

The Retail Observer

March, 2012

AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1970

Vol. 23, Issue 3

LAS VEGAS WINTER MARKET 2012

**BOLSTERED BY DOUBLE DIGIT
INCREASES IN ATTENDANCE**

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Stand Outside of Your Own Store Window

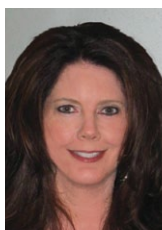
The pretty side of retail & the accessories of life were once again on display last month at The Las Vegas World Market. Floors of endless ideas for inspiration on how to adorn your showroom, making it appealing, attracting new customers with the beautiful, functional and yet creative displays—almost like art.

One particular display caught my eye. It was of larger-than-life sculptured horses with lampshades on their heads. So peculiar was the site, that crowds of people stood in front of the exhibit peering in to see what other curious delights their eyes may come across. As I stood back, also transfixed by the horses, I took note that dealers could take a lesson from this exhibit. By making sure that not only are their showrooms in tip top shape but also their storefronts and display windows should be set up in a way that grabs the attention of the passing shopper who may not be familiar with the wares they sell.

Our monthly writer, Elly Valas' article—Curiosity, Creativity and Change—reminded me of how important it is to stay curious in business. When you are curious, you remain open to learn something new about yourself, your business and the industry every day. You are open to change and willing to make the creative decisions needed that are going to keep your business alive.

Over the last few years, I have met independent business owners who seem to be stuck in a rut. Yet, here I was seemingly buoyant around them—reading new books, meeting new people & experiencing new things. Too often, we tell ourselves that our businesses take up all of our time—that we can't afford to just stop working and start exploring outside of our businesses. But the reality is, as independent business owner, you can never be too busy to remain curious. In truth, you can't afford not to, or your business will suffer. For instance, doing business the same way will only leave your employees uninspired, old technology will cripple your potential growth and not staying up to date on the latest trends will not keep existing customers happy or help you reach a new customer base.

Like the peculiar horse exhibit at The Las Vegas Market taught me, thinking out of the box can be as easy as taking a few minutes to stand outside of your own store window and peer inside.



Stay Curious!

Eliana Barriga

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The Retail Observer

MARCH 2012

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 3

CELEBRATING OUR 23RD YEAR
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What Can We Do For You?

It's closing in on 5 years now that *The Retail Observer* has been under new ownership and I would like to give you a brief update on some of the milestones we have reached during this time as well as future plans for the magazine.

While the Independent Appliance Retailer makes up the majority of our subscriber base; our retailers also carry a cross section of consumer electronics, plumbing, furniture and a variety of home goods on their showroom floors. We have become an important source of education within the industry, as *The Retail Observer* is attracting many of the industry's prominent thought leaders contributing their expertise—showcasing us as a year-round resource for our readership.

The Retail Observer sends out over 14,000 paper copies per month in North America and has over 5,000 digital subscribers to our online edition and e-newsletter. The subscribership to our LinkedIn group continues to grow daily, with 750+ industry professionals as members. *The Retail Observer* magazine online edition is viewed across 27 countries, in addition to the 286,000 electronic copies being sent out via social media outreach to various LinkedIn industry affiliated groups.

The Retail Observer sponsors 17 shows a year through editorial and specialty sections in the magazine and works closely with 26 trade associations and buying groups. Each year, we send out 10,000 print copies for distribution at tradeshow and in return these events email over 200,000 digital copies to their attendees.

At KBIS, we will be a proud sponsor of the new Appliance Pavilion. This is the first time in the history of the show that all appliance manufacturers will be exhibiting in one centralized area. *The Retail Observer* has also been added to the NKBA website on their new NKBA Newsstand page. This online listing showcases some of the top industry magazines and we are honored to be included among them.

Our most recent venture includes a new section being added to the magazine focused on the Service Industry. This section will include service related articles and ads filled with the latest opportunities in this growing and ever-changing market segment.

We would like to publicly thank our readers, writers, advertisers and the manufacturers who have helped us make the magazine a must read for the Independent Retailers and Designers who sell Major Appliances, Kitchen & Bath Products and Consumer Electronics and soon the Servicers in the industry.

The Retail Observer has done quite a lot in the last 5 years and we look forward to continued growth. Our mission has stemmed from servicing the Independent Retailer and one question continues to drive the direction of the magazine – What can we do for you? Please take time to let us know how we are doing and what we can do better now and in the future.



Eagerly waiting,

Moe Lastfogel

moe@retailobserver.com

The RetailObserver

MARCH 2012

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 3

CELEBRATING OUR 23RD YEAR
AS THE RETAIL OBSERVER

We proudly support the following trade associations and buying groups throughout North America whose news and information greatly contribute to the quality of *The Retail Observer* and the education of our readers.



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WINTER

STRONGEST IN THREE YEARS, BOLSTERED BY DOUBLE-DIGIT INCREASES IN ATTENDANCE, BUYERS, EXHIBITORS

Las Vegas Market

NEW DOMESTIC & INTERNATIONAL BUYERS WERE DIFFERENCE MAKERS 2012

Winter Las Vegas Market 2012 far exceeded expectations with strong traffic and sales created by an uptick in consumer confidence, scores of new showrooms and the market's distinction as the first major event for product introductions and buying in the western United States. Market officials reported significant attendance increases amongst retailers across all categories, interior designers as well as international buyers – especially those from Canada, Latin America and the Middle East.

According to Robert Maricich, CEO of International Market Centers, parent company of World Market Center Las Vegas, Winter Las Vegas Market 2012 was the strongest ever in three years. "Given the depth of the recent recession, our success speaks volumes about improving consumer confidence and a resurging economy," he said. "According to our statistics, the recession is officially over in the eyes of the furnishings industry. The energy at Winter Market was palpable. Buyers were buying, and ultimately, that's what counts."

Statistics from the five-day (January 30-February 3) Winter Las Vegas Market included:

- 14% increase in attending companies as compared to Winter Market 2011
- 23% increase in buyers as compared to Summer Market 2011
- 83 of the industry's top 100 retailers attended
- 4,000-plus new U.S. buyers attended for the first time; 1,000-plus new International buyers
- 58% increase in mattress buyers as compared to Summer Market 2011
- 21% increase in furniture buyers as compared to Summer Market 2011
- 19% increase in decorative accessory buyers as compared to Summer Market 2011
- 9% increase in floor coverings buyers as compared to Summer Market 2011

| continued on page 10 |



The international event for home furnishings, gifts and decorative accessories industry attracted tens of thousands of professionals and is considered as one of the most vibrant furnishings markets in the world given the depth and variety of product offerings coupled with a sophisticated, highly-efficient buying experience.

Since August 2011, Las Vegas Market signed an additional 275,000 square feet of showroom and exhibit space to 257 companies. This included 236 new companies to the Las Vegas Market and 21 existing tenants that have expanded. In total, Las Vegas Market encompasses more than 5 million square feet of exhibition space across three state-of-the-art, interconnected buildings which feature more than 1,000 exhibiting brands and lines.

According to Maricich, the growth of Las Vegas Market exhibitors speaks to the Market's overall value as a place where business is done. "Las Vegas Market is where retail buyers and designers get their industry intelligence and pick up on the hottest design trends at the start of every year, drawing from thousands of products and manufacturers from around the world," Maricich said.

The recent merger of the World Market Center Las Vegas complex and the most premier High Point properties, now forming the International Market Centers umbrella, is a positive force for the industry, Maricich said. "The two Markets are now cooperating, not competing," he said. "It's a union that has been a long time in coming, but one that is mutually beneficial for everyone in the industry. We can now offer buyers, exhibitors and manufacturers the best of both Markets."

New to Winter Las Vegas Market were notable powerhouses like Bassett, which was not only showing at Las Vegas Market, but has permanent space IMC's International Home Furnishings Center in High Point, N.C. "Bassett is one of the giants, a true bellwether in the home furnishings industry," said Maricich. "The company understands the value of having a strong presence at markets on both sides of the country, demonstrating the new synergy created by IMC's merger of platforms in Las Vegas and High Point."

Also debuting at Winter Market was the "Made in USA" pavilion, which featured an array of products made in America. According to Maricich, buying local is a growing trend throughout the entire manufacturing and retail industries, and the home furnishings and gift sectors are no exception.

Across the exhibition floors, buyers and exhibitors were equally enthusiastic:

- Bruce Cohenour, senior vice president for Bassett Furniture, reiterated Las Vegas Market's high energy. "Las Vegas Market is an important audience for us to capture," stated Cohenour. "On the first day alone, we had many new customers comment on how pleased they were with our products. We've aggressively added new offerings to our retail mix at this Market. Las Vegas has an energy you can't beat. We were happy to be a part of a successful week of meetings and sales."
- Brock Bogenschutz, director of e-commerce for Yosemite Home Décor said, "Vegas Market was exceptional for us. The dynamic was as strong as the product mix. Everyone loves coming to Vegas. We consider it our major Market, and we look forward to continuing to build on our success here."
- David Gebhart, CEO and president of Dallas-based Global Views, said Las Vegas has a zest about it. "We got to work hand in hand with our customers to educate them on trends and color palettes. There was a noticeable uptick in traffic and business in general. We were very pleased."
- According to Jason Philips, vice president creative director for Philips Collections, the Las Vegas Market best reaches its west coast customers but also has growing attendance from east coast and international buyers. "The city has established itself firmly as a national and international Market," he said.
- Toronto-based Patrick Kelly, Director of Cantrex's furniture network and retail programs, noted the importance of Las Vegas Market for its members in western Canada. "We're here shopping different manufacturers and products and working with them on different programs, so it's very important for the West—but we've also had a lot of people from Quebec and eastern Canada so it's been a good market. This markets stands out from other markets because the venue is awesome and it is so easy to shop."

Other Market highlights included an only-in-Vegas conversation with Priscilla Presley, the Gift+Home Merchandising Awards, and an esteemed panel focused on Canada as an emerging international market, plus dozens of other educational seminars from thought leaders in social media, marketing and design. Hospitality at Las Vegas Market was top notch all week long with events such as the Gourmet Food Truck Festival, a Market kick-off party that transformed the courtyard into a four-wheeled fiesta for market goers. Attendees also started the day off right with a delicious Grab 'N' Go breakfast compliments of Las Vegas Market, provided each morning in the Grand Plaza.

For more information on IMC, visit www.imcenters.com **RO**



Revolutionary NANOLUMENS[®] Digital Displays

ALMO OFFERS FULL LINE OF NANOLUMENS[®] FLEXIBLE AND RIGID DISPLAYS; SEE THEM IN ALMO BOOTH AT DSE 2012

Almo Professional A/V, the nation's fastest growing audiovisual distributor, has been named the exclusive national distributor for NanoLumens[®], Inc., manufacturer of the world's first line of ultra-slim and lightweight flexible and rigid LED displays for use in spaces previously impossible with traditional displays. NanoLumens displays will be shown in the Almo Pro A/V booth during DSE 2012 (Booth #631).

"As the exclusive national distributor of NanoLumens, we're uniquely positioned to bring an entirely new business opportunity for displays to our reseller partners," explained Sam Taylor, executive vice president and COO for Almo Professional A/V. "NanoLumens' patented technology, which enables LED displays to be made in virtually any size, shape or curvature, is perfect for our digital signage and rental and staging integrators." He continued, "We've already established ourselves as the number-one distributor in the U.S. for commercial displays 65-inches and larger. I see NanoLumens breaking into entirely new markets because of their highly customizable nature and at the same time, it will strengthen our core display business."

Taylor added, "Almo Pro A/V is a third-generation, family-owned American company and we are highly supportive of

other domestic companies like NanoLumens, which are not only leading the future for display technology, but are also creating jobs in the U.S. and literally 'breaking the mold' of what can be done with displays."

"Our entire line of flexible and rigid LED displays are now fully commercialized and ready for delivery to customers in virtually every indoor and outdoor vertical market," said Rick Cope, president and CEO of NanoLumens, Inc. "We look forward to working closely with Almo's field sales and support teams to bring the full benefits of our breakthrough, patented display technology to the widest possible audience of customers."

NANOLUMENS PRODUCTS

NanoLumens is changing the world of digital media with elegant, simple and energy-efficient digital displays that are available in any shape or size. The displays are one-sixth the weight and one-fifth the thickness of traditional displays and use only 25 percent as much power. Almo Pro A/V now carries the full NanoLumens product portfolio, which includes:

| *continued on page 13* |

- The **NanoFlex™** Family. The first and only display line of its kind designed to curve around contoured walls, wrap around columns and create unique architectural accents. This line includes the NanoFlex 112, NanoFlex Column Wrap and NanoFlex Ribbon.
- The **New NanoSlim™** Family. Designed to provide a sleek display for discerning applications, this line consists of beautiful, thin, lightweight large-format LED displays unlike anything out there today. NanoSlim displays are built to four standard sizes and are water-, dust- and impact-resistant.
- The **New NanoShapes™** Family. Built on the NanoSlim platform, NanoShapes are created in circle, triangle and square shapes to provide a unique display solution for those who think outside the typical display “box.”
- The **NanoPanels™** Family. Addresses the need for a slim, lightweight, eco-friendly and brilliant indoor/outdoor display capable of withstanding the elements and shining through tough ambient light situations. This family comes in 25” x 25” panels that can be connected to form any size display.

