

The Retail Observer

November, 2012

AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1970

Vol. 23, Issue 11

CEDIA EXPO 2012

QUALITY TRAINING ON HOME
ELECTRONICS TECHNOLOGY

ELECTROLUX DESIGN LAB

FINALISTS UNVEILED—
CONCEPTS STIMULATE THE SENSES



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The Season of Giving

The holiday season is upon us but before you get too caught up in the holiday frenzy why not take some time to be thankful and give back to your community. There are so many national and local non-profit organizations that could use your help, especially during the holiday season. Consider pairing up with a cause and implementing it into your marketing plan for a boost in holiday sales. Some of the well known charitable promotions for retailers have been with Make a Wish, Salvation Army and Toys for Tots.

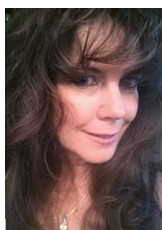
It's also a great time to engage your customer base and show that you care. Airport Home Appliance made a conscience effort when they recently held a free private screening of the new Disney film, "The Odd Life of Timothy Green." 85 people from the community attended the event held at their location in Hayward, California that included store giveaways and vendor promotions. What a great idea!

Your consumers are also always looking for new ways to enhance their quality of life. For instance, The Bed Wedge is a great product that I use and love. This wedge forms a barrier between the headboard and mattress that eliminates pillows and other items from slipping to the floor and potentially disrupting sleep. Why not pair this with your next mattress sale? Products like these are usually great add-ons with high sales margins for you. It's the little things that you share with your customers that will make their lives easier and remind them of your store every time they use it.

Please help us welcome our new contributing writer, Bill Keese, executive director of APRO. He will be sharing his insights with us on the Rent to Own industry. As the economy evolves and the lines between retail and rental become blurry, we find ourselves with more opportunities to reach new customers. Some retailers have already implemented a rental option into their sales plan and most rental dealers now both sell and rent products.

At this point, we all understand the rewards that come from retaining and selling to your existing customer base. John Tschohl takes a page from Amazon's customer-centered business philosophy and encourages dealers to continue leading the way in improving your customers' experience before and after the sale.

"There is never enough time in the day to get everything done." How many times have you recently said this to yourself? Well, according to Libby Wagner, it's time to clarify your priorities so that you don't get burned out and start getting the most out of each and every day. She reminds us to be realistic about what can get done and plan accordingly. You are always in control, whether you choose to do what you are "supposed to" or not – so start making what you want to happen today!



Happy Thanksgiving,

Eliana Barriga
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The Retail Observer

November 2012

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 11

CELEBRATING OUR 23RD YEAR
AS THE RETAIL OBSERVER

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MADE TO MEASURE
INTRODUCING THE NEW 17CU. FT. 32"
REFRIGERATION SERIES



We all know every kitchen is different, so the Fisher & Paykel ActiveSmart™ family is designed for choice and convenience. Now the Fisher & Paykel French Door refrigerator comes in two sizes. The 17 cu.ft. offers all the benefits of the larger 19.5 cu.ft. with unique design features to fit smaller kitchens better while keeping your food fresher for longer.

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Running a Business Should Be a Team Sport

In today's business culture, authority roles and responsibilities are usually shared throughout a company. With everything that a retailer has on their plate it is almost impossible to get it all done as a one man (or woman) show. We are no longer specializing in one product line or one category. In order to remain competitive, we are constantly evolving and changing to meet the different wants, needs and buying habits of diverse consumers.

How many hats did you wear today? Manager of payroll, IT, marketing, inventory, logistics, human resources, social media and of course keeper of the keys to name a few. What hat can you let go? Who on your staff could assist you in taking on some of these tasks so that you have more time to spend in other areas of your business? Have you ever taken a survey of your employees' skill sets that could be an untapped resource? You may not know it but there may be a social media expert, marketing or promotions manager, demonstration cook, speaker or home show coordinator already on staff that you have overlooked just because the right questions were never asked.

You're a busy person, juggling family, life, hobbies and a business. There are more stressors in business today than in any other time in history. The internet age has totally changed the way we live, work and think. It has also made it easier today for people to acquire a whole new repertoire of skill sets. Today's employee can be a bigger asset to an employer than ever before. Don't let these skills go to waste. If you haven't already, I suggest you hold a company town hall meeting or survey to find out exactly who works for you and how they can help to make your job easier, help to run your company more efficiently and who knows, you may even tap into hidden talents that can be used to push your company to the top of your market.



Happy Retailing,

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The Retail Observer November 2012

VOLUME 23, ISSUE 11

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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CEDIA EXPO

SHOWS GROWTH IN PROFESSIONAL ATTENDANCE

Hosts Over 450 Exhibitors



MORE THAN 450 EXHIBITORS
PARTICIPATED IN THE 2012 EVENT
AND OVER 16,900 ATTENDEES
FROM 71 DIFFERENT COUNTRIES.
OF TOTAL ATTENDANCE, 15% WERE
FIRST-TIME ATTENDEES TO EXPO

CEDIA EXPO 2012 showed positive growth with non-exhibitor attendance gains of 4% over last year's event. Ninety new exhibitors and more than 80 home technology products made their debut at CEDIA EXPO 2012, Sept. 5-8 in Indianapolis. More than 450 exhibitors participated in the 2012 event and over 16,900 attendees from 71 different countries. Of the total attendance 15% were first-time attendees to EXPO.

This year's event, exhibitors, and attendees were defined as "electric", "high caliber". "We experienced less hype and a lot cooler, rock-solid technologies on the floor," said CEDIA member Peter Cook, president of Automation Design & Entertainment. "There were more interactive displays and we were able to speak to qualified, well-informed booth personnel who had the answers, not just the sales pitch and a flier to hand out. Overall we had a great experience." *| continued on page 10 |*

CEDIA EXPO offered 175 training courses including manufacturer product training. This year's show was focused on educating electronic systems contractors on the network in addition to the foundational and advanced home technology education. Of those courses, 22 were new advanced IP Networking courses, all of which sold out. Additionally, CEDIA introduced a new credential, the Residential Networking Specialist, aimed for those who have demonstrated mastery of the network.

"I focused on attending as many courses as I could," said Aaron Hemp, owner of INC Systems, an IT firm in Swartz Creek, MI. "It was fascinating and encouraging to learn about all of the new technologies and where the industry is headed." Hemp continued, "At the end of the day, it's critical to get this knowledge and there isn't another source besides CEDIA that I can get this type of quality training on home technology that keeps me at the forefront of where I should focus my business."

80% of the electronic systems contractor registrants in attendance specified that they were responsible for final approval or making recommendations in their company's buying decisions. According to EXPO 2012 exhibitors the attendees were educated and high quality and the show delivered more leads than previous years.

"CEDIA EXPO is the premier event for the custom residential market," said Sean Goldstein, vice president of Marketing for Crestron. "We were thrilled to capture even more leads than last year. As a result, the introduction of our new line of shading solutions was a huge success."

"The dealers that are here are better educated than I'm used to seeing. I've definitely noticed a higher caliber of dealers. Instead of spending time introducing our brand, they're already familiar with how projectors work, and come with specific application questions," said Michael Bridwell, director of marketing for Digital Projection.

"Our booth traffic has been outstanding," said first time

exhibitor, Rob Fisher, vice president of marketing for ME Products. "We see this market as a growth opportunity for our company and I would recommend anyone who wants to break into this market to look at doing this show. It offers tremendous value not only in opportunities to connect with the right people but also in the variety of marketing opportunities offered through the show."

"We are thrilled with the result of participating at CEDIA EXPO," said Ari Supran, CEO of Dana Innovations. "This show is always about creating new business opportunities for us, and we will continue to be committed to this industry and to invest in developing innovations that expand the relevance of the custom installer."

"In the conversations we're having with dealers they're very optimistic about the future," said Jeff Kindig, vice president of marketing for AMX. "They're talking about specific deals and specific opportunities coming down. It's all been very positive conversations about real projects, and real market potential and opportunity."

Highlights of the event included the guided tours of CEDIA's Future Technology Pavilion which showcased technology solutions that brought together the fully intuitive home; a sold-out, standing-room only keynote presentation given by theoretical physicist, bestselling author, Dr. Michio Kaku; High Performance Experience Rooms; and a dedicated Security Solutions area.

For 2013, CEDIA EXPO will return to Denver Sept. 25-28, with the tradeshow floor open Sept. 26-28. CEDIA is an international trade association of companies that specialize in designing and installing electronic systems for the home. The association was founded in September 1989 and has more than 3,500 member companies worldwide. CEDIA members are established and insured businesses with bona fide qualifications and experience in this specialized field. For more information on CEDIA, visit the association's Web site at www.cedia.net. Follow @CEDIA on Twitter, find us on Facebook at www.facebook.com/CEDIA.Region2, or join the CEDIA group on LinkedIn. **RO**





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 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.

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Book Review

Powerful Phrases for Effective Customer Service

OVER 700 READY-TO-USE PHRASES AND SCRIPTS THAT REALLY GET RESULTS!

