

**“It was just the right thing to do.”** That’s the simple reason why Click Wholesale Distributing made the switch to alternative fuels, explains Vaughn Sommerseth, Click’s Operations Manager.

In 2010, Click began researching ways to shrink its petroleum use and environmental footprint. Five years later, the company now operates nearly 60 percent of its trucks with compressed natural gas (CNG); the remaining vehicles run on a biodiesel blend.

### A BLOSSOMING BUSINESS

Click Wholesale Distributing and its affiliates distribute fine wine, craft beer and specialty spirits throughout Washington and northern Idaho. The company’s drivers travel an average of 25,000 miles per year, delivering premium beverages to restaurants, bars, and grocery stores.

Click’s interest in alternative fuels emerged as the company experienced rapid growth. With more deliveries needed, its aging diesel truck fleet was increasingly prone to breakdowns and costly repairs. Most of the fleet’s 21 trucks would soon need to be replaced. Another problem, Sommerseth noted, was that the company’s dependency on diesel fuel didn’t fit well with Click’s environmental principles.

### NEW PATH FORWARD

With the blessing of upper management, the company began looking at alternatives to business as usual.



Hybrid technology appeared to have potential, but the company’s drivers determined that the hybrid trucks did not perform consistently enough for everyday use. Click next considered propane autogas and CNG, which would both require off-site fueling.

Once the company crunched the numbers, the clear winner was CNG. Over an expected seven-year lifecycle, a truck fueled by CNG would save the company nearly \$50,000. By converting to CNG, Click could also avoid the up-and-down nature of the diesel fuel market, allowing them to make clear economic projections for further company expansion.

**Switching to CNG saves Click  
nearly \$50,000 per truck,  
per seven-year lifecycle.**

One challenge of switching to CNG was refueling. Like most fleets of similar size, Click previously employed a diesel fuel supplier to refill each vehicle after work hours. Now, Click must allot drivers' time to refuel the trucks at nearby public CNG stations. Sommerseth says it hasn't been a problem. Drivers spend 20 minutes a few times a week refueling their own trucks, something Click is very willing to accommodate.

It's easy to understand why. Overall, **Click's average payback period for the CNG retrofit of a new truck is only 3.8 years** – a figure that includes the added cost of labor from the additional refueling pit stops.

The company has also noticed other benefits from the switch to CNG. The newly-bought trucks, retrofitted by World NGV, run more quietly, require fewer repairs, and pollute less – cutting particle pollution by over 85 percent. Click's drivers are fans too. The CNG trucks offer more power and even smell better than their older diesel peers.

### BENEFITTING FROM BIODIESEL

Click is moving forward with other alternative fuel efforts as well. Starting in 2015, the company began fueling its remaining (non-CNG) vehicles with biodiesel, using a B5 biodiesel blend (5 percent

## Top Takeaways

Here are three lessons learned from Click's conversion to CNG:

- 1. Get buy-in** within your organization, particularly top decision-makers.
- 2. Try it out first.** Talk to others who've adopted clean fuels. Better yet, rent a vehicle for a week and see if it's a good fit.
- 3. Jump in with both feet.** Once you've made a decision, embrace it. Make everyone aware of what's changed and why it matters.

biodiesel, 95 percent diesel). The move further signals Click's intent to minimize impact on both the environment and the neighborhoods it serves. Biodiesel produces less toxic tailpipe pollution and fewer greenhouse gases. Biodiesel is also a locally-produced fuel that can be made from waste grease or plant oils. Aside from checking fuel filters after the switch to biodiesel, Click anticipates a smooth transition for its trucks and drivers alike.

**So what's next for Click?** The company intends to power its entire fleet with CNG by 2018. Although Sommerseth is happy that Click is receiving plaudits from others, he admits that every organization can make a business case for making the switch to alternative fuels. **It just takes a bit of initiative to do the right thing.**

## Click's Green Fleet

- 12 CNG medium-duty trucks
- 9 biodiesel (B5) vehicles

### Lifetime Impact:

- Petroleum reduction: 443,800 gallons
- Greenhouse gas reduction: 1,400 tons

