

RETAILER SPOTLIGHT: NORMANDY WINE AND SPIRITS



Brothers **Vipul** and **Kamlesh Patel** operate their XCAP Lottery retail store seven days a week. Partner and brother-in-law **Kamlesh Amin** helped set up the business in 2006.



The store is conveniently located in the Normandy Shopping Center in Ellicott City.



Former engineer **Vipul Patel** built frames around the Lottery terminals to hold the waterfall displays of scratch-offs so customers can easily interact with the cashier.

Two brothers who began helping their father in his successful retail operation at age 16 have traveled around the world and full circle in their careers. Today, the engineers own and operate their own popular retail business, Normandy Wine and Spirits at 8450 Baltimore National Pike in Ellicott City.

Siblings **Vipul Patel** of Hanover and **Kamlesh Patel** of Ellicott City grew up in India, where they earned degrees in chemical engineering and mechanical engineering, respectively. Vipul immigrated to America 22 years ago to work in his field. Kamlesh devoted 18 years to work in the public sector and his older brother Vipul worked 14 years in the private sector.

When Vipul experienced a job layoff, he switched career gears. He and brother-in-law **Kamlesh Amin** of Glen Burnie, who is married to Vipul's sister **Trusha**, bought the 4,200-square-foot store in 2006.

The Great Recession was just a year away from rocking the U.S. economy. Yet, unlike many Maryland retailers, Normandy Wine and Spirits thrived. When the anchor store at the Normandy Shopping Center closed and nearby stores followed suit, Vipul worked harder and smarter. His brother Kamlesh immigrated to America in June 2008 and became a working partner in the store. Kamlesh Amin continued as a nonworking partner.

"Quality work and hard work always pays off in business," Vipul said. "100 percent customer satisfaction is our number one goal."

They applied best business practices in Maryland Lottery and liquor store sales, drawing on knowledge gained at their father's store and as American customers. For example, they built a loyal customer base by providing individual attention. They cater to special requests for products and know customers by name. The family men have few employees, preferring instead to have at least one owner and usually both of them on site seven days a week.

They have also expanded their Lottery offerings. The previous store owner had one Lottery terminal and sold about a dozen scratch-off games. The Patel brothers increased to two Lottery terminals and 70 scratch-offs while adding an Instant Ticket Vending Machine with 24 games for those preferring self-service.

"This gave a vast choice to customers," Vipul said. "We also added *Keno* and *Racetrax*."

To attract and keep these players on site, the brothers added a pair of side-by-side monitors at the front of the store and a pair in the middle of the store. They created stay-and-play areas consisting of a table, chairs and four Lottery play centers.

As weekly sales climbed, the store met criteria in 2009 to become an Expanded Cashing Authority Program (XCAP) store qualified to cash winning tickets up to \$5,000. Next, Lottery district manager **Ralph Henderson** helped them join the Lottery SalesMaker program to improve store displays. A Lottery in Motion terminal near the cash register now alerts customers to growing jackpots and Lottery winner news.

All of these changes "made a huge increase in Lottery sales," Vipul said.

Henderson praises the hard-working pair for adopting best business practices.

"They provide excellent customer service," Henderson said, "and have

quadrupled the store's weekly Lottery sales. They ask for the sale and have many best practices in place. Normandy Wine and Spirits is an outstanding Lottery retailer."

Whether a customer wants help selecting a microbrew or a *Mega Millions* ticket, the brothers are ready.

"Our customers drive to our location from 10 to 20 miles away because they know us personally, just like a family member or neighbor," Vipul said, as his brother busily rang up customer after customer. "We make everything easy for our customers and take care of them very well."

PATEL BROTHERS' SUGGESTED BEST PRACTICES

- "When our customers try to cash winning tickets up to \$5,000, one of the partners is at the store to cash the ticket," Vipul said. "We do not want any of our customers to make a second trip so they can always count on our availability."
- Empty dispensers the day new scratch-offs are due to arrive so you can quickly activate the tickets and display them for sale. "We open three to four books for the same game in four different dispenser bins to grab more attention," he said.
- Let players know what day new scratch-offs will arrive if you unexpectedly sell out of a popular game and can quickly reorder books.
- Celebrate wins by displaying recent winners' scratch-off and terminal tickets on a winner awareness wall or board.