Yes, most service providers do their best to give every customer the best service possible. Yet, certain customers—rude and angry customers, overly analytical and utterly irrational customers, and customers who are too friendly for comfort, among them—tend to try the patience of even the most diligent and dedicated. In these less than ideal situations, frontline service professionals are often left feeling frustrated, stressed out, and scrambling for the right words to say. Or worse, they abruptly say something to a customer they'll soon regret.

"This is the book you'll keep handy," Evenson assures her readers. "It's the book you'll turn to when you need to know how to work with a challenging customer. It's the book you'll use when you realize you've said or done something wrong and need to know how to handle yourself differently in the future."

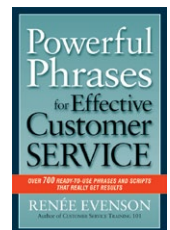
Powerful Phrases For Effective Customer Service presents over 700 phrases and scripts that have been thoroughly field-tested and proven to speak volumes with difficult customers of all kinds. In fact, it covers 30 different challenging customer behaviors and 20 tough situations provoked by service providers. And it's all broken down into at-a-glance, A-to-Z categories, (from What to Do When the Customer Is Agitated to What to Do When the Customer Is Wary) so that service providers can quickly find the right response to resolve their specific customer challenge or their own (including What to Do When You're Having a Personal Problem that Affects Your Work).

She gives you practice in using phrases that communicate welcome, courtesy, rapport, enthusiasm, assurance, empathy, regret, and appreciation to all customers, especially the challenging as well as pointers on reinforcing powerful phrases with attentiveness, a positive attitude, tone of voice and body language, ethical behavior, regulation of their energy level, and, when needed, calming techniques.

She maps out six critical steps for interacting with customers successfully, including Make a Great First Impression, Understand the Customer's Request, and Acknowledge the Customer. Included are Do This! sample scenarios that bring the phrases to life, as well as a clear, detailed explanation of Why This Works.

As every service provider knows from experience, dealing with customers isn't easy. Powerful phrases for effective customer service makes a difficult job less stressful and more rewarding. **RO**

Author: Renée Evenson has worked in customer service management and training for over 30 years, and writing about exceptional customer service for more than a decade. She has previously written Customer Service Training 101 (in its second edition) and Customer Service Management Training 101. Publisher: Amacom



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LG REIGNS SUPREME

With 33 cubic feet of storage space, LG's new Mega-Capacity Refrigerator is the **largest capacity French Door Refrigerator** on the market.* That means more food. More drinks. More of everything everyone wants from a fridge.

How'd they do it? Smart innovation, that's how. It's the same height and width as last year's model, with a redesigned icemaker and a streamlined layer of insulation. And best of all, it's backed by one of the industry's best warranties.

The new Mega-Capacity Refrigerator is the biggest indication yet that when it comes to product innovation, LG stands at the forefront.



To learn more about LG Refrigerators and join LG in the fight against hunger as we partner with the Share Our Strength and Food Bank For New York City charities, go to LG.com/US/refrigerators

The Linear Compressor is backed by a 10-year limited warranty, one of the longest in the business.



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33 cu. ft.
MEGA-CAPACITY
REFRIGERATOR



REPLACE A STANDARD, UPRIGHT REFRIGERATOR WITH TWO, STACKED 48-INCH SIGNATURE SERIES REFRIGERATED UNITS FROM PERLICK CORPORATION

NEW STACKING KITS FOR PERLICK'S 48-INCH SIGNATURE SERIES CREATE CUSTOMIZED, LIFESTYLE APPEASING REFRIGERATION



Perlick Corporation, a leader in total package bar equipment, beverage dispensing systems, and luxury residential undercounter refrigeration, introduces the ability to replace the standard, upright refrigerator with two, stacked Signature Series 48-inch refrigerated units. The addition of stacking kits to Perlick's product repertoire provides a customizable, lifestyle appealing approach to refrigeration.

"Perlick is dedicated to providing refrigeration solutions that are of the highest quality and that best fit the lifestyle and design needs of our customers," states Jeff Wimberly, vice president of sales and marketing for Perlick's Residential and Hospitality

Products. "In addition to emphasizing the structural integrity of Perlick's products, the new 48-inch stacking kits are perfect for our clientele because they provide the opportunity to replace the upright refrigerator with boundless options."

Stacking two Perlick 48-inch units provides nearly limitless choices and an impressive 24 cubic-feet of storage capacity — which is more storage capacity than most upright refrigerators. For example, for those who have a family, enjoy entertaining, and prefer to have wine readily available, a 48-inch Glass Door Refrigerator/Wine Reserve can be stacked atop the ENERGY STAR® Most Efficient 48-inch Freezer/Refrigerated Drawer. This configuration offers ample room to meet a family's food storage needs along with the ability to store up to 48 bottles of wine. And, the easily-accessible refrigerated drawers are the most durable drawers in the industry — each drawer can hold up to 200 pounds.

In addition to ample storage space, Perlick's products feature all-stainless-steel construction along with two-inch foamed-in-place insulation. These features, along with the new stacking kits, warrant the structural strength and durability needed to make stacking Perlick's 48-inch products possible. Perlick's stacking kits include anti-tip brackets as well as grill and mounting plates to seamlessly meld together endless options of stackable refrigeration. The new stacking kits retail for \$299. To learn more visit www.perlick.com or call 800-558-5592.

For more information about the stacking kit, Perlick's refrigeration offering, and to locate a dealer; visit www.perlick.com.

EUROCHEF USA INTRODUCES ILVE® COLLECTION

EuroChef USA, Inc.

EuroChef USA proudly announces the availability of the ILVE Collection of professional-grade cooking ranges in the US. The ILVE brand features the finest in exquisite Italian craftsmanship and technology and is a preferred brand worldwide for people with a passion for cooking and outstanding design. Since the 2008 introduction of the ILVE Majestic dual fuel series to the North American market it has quickly gained popularity and respect from consumers and retailers alike.

Now, EuroChef USA is happy to announce the expansion of the ILVE brand to include a Professional Series induction-top range and the Nostalgie Series of all gas ranges. "Our ILVE line represents over 35 years of tradition that emphasizes elegant design, powerful engineering and fine Italian craftsmanship.



Hand-assembled at the ILVE S.p.A factory in a small town near Venice, the brand is renowned for its superior design, innovation and functionality. EuroChef imports the ILVE brand to meet the needs of the customer seeking customization and professional quality in their kitchen. The collections are available in 8 colors, 3 trims and a variety of cooktop configurations and leg options- a range can be built to suit anyone's style," explains Melissa Haber, EuroChef's director of sales and marketing.

ILVE ranges come standard with luxury features such as full-size warming drawers and rotisserie on most models and are available in standard American widths of 24, 30, 36, 40, 48 and 60 inches.

Additional highlights include high BTU burners and an easy-to-use multi-function programmable oven with true convection and the industries only eight minute pre-heat. Chefs can choose from a variety of accessories that will enhance the enjoyment of cooking and complement any lifestyle. See the YouTube video: Nine Ways to Cook with ILVE® @ ilveappliances.com/video.php.

The full product line of EuroChef includes: dual fuel ranges, gas ranges, gas wall ovens, electric wall ovens, gas pro range tops, gas cooktops, electric cooktops and range hoods. The popular Verona and VeronaPro lines also offer optional accessories including a stainless steel range top griddle, maple cutting board, a variety of island trim and backguard options and rounded handles. Options in the ILVE line include chopping board, cast iron steak pans, steam and warming basins and gas barbeque grill, all which make the cooking possibilities endless. Color-matched range hoods are also available from the ILVE brand.

For more info, call (866) 844-6566 or visit www.eurochefusa.com.

HANSGROHE/AXOR CONTINUES TO ZERO IN ON UNIVERSAL DESIGN

ENRICHES EDUCATION & SHEDS SPOTLIGHT ON ITS OFFERINGS



AXOR[®]
hansgrohe

According to the World Health Organization (WHO), one out of seven people worldwide has a disability and the large baby boomer population is now entering its golden years. Always striving to meet the ever-growing and changing needs of its customers, Hansgrohe/Axor is keeping its commitment to provide a wide range of universal design products, adding more to the lineup each year. The company also

places much emphasis on universal design education. An increasing number of Hansgrohe/Axor team members are becoming Certified Aging in Place Specialists (CAPS). They, in turn, are educating customers about best practices and about the company's wide range of products that can be incorporated into a universally designed bathroom. An increasing number of Continuing Education Units will also be offered. Each product category has its own benefits.

| continued on page 18 |

Some of these categories include:

- **Single-Handle Faucets:** Single-handle faucets with lever type handles are ADA approved, allowing a person who has limited mobility of their hands to operate the faucet. Hansgrohe/Axor's wide range of single-handle faucets feature temperature limit stops that give users the option to set a maximum water temperature. This reduces the risk of scalding when the temperature of the water heater is set at a dangerous level.
- **Handshowers:** Hansgrohe/Axor offers handshowers in a variety of styles and with a wide array of features. Unlike a fixed showerhead, a handshower can be mounted at various heights through the use of a wallbar. This makes it possible to accommodate multiple people in a home, including users with special needs. Those in wheelchairs or who must rely on a shower seat can easily access the handshower and have full control of their showering experience.
- **Fix Fit Wall Outlet:** When a fix fit wall outlet is utilized with a handshower, it places control of the water closer to the person bathing, vital for individuals who must rely on a shower seat or chair. By mounting the fix fit near the seating area, or at a height that can be reached by a seated person, the handshower can be easily used by the bather. For aid-givers who must multi-task when assisting during the shower process, the handshower is easily accessible so can be turned on and off in a pinch, further easing the process for both parties.
- **Thermostatic Valves:** As in the single-handle lever style faucets, Hansgrohe's thermostatic valves have a safety feature that prevents the water temperature from exceeding the pre-set limit, making it safer for all bathers in the home.
- **Hansgrohe's RainBrain:** With its clear and intuitively operable touch screen panel, the electronic shower control system is incredibly user-friendly. The touch screen is ideal for individuals with limited use of their hands and fingers. They can operate the system by pressing the buttons with their finger, palm of their hand or knuckle. In addition, RainBrain boasts built-in safety features such as the preset temperature limit, as well as a "warm up" function. The latter clears the lines of any cold water that has collected in the plumbing lines. This helps to lower the risk factor in the bath as a blast of very cold water can cause a person to react quickly to get out of the way, potentially causing a slip and fall.