NanoLumens’ technology has been recognized by *Entrepreneur* magazine as a 2011 future-proof tech trend and was cited by *The Wall Street Journal* in its 2010 Technology Innovations Awards.

NanoLumens’ technology also received the “2011 Breakthrough Technology of the Year Award” at the American Technology Awards. And *Digital Signage Magazine* awarded the NanoLumens NanoFlex a 2011 DIGI Award for “Best New Display Device—Non-LCD or Plasma.”

NANOLUMENS ON THE E4 AV TOUR

NanoLumens will participate in the first E4 A/V event of the year, which will take place in Irvine, Calif. on April 3. At this event, NanoLumens representatives will teach a workshop, “Broaden Your Creative Horizons Using Flexible Digital Signage,” which focuses on how to apply flexible LED technology to engage audiences in ways never before imaginable.

ABOUT THE E4 AV TOUR

Launched in December 2009, The E4 AV tour is a free, full-day program with an intense educational focus that allows partners to earn valuable InfoComm International CTS RUs while networking with the industry’s top manufacturers. Close to 4,000 attendees have experienced the benefits of the E4 events and, in the process, have earned nearly 2,750 InfoComm CTS RUs. For more information, go to www.e4avtour.com. **RO**



The Art of Starting

HOW SEVEN SIMPLE WORDS CAN SAVE A BUSINESS CON

When that meeting or conversation gets off to a rocky start—whether tense words are exchanged or you just don't seem to be connecting—it's time to push the reset button. Andrew Sobel, author of *Power Questions*, reveals the phrase that can turn it all around.

Has this ever happened to you? You're talking to a client, or perhaps your boss, and you realize the conversation has gotten off on absolutely the wrong foot. You may have learned new and unexpected information from the other person that renders everything you've said irrelevant. You may have walked in with an assumption that was just not true. Or, you find you're not connecting, and tension and anger start to creep into the exchange. It really doesn't matter. What does matter is that a potentially productive business conversation has become awkward and stilted—or even worse, superheated and combative.

What do you do next? According to Andrew Sobel you have three options:

1. Continue trying to make your point. The tension and awkwardness will likely escalate, and you'll find that you and the other person are farther and farther apart.
2. Bring the conversation to an abrupt end and exit stage left. Both of you will be left with a bad taste in your mouth.
3. Salvage the situation with the judicious use of seven magic words: *Do you mind if we start over?*

“This question is the Saint Bernard rescue dog that brings a warming barrel of brandy into the conversational arctic,” says Sobel. “They want things to go well, and this question disarms them and eases the way to a new beginning.”

This question is only one of the many the authors include in their book, *Power Questions*. They explore dozens of questions that light fires under people, challenge their assumptions, help them see problems in productive new ways, and inspire them to bare their souls (which of course, strengthens the bonds in the relationship). And they wrap up the book with an exhaustive list of additional questions—bringing the grand total to 337 power questions to help readers succeed at work and in life.

Back to “starting over”: Sobel's coauthor recalls the time

he walked into the office of a wealthy benefactor named Allan to ask for a million-dollar donation to his alma mater's College of Engineering. Though he knew better, Panas failed to gain rapport and explore Allan's true interests before jumping in with the big request. When he was severely rebuked for his presumptuousness, Panas realized he had made a serious error and dug himself into a deep hole. He got up and excused himself, left the room, and 10 seconds later knocked on the door and asked the power question, *Do you mind if we start over?*

Allan smiled and invited Panas to sit down. Start over they did, and after approaching the revived conversation the right way, Panas discovered that Allan was interested in making a major gift—but to the University's theater program, not its engineering program!

Try it yourself. The next time a conversation gets off on the wrong foot or veers off track, reset with this powerful question. Sobel offers the following pointers:

- **If you're in the wrong, apologize.** Take responsibility for the conversation's derailment. You might say something like “I've gotten off on the wrong foot and I'm really sorry. Do you mind if I begin again? I haven't done this justice.” Or, “The reason I'd like to start over is that I put my foot in my mouth. Can I give it a second try?”
- **If you're NOT in the wrong, and the conversation has simply strayed into unproductive territory, ask in a way that doesn't place blame.** Try: “Can we step back from this? What should we be talking about?”

“Actually, even if the other party made the initial faux pas, it's still okay to say you're sorry the conversation went awry,” notes Sobel. “You're not taking blame; you're just acknowledging regret that things took a bad turn and that the other person is upset.”

- **Either way, smile.** It goes a long way toward smoothing any ruffled feathers.

“More than words alone, a genuine smile that reaches the eyes can evoke a powerful visceral response,” says Sobel. “It shows that your intentions are pure, and when people realize that, the vast majority are willing to give you another chance.”

CALL TO ACTION



SEND US YOUR SHOTS

LOOKING FOR RETAILERS, DISTRIBUTORS AND MANUFACTURERS engaged in their element while at trade shows, special events, showroom openings or just plain group get-togethers. *The Retail Observer* is interested in featuring you in our new snap-shot page, "Retailers Observed", where you can see what your industry buddies are up to. Please e-mail us your hi-res photos in .jpg format. Include the captions with the photos you send for consideration and be sure to put "Retailers Observed" in the subject line. Send to: production@retailobserver.com

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Over:

CONVERSATION GONE WRONG

- **When you start over, really start over.** You don't have to actually leave the room and come back in, like Sobel's coauthor did, but draw a sharp dividing line between the bad conversation and the new one. A good way to reset is to ask the other person a question and draw them back into the conversation as an active participant. It could be something as simple as "Can I ask—how have you been thinking about this?" or "Let's step back for a second—can you share your view of the situation?"

Of course, starting over isn't just for the workplace. It can work just as well to defuse a budding argument with your spouse or any family member or friend.

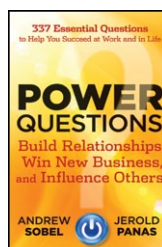
"It's a bold, gutsy move to restart a conversation from scratch," says Sobel. "Yes, it feels awkward. Most of us are not accustomed to swallowing our pride, admitting in real time that we screwed up, and asking if we can make it right. But the next time a conversation goes wrong, try it. Not only will it salvage the moment, it will pave the way for a more authentic and productive relationship in the future." **RO**

Author: Andrew Sobel is the most widely published author in the world on client loyalty and the capabilities required to build trusted business relationships. His first book, the bestselling Clients for Life, defined an entire genre of business literature about client loyalty. His other books include Making Rain and the award-winning All for One: 10 Strategies for Building Trusted Client Partnerships.

For 30 years, Andrew has worked as both a consultant to senior management and as an executive educator and coach. His clients have included leading corporations such as Citigroup, Xerox, and Cognizant; as well as professional service firms such as Ernst & Young, Booz Allen Hamilton, Towers Watson, and many others. His articles and work have been featured in a variety of publications such as the New York Times, Business Week, and the Harvard Business Review. Andrew is a graduate of Middlebury College and earned his MBA at Dartmouth's Tuck School.


Andrew is an acclaimed keynote speaker who delivers idea-rich, high-energy speeches and seminars at major conferences and events. His topics include Developing Clients for Life; Creating a Rainmaking Organization; Collaborating to Grow Revenue; The Beatles Principles; and Power Questions That Win New Business. He can be reached at www.andrewsobel.com.

Publisher: Wiley





VIKING UNVEILS DURDEN BUILDING AND LISTON P. DURDEN TRAINING CENTER

 Viking Range Corporation is pleased to announce the naming of one of its downtown buildings located at the corner of Main Street and Front Street, the Durden Building, and the naming of the industry leading training facility it houses, the Liston P. Durden Training Center. The facilities have been named by the company to honor its former Senior Vice President of Marketing, Liston Durden, who died of a heart attack January 22 of last year. The building was dedicated in his memory January 22, 2012.

Originally a Ford dealership in the early 1900's, the Durden Building serves as the heartbeat of the Viking dealer and distributor training efforts, and also functions as a demonstration classroom for the Greenwood, Miss. Viking Cooking School. Recently, 5,600 sq. ft. of training space was added to the existing facility to better showcase the company's four principal lines – Commercial, Professional, Designer, and Outdoor. To date, Viking associates from over 47 countries have received training in this facility.

“Training was near and dear to Liston's heart and was a big part of his career in the major appliance industry,” said Fred Carl, president and CEO of Viking Range Corporation. “Nothing could be more appropriate than to honor one of the appliance industry's most respected leaders in such a way.”

Prior to joining Viking in 1989 as the company's first Vice President of Marketing, Liston Durden worked for such appliance industry leaders as GE, KitchenAid, and Whirlpool. Durden was later named Senior Vice President of Marketing

and helped lead Viking to become an industry icon. Throughout his career, he was very active in the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers (AHAM), serving as its Chairman of the Board from 2004-2006. In 2007, he was awarded the Home Appliance Industry Leadership (HAIL) Award, considered the major appliance industry's top honor.

INDOORS OR OUT, TRUE'S DUAL-TAP BEVERAGE DISPENSER IS A HOME ENTERTAINER'S DREAM

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There's only one thing better than the ability to offer guests frosty, cold beer on tap—and that's the ability to offer them their choice of two different ales on tap, from the very same dispenser. That entertainer's dream is now a reality, thanks to the True Professional Series® Dual-Tap Beverage Dispenser.

The True Professional Series® Dual-Tap Beverage Dispenser is made to deliver “the perfect serve” and takes advantage of the company’s exclusive airflow technology, using a balanced refrigeration system which can cool beer down to a frosty 33 degrees—with the exact temperature displayed on the blue LED panel on the door. Crafted in the U.S.A. of 300 Series stainless steel inside and out, it’s also beautiful and rugged.

“The True Professional Series® Dual-Tap Beverage Dispenser provides value year-round,” notes True Director of Sales and Marketing, Steve Proctor. “When entertaining, it allows homeowners to offer their guests a choice of regular or light beer, foreign or domestic. And, when not in use, it easily converts into an under counter refrigerator, beverage center, or wine cabinet.”

Building upon the 65-year heritage of True Refrigeration® as the leading choice among beverage providers, this elegant and versatile product is uniquely rated by Underwriters Laboratories Inc. (UL) for both indoor and outdoor usage making it ideal for bars and outdoor kitchens alike.

The Dual-Tap Beverage Dispenser can accommodate one quarter-barrel or two one-sixth barrels of beer and effortlessly converts into an under counter or freestanding refrigerator with 5.7 cubic feet of storage capacity. It is ENERGY STAR qualified and is backed by an industry-leading two-year parts-and-labor warranty, with an additional three years of coverage for the sealed system. For more information about True and its new True Professional Series®, please call 888.616.8783 or visit www.true-residential.com.

OPTOMA UNVEILS EIGHT-OUNCE, 100-LUMEN PICO PK320

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Optoma Optoma®, a world leader in Pico projectors, has introduced the all-new PK320, a palm-sized, 8 oz. Pico projector capable of delivering images up to 150” in size in widescreen WVGA format from its 100 ANSI lumen light engine. With 2 GB of internal memory, a micro SD slot that supports up to 32GB of additional storage, and Office Viewer software that allows for PC-free operation, the PK320 sets a new standard for personal projector and is the perfect complement to business executives and consumers who thrive on the mobile lifestyle.



Available now, the PK320 has an end-user price of \$449.

“The PK320 is the most powerful and versatile pocket projector available,” said Jon Grodem, Optoma’s senior director of product and marketing, “and it’s a shining example of Optoma’s commitment to provide the most complete selection of mobile projectors for business and personal use.” The PK320 is perfectly suited to meet the wants and needs of business users and others who are looking for maximum power in a minimal package. Small enough to fit in the palm of your hand, the PK320 measures only 4.7” x 1.2” x 2.7”, yet it is packed full of features that place it at the top of its class.

An easy-to-use user interface provides fast access to essential functions, which translates into shorter set-up processes and less waiting time. Instead of the usual “drill-down” menu design, the PK320 incorporates six function keys and a home key. Specific functions are assigned to each key and those functions change depending on the menu level, resulting in users having single-key access to often-used functions. When plugged into an AC outlet, the PK320 delivers 100 lumens of brightness with a contrast ratio of 3000:1; when unplugged, it runs off its internal battery and the projector automatically switches to its 25 lumen mode for battery life of about one hour.

