanks to the modern refrigeration units and the LED lighting, the shop also saves on energy costs and reduces its repair costs.

Perfectly sized doors from SCHOTT

Before the renovation, a closed refrigeration unit with three double doors already existed. As part of the overall refurbishment, it had to be removed to make way for a new and more energy efficient concept with a product presentation that boosts sales. The floor-to-top doors installed in the new refrigeration unit were developed by SCHOTT together with EasyFill. "Our doors had to be adapted to the rotating EasyFill shelf model. Regardless of the model, our doors are now always a perfect fit", says Valentin Schulte, Sales Manager for Food Display in the DACH Region at SCHOTT in Mainz. The fully transparent doors from the Termofrost T.AGD 3 brand used here are available in a standard version, or as floor-to-top walk-in doors like the ones installed in the Shell station. "We have been working successfully with EasyFill since 2016 and have already realized several projects together with the store builder Stracke.

Gas station trends

At the same time, it is necessary to be aware of the latest trends for gas station store designs. Having refrigerated shelves that close, for example, is a prime example for energy savings: Thanks to the glass doors used, it is significantly easier to maintain the refrigeration temperatures required for the various product groups and reduce power consumption by up to 65 percent. This is possible because fully transparent glass doors have the same low U-value as conventional insulating glass doors. The issue of condensation on the refrigerator doors is easily resolved by switching from single to double glazing. Furthermore, at around 2.5 years, the return on investment (ROI) for covering open refrigeration equipment is very low. Thanks to the high visibility, it is much easier for customers to find their product, and because the refrigeration units are closed, the customers also remain longer in the store — both stimulate business. "Such systems will be encountered more frequently in the future, as older gas stations are gradually being modernized and made more attractive. Our joint solution consisting of rotating shelves and transparent doors offers a great many advantages in this regard", concludes Schulte.

More information on the companies involved is available here:

- SCHOTT: The TADG 3 model will be introduced for the first time as an add-on refrigeration room variant at Chillventa. More information at <https://www.schott.com/food-display/english/products/index.html>
- MHB: <https://www.mhb-mineraloel.de/>
- EasyFill: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=q1PBDfZO2rQ&feature=youtu.be>
- Stracke Ladenbau: <https://www.stracke-ladenbau.de/>

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Images:



Caption 1: Structural restoration of the Shell station



Caption 2: After the renovation



Caption 3: Cooling unit ColdFront with SCHOTT Termofrost® glass doors