Hansgrohe/Axor plans to continue its commitment to serving those with universal design needs by further expanding its product options and continuing to provide education to its employees and customers. For more information on Hansgrohe and Axor, visit www.hansgrohe-usa.com or call 1-800-334-0455.



DACOR TEAMED UP WITH CHEF FABIO VIVIANI FOR PREMIER SAN FRANCISCO FOOD & WINE FESTIVAL

CELEBRITY CHEF FABIO VIVIANI HOSTED THE DACOR DEMONSTRATION STAGE & KITCHEN AT THE 2012 SAN FRANCISCO CHEFS FOOD, WINE & SPIRITS FESTIVAL

dacor

Dacor®, a market leader in the design, manufacture and distribution of luxury kitchen appliances, announced their

3rd consecutive year of participation at the 2012 SF Chefs Festival that was held in San Francisco's Union Square District.

As a platinum sponsor, Dacor hosted the festival in more events than one. Chef Fabio Viviani, season 5 star from Bravo's reality series Top Chef, hosted cooking demonstrations on the Dacor Demonstration Stage and also judged the SF Chefs Eater Chef Challenge.

"It's always a pleasure to be in San Francisco. I was excited to host the cooking demos on the Dacor Demonstration Stage and to judge some of the best chefs in town during Round 2 of the Eater Chef Challenge at the Dacor Demonstration Kitchen," says Fabio Viviani, owner and executive chef of Café Firenze & Firenze Osteria. Premiering as the choice appliance for SF Chefs will be Dacor's Renaissance® Wall Ovens and Cooktops. Fabio adds, "Dacor appliances are a favorite of mine and I use Dacor in my home. I love the quality and precise performance that I experience with my Dacor appliances and am pleased that our panel of chefs will be able to experience them here."

There were over 350 guests present for the event as well as 20 winery and 9 artisanal purveyors. As a surprise, Martin Yan and Jen Biesty came to the event and co-hosted alongside Fabio Viviani.

The SF Chefs Food, Wine and Spirits Festival is produced by the Golden Gate Restaurant Association, a non-profit trade association. SF Chefs will benefit several charities, including Meals on Wheels of San Francisco, the Center for Urban Education about Sustainable Agriculture (CUESA), the San Francisco and Marin Food Banks, La Cocina, and the Golden Gate Restaurant Association Scholarship Fund.

"Dacor was honored to be a premier sponsor of SF Chefs. It's a unique and innovative culinary event that | continued on page 20 |



[Distinctive 30" Dual-Fuel Range]



[Distinctive 36" Gas Cooktop]



[Distinctive 30" Wall Oven]

Are your customers ready for Dacor?

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[Visit dacor.com/ro for details]

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dacor

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has such a great impact on our local community," says Charlene Rouspil, manager of the San Francisco Dacor Design and Culinary Center. "We enjoy being a part of the inspiration that these demonstrations and events bring to both home and master chefs."

Visit www.sfchefsfoodwine.com for more information about the Saturday Afternoon Grand Tasting Event, the Eater Chef Challenge and the SF Chefs Festival. For more information on Dacor or the product series, visit www.dacor.com or contact Customer Care at (800) 793-0093.

NATIVE TRAILS' HAND-HAMMERED MIRRORS OFFER DISTINCTION FOR THE BATH AND HOME

MILANO AVAILABLE IN TWO FINISHES; DIVINITY SHOWCASES HAMMERED ALUMINUM'S UNIQUE BEAUTY



Native Trails, a leading brand offering sustainable, artisan-crafted fixtures and furnishings for the home, is extending the range of its signature, hand-hammered products, providing more finishes and offerings in accessories. The Milano Mirror is now available in two finishes: Antique and Tempered, and the recently introduced Divinity Mirror is made from hand hammered aluminum. Since its establishment some 15 years ago, Native Trails has earned a strong reputation for bringing eclectic sophistication to high-end kitchen and bath furnishings with evocative, authentic, artisan-crafted designs that incorporate recycled, reclaimed or green-certified materials.

Naomi Neilson Howard, founder and CEO of Native Trails remarks, "While our brand is most recognized for artisan-made kitchen and bath fixtures, our hand-hammered mirrors gracefully extend into other areas of the home, adding a textural element that warms and personalizes a space."

MILANO MIRROR

The brand's classic Milano Mirror is now available in Antique and Tempered finishes. Simple and rectangular in shape, Native Trails' Milano provides a functional piece in a beautifully executed form. The artisan-crafted, hand-hammered frame made from 100% recycled copper contrasts beautifully with the piece's beveled glass surface to create an elegant accessory that could be used in the bath, bedroom or other area of the home. Further showing its versatility, Milano can be hung either horizontally or vertically.

Available finishes include:

- **Antique**—celebrating copper in its most pure form, Native Trails' Antique finish is rich and complex. The dark, textural surface provides a striking option for the bath, complementing a range of woods as well as other metals.
- **Tempered**—this surface integrates a complex heating and cooling process that shows the remarkable mottling effect on the surface with unique coloration "splashes" punctuating each piece. The Tempered finish has a wonderfully variegated look; ideal for pairing with light and dark woods as well as classic and antique-style furnishings.

| continued on page 22 |



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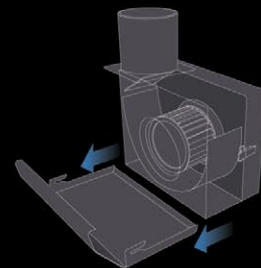


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Offered in three sizes, Small (measuring 20" x 36"), Medium (measuring 28" x 40") and Large (measuring 36" x 60"), Milano can easily suit a variety of spaces. Additionally, due to the 100% all-copper frame, its solid structure assures that it will last and perform over time. As with many Native Trails' products, Milano reveals the individual and unique artistry of the many hammer strikes used by artisans to create it.

DIVINITY MIRROR

Characterized by its luminous finish and clean lines, the Divinity Mirror pairs well with Native Trails hand-hammered lavatory sinks in Brushed Nickel. An assortment of shapes and sizes are ideal for use in the bathroom, bedroom, hallway or living area. Made of hand-hammered aluminum with inset beveled glass, Divinity's texture offers just the right touch of glimmer and interest, complementing the simple form. The mirror incorporates high quality, bright aluminum that is made from recycled content, highlighting the unique texture. Divinity is offered in small 22" X 28", large 28" X 34" and 25" diameter round.

For more information, contact Native Trails at 800-786-0862 or visit www.nativetrails.net.

AIRPORT HOME APPLIANCE HOLDS A PRIVATE SCREENING OF "THE ODD LIFE OF TIMOTHY GREEN" FOR A GROUP OF LOCAL MOMS AND FAMILIES



Airport Home Appliance in Hayward CA. held a private screening of the new Disney movie "The Odd Life of Timothy Green" in

August to reach out to moms and families living in the Bay Area in an effort to build their social community on and off the web. The movie starring Jennifer Garner is about a couple that was told they were unable to conceive a baby so they dream up their ideal child and write their ideas on pieces of paper which is buried in the backyard. With the imagination of Disney, a 10-year-old boy arrives at their door step, covered in dirt, and claims the family has his own. This movie is great for families and children of all ages.

Jennifer Garner has partnered with Frigidaire as their brand ambassador. In an effort to promote the movie Frigidaire sponsored a promotion and offered Airport Home Appliance consumers a chance to win premiere tickets and a Frigidaire Affinity washer and dryer laundry pair.

Airport Home Appliance's private screening was held in Hayward, California. The appliance retailer hosted 85 local participants for the film where they received gift bags and the chance to win a number of prizes. This event was the first of many that Airport Home Appliance will hold in an effort to expand community involvement.

<http://www.airportappliance.com>.