The multimedia and Office Viewer software, preloaded in the projector, enable users to enjoy PC-free operation and support the most popular Microsoft Office programs, including past and present versions of PowerPoint, Word, Excel, as well as Adobe PDF files, jpeg images, and most common video file formats: AVI, MOV, MP4, 3GP, and WMV. The PK320’s WVGA resolution | *continued on page 18* |

(854 x 480 pixels) produces vivid images in 16:9 aspect ratio, making it a perfect match for computer and movie formats.

It also provides a full complement of I/O ports, including mini HDMI, a port for VGA, an input for composite video and audio, micro USB, and 3.5 mm stereo out. This gives users the ability to connect to just about any device, including computers, tablets, smart phones, gaming consoles, or digital cameras and camcorders. Standard accessories that come with the PK320 include an IR remote control, a rechargeable Lithium-ion battery, power adapter, padded carrying pouch, and the following cables: Universal to VGA cable, type A to micro USB and an RCA to 2.5 mm AV cable. The projector carries a 1-year limited warranty (90 days on the battery). For more information on the PK320 and all Optoma products, go to www.optomausa.com or call 888-289-6786.

IGO AUDIO NAMED AS CES INNOVATIONS 2012 DESIGN AND ENGINEERING AWARD HONOREE



IGO Audio announced that it has been named an International CES Innovations 2012 Design and Engineering Awards Honoree for their Home Theater Rack.

Products entered in this prestigious program are judged by a preeminent panel of independent industrial designers, engineers and members of the media to honor outstanding design and engineering in cutting edge consumer electronics products.

The Home Theater System with Surround Sound offers an

integrated “all in one” system including: TV Stand, Amplifier, Speakers, Subwoofers, Plug & Play.

According to IGO Audio, the AV rack was developed to fill a void in the TV Rack and Stand category. Now there is a convenient solution to managing your audio and big screen television combination. The company is one of the world’s largest OEM & ODM manufacturers of high quality audio speakers and makes for many famous name brands.

IGO Audio has a distribution facility in Ontario, California and offers warehouse shipments as well as direct import programs. The company will also provide technical support and warranty services. For more info visit www.igoaudio.com.

RILA WELCOMES IRS RELIEF FROM NEW 1099K REPORTING REQUIREMENT



The Retail Industry Leaders Association (RILA) welcomed a decision by the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) that the agency will relieve retailers and business taxpayers in general, from new reporting requirements related to debit and credit card receipts.

The IRS previously announced that beginning in the 2011 filing year, businesses would be required to reconcile reimbursement information, such as cash back, sales taxes, state and local deposits and other non-income related dollars from the gross receipts. Last October, the IRS delayed implementation of the new requirement until 2012 and in a recent letter to RILA, the IRS confirmed that it will not require that the information be separately reported.

According to the IRS letter, “There will be no reconciliation required on the 2012 form, nor do we intend to require reconciliation going forward. Our intention is that the reporting of gross receipts and sales on the 2012 income tax forms will be modeled on the 2010 income tax forms.”

RILA raised concerns about the complexity of complying with the regulations as well as the relevance of the resulting number in a December 2011 letter to the IRS.

“We are very pleased that the IRS took the time to listen and work with us to resolve this matter in a satisfactory manner,” said Bill Hughes, senior vice president for government affairs. “This will relieve retailers of an unnecessary burden while still providing the IRS with the tools it needs to ensure tax compliance.”

RILA is the trade association of the world’s largest and most innovative retail companies. RILA members include more than 200 retailers, product

| *continued on page 20* |

Ranked Highest in Customer Satisfaction.

Once again, J.D. Power and Associates has ranked Miele "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Dishwashers".

Our new Futura dishwasher features a FlexiCare Basket System and intelligent sensor technology for a perfect clean and unmatched care.

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© 2011 Miele Inc. Miele received the highest numerical score for dishwashers in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2011 Kitchen Appliance StudySM. Study based on 11,701 total responses measuring 18 brands and measures opinions of consumers who purchased refrigerators from a retail store or their new-home builder during the previous 24 months. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed in March-April 2011. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com

manufacturers, and service suppliers, which together account for more than \$1.5 trillion in annual sales, millions of American jobs and more than 100,000 stores, manufacturing facilities and distribution centers domestically and abroad.

FRY'S ELECTRONICS WINS "GLOBAL GOLD" TOP PRIZE AT MONSTER'S ANNUAL RETAILER AWARDS AND CONCERT—CES 2012

MONSTER Monster's annual Retailer Awards and Concert at CES 2012 filled the ballroom at the Paris Hotel to capacity with thousands of guests attending the festivities in honor of the Most Monsterous® Dealers of the Year Awards. Winners received Monster Retailer Awards in a variety of categories. The top award, "The Global Gold," was presented to Fry's Electronics of San Jose, CA.

THE MOST MONSTEROUS WINNERS

Global Gold Award

Fry's Electronics – San Jose, CA

Most Monsterous Audio/Video Specialist Retailer

World Wide Stereo – Hatfield, PA

Most Monsterous Power Retailer

Media Market Russia – Moscow, Russia

Most Monsterous Specialty Retailer

Inmotion Entertainment – Jacksonville, FL

Most Monsterous Electronics & Appliance Retailer

Fry's Electronics – San Jose, CA

Most Monsterous International Retailer

Best Buy Canada/Future Shop – Burnaby, BC, Canada

The evening continued with a concert by the legendary rock band Chicago, the first American rock band to chart Top 40 albums in five decades. Korean global pop sensation The Wonder Girls opened for Chicago, singing their new smash hit "Be My Baby" for the first time in English, as well as "Girls Girls" in Korean.

Individuals and companies nominated for awards are selected as the best Monster Retailers in their particular categories, standing out as among the highest achievers in growth, highest percentages of total Monster product sales, and dollars-per-store sales. Each nominee reflects the highest standards of business procedure in today's retail environment. To win, however, retailers must also have done something "above and beyond" Monster's ordinary business processes. Winners were painstakingly chosen from among the selected nominees, with final decisions coming down to interviews with Monster reps, sales managers and trainers.

The Global Gold Award, bestowed on a single retailer from among all the "Most Monsterous" nominees and winners, is Monster's | continued on page 22 |



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most prestigious presentation. It represents the Most Monsterous retailer in Monster's largest market, recognizing outstanding accomplishment throughout the year, with an extraordinary ability to implement Monster programs on a global basis. Explore the world of Monster at www.monsterproducts.com.

VENT-A-HOOD UNVEILS INTERACTIVE TOUCH SCREEN DISPLAYS



Vent-A-Hood In a world of iPads and smart phones, Vent-A-Hood, the company that created the modern residential range hood, is introducing a “smarter” range hood display with an interactive touch screen to elevate the showroom shopping experience to a whole new level.

Vent-A-Hood has unveiled an interactive touch screen that mounts to any of its signature single, double and triple unit displays. The new screen encourages customers to investigate distinctive features related to the company's superior products.

“We're a society that loves gathering information. And when it comes to making purchases, consumers like being in control of the process,” said Blake Woodall, vice president of Vent-A-Hood. “Now we have transferred that experience to the appliance showroom with the new Vent-A-Hood touch screen.”

The new touch screens include sections on “Quietest Brand,” “Easiest to Clean,” and “Best Warranty,” and each topic is activated with the touch of a finger.

The company is offering the touch screen as an optional

feature to new Vent-A-Hood displays being added to showrooms across North America. In addition, the touch screen is an upgrade that can be installed on existing units. For more information, please visit www.ventahood.com. You can also follow Vent-A-Hood on Facebook.

GE'S "ECO KITCHEN" APPLIANCES HELPS CONSUMERS SAVE 20 % ON ELECTRICITY



Interested in a new, energy-efficient kitchen? Many consumers support the need to reduce home energy use through more efficient appliances. According to a recent survey, 78 percent of Americans think it is “very beneficial” for appliances to become more energy efficient.^[1]



GE® now makes it easy to assemble a kitchen full of energy-efficient appliances. GE's new “ecomaginationsm” suite of appliances can help reduce electricity consumption in the average U.S. kitchen by up to 20 percent (compared to standard appliances).

Ecomagination kitchens include:

- **GE's double-oven electric ranges:** If consumers use the smaller oven 50 percent of the time, they can reduce energy use by up to 25 percent compared to GE's 5.3 cubic foot single oven.
- **GE's over-the-range microwave ovens with Power Saver feature:** When activated, the Power Saver feature reduces energy lost during standby mode. Regular use of the Power Saver button can reduce annual microwave energy consumption by more than 20 percent.^[2] | continued on page 24 |

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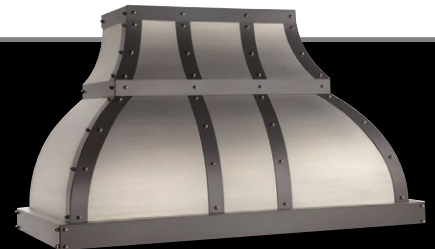
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Vent-A-Hood



- **GE's ENERGY STAR®-qualified dishwashers:**
GE's ENERGY STAR-qualified dishwashers can reduce energy and water use by approximately 10 percent over non-qualified dishwashers.
- **GE's ENERGY STAR-qualified refrigerators:**
ENERGY STAR refrigerators can reduce energy use by 20 percent compared to non-qualified refrigerators.

“The ecomagination initiative is GE’s company-wide commitment to imagine and build innovative solutions to the world’s most pressing environmental challenges,” said Rod Barry, director of Efficiency and Environmental Relations for GE Appliances. “At GE Appliances we are rapidly expanding our ENERGY STAR® and ecomagination product offerings because it’s what consumers want and is the right thing to do for our planet.”

In 2010, GE sold 2.5 million ecomagination kitchen appliances designed to avoid more than 130,000 metric tons of associated CO2 emissions on the U.S. grid per year. That’s equivalent to the annual CO2 emissions of more than 25,000 cars on U.S. roads. Good for the environment and your wallet.

In addition to being happily surprised by lower electrical bills, consumers may benefit in other ways, too. In some areas, the purchase of ENERGY STAR appliances can make consumers eligible for utility rebates.

To learn more, visit www.geappliances.com/rebates_promotions/american-recovery-act-state-appliance-rebates.htm to see a comprehensive website on the latest rebates and incentives.

^[1] “Public Attitudes Toward Energy Efficiency and Appliance Efficiency Standards,” Consumer Federation of America, March 2011

^[2] Based on estimate of 12 minutes microwave use per day

ALLURE ENERGY'S EVERSENSE TO OFFER STREAMING MUSIC AND ENERGY SAVING VIDEO TIPS



Allure Energy, Inc. introduced their revolutionary new product, EverSense™, at CES Unveiled in Las Vegas. EverSense, a home environment and energy management product features Allure’s patented Proximity Control technology with privacy protection, as well as streaming music, energy saving video tips, and weather updates.



“We have found that consumers desire value added technology that fits within their normal daily life,” says Kevin Imes, CEO of Allure Energy. “With EverSense, we are breaking the mold of conventional thermostat thinking. EverSense is a platform that will allow consumers to obtain valuable energy saving tips and content at the point at which they are making their largest energy purchasing decision. With the added benefits of proximity control, streaming music, video playback, and photo viewing, EverSense is delivering an experience that aligns with smartphone and tablet user trends.” | *continued on page 26* |



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EverSense, a thermostat replacement technology that brings a rich, multi-media experience into the mainstream HVAC consumer market will be available in early 2012. With the processing power of a tablet PC, and a layer of proximity control via Allure Mobile, EverSense eliminates the need for consumers to pay a monthly fee or experience long delays in adjusting their comfort level. Consumers will be able to have their home environment managed automatically, while saving on energy costs.

“The look and feel of EverSense is stunning,” says Jim Mills, vice president of business development for Allure Energy. “Our team of talented industrial and software designers created a work of art for the home. Every detail of a user’s experience has been taken into account, from the look of the product to the user’s touch screen interaction at the unit. Best of all, a portable countertop model will be available that allows music to be streamed anywhere in the home and full control of all other EverSense units that replace legacy thermostats throughout the home. With built in Wi-Fi, stereo speakers, and a capacitive touch screen, EverSense provides for an unparalleled user experience.” For more info go to www.allure-energy.com

ANYTHING BUT ROUTINE, SAMSUNG LAUNCHES A LAUNDRY EXPERIENCE GAME-CHANGER

NEW LARGE CAPACITY WI-FI ENABLED WF457 FRONT-LOAD WASHER MAKES DOING LAUNDRY EASIER THAN EVER WITH FIRST-OF-ITS-KIND SMART CONTROL SYSTEM AND UNPARALLELED CLEANING PERFORMANCE

 Samsung Electronics Co., Ltd., a global leader in digital media and digital convergence technologies, is taking technological innovation and wonder in the laundry room to a new level with the launch of the industry’s¹ largest capacity (4.5 cu. ft.)² WF457 Front-Loading Washer. Combining superior cleaning performance and a new Smart Control System that will significantly streamline the laundry process, the WF457 delivers the easiest and most efficient laundry experience ever.

