



Employees of Brownsboro Hardware & Paint received "thank you" bonuses and gift packages to thank them for their dedication during the pandemic.



Vince Christofora of Woodstock Hardware developed the Pandemic Supply Program to provide reliable access to in-demand products.

gifted them all with a crisp \$100 bill, a brand-new YETI cup and a gift certificate for 50 percent off anything in the store.

The appreciation bonus program ran from mid-March until mid-June for about 40 employees in Lehrer's two Do it Best stores. "I lost about 20-25 percent of my staff early on, but everyone's back now," he says. "It's been pretty hectic, but we've picked up a lot of new customers who never thought of us before."

Lehrer says he hopes other owners are doing something similar for their staff who have put in long hours under stressful conditions.

ROLLING OUT A PANDEMIC SUPPLY PROGRAM

Owner Vince Christofora, owner of Woodstock Hardware in Woodstock, N.Y., has created the Pandemic Supply Program, an offshoot of his Wholesale Supply Program, to offer local businesses safe and reliable access to the products they need to protect their customers and employees. Plexiglass and related materials, antibacterial wipes, cleaners, gloves, masks and more are being offered through their website.

The Do it Best member has been working seven days a week from 4 a.m. to 6 p.m. since mid-March and says that they have never experienced business demand like this before.

"We were in the middle of the pandemic and I realized we needed to come up with alternative ways to find products for customers. Most businesses were shut down, but there were a couple of iconic businesses like the Woodstock Inn that were going through major renovations with plans to open this summer," Christofora explains. "They needed to know they can't just call us and ask for three cases of Lysol spray or 40 cases of toilet paper and expect we'll have it immediately for them."

So, Christofora helped these businesses preplan for their reopening by figuring out how many sanitizer dispensers they would need for example.

"I have some connections to alternative supplies, but I do spend a lot of time trying to source products. No one can find Clorox wipes, but I found an alternative pack that had the right percentage of alcohol and came in packs of 20. It's about educating customers so they adjust their expectations," he says. "We've definitely picked up some new customers." ■