BED WEDGE PROVIDES SAFE, SIMPLE WAY FOR A REJUVENATING NIGHT OF REST

ADULTS AND CHILDREN SLEEP SAFER AND SOUNDER BY ELIMINATING COMMON DISRUPTIONS TO SLEEP PATTERNS



The Bed Wedge Company has announced a revolutionary new sleeping aid, The Bed Wedge, which enhances the way individuals sleep throughout the night.

It helps to eliminate tossing and turning, hard surfaces, lost pillows, and toys that slip between the headboard and mattress, interrupting a solid sleep cycle. The Bed Wedge also provides convenient pockets to store remote controls, eyeglasses and other important bedside items.

Acting as a barrier between the top of your mattress and the floor below, The Bed Wedge is constructed using a scientifically tested, high density polyurethane material specifically designed to work with two opposable forces (headboard and mattress). When used as instructed, The Bed Wedge forms a soft, comfortable barrier that prevents items from falling or becoming stuck between a headboard and mattress.

"Several times a night I would wake up because my pillow was disappearing between the headboard and mattress and interrupting my valuable REM sleep," said co-inventor and partner Ed Peisner. "After we created The Bed Wedge, we realized it instantly solved that and many more problems adults and children experience that ruin a good night of sleep."

The Bed Wedge is not only practical, it also increases safety! Each year, thousands of injuries are reported as a result of a child or adult reaching behind their mattress while trying to retrieve a lost item.

| continued on page 24 |



THE STYLE REVOLUTION BEGINS

INTRODUCING THE NEW SLATE FINISH

Inspired by the rich texture and appearance of stone, Slate is a matte finish that reflects modern color trends and naturally complements today's cabinet finishes and countertops – so the kitchen becomes the hero of the home. It's a timeless new finish that stands out with sophisticated style.

To learn more, visit geappliances.com



ADVANTAGES OF USING THE BED WEDGE:

- Avoid injuries from fishing items out of that difficult gap behind the bed
- Children won't lose their favorite stuffed toy to the "dead zone"
- Side sleepers never bump their elbows on a hard surface in the night
- Bedside items and emergency flashlights are always within arm's reach
- Prop yourself up more comfortably when reading or watching TV in bed

Available in a wide variety of colors and patterns and made to fit any bed size, The Bed Wedge will be a stylish addition to any bedroom.

"We LOVE our bed wedge! My 8 year old son will not sleep without his now. No more crying because something fell down between the bed and the wall! No more of me trying to reach my arm down there trying to find the thing," said satisfied customer Christie Goldenberg.

For more information or to see the product demonstration, please visit us at our website: www.mybedwedge.com or call 818.888.0220.

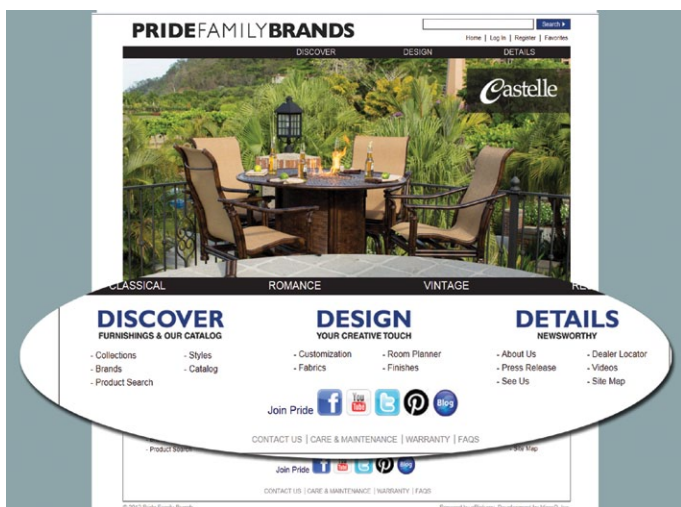
Family Brands, an award-winning designer and manufacturer of cast aluminum casual furniture, announced the launch of its newly revamped website for its luxury brands. The clean, user-friendly site provides information and imaging platforms for Pride Family Brands' product lines with extensive options for engagement by retail partners and their consumers.

"With the vast majority of our business encompassing custom orders, the new design tools within the site enable customers to view the furnishings just as they will appear in a lifestyle setting," said Steve Lowsky, president, Pride Family Brands, Ft. Lauderdale, Fla. "Our new site not only offers customization within individual product images; but also offers an exclusive opportunity for entire rooms to be manipulated down to the complete collection details."

The newly designed site's easy to use customization tool enables for the manipulation of finish, fabrics and cushion treatments. The website redesign, which was coordinated by Pride Marketing team, also includes a custom room planning feature for retailer and consumer use. "Customers are able to fit pieces into their room plan and eliminate any concerns with regard to size and placement prior to placing the order," said Lowsky.

Also debuting in the 2012 Pride Family Brands' website is a new format for images and information of the company's full line of furnishings including the new 2013 introductions. The site allows the visitor to get as in-depth as they choose with easy to navigate information divided into three sections; Discover, Design and Details.

For more information about Pride Family Brands' distinguished lines of casual furniture visit www.pridefamilybrands.com or contact 954-735-9800.



PRIDE FAMILY BRANDS, OUTDOOR FURNISHING DESIGNER-MANUFACTURER, LAUNCHES WEBSITE UPGRADE WITH EXPANDED RETAILER DESIGN AND MARKETING TOOLS

PROVIDING THE LATEST TECHNOLOGY IN PRODUCT DESIGN AND CUSTOMIZATION IMAGING, PRIDE FAMILY BRANDS ANNOUNCES THE LAUNCH OF ITS TOTALLY UPGRADED WEBSITE

PRIDEFAMILYBRANDS Included in the new online portal are enhanced design features from complete lifestyle furnishing layouts to outdoor room planning for use by casual retailers and consumers. Pride

THERMADOR SURVEY REVEALS INDUCTION COOKING AT THE HEART OF TODAY'S KITCHEN REMODELS

SURVEY ON KITCHEN REMODELING FINDS THAT MORE PEOPLE ARE LOOKING TO MAKE INDUCTION COOKTOPS A PART OF THEIR NEW KITCHENS AS THEY LEARN ABOUT ITS COOKING AND SAFETY BENEFITS

Thermador | Interest in kitchen remodels is heating up as both kitchen and bath remodeling projects have increased by 17 percent from two years ago, and a new study conducted by luxury appliance brand Thermador reveals what today's American kitchen remodelers are looking for more than ever is induction cooktops. | continued on page 26 |

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Look to EuroChef for a beautiful Italian crafted appliance that is perfect for any kitchen!

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Gas Pro Range Tops | Gas Cooktops | Electric Cooktops | Range Hoods



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Thermador conducted a nationwide survey of homeowners ages 35-54 who are looking to do a kitchen remodel over the next 12 months. Of the respondents, 88 percent are interested in experiencing new induction cooking technology after learning of its many benefits—including generating heat faster, adjusting temperature instantaneously and its being safe to the touch. Additionally, the survey found that a whopping 93 percent of these homeowners would purchase an induction cooktop if cost were not a factor.

“More thought than ever is being put into the American kitchen as it continues evolving into the centerpiece and main gathering place of today’s home,” said Zach Elkin, director, brand marketing of Thermador. “With home improvements being top-of-mind among today’s homeowners, the kitchen comes to the forefront. As more homeowners discover the many benefits of induction cooking such as its ease of use, safety and striking design potential, this technology is set for a bright future — a future Thermador is prepared for.”

Of those surveyed, 60 percent say a contemporary/modern kitchen style is most appealing to them in their remodel — a style that certainly lends itself to the sleek look of an induction cooktop.

Induction cooking is perhaps the most revolutionary advancement in cooking technology, efficiently using magnetic fields to directly heat cookware along a flat surface. Up to 90 percent energy is used, compared to less than half when cooking with gas. This means cooking with instantaneous and evenly distributed heat across all cookware. Besides the performance, an induction cooking surface remains cool to the touch, translating to safer cooking and no more burned-in spills. Induction technology is at a fever pitch today with innovations such as the Thermador Freedom® Induction Cooktop, the world’s first induction appliance to eliminate conventional cooking elements and offer one limitless cooking surface with an intuitive touchscreen interface. Home cooks now have the flexibility with a cooktop that intelligently recognizes cookware size, shape and position to deliver heat without boundaries. The cooktop debuted this year at the International CES in Las Vegas to rave reviews and currently is available at an MSRP of \$5,499.

“A product like the Freedom Induction Cooktop does more than offer limitless cooking possibilities, it also does the same for kitchen design,” said Malte Peters, senior product manager for Thermador. “Kitchen designers are quickly gravitating to this revolutionary appliance because of its instant appeal and natural ability to quickly become the centerpiece of any luxury kitchen.”

For more information please visit www.thermador.com.



LEGGETT & PLATT INTRODUCES NEW BRANDING AND PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT INSPIRED BY EXTENSIVE RESEARCH SHOWING CONSUMER DEMAND FOR BEDROOM HAVENS

Leggett & Platt INCORPORATED The Leggett & Platt Adjustable Bed Group, the market leader in the category with more than 30 years of experience in the design and development of adjustable bed bases, has just completed a year of in-depth consumer research that points to the growing desire amongst Americans to transform their bedroom into their personal haven. The research found that adjustable beds with enhanced functionality and modern aesthetics make sense for these target consumers as a lifestyle-enhancing product that enables them to live their lives in both comfort and style.