“The Samsung WF457 Front-Loading Washer gives moms just what they need – the ability to do laundry and get their clothes cleaner than ever with our new innovative SpeedSpray technology while enjoying the time savings and convenience of our new Smart Control system.”



Having made its debut at the 2012 International Consumer Electronics Show (CES) in January, the Wi-Fi-enabled WF457 washer’s Smart Control system allows consumers to stay connected to the washer cycle without having to remain close by the machine. Consumers can, via a wireless router and a smart phone application, monitor cycle selections, remaining time and finishing alerts, as well as remotely start or pause the washer—a huge benefit to busy moms who spend time running back and forth from the laundry room trying to estimate when the load is done.

In addition, Samsung’s Smart Care system makes user manuals obsolete by quickly diagnosing washer issues and sending alerts to consumers’ smart phones. And the washer features the industry’s largest 8” color LCD touch screen – as intuitive as it is stylish – for easy cycle selection.

The WF457 washer is also the first from Samsung to feature SpeedSpray, which delivers a cleansing shot of water with dissolved detergent and then a rinsing shot for improved rinsing performance. These result in a cycle time that is up to 25 percent shorter compared with conventional washers.

“Samsung’s strategy is to enable consumers to be more connected and organized through | continued on page 28 |

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their household devices and appliances, and we're now extending that connectivity right into the laundry room," said Kevin Dexter, senior vice president of home appliance sales and marketing, Samsung Electronics America. "The Samsung WF457 Front-Loading Washer gives moms just what they need – the ability to do laundry and get their clothes cleaner than ever with our new innovative SpeedSpray technology while enjoying the time savings and convenience of our new Smart Control system."

Other features of the WF457 include:

- **The industry's largest capacity** – large enough to fit 31 bath towels
- **Seven Specialty Cycles** to take the guesswork out of laundry and provide the best washing performance and stain treatment for specific every day occasions. And unlike most stain treatment cycles that only remove a specific stain, Specialty Cycles treat all potential stains and dirt for the best cleaning results
- **Eco Seal** to prevent the build-up of residue around the washer door
- **Samsung's exclusive PowerFoam™ Technology**, which infuses detergent with air and water to create a powerful cleaning foam that penetrates fabrics quicker
- **Steam cycles in both the washer and matching dryer** for enhanced stain removal, wrinkle reduction and fabric refreshing
- **Stainless Steel Diamond Drum** design that reduces wear and tear on delicate fabrics
- **VRT Vibration Reduction Technology Plus™** which makes the washer so quiet, it can be installed on second floors and near bedrooms, even at 1300 revolutions per minute
- **Smart Vent Sensing** in the DV457 dryer that indicates blockages in vents and notifies consumers when it's time to clean them, helping with overall appliance performance and reducing potential fire hazards

Recognized by ENERGY STAR as a 'Most Efficient 2011' clothes washer³, the WF457 is leading the charge toward eco-efficiency within the industry. It uses just 96 kWh/year in electricity and up to 70 percent less water than top-loading washing machines, helping consumers save even more money on utility bills. In addition, the WF457 is the first Samsung washer to be Smart Grid-ready, a national program created in conjunction with utility providers to enhance the overall efficiency of consumers' electricity consumption and CO2 emissions, saving energy and reducing their electricity bills. The

WF457 was also named a 2012 CES Innovations Award honoree in the eco-design category.

The WF457 Washer and matching dryer will be available in onyx and white.

For more information, please visit www.samsung.com.

¹ Industry = non-commercial large capacity front load washers

² 5.2 cu. ft. IEC equivalent

³ The ENERGY STAR Most Efficient 2011 designation recognizes the most efficient products among those that qualify for the ENERGY STAR. These exceptional clothes washers represent the leading edge in energy efficient products this year.

NEW FLUIDMASTER® WEBSITE ALLEVIATES TOILET REPAIR FRUSTRATION



Fluidmaster®, leading global manufacturer of toilet repair products, has unveiled a new website that provides self-help information for plumbing repairs that just about anyone can successfully tackle. The new www.fluidmaster.com site was designed to provide solutions for those confused and frustrated by toilet repair issues and is built to easily address common toilet problems such as phantom toilet flushes, a flush that never stops and a toilet bowl that won't drain completely.

With user-friendly navigation and helpful graphics, visitors to the site can click on how-to videos to receive professional guidance on their

| continued on page 30 |

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next toilet repair and replacement projects. Under the “Fix-It” section, the website offers helpful tips and technical advice by allowing users to just “ASK BOB,” an online, interactive resource for some of their toughest toilet inquiries.

The site also provides global information about Fluidmaster products available for sale with links to retail partners and store locator capabilities. A major section of the new site covers water-saving solutions including Fluidmaster’s new Duo Flush™ family of products engineered to turn any older model toilet into a water-saving unit and help homeowners avoid the expense and trouble of purchasing a new toilet.

“Recent reviews have called the website the friendliest and best plumbing website for unfriendly toilet problems,” said Scott McDonald, marketing VP. “Our team really did their homework and found out what online users are seeking and then developed a website experience that consumers really like.”

PEERLESS-PREMIER APPLIANCE CO. EXPANDS COMMERCIAL-STYLE RANGE

PRO SERIES RANGE PRODUCT LINE OFFERS CONSUMER-FRIENDLY STAINLESS STEEL RANGES AT AFFORDABLE PRICES



To support growing consumer demand for stainless steel kitchen appliances, Peerless-Premier is expanding their Pro Series range product line by adding 10 new units to now provide 25 different models overall. These ranges from the Peerless-Premier Appliance Co. are available in 24-, 30- and 36-inch widths and are a value-priced alternative compared to expensive stainless steel options.

“Stainless steel kitchen appliances have taken over as the most popular style. Providing a modern look, stainless steel appliances make any kitchen look sleek and up-to-date,” states Jessica Gezon, contributing writer to Guides at Overstock.com, addressing new trends in kitchen appliances.

“We’ve provided Pro Series ranges to consumers for almost 12 years and are very excited to be expanding with additional models within this affordable, commercial-styled range lineup,” says Dennis Daniels, national sales manager of Peerless-Premier Appliance Co. “Opportunities exist for us to expand our presence with this stainless steel range lineup in a number

of ways and the timing could not be better for our industry.”

Stainless steel appliances have been the fastest growing segment in the major appliance industry for the past decade and projections continue to see long-term growth in this category in the U.S. However, recent and projected trends in combination with the economic downturn in the U.S. are putting mid- to high-end stainless steel ranges outside the acceptable price acceptance/affordability of today’s value-conscious consumers.

“We have studied the markets and trends and are confident we are meeting and exceeding consumer expectations,” says Daniels. “We realize the timing is ideal for consumers wanting kitchens with stainless steel ranges. Pro Series fills this gap and still delivers on outstanding design and cooking upgrades that are expected of ranges that cost many several thousands of dollars more.”

Echoing these comments is Andrea Enns, Stanton Homes’ Interior Design Expert. According to Enns, “Kitchen budgets are still creeping higher in relation to the rest of the house.”

“Consumers recognize and appreciate the benefits of a stainless steel kitchen, but quite often suffer from sticker shock when they see exceptionally high prices for stainless steel appliances over their previous experiences with like white goods,” explains Alex Volansky, president/CEO for Peerless-Premier Appliance Co. “With Pro Series ranges being a great value and option, consumers do not have to sacrifice high quality cooking features to gain that popular stainless steel look so many want to have.”

Volansky further explains that many consumers are not familiar with Pro Series ranges because the company does not support any of their products with consumer marketing efforts. Consequently, Peerless-Premier refuses to inflate product costs by layering expensive consumer-oriented advertising/marketing efforts to promote name brand recognition. These product line savings are ultimately able to be passed along to consumers at retail by Peerless-Premier because of this approach and commitment.

Andrea Enns, Stanton Homes’ Interior Design Expert, states that stainless steel is well worth the investment, “In the event that you ever had to sell your home, stainless steel appliances would be valued higher than white appliances. I would definitely be making the switch to stainless steel appliances. They have been strong in the market for over a decade already with popularity looking still strong for the future.”

Enns further comments, “In review of interior design trends as outlined by the Color Association | continued on page 32 |

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of the United States, the Appliance Manufacturers Association, Pantone, whose color forecasts have been relied upon for decades by manufacturers, and designers around the globe, it appears to be quite a “safe” choice to invest in stainless steel appliances. Stainless steel will continue to be a favored choice for your kitchen appliance finish. Since stainless steel has been used in the best kitchens for over a century due to its universal appeal, its ability to provide a sterile surface, its shiny appearance, as well as its association with luxury.”

NEW TECHNOLOGY ENABLES BOOMERS TO MONITOR AND STAY CLOSER TO THEIR AGING PARENTS IN THEIR DECLINING YEARS

sonamba Many boomers living far away from their parents deal with feelings of denial that their parents are getting older and guilt that they are not physically closer. These feelings are magnified after a ‘trigger event’ occurs, such as a slip, fall or hospital visit. A higher value is placed on communication as boomers begin to look for ways to stay close to their aging parents rather than just monitor their overall health.

Sonamba is an easy-to-use device for technology challenged seniors that is placed in their home, enabling families to share valuable conversations when time is precious. With social communication features similar to Facebook, such as photo-sharing and text messaging, it makes staying connected and interacting simple for busy,

working boomers on-the-go.

The 7-inch plug-n-play touchscreen device is packed with social communication features that allow you to remain close, helping to reduce the burden of guilt. Boomers no longer have to rely on a phone to communicate. They can easily exchange text messages and send photos in minutes remotely by accessing the web portal MySonamba.com or using the iPhone App. Now a conversation can be shared without picking up the phone, photos shared without downloading them to a computer and text messages shared without using a mobile device, all made possible with Sonamba. When not in use, the device even doubles as a digital photo frame, allowing aging parents to enjoy their families through pictures.

Boomers can also enjoy peace of mind through motion and sound sensors that track activity levels in the home. Sonamba periodically sends well-being status alerts to family members and includes optional 24/7 Personal Emergency Response Call Center services. Updates are sent automatically via email or text so boomers are always informed of their parents’ safety.

Pomdevices, LLC, recently unveiled their newest version, SonambaPro, with all the functionality of Sonamba, plus new Home Health Monitoring capability for recording key vitals. Families can now receive added insight into their aging loved ones’ health through adaptable, lightweight measurement tools such as blood pressure cuffs, weight scales, glucometers and spirometers and play a more active role in monitoring their overall well-being.

For more information, visit www.sonamba.com. **RO**



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Increased optimism felt at NAHB 2012 International Builders' Show

More than 51,000 builders, remodelers and other members of the home building industry crowded the aisles of the National Association of Home Builders' International Builders' Show (IBS), on Feb. 8-11, 2012 at the Orange County Convention Center in Orlando, Florida

Signs of optimism for the industry's recovery could be felt throughout the show, as exhibitors noted increased booth traffic and solid sales leads.

"We were so happy with the show this year—it was truly unbelievable. We barely had time to take a break," said Brian Stowell, CEO of Crown Point Cabinetry, who noted that they will exhibit again at IBS 2013 in Las Vegas. "If you supply the construction trade, you are crazy if you don't have your product here. This is your one chance all year to get in front of a national audience of builders that have projects. This show is a must for us."

The 2012 IBS featured exhibits from more than 900 suppliers representing all facets of the home building industry. Builders and remodelers also attended more than 165 educational sessions on design trends, green building, marketing, remodeling and other building industry topics.

Attendees also flocked to IBS Live, a new theater-like venue on the show floor that featured several exciting sessions throughout the week including an appearance by "Dancing with the Stars" winner and Operation Finally Home spokesperson, J.R. Martinez; a live airing of the popular Los Angeles-based radio show, "Home Wizards;" and a number of presentations on topics like green building, consumer trends and home financing.

"We really enjoyed our experience at the 2012 IBS. We were able to meet with vendors and see the latest product innovations, attend a wide variety of | *continued on page 36* |



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education sessions to learn new ideas and sharpen our skills, and hear from a great line-up of speakers, said Steve Spanjer, president of Spanjer Homes. “We returned to work recharged and inspired. The IBS is an event our firm will not miss, as it helps enable us to be better prepared builders.”

Other highlights of the show included The New American Home 2012, NAHB’s official show home, and the IBS Opening Ceremonies featuring world-famous magicians Penn & Teller as keynote speakers, and Aron Ralston, whose inspiring story of bravery was made famous in the acclaimed movie 127 Hours.

TIGHT CREDIT CONDITIONS IMPEDING HOUSING AND ECONOMIC RECOVERY, FED CHAIRMAN TELLS HOME BUILDERS

Nearly 2,500 people attended a special address by Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke, where he discussed how restraints on credit for home buyers and home builders alike continue to impede the housing and economic recovery.

