

Emergent Case Study

Supermarket Reinvention: Potash



As the entire supermarket industry undergoes sweeping changes to meet the desires of shoppers looking for higher quality, fresh, real food experiences, conventional, middle-of-the-road grocers face comprehensive, survival level, business challenges.

One of Chicago's independent, family-owned legacy retailers was at a critical crossroads. Shiny new differentiated competitors, with in-store wine bars and strong fresh food programs, were fast encroaching upon their trading areas, market share and employee pools.

Following decades of deeply-seated business practices, relying on 'business as usual' was no longer an option. Becoming competitive in this new world required 'fresh eyes' and expertise beyond their own bricks and mortar.

Enter Emergent.

OUR GOAL

Potash Markets, an iconic Chicago stalwart established in 1950, benefited from neighborhood traffic at their three in-city locations — morphing their limited store footprints to meet the most immediate needs of its base — becoming part hardware store, part convenience store, part grocery, and part deli.

With the onset of elevated grocery shopping experiences, the renaissance of home cooking and the explosion of upgraded and upscale foods and services, how could an urban grocer break through and become newly-relevant to their evolving customer base? What would it take to not only protect — but grow — their business?

In short, how could they compete now that that **everything** had changed?

OUR SOLUTION

Comprehensive challenges require holistic solutions. One-off quick fixes, while appearing less risky, wouldn't markedly change the business trajectory nor provide a sustainable blueprint for future growth.

Via Emergent's retail consulting services, we set out to create a new business vision for the Potash of today. This immersive effort required delving into all facets of the organization and operation. Interviews were conducted with customers and employees, as well as leadership and suppliers – the intangibles as important as the tangibles. Emergent conducted a competitive analysis of their trading areas.

These discoveries, coupled with Emergent's expertise in food retail and the culinary and healthy living consumer segments, became the strategic framework and multidisciplinary implementation roadmap for the newly-envisioned Potash.



Potash's improved Catering Menu feat. items such as deviled eggs with candied bacon & arugula, cucumber cups with crab salad, and assorted mini pastries from Alliance Bakery

Potash's upgraded Deli at 875 N. State Street



The Work

New Strategic Vision & Operating Model for Mature Food Retail Banner

Focus Group Research & Discovery

To assess the needs of current, lapsed and prospective shoppers, Emergent convened Focus Groups whose opinions helped inform the new Potash business vision and platform. In addition to providing intimate constructive feedback on all aspects of the Potash experience, these groups **evaluated proposed branding, product and service enhancements**, many of which would come to fruition in the months that followed.



Brand Sustainability Analysis

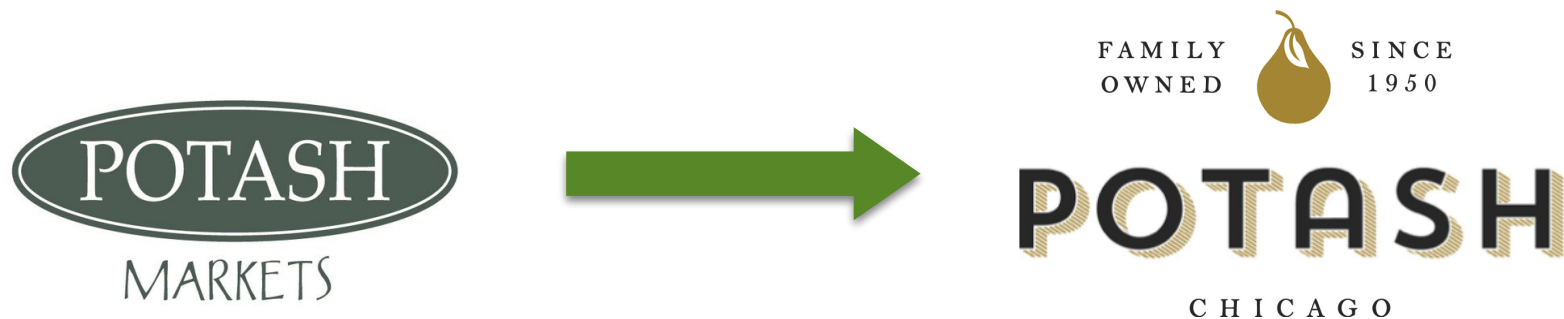
Emergent deployed our proprietary **Brand Stand Analysis** methodology to discover Potash's overall **purpose and mission** — as a relevant banner, as a grocer, and as a neighborhood employer. The result wasn't a quippy tagline, but rather a meaningful standard, the **"Potash Brand Stand,"** from which business behaviors, customer and employee interactions, product decisions and future endeavors would be held to account.