- A vast majority of target consumers (almost 90%) are keen to have a tranquil master bedroom retreat that envelops them in a serene atmosphere where they can relax, unwind and enjoy their favorite activities
- Over 70 percent of target consumers read and/or watch television in bed, and over half have internet access in their master bedrooms

“With the category experiencing unprecedented growth over the last few years, we wanted to reconnect with our consumers and uncover which factors are most important when they consider a new bed,” said Jay Thompson, president of the Leggett & Platt Adjustable Bed Group. “We found that the prevalence of home technology in the bedroom and a desire to obtain a higher level of comfort fueled consumers’ interest in | continued on page 28 |

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adjustable bed bases. Armed with this new insight, we intend to employ this 'Bedroom Haven' trend to inspire new product development and position the brand to appeal to a larger group of target consumers."

In the first step toward satisfying the Bedroom Haven trend, the Leggett & Platt Adjustable Bed Group is rolling out a branding campaign that will include direct-to-consumer marketing and support materials for retail partners. Introduced at the August 2012 Las Vegas Furniture Market, the new branding employs a new tagline, "finely crafted tranquility", and is executed in stylish, tranquil colors, fonts and copy. This tagline captures the heritage of Leggett & Platt's dedication to quality craftsmanship, with a focus on reaching contemporary style-savvy consumers. The new branding will be used online and in advertising, in-store materials, and product packaging.

An all-new consumer website, www.LPadjustablebases.com, will provide engaging and in-depth content to educate consumers on the options and benefits of Leggett & Platt adjustable bed bases. As research found that at least 75 percent of target consumers will try an adjustable bed base in-store before purchasing it, the new site will include a user-friendly store locator function to make it easy to find Leggett & Platt products at retail. For retail partners, a robust website will house easily accessible marketing support materials at www.LPadjustablebasepartners.com.

The branding initiative is designed to reinforce the market leader's 30-year history of providing superior products and underscore a refueled commitment to ongoing product development. Armed with fresh consumer insights and strong consumer and retail marketing programs grounded in research, Leggett & Platt aims to introduce a stream of new products beginning in 2013 that will capitalize on this Bedroom Haven trend to target consumers seeking an aesthetically-pleasing adjustable bed base made with high-quality craftsmanship. For additional information, please visit www.LPadjustablebases.com.

REMODELING TRENDS FROM COTY AWARDS REVEALED

MATERIAL REUSE, SUBWAY TILE, AND POCKET DOORS—STANDOUTS FROM THIS YEAR



The National Association of the Remodeling Industry's (NARI) Contractor of the Year (CotY) awards program not only identifies the top remodelers in a variety of project categories but also reveals remodeling trends seen nationwide.

These trends show up frequently in projects. NARI remodelers share why.

RECLAIM, REUSE AND REFURBISH

Several CotY-winning projects mentioned reusing items in the home and/or installing reclaimed items. Christopher Risher, CR, of RisherMartin Renovations based in Austin, Texas, is no stranger to this trend, with 90 percent of his clients requesting reuse to some degree in remodeling projects.

"I think people try to save as much as possible; they don't want to replace everything," Risher says.

In the Austin market, homeowners often make environmentally-conscious decisions, plus the housing stock is older and many people are interested in preserving the historical charm of their homes.

Risher's 2012 South Central Regional CotY award-winning | continued on page 30 |



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Steam Laundry



project in the Residential Addition \$100,000 to \$250,000 category featured reclaimed long-leaf pine flooring, which matched the addition to the original home's flooring throughout.

"We found the flooring through a salvage company in Dallas, and it took quite a bit of work to make it match the original," Risher says. This included separating the damaged pieces, using twice as much wood filler to seal imperfections, sanding and staining.

Despite the extra effort, Risher says there is benefit. "It's environmentally beneficial, and it lasts longer than new pine flooring because reclaimed pine comes from old-growth trees that were more dense."

Other CotY-winning projects featured different ways of reuse such as cabinetry, reclaiming barn doors and repurposing a dresser into a bathroom vanity.

John Albrecht, president of Albrecht Wood Interiors Inc., based in Centerville, Ohio, has had a similar experience with clients' wanting their project to have that antique-look. As a custom cabinet-maker and woodworking expert, Albrecht has noticed a trend toward the distressed wood interiors and away from the sleek, contemporary look.

"Old is new," Albrecht says. "Clients are consistently asking me to repurpose an old piece of wood into something else or build something new and distress it to look old."

The process of distressing new wood to look old basically means banging it up and creating dents to resemble imperfections. This can be done with a variety of tools, including hammers, chains or rocks. Stains and varnishes can be used to give the wood color depth, especially enhancing the dents.

One of Albrecht's clients scours flea markets, looking for just the right pieces for her home. Barn beams run across ceilings or are transformed into furniture, tree trunks become the base of desks and rail carts are made into coffee tables.

As a custom cabinetry-maker for the last 30 years, Albrecht finds the trend interesting and challenging. "It's definitely harder making something look old—it could take me a day-and-a-half to tear something apart."

OTHER DESIGN TRENDS FROM THE 2012 COTY AWARD PROGRAM:

- **Pocket doors:** Albrecht says these are often used by designers in areas where space is too restricted to use a swinging door. But he warns clients to include them in areas with limited use. "They're not built as well as they used to be, and a standard 2x4 wall-width doesn't allow for a wide enough gap," he says. He adds that once they fall off their track, it's hard to fix without tearing open part of the wall and casing.
- **Sunrooms:** Many projects this year included sunrooms, which is a great way to increase living space inside and outside. New technologies allow for use of sunrooms all year.
- **Subway tile:** Fifty percent of Risher's clients are putting subway tile

into projects. "Clients like the look of it," he says. Also, subway tile is known for its durability and modern aesthetic. It comes in a variety of sizes and colors to match any kitchen or bath.

- **Spray foam insulation:** Remodelers know that as long as walls are being torn apart, it's a good idea to add extra insulation to increase efficiency. CotY winners this year used a lot of spray foam to insulate projects—keeping warm and cool air in and reducing energy costs in the long-run.

NARI is the source for homeowners seeking to hire a professional remodeling contractor because members are full-time, dedicated remodelers who follow a strict code of ethics that observes high standards of honesty, integrity and responsibility. Visit the NARI.org site to get tips on how to hire a remodeling professional and to search for NARI members in your area.

HANSGROHE ENHANCES ITS LINEUP WITH NEW SOLUTIONS FOR THE SHOWER

IDEAL ADDITIONS FOR BATHROOM REMODELS AND HOME SPAS

hansgrohe

Hansgrohe is making a big splash in the shower and rolling out several innovative new products for 2012. These introductions are sure to be a game-changer when it comes to remodeling. A global leader in this category, the brand is bringing a trio of sleek and unique showerpipes stateside. In vogue in Europe, the exposed systems are elegant, easily serviceable and perfect for renovation projects. Hansgrohe is also expanding its popular Raindance® collection, which will now include a new handshower. All Raindance models are infused with Hansgrohe's patented AIR technology. New pressure balance trims with diverters round out the offerings.

Ideal for remodels and retrofits, showerpipes are beginning to take shape in the U.S. Highly popular internationally; Hansgrohe North America sees them as a strong area for growth. Their chic modern retro look and unique outside-the-wall placement are just some of the benefits. Because showerpipe



| continued on page 32 |

ZEPHYR

GENERATION NEXT

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OF VENTILATION



Introducing the industry's first ever range hood powered by brushless DC motor technology. Next Generation Europa has been re-engineered with Zephyr's proprietary DCBL Suppression System™ to usher in a new era of kitchen ventilation.

With the state-of-the-art DCBL Suppression System™ built-in, Next Generation Europa range hoods deliver a powerful yet pleasantly quiet cooking experience while barely using 14-watts of energy. The breakthrough Bloom HD LED light bulbs evenly distribute halogen-level light on the cooktop below while requiring only 3-watts of energy per bulb.



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25,000 HOUR LIFETIME
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The result is a range hood that uses only 26 watts and provides you nearly inaudible ventilation to match everyday cooking styles. That's less energy than just the halogen light bulbs on an AC range hood.

- 77% Less Noise
- 77% Less Energy Consumed
- 30% More Power
- 26-Watt Energy Consumption
- Exceeds Energy Star™ Requirements

With Next Generation Europa, Zephyr once again re-imagines what a range hood can be. And what else it can do. When it comes to kitchen ventilation, think Zephyr first.

