

## Gift Cards Get Pretty Packages

When planning for the 2007 peak holiday season make sure to include all the trimmings, including pretty packages for gift cards. According to Seastone, a Provo, Utah-based provider of gift-card packaging, one out of every three consumers who purchases a gift card also purchases an enhanced gift-card package, such as custom-designed bags, envelopes, boxes and tins.

Last year, Seastone delivered more than 40 million gift-card packaging units and supplied a



Gift-card packaging, like this 2007 holiday collection from Seastone, boosts sales.

number of retailers including Cabela's, The Home Depot, Kohl's, Safeway, Staples, Walgreens and Wal-Mart. In a prepared statement, Staples acknowledged that gift-card packaging "delivered additional sales and margin to the category."

The gift-card industry has emerged as a dominant choice among consumers across all retail types. Corporate Research International (CRI) of Findlay, Ohio, reported that during the 2006 holiday season 70% of U.S. consumers gave at least one gift card and more than 67% of people received at least one gift card. On average, CRI found each consumer gave four or more gift cards during the 2006 holiday season.



## Environmentally Friendly Plastic Cards

The spotlight on sustainability has every retailer looking for ways to operate with more environmentally friendly processes and products. As a result, the Green Earth Card, a biodegradable plastic card that was introduced 10 years ago by Versatile Card Technology (VCT) of Downers Grove, Ill., has experienced renewed popularity.

A key ingredient in the Green Earth Card is corn starch, and its plastic core and overlay are completely biodegradable. VCT's product portfolio spans a wide variety of cards including loyalty, membership, gift cards, SmartCards, access-control and contactless cards. The company is also a certified manufacturer of Discover, Visa and MasterCard.

## Cashless- and Contactless-Vending Machines

Layovers at Atlanta's Hartsfield-Jackson International Airport just got more interesting. Vending machines throughout the airport are equipped with an embedded RFID-reader technology that accepts cashless, contactless payment from consumers who have RFID-enabled credit and debit cards.

By waving their card within a few feet of the vending machine, consumers with RFID-enabled cards can literally grab a soda on the fly. The convenient and secure vending system is the result of a partnership between vending-management solutions provider Isochron (Austin, Texas) and SkyeTek (Westminster, Colo.), a provider of RFID-reader technology.

Advanced Universal Reader Architecture (AURA) provided by SkyeTek incorporates state-of-the-art encryption and anti-cloning technology, and utilizes the same algorithms incorporated by the Department of Defense to offer the most secure contactless payment. It supports transactions with MasterCard Paypass, Visa Contactless, Amex ExpressPay and Discover Network.

## Loyalty = Discounts + Rewards

Harps Food Stores, a regional grocery chain based in Springdale, Ark., and operating more than 50 stores in Arkansas, Oklahoma and Missouri, has debuted the Pay By Touch S&H greenpoints Reward Program in its stores located in six Arkansas markets. In addition to earning the typical discounts associated with loyalty-card programs, shoppers will also earn 10 greenpoints for every dollar spent at participating Harps Foods Markets. The greenpoints can be redeemed in-store,

online or through a catalog.

The greenpoints Reward Program is the digital reinvention of the original loyalty marketing "Green Stamps" program introduced in 1896 by Sperry & Hutchinson Co. Additionally, Harps Foods adopted Pay By Touch's real-time marketing solution that enables the retailer to deliver one-to-one shopper messages in-store through multiple platforms. Pay By Touch, a leader in biometric payments and personalized marketing, is based in San Francisco.