The new vision revealed critical areas in need of overhaul to meet the needs of their gentrified trading areas and become competitive for the long haul. Emergent developed the **comprehensive transformation platform** while providing ongoing **counsel, guidance and oversight; resource introductions and relationship brokering**; as well as implementation **support and project management** of the cross functional Transition Team.

Branding Evolution

To **telegraph change-for-the-better**, Emergent developed a fresh retail banner brand identity that mirrored the spirit of the changes to come in-store. The new **brand identity and logo package** communicated a contemporary look and feel, symbolizing a gold standard in both quality and variety of fresh produce and new products.

Working with the Transition and graphics teams, Emergent provided guidance and counsel as the new identity was rolled out and integrated in Potash communications to ensure consistency across all internal and external executions.



Messaging Strategies

To attract the more discerning culinary, health-oriented and quality shopper, a new brand voice needed to move beyond **exclusively** traditional, transactional price-and-product communications. Emergent worked with the in-house teams to create a **new messaging paradigm** focused on crafting stories promoting product quality and ingredient integrity, local sourcing, next-level recipes and chef-inspired expertise.

Product & Prepared Menu Upgrades

Elevating the produce and product selection was instrumental. Every category and department was under review; creating a better mix of the staid go-to brands, and the new exciting, better-quality brands that were drawing consumers to the newer banners. Emergent provided guidance throughout, taking special interest in the areas **driving quality-seeking shopper visits and highest margin opportunities**.

Emergent worked with Potash to enhance **their Deli, Prepared Foods, Cheese and Catering offerings**. In addition to elevating the sensory and culinary appeal of these areas, Emergent modeled **rich storytelling opportunities** — identifying local and regional farms and suppliers, providing culinary tips and nutrition information, sharing relevant context beyond price per pound.

Emergent collaborated with Chicago's **Charlie Baggs Culinary Innovations (CBCI)** to **design new flavor-forward, chef-inspired menus** to elevate the Deli, Prepared Meals & Catering programs, as well as provide shoulder-to-shoulder onsite training for Potash kitchen staff.

Emergent developed **The Taste of Potash**, a series of in-store sampling events creating an elevated shopping experience (with chefs providing service) and promotional awareness for key catering pre-ordering time periods and product introductions.



Traffic generating direct mail to introduce new Potash concept

Taste of Potash event with CBCI chefs

Employee Engagement & Curating Culture

Key to the Potash transformation was **cultivating a gold star customer service experience** that engaged and provided enhanced service to meet and exceed expectations of more discerning shoppers.

Emergent designed and deployed **employee and manager surveys** to gather insights to help facilitate a more engaged workforce and a better employee experience — which would serve in support of an improved shopping experience. Areas of opportunity included: Training, Communication and Appreciation.

- To bring improved customer engagement in-store, Emergent partnered with **Kendall College**, known for their culinary arts and hospitality management curriculum, to develop a customized program to train select Potash management and staff on providing **culinary guidance to shoppers** throughout the stores.
- To provide all-staff training, Emergent worked with **ServiceSpeaks** to develop a customized **hospitality initiative** through **train-the-trainer sessions** for managers to train existing employees, as well as a special **new-hire module**.
- To brief employees on details of the Potash transformation and their roles in delivering on the new Potash Promise, Emergent developed and produced an **all-store Managers' Meeting** and **all-staff Employee Rally**. These sessions detailed product and service enhancements including learning about and **tasting the newly-created prepared dishes** served by the CBCI team.



Kendall College trained Potash staff



Emergent introduced Potash to Teamwork, a new collaboration platform and project management tool



Potash Employee Rally feat. New Prepared Items

OUTCOMES

In our consulting capacity, Emergent knows it takes a special kind of bravery (and trust) to take such a critical look at your nearly 70-year old family business and then commit to evolve the relevance and health of your brand. The Potash team embraced the promise of the future, and continues their transformation with a sure-footed vision and the processes and tools to guide success. To date:

- Each of the stores' footprints has been redesigned to optimize the fresh food perimeter shopping experience.
- Each department offers a more curated selection of products focusing on locally- and regionally-sourced, artisan, and better-for-you offerings.
- The improved shopping experience includes culinary-trained assistance in the aisles, contemporary chef-crafted dishes in the deli, hot cases and catering program, and an enhanced guest hospitality mantra.
- The fresh brand identity communicates a renewed investment in the stores and their trading areas, and a renewed commitment to providing elevated products and services for their patrons.
- The strengthened company culture benefits from an aligned purpose-driven vision, improved communication between managers and employees, and an atmosphere empowering, and recognizing employees for, great service.



Potash Employee Empowerment Tools: Potash Cash Rewards and Potash VIP Guest Offer for employees to share



Emergent would be happy to design and implement a comprehensive business- and brand-building strategy to position your organization to leverage the evolving consumer trends impacting food retail.

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