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WINNER OF
THE 2011
GOOD DESIGN
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thermostats are exposed, they are easily installed and maintained. Truly offering the “whole package,” all shower components are included in one product, making it easy to stock and a stress-free purchase for the consumer. Hansgrohe is adding to its current offerings with the following new models:

RAINDANCE SELECT® SHOWERPIPE

Part of Hansgrohe’s ComfortZone concept, which advocates for ease of product use in the bath, this avant-garde showerpipe has a smooth metal silhouette that is designed with the user’s comfort in mind. It also boasts an integrated exposed thermostat, which doubles as a handy shelf. Blue and red markings on the thermostat clearly indicate hot and cold and all the connections are cleverly concealed within its anti-scald chrome housing, offering peace of mind in the shower. The included Raindance Select 150 handshower with generously-proportioned spray face fits perfectly with the showerpipe’s design aesthetic and functionality. The name “select” says it all, allowing users to “select” spray modes at the click of a button via the ComfortZone Select function. Available sprays include: a soft Rain AIR, Caresse AIR, and MIX. Hansgrohe’s existing Raindance E 360 AIR showerhead provides overhead water flow. It was designed in keeping with the body’s natural contours, thereby providing maximum coverage. The showerpipe and all components come in chrome or a chrome/white dual finish.

RAINDANCE 180 SHOWERPIPE

For modern meets traditional tastes, the Raindance 180 Showerpipe features a Raindance S 180 AIR 1-jet showerhead and a Raindance S 100 AIR 3-jet handshower with Rain AIR, Balance AIR and Whirl AIR spray modes. An angle-adjustable holder also pivots left and right, slides easily and locks into place. Its built-in service stops make it ideal for commercial, hospitality or large scale residential projects as it allows you to shut off water at one

water point and not disable all water points in a building. A tub/shower model is available as well; all models are offered in chrome or brushed nickel.

CROMA GREEN SHOWERPIPE

The sleek-looking showerpipe offers anti-scald protection and includes the Raindance S 150 AIR Green 1-jet showerhead and the Cromo E 100 Green 3-jet handshower with Full, Pulsating Massage and Intense Turbo spray modes. An angle-adjustable holder pivots left and right, slides easily and locks in place. Easy on the wallet, this showerpipe is easy on the environment, as well.

Thanks to its low-flow components and its integrated diverter, which prevents simultaneous use of handshower and showerhead, it is also compliant with California’s CalGreen Code, the strictest in the nation. A tub/shower model is available as well; all models are offered in chrome or brushed nickel.

RAINDANCE RAINFALL AIR 180

Available in a chrome or white/chrome dual finish, this showerhead has two spray modes, a body encompassing Rain AIR and a Rainflow Waterfall. It integrates Hansgrohe’s proprietary AIR technology, which injects air into the water in a 3 to 1 ratio. Developed in the Hansgrohe Spray laboratory in Schiltach, Germany, this system delivers a voluminous rain of soft, air-infused droplets instead of the needle-like, “spaghetti” sprays of

conventional showers.

NEW PRESSURE BALANCE TRIMS WITH DIVERTERS

To complement Hansgrohe’s already robust shower system lineup, the company is offering new trims in the S, S/E and C lines for use with its industry favorite iBox Universal Plus rough. The S and S/E styles work well with modern looks and the C is best for classic decors. Each allows for temperature and on/off control for two outlets. For more information visit www.hansgrohe-usa.com. **RO**



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DESIGN LAB



CONCEPTS STIMULATE THE SENSES

ELECTROLUX

DESIGN LAB

FINALISTS UNVEILED

The tenth edition of the annual Electrolux Design Lab competition challenged industrial design students to consider how a fuller, sensory experience can be incorporated into everyday, home appliances. Ten young designers, chosen from a field of 1,200 entrants, will present their concepts to a jury of esteemed professionals at the final event in Milan, Italy.

The ten finalists, who represent Australia, Brazil, China, Denmark, England, New Zealand, Norway, Poland and Spain, will present their concepts and prototypes to a jury consisting of award winning chef and restaurateur Davide Oldani, renowned designer Dante Donegani, popular design blogger Kelly Beall and Senior Vice President Design at Electrolux, Henrik Otto.

"As we celebrate the tenth year anniversary of Electrolux Design Lab, we wanted to give the students a brief that challenged them to create holistic sensorial experiences," said Otto. "The ten concepts that have reached to the Design Lab 2012 finals are an overview of the kind of creative design thinking that surprises and challenges us and creates discussion about the future."

The final event will have taken place at the Triennale Design Museum in Milan on October 25, 2012. The jury will evaluate entries based on the sensory experience it creates and will award the first prize of a six-month paid internship at an Electrolux global design centre and 5,000 Euros. In addition, they will award a second prize (3,000 Euros) and third prize (2,000 Euros) at the competition.

THE FINAL CONCEPTS

1: AEROBALL

COUNTRY: POLAND • DESIGNER: JAN ANKIERSZTAJN
SCHOOL: UNIWERSYTET ARTYSTYCZNY W POZNANIU

The Aeroball is a revolutionary way to improve the spaces in which we live. In tiny bubbles that float and hover, the Aeroball cleans and filters the air while hovering in place. When filtration is not enough, the Aeroball also comes in scented varieties. Designed with inspiration from nature, the glowing shell of the sphere absorbs light during the day and radiates at night, a delicate indoor firefly always working to improve the air that we breathe. Space is such a valuable commodity these days so the Aeroball works to purify and make the environments we live in more precious and beautiful.

2: EASYSTIR

COUNTRY: NORWAY • DESIGNER: LISA FRODADOTTIR LÅSTAD
SCHOOL: NORWEGIAN UNIVERSITY OF SCIENCE AND TECHNOLOGY

The Easystir stirs your perfectly planned dinner for you so your hands are free to make the most of life. By utilising magnets that react to your induction stove the Easystir will literally save you time and money by never needing to be charged, batteries replaced or plugged into a wall socket. The stirring speed can be adjusted easily by the user; while the Easystir adjusts itself to fit into almost any pot. It's compact, dishwasher safe and can be stored as simply and | *continued on page 36* |



neatly as any other kitchen utensil. While Easystir is working hard in the kitchen you are free to spend more time with your friends and family.

3: ICE

COUNTRY: SPAIN • DESIGNER: JULEN PEJENAUTE
SCHOOL: UNIVERSIDAD POLITECNICA DE VALENCIA

ICE sheds new light on the world of cooking. ICE can not only be used as a basic lamp with adjustable brightness or colour to fit the mood of any dining occasion. It also has an "Experience" mode used to enhance your meal by adding interactive backgrounds that react to your movements and create dynamic links between objects on the table. When placed above any cooking or dining area ICE can scan its surroundings and assist the user in creating the best meal to suit any occasion. ICE can scan ingredients you've already chosen to cook and give suggestions on meals that can be made from those ingredients. The user can also access a vast database of recipes and ICE will guide you every step of the way. ICE is a great way to learn and experience a whole new world of cooking in your own home.

4: MO'SPHERE

COUNTRY: MEXICO • DESIGNER: YUNUÉN HERNÁNDEZ
SCHOOL: CENTRO DE INVESTIGACIONES DE DISEÑO INDUSTRIAL- UNAM

The excitement and adventure of creating something new is what makes cooking fun. Mo'Sphere allows the user to experiment with and experience new flavours and sensations through the exciting world of molecular cooking, which up till now has been dominated by celebrity chefs and Five Star restaurants. This molecular cooking appliance makes use of physical and chemical reactions during cooking. The result? Flash freezing, foams, frosts, gelés and even cotton candy. With Mo'Sphere your kitchen becomes a place of exciting new creations and tastes the like you've never known.

5: SMARTPLATE

COUNTRY: UNITED KINGDOM/ROMANIA • DESIGNER: JULIAN CARAULANI
SCHOOL: COVENTRY UNIVERSITY

Share the recipe of sound with SmartPlate. SmartPlate is the world's first intelligent dish that physically understands food and transforms it into sound, completing the circle of senses by which we understand what we eat. The plate wirelessly connects to your mobile device, then by measuring different aspects of your ingredients it identifies food and precisely attaches musical notes, harmonies and rhythm to each ingredient. The user can actively listen, compose and interact with recipes of sound, sharing the experience in the most intimate way: by music.

6: SPUMMY

COUNTRY: BRAZIL • DESIGNER: ALEXANDRE DE BASTIANI
SCHOOL: PONTIFÍCIA UNIVERSIDADE CATÓLICA DO PARANÁ

The Spummy is the future of flavour creation. Using nano-technology the Spummy creates edible foam with any flavour or combination of flavours you can imagine. With endless possibilities of flavour combinations this is the perfect tool for those looking to impress. Spummy is inspired by Ferran Adrià, the inventor of flavoured foam that helped win him Restaurant of the Year four years in a row. With the Spummy the future of 5 star cuisine is possible in your own home.

7: TREAT

COUNTRY: AUSTRALIA • DESIGNER: AMY MON-CHU LIU
SCHOOL: QUEENSLAND UNIVERSITY OF TECHNOLOGY





6

Tree + Eat = Treat. The Treat seamlessly combines classic food storage techniques, such as vacuum sealing, with modern remote, mobile technology for the perfect combination of freshness and convenience that is more important than ever in our increasingly busy lives. The Treat has a clever and intuitive way of communicating and warning you when your food is expiring by first changing colour as the food ages and finally dropping from the tree when the food has expired. You can even access the Treat with a mobile app and tell it to preheat your meal before you even get home. Treat yourself to fresher food and more of your own valuable time with the Treat.

