
Vector® Pays Real Dividends at Wisconsin Cooperative



Vector® is a popular attraction for co-op members

MIDDLETON, WI – At the Middleton Farmer's Cooperative, the customer is always right – in part because every shopper is considered another owner of the business. “Each customer has the opportunity to open an account with the co-op,” explains Mike Langer from MFC. “Patrons earn equity and dividends in proportion to their spending, and they receive payments each year based on the co-op's profitability.”

Langer says the co-op has a built-in responsibility to meet its members' needs. “We've grown since 1928 in response to our members' desire for better products and services,” he notes. “At this site, we currently have a full-line hardware store, convenience store, 14 fuel dispensers and a car wash,” he notes. The car wash, a Vector® touchless in-bay automatic, was built in 2003 as a new installation.

“The Vector is a great addition to the site,” says Steve Heideman of Belanger distributor Oil Equipment Company, who now services the wash. “The area near the co-op had always been underserved with respect to car washing.” He remarks “Adding the Vector was a natural expansion of the co-op's offerings. With two gas islands and a large c-store on site, I think people expected the car wash to be there, too.”

According to Langer, the Vector® has been well-received by co-op members. “This is a working community, and we sell a lot of fuel Monday through Friday,” he comments. “But the Vector does steady business seven days a week.” Langer attributes the

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wash's popularity to positive word-of-mouth. “Many folks have told me it's the best car wash in town,” he says. “It seems to be common knowledge.”

As evidenced by the wash's sales, members don't just appreciate its availability – they appreciate the range of options the Vector® gives them. “At least half of our wash customers buy something over and above the basic wash,” Langer observes. “Our packages with the two-step wash and clear coat protectant are especially big sellers. Folks know these packages will leave their cars clean, shiny and protected.”

Langer says the Vector® has also built a loyal user base by being versatile. “The Vector's open bay feel and treadle-free loading are very inviting,” he comments. “This area has a broad mix of vehicles, from smaller cars to dually pick-ups and large SUVs.” Langer notes “The Vector accommodates them all with ease.” He adds “This doesn't simply get folks in the wash bay today ... it keeps them coming back.”

Those loyal customers can buy car washes in several ways, to meet their needs and budgets. “About half of them pay at the pumps, which means they're buying gas too,” Langer observes. “The rest of them buy in the store, which brings them inside for merchandise sales.” He adds “Another popular choice is our pre-paid wash cards, which give \$30 in value for \$25. It's a win-win for the co-op and our members.”

The bottom line? “Car washing is not our core business, but serving members is,” Langer says. “The Vector gives our members quality wash results, ease of use, and performance they can count on. It's an important part of the total value we offer at our co-op.” He concludes “Our Vector's dependability pays off every day, while its profitable operation pays dividends every year. It's an investment in member satisfaction.”