Restraints on credit for home buyers and home builders alike continue to impede the housing and economic recovery, Federal Reserve Chairman Ben Bernanke said in an address to the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) Board of Directors in Orlando.

“Banks remain reluctant to make loans, both to mortgage borrowers and home builders,” said Bernanke, who noted that current credit conditions are too tight for the financial system, for the construction industry and the economy.

The Fed chairman said that his message to regulators is for them to take a balanced approach and to approve loans for those who meet sound underwriting standards.

“Do not turn away creditworthy borrowers, and that includes home builders,” he said.

“Chairman Bernanke understands that today’s tight credit conditions are preventing qualified buyers from obtaining home loans and builders from getting financing for the construction of viable new home building projects – and that this is harming the housing market as well as the overall economy,” said Barry Rutenberg, the newly elected chairman of the National Association of Home Builders (NAHB) and a home builder from Gainesville, Fla.

Noting that many local markets have an overhang of empty and foreclosed homes, the current harsh lending environment, and that the weak housing market is impairing the financial health of home owners, Bernanke said that the “state of the housing market has been a key impediment to a faster recovery.”

“For these reasons, and because the troubled housing market depresses construction activity and employment, we need to continue to develop and implement policies that will help the

housing sector get back on its feet,” the Fed chairman said. “No single solution will be sufficient. But sustained efforts to address the many interlocking factors holding back the housing market will pay dividends in the long run.”

He also added that the Fannie Mae and Freddie Mac limits on investor loans are counterproductive in the current economic climate and that policy should be to encourage more loans to help ease the inventory of distressed properties.

Bernanke’s remarks on the need to take more aggressive action to support a housing recovery confirms what the nation’s home builders have been saying for some time and reiterates similar themes in a Jan. 4 white paper provided to Congress, in which the Federal Reserve noted that “restoring the health of the housing market is a necessary part of a broader strategy for economic recovery.”

Fixing the nation’s housing woes is taking on a sense of increasing urgency in Washington. In unveiling a new plan, President Obama cited the important role that housing plays in the economy.

“A lack of building demand has kept hundreds of thousands of construction workers idle,” said Obama. “Everybody involved in the home building business – folks who make windows, folks who make carpets – they’ve all been impacted. The challenge is massive in size and scope, because we’ve got a multi-trillion dollar housing industry.”

The President reiterated the high value that Americans place on homeownership and the need to help home owners while commenting on the mortgage settlement agreement reached between the states and five major banks.

“We can’t wait to get things done and to provide relief to America’s home owners,” Obama said. “We need to keep doing everything we can to help home owners and our economy.”

“You work and you save your entire life to buy a home,” Obama added. “That’s where you raise your family, that’s where your kids’ memories are formed. That’s your stake, your claim on the American Dream.”

With the proper policies in place, housing can serve as an engine of job growth, said Rutenberg, who noted that building 100 homes creates more than 300 full-time jobs and generates \$8.9 million in federal, state and local revenues to fund local schools and strengthen communities across the nation.

“In this key election year, the voters are calling on the Administration and Congress to take actions to restore the health of the housing industry in order to create jobs, increase household wealth and keep the economy on an upward trajectory,” he added.

The next International Builders’ Show takes place Jan. 22-24 at the Las Vegas Convention Center. Registration for the 2013 show will open on Sept. 1. Details will be available at www.buildersshow.com. **RO**



CEA's Innovation Movement Reaches Milestone of 200,000 Members

MORE THAN 5,300 SIGN THE 'DECLARATION OF INNOVATION' AT THE 2012 INTERNATIONAL CES

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA)[®] announces that more than 200,000 people have joined its grassroots Innovation Movement in support of technology and innovation. More than 5,300 Innovation Movement members signed on to the Movement's "Declaration of Innovation" to signal their support of pro-innovation policies during the recent 2012 International CES, the world's largest technology tradeshow.

CEA provides its Innovation Movement members with tools to contact their members of Congress—via email, Facebook, or Twitter—to support policies that encourage and advance American innovation and shore up our economy for future generations. Issues on which the Innovation Movement is active include international trade, skilled immigration, deficit reduction, broadband deployment, and most recently the controversial Stop Online Piracy Act (SOPA) and Protect IP Act (PIPA).

At the 2012 International CES, one of America's founding fathers, Thomas Jefferson, acted as the face of innovation in the show's Grand Lobby in front of a wall that attendees could sign to "declare innovation." Jefferson

also toured the show floor asking attendees about their opinions on innovation and seeking electronic signatures for the Declaration of Innovation on a tablet computer.

"CEA launched the Innovation Movement to create an engaged community of Americans who believe innovation

is critical to our nation's global leadership and economic growth," said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO, CEA. "Having the Declaration of Innovation front and center at the largest CES in show history helped shine a light on the policies that directly impact our industry. The attendees, exhibitors, CEOs and celebrities who declared innovation at CES are sending a message to policy makers that now is the time to stand up for innovation."

CEA's Innovation Movement is committed to returning innovation to its rightful place at the center of America's economic policy.

The Declaration of Innovation wall display will be on view at CEA's Arlington, Va., headquarters. Signatures on display include Eliza Dushku, Entertainment Matters Ambassador at the 2012 International CES.

For more information on the Declaration of Innovation and CEA's Innovation Movement, visit DeclareInnovation.com and facebook.com/InnovationMovement.



The Innovation Movement™

★
AMERICA IS
READY FOR A
COMEBACK

The Declaration of Innovation

We, the people of the United States of America, hold these truths to be self-evident - that great innovators drive America's unsurpassed economic success; that innovation creates jobs, markets and industries where none existed before; and that innovation moves us forward as a nation, pushing us to succeed and strive for a better tomorrow.

We urge policies that promote innovation:

- ☛ **We believe American innovators should be able to buy and sell their products around the world.**
- ☛ **We believe that more spectrum must be available for wireless broadband.**
- ☛ **We believe in welcoming the best and brightest minds to the United States.**
- ☛ **We believe in cutting the federal deficit.**

Today, I pledge my commitment to innovation and my support for the policies that ensure innovation remains the strategic advantage of the United States of America.



**The Innovation
Movement™**

Curiosity, Creativity and Change

Children embody curiosity. Infants expand their small worlds by putting everything they can reach into their mouths. They learn new things from the texture, feel, color and taste of things around them. Older children risk getting burned by touching burners to see just how hot their mothers meant when warning them to stay away.

Curiosity is defined as “the desire to know something; eagerness to know about something or to get information.” A curiosity is “an interesting and unusual object, person, or phenomenon.”

Man’s probing into the skies led to astronomy, space programs, landing a man on the moon and the International Space Station. Inquiring minds have advanced medicine from leeching and herbal cures to robotic surgery, organ transplants and life saving drug therapies. Probing scientists have sequenced the human genome which has brought them closer to developing DNA-specific targeted drugs.

Curiosity is the cornerstone of creativity. Change comes from that desire for more information—to learn new and better ways of doing things.

Like everything else, retail is constantly evolving. Early retailing was conducted in market squares with customers coming into commercial centers in nearby villages to exchange goods. Later, the general store sold everything from nails and fabric to pickles and flour. As product offerings expanded, stores

began to specialize—department stores sold dry goods and supermarkets sold food. As suburbs grew, malls popped up.

And now, curious dealers are trying to figure out how to best reach prospects on social media sites and the Internet. Curious consumers use mobile apps to get information to make decisions about what to buy and who to buy from.

The power of curiosity really hit me as I walked through the Consumer Electronic Show with a colleague. We were like wide-eyed children going from booth to booth looking at new technology. Much of what was exhibited will never come to market but hundreds of new ideas—the creativity born out of curiosity—will change lives.

Successful retailers are innovators. Their questioning, probing and prying—with their customers, their peers and their vendors—gives them new ideas to try.

Amazon founder Jeffrey Bezos was not a retailer but a Wall Street analyst. In 1994, there was still no Internet commerce to speak of. One day that spring, Bezos observed that Internet usage was increasing by 2,300 percent a year. He saw an opportunity for a new business model, and immediately began considering the possibilities. He reviewed the top 20 mail order businesses, and asked himself which could be conducted more efficiently over the Internet than by traditional means. Books were the commodity for which no comprehensive mail order catalogue existed, because any such

catalogue would be too big to mail -- perfect for the Internet, which could share a vast database with a virtually limitless number of people.

He flew to Los Angeles the very next day to attend the American Booksellers’ Convention and learn everything he could about the book business. In July of 1995, Amazon opened for business. Singlehandedly, Jeffrey Bezos’ curiosity changed the face of retailing.

Your third grade teacher was dead wrong when she told you to stop gazing out the window and to stop day dreaming. Get out from behind your desk and out into the world.

Go shopping and see how other industries build traffic, design displays and create customer loyalty. Travel and see how people in other parts of the country and in other countries live.

Ideas are everywhere. Read a new magazine every month. Watch a different TV show. Go see an “artsy” film or listen to a different kind of music. Go to a gallery or a museum. Go do the things your customers are doing to see what’s getting them fired up.

Check your curiosity quotient from time to time. Ask yourself when was the last time you did something that was inquisitive or probing. **RO**

Elly Valas is the Marketing Services Director for Nationwide Marketing Group. She can be reached at elly@ellyvalas.com or at 303-316-7569. Visit her website at www.ellyvalas.com.



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Coworkers Are Customers Too

PROVIDE THEM WITH THE BEST SERVICE POSSIBLE

When we talk about customer service, we usually think about how we deal with the people who walk through our doors—both physical and virtual—to purchase our products and services. What we often fail to realize, however, is that we also have customers within our organizations; those customers are our coworkers.

Customer service means being responsive to a customer's needs and being resourceful in meeting those needs. Customer service is many things: knowledge, communication, skill, attitude, efficiency, integrity, reliability, knowledge, and helpfulness.

How you interact with coworkers and supervisors has a huge impact on the effectiveness of the team. When Dan asks for your help in completing a report, do you tell him that it's not your responsibility, or do you eagerly offer to do whatever you can to help him meet his deadline? When Bethany points out an error, do you get defensive, or do you view her comment as constructive and vow to improve your performance?

When you treat coworkers and supervisors with respect, when you help them solve their problems and meet or exceed the demands of the job, your value as an employee increases dramatically. Just as you should do whatever it takes to satisfy a customer, you should do whatever it takes to help a coworker.

If you want to ensure that the service you are providing is exceptional, take these steps:

- **Develop a positive attitude.** Your attitude is reflected in everything you do. It not only determines how you approach your job and your coworkers, it determines how they respond to you. Don't complain—and don't hang around negative coworkers. Do whatever it takes to get the job done—and done right.
- **Listen.** You can't help a coworker unless you hear and understand what he needs. Listening shows that you care and provides you the information you need to do what needs to be done. Ask questions. Rephrase what your coworker is saying to ensure that you understand the situation. Then use that information to decide how to move forward.
- **Solve problems.** Great customer service professionals are quick on their feet. They have the skills necessary to quickly analyze a situation and decide what needs to be done to solve the problem. Don't procrastinate. Develop a plan of attack, and handle the situation as quickly and efficiently as possible.
- **Be accessible.** This means returning phone calls and responding to emails as quickly as possible. Doing so sends the message that what your coworker needs is important to you and that you are available and eager to provide whatever assistance is needed.
- **Be honest.** If a task is outside your level of expertise, or if you cannot meet the required deadline, admit it. Then offer to facilitate by helping your coworker identify someone in

the organization who does have the expertise and the time to assist with the project. Honesty earns respect. The same holds true when you make a mistake. Admit it, apologize, and learn from it.

- **Make your coworkers feel valued.** Recognize them with a smile. Call them by name. Make eye contact. Be attentive to what they have to say. Compliment them when they do a good job. Ask for their advice. Make them feel important.
- **Perform.** Deliver what you promise. Send the message that your coworkers can depend on you. Do what you say you will do—and do it with quality, speed, and accuracy. If you say you are going to complete a report by Tuesday, do your best to complete it by Monday.

There is great power in mastering the skills necessary to provide exceptional customer service. You will gain confidence in yourself and your abilities, you will earn the respect of your coworkers, and you will be recognized and rewarded. You will set yourself apart and be recognized as a valuable member of the team. And you will have satisfied customers. **RO**

John Tschohl - described by Time and Entrepreneur magazines as a customer service guru, is also an International strategist and speaker. He can be contacted at John@servicequality.com





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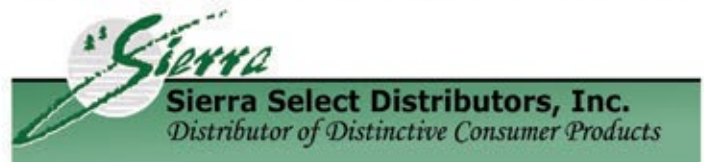
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What Free Information Are You Gathering?