8: IMPRESS

COUNTRY: NEW ZEALAND • DESIGNER: BEN DE LA ROCHE
SCHOOL: MASSEY UNIVERSITY



7

How many times have you put leftovers in the fridge and forgotten about them, only to come back a week later and find them spoiled? Impress completely transforms the way we refrigerate. Impress is a refrigeration wall that holds your food and drinks for you out in the open and not behind closed doors so you will always remember the lunch you prepared for work or find that midnight snack with ease. Also, Impress refrigerator does not refrigerate when there is nothing in it and uses less power when there are fewer items pressed into it. Waste no more leftovers, waste less space and save more money with Impress.

9: MEMORY

COUNTRY: CHINA • DESIGNER: WENYAO CAI
SCHOOL: GUANGDONG INDUSTRY TECHNICAL COLLEGE OF CHINA



8

9

A small but important part of many people's lives is the intimacy of having a barista who remembers who you are and more importantly how you have your coffee. Memory is a coffee maker that uses hand print recognition to make the right cup of coffee for the right person. Whether you want weak, medium or strong coffee or maybe you prefer an espresso to a ristretto. Any way that you might think the perfect cup of coffee is made, Memory will remember every time. You tell it what you want, it scans your hand and the next time you want that exact same cup of coffee Memory is ready and waiting to serve it to you.

10: TASTEE

COUNTRY: DENMARK • DESIGNER: CHRISTOPHER HOLM-HANSEN
SCHOOL: TECHNICAL UNIVERSITY OF DENMARK



10

Don't you wish you had the sophisticated palette of a professional chef? The Electrolux Tastee is a taste indicator that is used when cooking to assist the chef in bringing out the flavours in the meal. The Tastee is the shape and size of a regular spoon but with one main difference, The Tastee tastes for you. Using receptors based on human taste buds, the Tastee tells you what you need, what you don't and maybe even something you would never imagine. Tastee helps you make the perfectly balanced, flavourful meal for you and your family to enjoy.

ELECTROLUX DESIGN LAB

Design Lab is a global design competition that began in 2003 and invites industrial design students and recent graduates of industrial design to compete for a six month paid internship and prize money by submitting ideas for appliances with a particular theme. This year, the challenge was to consider how a fuller, sensory experience can be incorporated into everyday home appliances. These ten designers presented their concepts to a jury of professionals in Milan, Italy, in October, 2012. For additional information, please visit: www.electroluxdesiglab.com. **RO**

Retailing: The Ultimate Pro Sport

If you are a sports fan, this is a great time of year. As I write this, we're in the midst of the baseball playoffs, and the football season is well under way. The NBA pre-season games start shortly. If only the puck would drop we would have all four of America's favorite spectator sports playing at the same time.

I often think that running a business is much like managing a major league franchise team.

Right off the bat, both depend on good teams. The best ones take home the Stanley Cup or win the World Series or the Super Bowl. In Denver this season, we're learning that it takes more than one great player to win games. Peyton Manning may turn out to be the best quarterback we've had since John Elway, but he needs someone to catch his great passes, a good line to protect him and a strong defense to keep the other team from scoring.

I continually hear how difficult it is for retailers to hire good people.

You need good offense and defense. Your world-class sales team needs back up from a professional delivery and installation crew and merchandisers who can assure that they have the right quantities of the right products purchased at the right price. How well your entire team performs—on a given day or in a whole season—will determine if your business grows or stagnates.

You need stats to see how your players perform. Just like a player's batting average or ERA, you need to know your associates' gross margin, average ticket and extended warranty penetration. Successful franchise owners track their companies' inventory turns and GMROI. They understand cash flow and balance sheet ratios.

Your scoreboard may be year-over-year

growth or increases in accessory or warranty sales. And of course, bottom line profits are a clear indicator of on-field success.

Retail and professional sports both require that their players are well-trained and conditioned. Even Little Leaguers practice long before they take the field in a game. In our stores, though, too often we wait until game time—when the customer walks in—to practice our trade.

College teams go to great lengths in recruiting the best players to their teams. Yet John Wooden, famed UCLA basketball coach, was famous for teaching his new team members from the beginning—in his case, he taught them how to put on their socks and tie their shoes before they got to dribble the ball. To run your plays well, your team needs to continually practice and update their skills. Your sales associates need to know how to approach well informed customers in today's digital world. They need increased product information but also updated selling skills. They need to know how to ask questions to determine which products will work well for their prospects and to really listen to the answers.

And what about coaching? The list of best all time coaches includes greats like Bear Bryant, Vince Lombardi, Phil Jackson, John Wooden, Joe Torre, Red Auerbach and Dean Smith. We all have our favorites.

Lombardi is still much-quoted. "Practice does not make perfect. Only perfect practice makes perfect." Or "Once you learn to quit, it becomes a habit." And my favorite "The achievements of an organization are the results of the combined effort of each individual."

Dean Smith was known for helping his players meet their personal goals and to

ensure that they graduated from college.

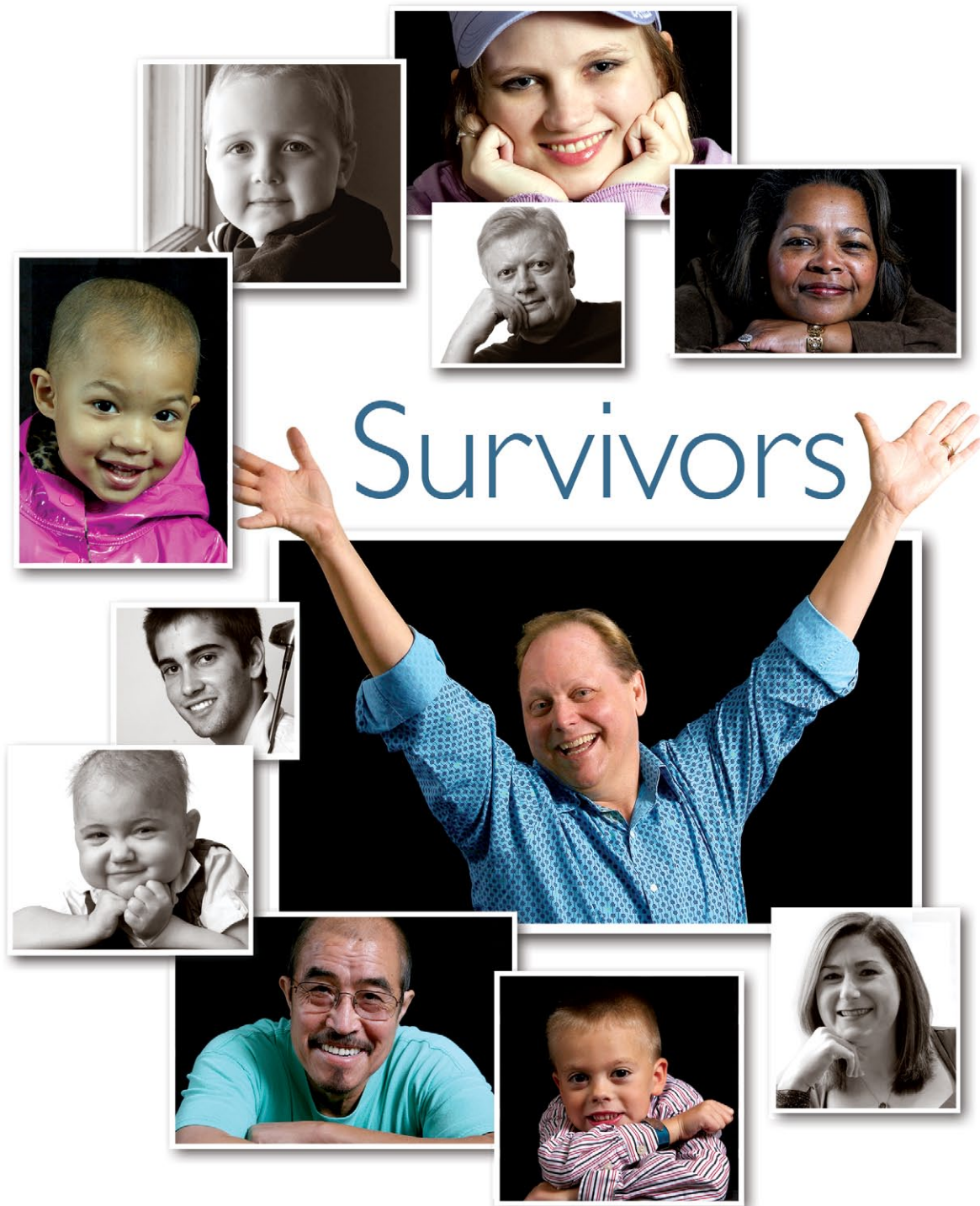
John Wooden admitted to an absence of "coaching" during a game. He always had his teams prepared well ahead of time. His well-known 12 Lessons of Leadership—and my comments on them—include:

- **Good values attract good people.** As a manager, part of your responsibility is to build a strong team. Strong values will help you attract the kind of folks you need.
- **Call yourself a teacher.** If you want to be a successful leader, be a teacher, a role model. Show people how to do their jobs well.
- **Little things make big things happen.** There are no silver bullets. Kaizen teaches us to find 100 things to do 1% better.
- **The carrot is mightier than the stick.** Wooden believed encouragement, not punishment, improved his players.
- **Make greatness attainable by all.** The team is only as strong as its weakest link. When the team wins, everyone wins.
- **Seek significant change.** Set your goals high and you'll achieve more.

