



Peter Stevenson, an owner and manager at Toronto's I Went to Philly cheesesteak restaurant, uses Vicinity as a loyalty card for their customers.

# Loyalty reaps rewards

*Program helped couple get fledgling business up and running*

I Went to Philly is a fast-food oasis for Toronto's Philly cheesesteak lovers. Located in the heart of the city's downtown, this family-run bistro offers a selection of authentic Philly cheesesteak sandwiches made with quality rib-eye beef and Cheez Whiz, and much more.

The restaurant was established by Julia and Jack Stevenson in 2011 after they returned from a road trip in the United States. Jack had loved Philly cheesesteak sandwiches as a boy; when the couple stopped in Philadelphia along their route, he convinced his reluctant wife to try one.

"Frankly, the idea of beef and hot Cheez Whiz on a bun sounded gross," she says.

"But I had one bite and went, 'Wow! How come we don't get these at home?' So I came home and started making them for my family and friends. Then my husband and I quit our jobs, and opened up

I Went to Philly."

Even with good reviews and a popular product, life is challenging for the business. Downtown Toronto storefronts don't come cheap, nor do other items related to running a restaurant — even when the Stevensons cut costs by asking the entire family to pitch in.

To boost sales and promote repeat business, the couple decided to start a loyalty card program. Buyers earn a point for every sandwich they buy, and can get any single item on the menu for free after they've collected nine points.

"We don't want to limit our customers when it comes to choosing their free sandwiches," Julia says. "They can choose whatever they like."

The Stevensons turned to Rogers' Vicinity ([vicinityrewards.ca](http://vicinityrewards.ca)) to set it up for them.

Vicinity is a turn-key loyalty card program designed and priced for small businesses. It allows small business owners

to get the benefits of a customized program that offers meaningful customer benefits at a price a growing business can afford.

At a cost that can average just pennies per card tap, Vicinity does it all for I Went to Philly. Vicinity provides Vicinity-branded cards and card readers used for recording and redeeming points.

**We don't want to limit customers when it comes to free sandwiches**

They also provide ongoing support for I Went to Philly's rewards program, ensuring maximum efficiency and consistency.

Julia Stevenson has nothing but praise for Rogers Vicinity staff who have worked with

her on the program. "They are very friendly, and very hands-on. They have been there for us from Day One, making sure that our loyalty program works well and addressing any issues that might come up."

"Besides," she adds, "Rogers' head office is close by, so their people buy a lot of cheesesteak sandwiches from us for lunch."

Free food isn't the only potential reward from a Vicinity loyalty program. Thanks to the system's customizable design, small businesses can offer whatever rewards they choose on a points value-and-redemption schedule that works for them.

Customer sign-up is no hassle. The customer's phone number is collected, added into the business's database — run and maintained by Vicinity — and it's done.

Vicinity makes it easy to launch sales-boosting promotions via SMS texts and emails. If someone is a big

spender, they can be rewarded with an electronic coupon offer or free product. If someone else hasn't stopped by for a month, the business can send a friendly, "We Miss You!" reminder message.

Market research is automatic. Every time a customer taps a Vicinity rewards card, the transaction is recorded. This allows small businesses to review who's buying and when they're doing it, and track how well their rewards program is working for them.

The results? "Even with the free sandwich giveaways, our Vicinity loyalty program has boosted our sandwich sales and our revenues," Stevenson says. "People love earning points, and they're willing to buy extra sandwiches to get their nine points sooner. We also get a lot of nearby businesses coming here to buy big orders, again earning free sandwiches. Face it, people love 'free,' and our loyalty program gives that to them."

## Rogers makes loyalty easy

According to the 2013 Maritz Loyalty Report, 92% of Canadian consumers belong to loyalty programs and 78% choose to shop where they can accumulate loyalty points.

Compiled by Maritz Research Canada, the report surveyed over 4,000 consumers and 100-plus loyalty programs across Canada.

"Canadian shoppers are a loyal bunch of people," says Fiona Lake Waslander, general manager of Vicinity, Rogers Communications' loyalty and automation platform for small/medium businesses in Canada.

"Add the fact that 94% of Canadians want to support small business and that 88% say they feel better when they do, and you can see why a small business' loyalty program can make a big difference to its bottom line. That's certainly been the case for I Went to Philly, one of Vicinity's many small business clients."

Developing a loyalty program in-house is an expensive proposition, especially when it comes to implementing smartcards and smartcard readers. "This is why Vicinity is such a good match for small businesses like I Went to Philly," Lake Waslander says. "Rogers has already done all of the homework to build the easiest to run, most secure and most effective loyalty program. A small business just calls us up and we get it running for them, at a cost of just pennies per customer."

Once Vicinity is installed at businesses such as I Went to Philly, these enterprises can profit from the overwhelming number of Canadian consumers who use loyalty programs faithfully and actively support small businesses.

"We manage everything for them, plus provide our clients with a wealth of real-time marketing information. This allows Vicinity users to boost sales by target-marketing frequent buyers, and win back absent clients with enticing 'come back and see us, we miss you!' offers."

One of Vicinity's most appealing aspects is the simplicity of signing up new members. "All the small business owner/operator has to do is to get the consumer's phone number to sign them up," says Lake Waslander. "That's it. Given how busy companies like I Went to Philly are at lunchtime — I've seen lineups out the door, right onto the sidewalk — fast sign-up is a must. Julia and Jack Stevenson are too busy making their amazing Philly cheesesteaks to waste time asking customers for their address, email, and other details. That's why Vicinity only requires a phone number."

Vicinity is just one of Rogers Communications' many products designed to help small/medium businesses get the revenue-boosting tools they need at a price that they can afford. "We really want to help our customers to do well and succeed in business for a long, long time."