Every time a customer walks through the front door an impression is made. Just like a security scan at the airport that is trying to capture information from the person being scanned, we make instant judgments of people who cross the threshold of our stores. When people are well dressed, wearing perfect make-up with every hair in place, we tend to place a higher value with this type of person. Many of us will make the assumption that they have more financial strength than someone who might come in wearing dirty jeans, a t-shirt with holes in it, grease stains, unkempt hair and might even have a less than pleasant body odor. But this is not always the case anymore.

We are living in the age of “stealth wealth.” We don’t have to look any further than Steve Jobs as the perfect example of the type of behavior that downplays the importance of materialistic adornments? The real problem is that rich people just don’t look like rich people anymore or perhaps they do. When people are comfortable within their skin and know what is important to them, they don’t need the impressions that appearances can perceive.

That is a wonderful altruistic way to live and if there were more people who lived their lives like that, retailers would be going out of business in record numbers. The truth is many people love to collect the trappings of

a successful life. Think about the 30-something who leases the premium auto because it makes him feel good as he drives down the street hoping everyone will be watching. The woman who is constantly trading up her diamond to make it bigger and bigger for the personal high it gives her. The couple who stretches to get that bigger home, not that they need it, but because they want it.

To quote Michael Douglas’ famous line from the movie *Wall Street*, “greed is good.” It moves economies, it creates jobs, it fosters great design and it makes a boring and unexciting world come alive, just like the lights on the Strip in Las Vegas. Let’s not judge people by what is important to them; let’s learn to appreciate that every person has the potential to become our best customers. Just as that person wearing the dirty jeans deserves the respect that your business has to offer, the same respect that Richard Gere had to insist upon when Julia Roberts went into a high-end store and was ignored. When Mr. Gere returned to the store he made it perfectly clear that they were disrespecting a customer who was bringing them a large source of business.

The real issue is how do we control our natural tendencies of treating some people better than we treat others? Just because someone is dressed well or drives a late model car doesn’t mean that every sales associate

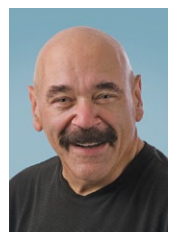
is going to put them on a pedestal. In many cases they want to knock them off the pedestal as if to say “what makes you better than me?” or “who do you think you are?”

I recently worked at a high end jewelry store where the majority of the salespeople could not afford the products they were selling, yet they did a masterful job of feeling so fortunate to be able to work and play in an environment with the nicest things in life. It’s not just about celebrating one’s wealth; it’s about celebrating the excellence of the products we sell and the creation of those products. It’s the celebration of the designers who design those products.

The customers who walk across our threshold are not as plentiful as they once were due to increased competition and of course the internet. None of us have the right to pick and choose like we once did. This is a simple lesson with far reaching affects.

The bottom line is, who gives us the right to decide who our customer will be? We win some, we lose some, but we dress for them all. **RO**

Rick Segel, author of The Retail Kit for Dummies, helps retailers and vendors partner so everyone sells more! Visit Rick’s website at www.ricksegel.com





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A Business Partnership:

IT'S NOT A MARRIAGE, OR IS IT?

A colleague is watching one of his long-time client partnerships implode. *Implode* seems strong, but it's not far from what this break-up feels like: to collapse inward violently; to demolish. Many who have experienced this first-hand know this feels as terrible as the divorce of a married couple: loss of a dream, a sense of wasted time, sadness, anger, the divvying up of resources and property. No one sets out with this in mind. But sometimes, it's time to call it quits.

How do you know?

Using the Influencing Options® Three Choices model is one of the most empowering tools to examine a partnership situation.

- **Influence** means you come up with a plan to bring about some changes. You might work with a trusted advisor or a consultant.
- **Acceptance** means that whatever it is that's not working is something you're willing to let go of—to no longer let it affect you negatively.
- **Removal** is, well, removal. This is the break-up or at least the radical reorganization of things.

AT THE OUTSET, OR AT A RENEWAL POINT

People who are getting started in a business or business partnership often do not seek the outside help of a consultant to gain clarity and behave proactively. They focus on getting money in the door, people on the street, and the word out. They often believe, with their great optimism, it will just work out.

If they are successful right away, it's

almost worse—they succeed in spite of themselves until they reach the point of the next level of growth (like hiring more employees, taking on bigger clients or customers, instigating new technology, etc.) and they realize painfully that they can't keep doing it the way they have been because the terrain has changed. Either way, “outset” or “renewal” is a good place to get really clear on your partnership.

KEYS TO CREATING A SUCCESSFUL PARTNERSHIP

- **Clearly articulate your company vision & mission.** Don't underestimate the power of this. If you're not on the same page literally, you never will be.
- **Clearly articulate your roles, responsibilities and scope of work.** Who does what? Who's responsible for sales? For marketing? For being the front-person for the company? Document it.
- **Define how you will make decisions, especially around new initiatives and money.** Where do you have collaborative decision-making? Where do you have autonomy? What will you delegate?
- **Define how you will resolve conflict or disagreements and have a plan for confronting and creating accountabilities.** This is really important because it allows you to get back on track when you get off.
- **Identify how each of you will be able to grow and develop within the business.** What is the ratio between work time and discretionary time? What

are the values you share with your partner and the ones you don't?

- **Examine and define your exit strategy if it's time to end, dissolve the business, or retire.** Again, a trusted advisor or consultant can help here.

HOW DO YOU KNOW WHEN IT'S TIME TO GO?

Take a look at the following list. The more you “check,” the greater the need to reevaluate the partnership, and the more urgent it is for you to select either “Influence” or “Removal.”

- You do not look forward to coming to work; your heart's not in it.
- You seem overly exhausted, tired and burned out.
- You are not addressing issues directly or resolving issues in a timely way.
- You are speaking through others—employees, colleagues, lawyers, and consultants—for long periods of time. (or you're not speaking at all!)
- Your organization itself is suffering, i.e. low employee morale or high turnover; decreased profits and revenues, decline in market share, diminished reputation in industry.
- You feel like you've exhausted your personal and emotional resources to try to make it work, and it's just not. **RO**

Libby Wagner, author of *The Influencing Option: The Art of Building a Profit Culture in Business, works with clients to help them create and sustain Profit Cultures.*
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Simplify Your Business:

STOP CHASING PROFITS AND START CREATING THEM

The climate we now live in has created new dynamics in the marketplace never seen before. So how does the independent dealer make sense of it all? Simplicity is the key. Your focus should be on removing the clutter and complexity so you are left with the fundamental basics of running your business.

DECREASE YOUR INVENTORY AND INCREASE TURNS

Trying to manage too many brands and products will leave your showroom looking cluttered and your warehouse full of inventory that you can't sell. Decrease your inventory and you will see an increase in turns. Choose a select group of brands and build stronger relationships with those vendors. As margins are tougher to earn, you have to put yourself in a position to maximize your programs (and profits) with your key vendors. You cannot do this if you are spread too thin across brands. The few vendors you decide to do business with will respect your commitment to selling their brands and in return reward you with much needed support.

It is also much easier to keep your sales team trained on new products and features when you are working with a select number of brands, putting you in a better position to compete on service and features rather than spinning your wheels in the price game. Even the largest national accounts are brand selective. Just walk the showroom of your local Sears or

Best Buy store and you will see the brands they stand behind and successfully sell.

BUILD BRAND NAME EQUITY BY TELLING A COMPELLING STORY

A wise man once told me that, "At the end of the day what you are selling or offering doesn't matter, it is the best story that wins." Your business should be the primary message in all of your marketing materials from in-store signage to HDTV commercials. Too many times I see circulars filled with products and prices and a store name stuck at the bottom. Remember...You are the brand in the consumer's eyes!

Build brand name equity in your store by creating a compelling story. Customers should shop your store because you offer a phenomenal customer experience and your showroom is filled with displays demonstrating the latest products and technology, your sales team are trained professionals who can work with customers on choosing the best features that work with their lifestyle, you offer the best product warranty in the area and back it up with door to door white glove delivery, setup and customer service. Also, create a story around after sales service. This is one of the biggest disappointments for consumers shopping the big box's. You have HUGE advantages! Tell somebody!

After you've told your story then season it up with constant consumer product offerings. Keeping your brand at the center of your marketing will create a

stable message that will remain constant regardless of what the vendors are doing.

DEVELOP A SOLID BUSINESS PLAN

The reality is, many independents are so caught up in the chaos of chasing ever-changing merchandising, products and promotions, they simply don't have time to develop a solid business plan. But if you have decreased the number of SKUs you are working with, it should be easier to keep track of upcoming vendor incentives and revenue streams. You can also plan your marketing budget farther in advance if your store's brand (not your product offerings) are the focus of your advertising message. Ensuring that 80% of your business plan is set and 20% is flexible spending will give you enough room to manage your own plan and still react to a constantly changing marketplace.

Confidently navigate the current marketplace by simplifying your business. Streamline your merchandising strategy, develop a clear marketing message and reflect those changes in a solid business plan. It will result in a stronger, leaner business equaling a better value for your customer and increased margins for you. **RO**

Jeff is the Senior Vice President of Appliance Marketing for Nationwide Marketing Group, a leading buying and marketing organization for independent retailers.





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Products Are Commoditized... Solutions Are Not

HOW CONSUMER-ELECTRONICS DEALERS ARE PRESENTING COMPLETE SOLUTIONS IN THE FACE OF COMMODITY SALES

The consumer electronics field can be a challenging market, because commoditized products—especially video displays—have low margins for the CE dealer. It gets even tougher considering that video displays—namely entry-level flat-panel televisions—are one of the most popular items on store shelves. There simply is little money to be made here for retailers.

Rather than look at this from a defeatist perspective, we in the CE business choose to instead look at it as a gateway to additional sales and product categories. After all, there aren't that many people that go into a specialty AV store scouring the shelves for a power conditioner—a product that can both safeguard electronics purchases and remove image noise. It's just not that sexy. And we believe that the specialty AV retailer is the only retailer that has the experience, cutting-edge technology and product knowledge to make sure the customer is getting the best and most current system components. Our mantra is that while the products are commoditized, the solutions are not. We must start selling full solutions and not individual products.

For example, recently one dealer was working with a customer who came in wanting a big, inexpensive LCD display. Of course, the dealer was happy to oblige, but instead of starting at the bottom with the lower-end models, he started with the very best flat-panel TV he had. That way, the customer knew what a decent picture looked

like and would likely not be satisfied with the low-end model. In other words, if you don't know what a good picture looks like, you don't know what you're missing.

When the salesperson began asking the customer questions, he quickly learned that the client was a musician and wanted to be able to listen to concert DVDs in surround sound at high volumes and watch movies without waking up the neighbors. An audio discussion ensued, and by the time the customer left, the dealer had turned what would have been a commodity TV sale into a full-blown home theater system complete with quality speakers, power protection, a receiver, AppleTV, and high-quality audio and HDMI cables. Oh yeah, and that inexpensive LCD was abandoned in favor of the original high-end plasma display that was first demonstrated. The customer also decided that a programmed step up universal remote that also worked via an app on his smart phone was a must. Finally, the dealer explained the benefits of an extended service plan to protect the customer's investment, which also added on to the sale.

What could have been a no-win situation for this dealer grew into a complete system plus in-home installation. In the end, it was about filling up that shopping cart with add-ons, upgrades, and accessories. And while this may be a best-case scenario, it happens often in our industry thanks to skilled dealers who offer real benefit to clients. That's something that consumers won't find in a

big-box store where there simply isn't the manpower, expertise, in-depth product knowledge or dedicated demo environments to give consumers the real experience that they are looking for—whether they know it or not.

Another AV dealer gets waves of customers coming into his store looking to get connected with AppleTV, which is a \$99 black box. He uses the product as a conversation starter to broach other subjects, such as appropriate cables, adaptors, and a high-quality display or speakers on which to enjoy all that content. Again, it's about the entire solution: What is the margin on the entire sale instead of the initially desired product. You'd think that mainstream products like the AppleTV, the iPad, or Android devices might be viewed by the AV dealer as the enemy, but in fact they are giving them access to clients they wouldn't normally have access to, and opening these clients up to the broader world of high-quality AV. Long story, short; this digital age that is full of opportunities that AV retailers can capitalize on, and it's time to embrace it! **RO**

Jim Ristow is the executive vice president of consumer electronics for BrandSource, helping establish BrandSource as one of the largest and most influential CE merchandising groups in the United States.



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2012—The Year of Color

STYLE FILE - WINTER MARKET 2012

If 2011 was a year dominated by neutrals, then 2012 will be the year of color. Color across all home furnishings and gift categories with a full spectrum of colors to boot, from Pantone's spirited Tangerine Tango to soothing watery blues, plus all the gold, greens and reds in between.

COLOR WATCH

Bold, bright and sometimes daring color never waned in some product categories (think: area rugs), despite others' inevitable retreat to "safe" neutrals when the economy was in flux. But across all styles and genres—coastal, cottage, farmhouse, country, lodge, contemporary, transitional and traditional—interiors will command layers of color. With the spring and summer seasons on buyers' radar, tropical and beach-inspired colors seemingly saturated by the sun are especially timely. Within these tropical palettes, several top-performing colors are in focus all at once: green and blue mixing with pink and orange. Garden-inspired colors, as well as garden accessories, are poised for sales in the seasons ahead, too.

PATTERNS WITH PUNCH

As color signals a welcome uptick in consumer sentiment, pattern makes a play for fashion frontrunner, look for graphic patterns that evoke indigenous cultures, as well as designs inspired by latticework, iron gates

and Turkish architecture. While home furnishings designers have been courted ikat, suzani and other ethnic patterns for several seasons, the focus zooms in in 2012, giving parts of these patterns, not necessarily the whole, a fresh, new look. Examples include Surya's new Brentwood area rug and Capel Rugs'

ECO-INFLUENCED PATTERNS + SUSTAINABLE

Textile introductions at this season's Las Vegas Market and Gift + Home showcase eco-influenced designs and sustainable manufacturing trends. Case in point: European fabric convertor Harry Harry will introduce a line of organically inspired, natural-fiber goods. In addition to fabric by the yard, new offerings for the January event include ready-made table linens, drapery, decorative pillows, top of bed, and upholstered ottomans and wingback headboards. A centerpiece of Harry Harry's fabric offerings, the Hinojona pattern is an herb-inspired print on a 90 percent cotton/10 percent linen blend. Rendered with a light, modern hand and available in five colors (aqua, tangerine, apple green, natural and black), Hinojona is produced in accordance with Oeko-Tex Standards, thereby earning it high eco marks for its sustainable provenance. C & F Enterprises also comes to market this January with a range of eco-inspired fabric goods, which are awash with easy-going Coastal themes, such as a quilted and scalloped cotton apron with a delicate sea-life print. Meanwhile, Wabisabi Green's new table linens are a blend of recycled polyester and organic cotton. The fabric is printed by hand using environmentally friendly inks; Coastal and botanical motifs are new for 2012. **RO**



Florentine pattern. Meanwhile, textile leader Emma Gardner looks to Turkish patterns for her Istanbul pillow, as does Feizy Rugs for its Saphir Callo Collection. Four Hands' new ikat wingback chair features the popular color combination of gray and yellow. Lattice and ironwork patterns are inspirational sources, too, with bold color contrasted with white as the go-to look for summer months.

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Positive Momentum and New Features Point to Strong Opportunities at National Hardware Show[®]

As the U.S. housing market continues to show signs of strengthening and retail sales continue to climb, the National Hardware Show[®] is sharing in this positive momentum with more big brands signing up to exhibit at the event, more opportunities for buyers and sellers to connect and a show floor that is selling out at record pace.

The National Hardware Show, being held May 1-3 at the Las Vegas Convention Center is currently more than 90 percent sold out of exhibit space. “We are extremely encouraged by the positive energy and response we are experiencing out in the marketplace about the National Hardware Show and the opportunities that it will present to buyers and sellers,” says Sonya Ruff Jarvis, vice president of attendee programs with the National Hardware Show.

One of the biggest positive signs for the Show is that many of the industry’s largest brands have already signed to exhibit at the show, including a number of companies that haven’t been at the show for a number of years.

To date, the show has signed more than 30 percent more large brand exhibitors than in the past several years. Companies already committed include industry leaders such as: Weber, COSCO, Jasco, Soleus Air, Lasko, Burpee, The Scotts Co., Keter, Ames True Temper, TORO, United Pet Group, Westinghouse, Shurtech, Charbroil, The Coleman Co., Generac, Cooper Lighting, Flexon, Rio Brands, CLC, Hamilton Beach, Rheem Sales Co., Milwaukee, Woodstream Corp. and more. Along with these well-recognized companies, manufacturers new to the event will fill a total of 25 percent of the entire show floor.

“We have worked very hard to create and develop this event as the single best place in the industry for buyers and sellers of hardware and home improvement products to get together and do business, exchange ideas and build a better future together,” says Jarvis. “We feel that the piquing interest in the Show is a

strong sign that the industry is responding to its value.”

Other new additions that add to the value for Show exhibitors and attendees include the launch of a new Product Review & Vetting Program. Through this program, manufacturers can submit their products for review and help move them into the marketplace.

“We see our participation in the Product Review & Vetting Program as an opportunity for manufacturers who are on the show floor to be able to bring their products to us in a proactive way so that we can take a look at them at our pace and assess the products and whether they might be a good fit for our members,” says Dave Christmas, president and CEO of North Carolina-based Distribution America, the nation’s largest network of independent hardware, hardlines and paint sundries wholesale distributors. “Instead of us having to seek these manufacturers out on the floor where we might not find them simply because there are so many manufacturers exhibiting, it gives them an opportunity to reach out to us in a more proactive way.”

Theme specific areas such as a Made in the USA area and Pet Products section of the show floor will also highlight the latest market trends that offer potential for growth. Areas including the Innovation Station, Inventor’s Spotlight and New Product Launch Spotlight will all provide an easy way for attendees to see the latest and greatest product introductions.

The National Hardware Show features products across nine categories including Hardware & Tools, Homewares, Lawn, Garden & Outdoor Living, Paint and Decorating Retailers Association (PDRA) Paint & Accessories Show, Plumbing & Electrical, Storage & Organization, Tailgate & Outdoor Recreation, Inventors Spotlight and International Sourcing and attracts buyers and sellers from around the world. For more information on the National Hardware show, visit www.NationalHardwareShow.com. **RO**

2012 •

UPCOMING EVENTS

• 2012

MARCH 17 — ST. PATRICK'S DAY

MARCH

1-3

HEARTH, PATIO & BARBEQUE EXPO (HPBE)

Georgia World Congress Center
ATLANTA, GA
www.hpbexpr.com

6-9

DIGITAL SIGNAGE EXPO

Las Vegas Convention Center
LAS VEGAS, NV
www.digitalsignageexpo.net

10-13

INTERNATIONAL HOME AND HOUSEWARES SHOW

McCormick Place
CHICAGO, IL
www.housewares.org

17-21

MEGA SPRING NATIONAL CONVENTION

Marriot Hotel
ORLANDO, FL
www.megagroupusa.com

28-31

NATIONAL APPLIANCE SERVICE CONVENTION 2012

Hilton Airport Hotel
FORT LAUDERDALE, FL
www.psaworld.com

29-APRIL 1

AMIBA 2012 CONFERENCE

Galt House Hotel
LOUISVILLE, KY
www.amiba.net/conference

APRIL

Earth Day April 22

21-26

HIGHPOINT MARKET

HIGH POINT, NC
www.highpointmarket.org

24-26

KBIS - KITCHEN & BATH INDUSTRY SHOW

McCormick Place
CHICAGO, IL
www.kbis.com

MAY

National Home Improvement Month

5-8

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION SHOW

McCormick Place
CHICAGO, IL
show.restaurant.org

6-8

HOME FURNISHINGS INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

Westin Mission Hills
PALM SPRINGS, CA
www.homefurnishingsconference.com

9-11

LIGHTFAIR

Las Vegas Convention Center
LAS VEGAS, NV
www.lightfair.com

15-17

HOSPITALITY DESIGN EXPOSITION & CONFERENCE

Sands Expo & Convention Center
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www.hdexpo.com

17-19

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www.aiaconvention.com

JUNE

11-13

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NOTE: Attention Buying Groups, Associations, Distributors & Manufacturers—Please submit your event schedules to production@retailobserver.com at least two months prior to the date so that it may be included in our Upcoming Events Calendar. To receive *The Retail Observer* in print version, please go to www.retailobserver.com to subscribe.

Nationwide Honored with 2012 ENERGY STAR® Award

BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP CONFERENCE DATES ANNOUNCED

Nationwide Marketing Group was acknowledged by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) with the 2012 ENERGY STAR Award for Excellence in Retailing.

“Nationwide Marketing Group and our member dealers have always been deeply committed to ENERGY STAR and the promotion of energy efficient appliances and electronics,” said Richard Weinberg, senior vice president of merchandising. “We are honored to be acknowledged for the 6th year in a row with an award from the EPA and DOE and will continue to do our part in helping to build a more sustainable environment.”

Each year, the EPA and the DOE honor organizations that have made outstanding contributions to protecting the environment through energy efficiency. Last year, Nationwide Marketing Group was the recipient of the 2011 ENERGY STAR Award for Excellence in Appliance and Electronics Retailing.

“The Nationwide merchandising and marketing team work hard to ensure our entire membership, who represent over 10,000 retail locations across the country, have access to the most current information on ENERGY STAR product specifications, promotional materials and rebates from their local utilities and our vendor partners,” continued Weinberg. “All of our promotions include an ENERGY STAR component and this year we rolled out several additional ENERGY STAR focused campaigns as well as advanced our push for the early retirement and proper recycling of appliances and electronics.”

Nationwide Marketing Group will be presented with an award crystal by the EPA and DOE at the 2012 ENERGY STAR Awards Ceremony being held on March 15, 2012 at the Marriott Wardman Park in Washington, DC.

BUSINESS AND LEADERSHIP MANAGEMENT CONFERENCE DATES ANNOUNCED

Nationwide Marketing Group, a beacon for business education and training for independent dealers, announced plans to hold their next Business and Leadership Management Conference on April 15-17, 2012, at the Airport Marriot in Denver, CO.

“We were sold out weeks before the first conference held last year due to the level of in-depth training on the most vital aspects of running a business that independents are so hungry for,” said Robert Weisner, CEO. “So we have very high expectations for the conference’s success this year.”

Nationwide’s first Business and Leadership Management Conference was held on April 3-5, 2011 at the American Airlines Conference Center in Fort Worth, TX. The 3-day event consisted of 15 sessions on email & web marketing, merchandising, customer service, financial management, strategic and succession planning. New course topics added for this year will include understanding financial statements, managing cash flow, maximizing internet exposure and leveraging social networking to improve visibility on internet search engines.

“We were definitely thrilled from top to bottom and give the conference an A+ plus. The hour and half sessions seemed like a half hour because the instructors kept us all participating, talking and breaking into groups. This carried to the outside of the classroom which stirred up conversation on doing business with other dealers,” said Brian Nowacki of Plaza TV & Appliance in W. St. Paul, MN, who attended last year’s conference. “We all left on a high note and very enthusiastic about what we learned and excited to put it into practice. We got an unbelievable value for the price of two plane tickets!”

With the ongoing uncertainty of the economy Elly Valas, member services director, saw the need for independent dealers to get back to basics. Valas along with Edward Knodle, Vice President of Member Development, led the charge in creating a conference that would do just that, teach dealers the fundamentals of running a business and ensure their continuity in the new marketplace.

“We brought in the very best in the industry including a pool of experts from Nationwide,” said Valas. “I am extremely happy with the turnout and we already have a waiting list of dealers who want to attend the upcoming conference in April.”

For more information on the Business and Leadership Management Conference contact Elly Valas at 303-316-7569 or elly@ellyvalas.com. **RO**



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BRANDSOURCE HOSTS KATHY IRELAND RECEPTION, SHOWCASES SERTA MATTRESS COLLECTION AT WORLD MARKET CENTER

BrandSource brand ambassador and designer Kathy Ireland, CEO and Chief Designer for kathy ireland Worldwide® (kiWW®), met with existing and prospective group members at World Market Center Las Vegas in January. Kathy and the kiWW team were on hand to discuss upcoming projects and to showcase several home furnishing lines kathy ireland Home designs for top companies including Bush Furniture, Martin Home Furnishings, Shaw Floors and Vaughan Furniture. Kathy also showcased several new home furnishing and kitchen products that kathy ireland Home has designed for BrandSource.

Guests also got a sneak preview of the new and exclusive Majestic Crown Collection, which is part of Serta's Perfect Sleeper line, the first official mattress of the National Sleep Foundation (NSF). Available to BrandSource members now, the Majestic Crown Collection by Serta is engineered to help solve common sleep disturbance issues through optimal mattress design. A complimentary copy of the National Sleep Foundation's Guide to Sleeping Well is provided with every purchase, offering tips, suggestions and resources to help customers get a full array

of benefits from their Perfect Sleeper mattress.

"We were very excited to give guests an opportunity to meet and talk with Kathy about kathy ireland Home's wonderful designs," E. Michael Allen, VP home furnishings for BrandSource. "Our guests were also the first to see and experience the very impressive new mattress collection from the Serta Perfect Sleeper line."

BRANDSOURCE APPOINTS INDUSTRY VETERAN TOM BENNETT AS VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES

BENNETT TO OVERSEE ALL SALES FUNCTIONS FOR THE 4,000 MEMBER BUYER'S GROUP



BrandSource has appointed industry veteran Tom Bennett as vice president of sales. In this newly created position, Bennett will oversee all sales functions and collaborate with district and regional managers regarding membership recruitment and retention as well as member relations. He will also supervise a succession of product roll-outs with Expert

Warehouse II, which offers members an extensive and growing assortment of products and brands with greater efficiency in logistics, warehousing, shipping and billing.

"Tom is a well-known and well-respected individual in this industry and he brings a wealth of knowledge and a fresh, insightful perspective to the table," said Bob Lawrence, CEO of BrandSource. "We're eager to roll up our sleeves and work with him as we move into our next phase of growth."

Bennett said that he is committed to helping the BrandSource organization continue on its path of growth and expansion. "I have a wonderful canvas to work with here and I'm truly energized by the enthusiastic reception I've been given," said Bennett. "I'm particularly excited about utilizing the BrandSource website and mobile app to help our members establish new touch points with customers and drive store traffic."

Bennett has more than 17 years of experience in the appliance industry, beginning his career at Maytag and most recently serving as director of distributor sales for Electrolux. Throughout his career, Bennett has called on several key customers including Best Buy, Circuit City, Home Depot and Sears. Bennett earned his B.S. and M.B.A. in business management from the University of South Dakota. He resides in Waxhaw, North Carolina with his wife, Mollie, and son, Tommy. **RO**



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Service Department Efficiency Delivers Profits and Customer Satisfaction

Service department efficiency can and will deliver increased service department profits and customer satisfaction. Your service department's efficiency is measured in first call completes (FCC). A FCC is simply a service experience completed in one trip to the customer's home. With today's rapidly emerging new technology in appliances and reduced field training from OEM cutbacks, increasing FCC's are easier said than accomplished. An average service technician's FCC rate will range from 4 to 6 calls per day. Your goal and that of your supporting teams should be 7 or 8 calls per day.

We know that exceeding a customer's expectations results in repeat business and family or friend referrals in not only your store and service, but also the appliance brand; so shouldn't that be our focus? Maybe, but the need to be profitable in order to sustain your business is equally important.

Let's explore expectations first. Today's customers are more demanding and since the customer is always right, exceeding expectations are essential but can be tricky. The customer expectation paradox doesn't help either. While customers want more from the companies and employees they do business with, they have actually come to expect less. When was the last time your doctor actually saw you at the booked appointment time?

Customer expectations in the service

experience range from speed and accuracy of repair; courtesy and appearance of the technician to rebuilding confidence in their choice of appliance and brand. More often than not there is a big gap between customer expectations and those of your technician and you as the business owner. Technicians want to be respected, challenged and well paid for their knowledge. Many also expect to be home by 4:00 p.m.

As business owners, we want to promote a profitable and sustainable business activity that meets the customers' needs. Having a competitive edge and gaining market share are also top of mind. Alignment of these three different expectations is crucial to customer satisfaction and service profitability but remain a continual challenge. The best way to check this alignment is through customer satisfaction surveys after every completed service call. Customer satisfaction is seen as a key differentiator and has increasingly become a key element of business strategy in corporate America.

When FCC's increase, customer satisfaction soars. Customers spend less time waiting for a repairman and more time at work or with family and friends getting on with life. Stresses are relieved when time saving appliances are working and confidence in brands and purchases are restored.

When FCC's increase, service department profit soars. More calls are

completed per day with fewer trips, time and costs. Less support staff time, vehicle wear and tear and gasoline are consumed per call.

In a company with 4 technicians completing 4 FCC's per day, 5 days a week with an average income per call of \$80.00, the gross labor income per year is \$320,000. In that same company if they increase one more FCC per day, the gross labor income per year jumps to \$400,000. That's \$80,000 for one more FCC per day from each technician.

FCC's are a measure of your service department's efficiency, technician competency and attitude, inventory suitability and accuracy. A FCC also requires customer cooperation and some old-fashioned good luck.

Are first call completes on your radar? If not, they need to be. Attend one of USA's Regional Service Meetings coming to a city near you. You'll learn 10 or more ways to increase your service company's efficiency that will deliver increased customer satisfaction and increased service profits. For more information visit www.unitedservicers.com. **RO**

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Toro Giving Program Donates Mowers to Habitat for Humanity

Sales of the Toro and Lawn-Boy mowers at Habitat ReStore resale outlets across 18 states will help fund local housing projects.

Habitat for Humanity announced that the Toro Giving Program has donated more than 500 walk-power mowers to help raise funds for Habitat's affordable housing work. The Toro and Lawn-Boy mowers will be sold at Habitat ReStore resale outlets in 22 cities across 18 states. Habitat ReStore resale outlets sell donated goods to the general public to help local Habitat affiliates fund the construction of homes within their communities.

"We proudly support our communities through various efforts," said Judson McNeil of the Toro Giving Program. "Habitat is one of those organizations we have long supported through employee volunteerism and product donations – to help assist their efforts in providing affordable housing."

"Habitat ReStore resale outlets help Habitat affiliates across the United States fund build projects in partnership with low-income families," said Drew Meyer, senior director, ReStore and Gifts-in-Kind Support for Habitat for Humanity International. "We are grateful to Toro for supporting the work of local Habitat affiliates with this donation."

Habitat ReStore resale outlets in the following cities are among those receiving the donated mowers:

Phoenix, Arizona
Denver, Colorado
Tampa, Florida
Atlanta, Georgia
Boston, Massachusetts

Los Angeles, California
New Haven, Connecticut
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
Chicago, Illinois
Detroit, Michigan

Minneapolis, Minnesota
Charlotte, North Carolina
Cincinnati, Ohio
Chattanooga, Tennessee
Houston, Texas

St Louis, Missouri
Philadelphia, Pennsylvania
Youngstown, Ohio
Dallas, Texas
Seattle, Washington
Jasper, Wyoming



Habitat for Humanity International is a global nonprofit Christian housing organization that brings people together to build homes, communities and hope. Since 1976, Habitat has served more than 500,000 families by welcoming people of all races, religions and nationalities to construct, rehabilitate or preserve homes; by advocating for fair and just housing policies; and by providing training and access to resources to help families improve their shelter conditions. For more information, to donate or to volunteer, please visit www.habitat.org, or follow us at www.facebook.com/habitat, at www.twitter.com/habitat_ or join Habitat's blog community at www.habitat.org/blog.

The Toro Company (NYSE: TTC) is a leading worldwide provider of turf and landscape maintenance equipment, and precision irrigation systems. With sales of nearly \$1.9 billion in fiscal 2011, Toro's global presence extends to more than 90 countries through its reputation of world-class service, innovation and turf expertise. Since 1914, the company has built a tradition of excellence around a number of strong brands to help customers care for golf courses, sports fields, public green spaces, commercial and residential properties and agricultural fields. More information is available at www.toro.com. **RO**



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Surplus products? Misordered items? Reusable materials?

Donating them to Habitat for Humanity provides an ideal way to move these items out of your inventory and put them to use helping families in need of affordable housing.

Habitat's Gifts-in-Kind program redistributes donated items to local Habitat affiliates for building, renovating and repairing homes. Items not usable for construction are directed to our ReStore resale stores.

Your support lowers our affiliates' construction costs and provides funds for building through the sale of items in our Habitat ReStores. Both enable us to help more families.

Join with us in creating more sustainable communities and addressing diverse local housing needs. Become a donor to Habitat ReStore and Gifts in Kind.

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Promotions

GE HOME & BUSINESS SOLUTIONS NAMES CHIP BLANKENSHIP PRESIDENT AND CEO OF GE APPLIANCES



Chip Blankenship

GE Home & Business Solutions announced that Charles (Chip) Blankenship has been named president and CEO of GE Appliances, a global industry leader in major appliances and home energy management products and services for residential use.

Blankenship will report to GE Home & Business Solutions President and CEO Charlene Begley.

“Chip brings a wealth of business leadership and program and product management expertise to this role,” said Begley. “We see tremendous opportunity to leverage his background and look forward to growth under his leadership.”

Blankenship joins the Appliances team from his most recent role as vice president and general manager for the Commercial Engines Operation for GE Aviation. Prior to GE Aviation, Chip was the general manager for

Aero Energy, a division of GE Energy.

Blankenship began his GE career in 1992 as a staff scientist at the Global Research Center. He joined Aviation in 1996 and held several product and program management positions before taking on the business leadership role in Aero Energy.

Blankenship earned a bachelor’s of science degree in materials engineering from Virginia Tech and a doctorate in materials science and engineering from the University of Virginia.

Blankenship succeeds James P. Campbell who elected to retire on December 31, 2011 after 30 years of service to GE.

“It is with immense gratitude that we’d like to recognize Jim for his dedicated service to GE,” said Begley. “In his three decades of service to our company, Jim has distinguished himself as a leader known for his passionate focus on the customer and his employee development and advocacy.”

VENT-A-HOOD ANNOUNCES TERRITORY CHANGES FOR DISTRIBUTORS



Vent-A-Hood, the company that created the modern residential range hood, has announced territory changes, enlarging regions for three of its existing distributors in areas across the country.

Pinnacle Express, Inc., with the existing regions of North Carolina, South Carolina and southern Virginia, will now also distribute Vent-A-Hood products in Florida. Based in Haines City, FL, Pinnacle Express has been in business for more 30 years and became an official Vent-A-Hood distributor at the beginning of 2011.

Shady Oak will begin to distribute in the regions of Nebraska, Iowa and Illinois. The company’s existing regions are North Dakota, South Dakota, Minnesota and Wisconsin. Headquartered in Hopkins, MN., Shady Oak

Distributing is a family owned business that has had a relationship with Vent-A-Hood for more than 40 years.

VAH Distributing will distribute Vent-A-Hood products to dealers in Kansas and Missouri. The company is also the distributor within the direct territory of Texas, Oklahoma and Louisiana.

“We’re excited to expand the territories for these fine companies among our exclusive group of Vent-A-Hood distributors in the U.S.,” said Mark Klein, director of sales for Vent-A-Hood. “As we reflect on the successes and growth of this year, we’re focusing on an even bigger new year through relationships like these that will help meet the growing demand for our quality range hoods.”

For more information, please visit www.ventahood.com. You can also follow Vent-A-Hood on Facebook. **RO**



RETAILERS • DISTRIBUTORS • MANUFACTURERS

TRADE SHOWS, SHOWROOM OPENINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

*PremierDPH
Buying Group
Annual Conference*

Top Knobs was named Vendor of the Year by PremierDPH Buying Group at their annual conference held recently in Tempe, Arizona. The award was presented to Top Knobs in recognition of their commitment to quality in products, customer service and representation in the field.



Whirlpool Corporation's Latest Involvement in Industry Showhomes

The Whirlpool Corporation commitment to helping building professionals create homes of distinction is prevalent within a few of the industry's most prominent showhomes.

"With this many trusted brands—and an extensive selection of innovative products—we make it easy for builders to specify the right appliances for every type of home and home-buyer," said Terri Connett, senior contract channel manager at Whirlpool Corporation.

Featuring appliances from Whirlpool, KitchenAid, Jenn-Air, Maytag and Gladiator brands, the annual BUILDER Concept Home series includes three distinct homes, each reflecting the lifestyle needs of an important demographic group—Gen X, Gen Y, and Baby Boomers. The homes showcase important shifts in development and design strategies, including product applications that make the project successful. Additionally, the Baby Boomer house will be rendered as a comprehensive, photo-realistic virtual tour within the project website at:

BUILDERConceptHome2012.com.

The NextGen Companion Homes™ Series were unveiled during the International Builders' Show®. Featuring Whirlpool brand appliances, this home series is designed to meet the growing market demand

for small-footprint homes that satisfy the diverse generational needs of the American family. The first three homes in the "Companion Series" are designed to share the same lot as an existing home, making them ideal for use as a guest home or lodging for aging

parents or extended family. Homes features in the series will also have the ability to be on a stand-alone lot with the design flexibility to add modules, such as additional rooms or a garage. More information can be found at nextgenhome.com.

The New American Home (TNAH) showcases innovative construction technologies and the latest building products. Featuring Jenn-Air, Whirlpool and Gladiator brand appliances, the home honors architecture of the past, while taking advantage of current technologies and design trends. As NAHB's official show home, TNAH gives building industry professionals an opportunity to see design trends, construction techniques and materials that can be used in any new or remodeled home. Visit buildersshow.com



for more details.

"Each of these showhomes was designed with unique lifestyles in mind. With so many distinctive brands and innovative products to choose from, the possibilities for building professionals are endless," said Connett. **RO**



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Frigidaire Gallery® French Door Refrigerator Finally, a French Door Refrigerator that maximizes usable space on the inside, so you can store more.

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¹Based on industry-standard dryability testing using Effortless™ Dry for plastic-interior dishwashers.