So take to your field, your court, your ice, or your diamond as a coach, team manager or franchise owner would. Create your own playbook. Recruit the best players. Give them the tools they need. Reward them for success. Then go out and win week after week. **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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Follow The Leader— and Leave the Rest of the Pack Behind

Amazon.com is a master at courting—and keeping—customers. It builds everything around the customer and has a better grasp of the power of the customer experience than any other company in the world. You would do well to study Amazon's focus on the customer and to do everything in your power to emulate it.

Let me share with you the experience my friend, Vicki, had with Amazon, when she placed an online order for a Kindle Fire HD. Amazon immediately confirmed the order, then sent two more emails the day the Kindle was shipped. The first provided the tracking number and estimated delivery date, the second—sent at the same time and the same day—provided Vicki with information she would need to immediately begin using her new Kindle once it arrived, including how to upload music and photos, connect with Facebook, and download music, books, movies, and TV shows.

"I was blown away," Vicki says. "My new Kindle arrived a day earlier than anticipated and, once I took it out of the box and turned it on, I discovered that it already contained the book library and other items from my previous Kindle. I was up and running in a matter of minutes."

Amazon's focus on the customer, combined with its focus on speed and price, resulted in 2011 sales of \$41 billion, a whopping 41 percent increase over the previous year. Amazon has more than 164 million customers, offers more than 20 million products, and has been rewarded

with an increase of more than 397 percent in its stock during the past five years.

I recommend that, if you are going to emulate a company, emulate the best company in the world. Read everything you can get your hands on about Amazon and how it uses technology and people to provide a customer experience that is unparalleled. Let me share with you a quick look at how Amazon does that.

It starts with Amazon founder Jeff Bezos. Three statements he made during an interview with Fortune magazine sum up his winning philosophy:

- "We will continue to focus relentlessly on our customers."
- "We believe the principle competitive factors in our retail business include selection, price, and convenience, including fast and reliable fulfillment."
- "We maintain a dogged focus on improving the shopping experience."

Amazon's focus on the customer is apparent during meetings with upper management. During the company's early years, he would place an empty chair in the meeting room, forcing those attending to think about the crucial participant who was not at that meeting—the customer. Today, specially trained employees sit in that chair and react as they think Amazon's customers will to the discussion taking place and the decisions being made.

Bezos has attributed Amazon's success, in part, to its commitment to determine what its customers need and then working

backwards to meet that need. For example, he says, the company's new products, such as the Kindle, were defined by customers' desires, not by engineers' tastes.

Price is also at the forefront of Amazon's commitment to its customers, which translates to customer value. Bezos has said there are two kinds of companies: One tries to figure out how to charge more, the other tries to lower prices and charge less. Amazon, he says, falls into the second category.

Bezos also places great importance on word-of-mouth advertising, which means that, for a company the size of Amazon, very little money is spent on advertising. He prefers, he says, to provide customers with service that is so amazing that those customers tell everyone they know about it.

What is your business philosophy? Do you focus on your customers? Do you work to provide them an experience that will keep them coming back to you? What are customers saying about their experiences with your company?

Follow the leader—follow in Amazon's philosophical footsteps—and you not only will leave the rest of the pack behind, you will realize success beyond your wildest dreams. **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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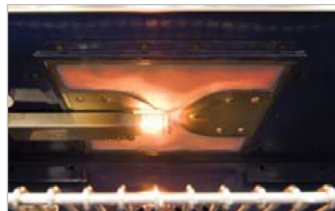
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The Five Elements to Small Business Success

I think the toughest part about keying in on the 5 steps or elements of small business success is what elements to eliminate. I started the list with 16 key components and started to refine the list. I looked at the most successful businesses that I have worked with over the years, winners of the many award programs I have judged, and stores that received some type of media coverage. The following is my list of the top five.

I must warn you that you probably will disagree with some of the selections. I say that because I disagree with a couple of them. I know that might sound strange, but the criteria I established and the grading system every component was subject to eliminated some of the guesswork or personal favorites. However, after a closer review we realized that these five cover all of the marketing components for success. Therefore, accounting, operational management, and buying might not be in the top five but are definitely present in most winning stores. The steps listed scored higher.

1. Know what makes you different—

Competition is so tough today there is no room for “also-rans”. You must be the best in class company. Customers talk about what’s different, businesses are built on word of mouth advertising, and word of mouth advertising is based on, “That’s different”.

Customers will travel farther, spend more, and tell more people about a positive experience that is different. The problem comes in that the business doesn’t know why they are different and or what the customer thinks that makes them different. Many times that little thing can be a big thing in the eyes of the customer.

2. Understand who the customers are and who the customers aren’t—

A good retailer can spot their customers miles from their stores. Why? Because every successful store has their unique attitudes, taste levels, and buying habits that must appeal to a market segment. It is more than demographics today although the good stores can also pinpoint their customer that way. Today, it is more lifestyle choices aka Psychographics, defining the customer by personal preferences.

3. Knowing how to reach your customer base—

“The greatest marketing pieces are worthless if the right customer doesn’t see it.” The biggest challenge we have as business people is knowing the preferred method to communicate with our customers. Is it the telephone and if so what number? Are they Facebook people or are they on LinkedIn? If you send them a newsletter, will they read it? Do they live by texting or are they chatting on Google? The successful businesses are constantly asking their customers how they should reach them. This is basic and might not sound like much but it really is the essence of business building.

4. The returnability quotient—

The Returnability Quotient was originally designed and saved for just websites. It determined what was on that site that would make you return again and again. Was there a tool, an app, a widget, a table, or a survey that would make people return again and again to store websites? However, it also applies to the store experience. The service and the way it is delivered. It is the merchandise and the way it

is presented. The interior advertising and displays that are the backbone of the shopping experience, the schedule of classes offered by the store, any special events, and even celebrating community activities are part of a store’s Returnability Quotient.

Returnability is not just for the web anymore. It is for everything we do or don’t do. It is the reason customers keep coming back.

5. Understanding likability and selling skills—

This should be #1 because the single highest scoring feature about winning stores is their ability to sell what they sell. Winning stores know how to move merchandise. They know how to sell and how to make multiple sales effortlessly. They look at selling as service not selling. They feel as if they are doing a great job for their customers by exposing them to as much merchandise that would be right for them. We all understand that to a certain point but what is with Likeability? The first step in selling anything is selling ourselves. The best way we do that is by becoming more likeable.

Let me just share an opinion. The more you read and analyze the five components, the more you begin to see how accurate they are. If not, let me know what you think. **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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Triple-Booked is Gridlock: You Ain't Going Nowhere

Looking back over the past few years, many retailers have been trying to play it lean and mean. The temptation is to work longer, harder, faster because we imagine if we can just hold out for a bit longer, we'll have this crisis licked. We're escalating at warp speed working into the wee hours. Tempted to double- and triple-book your calendar? Do you imagine if you can just master the multi-task you can make it happen?

1. Resist the urge to be more urgent—get control of your priorities. Most of the time when people want to improve their time management and effectiveness, it's really a case of being better able to prioritize. What really is the most important thing? And perhaps even more importantly, what criteria are you using to identify what's important? What will give you the biggest bang or have the widest reaching impact? You simply must breathe and push back on your own compulsion to get revved up by adopting a methodical and systematic way of identifying key priorities.

2. Get out of the weeds—you can't see the skyline from the muck. One of the biggest challenges to managing significant change and difficult times in business is to resist the gravitational pull of day-to-day tasks and operations. As a leader, your responsibility is to try to hold two thoughts at once—the big picture and the work itself—and this is not always an easy task, especially if you feel like your organization is facing business-threatening issues. Trust me, you won't make it better by mucking about in the trenches, even if you've been-

there-done-that and think you can do it with your eyes closed. Your ability to remain calm, confident and patient, even in the face of trouble, will differentiate you among leaders and give you bigger payoffs in the end.

3. Hand over the reins—you can't and shouldn't do it all. Delegation is a sign of trust, and also a sign that you have prepared your employees and staff to take on additional responsibilities and have both the role and the sense of satisfaction to control the process. Set the outcome and be clear about what you want—then hand it over! Micromanaging or excessive follow-up defeats the purpose of delegating. Plus, since micromanagement is really about a lack of trust, if you find yourself engaging in it, then you need to examine some possibilities: what would it take for you to feel comfortable handing something over and trusting that the person or team will see it through? What could you proactively provide so that your delegat-ee can be successful?

4. Ask for what you want—don't wait for them to read your mind. Honestly, how much time could you save if you did not have to repeat instructions or requests? If you find that this is impacting your time significantly, don't assume you have a slew of employees who need hearing aides or new job assignments. Look at yourself first: did you clearly ask for what you wanted, providing enough detail and specifics that they could fulfill your request or complete the project successfully, on time, with minimal errors or distractions?

Save yourself the frustration of feeling disappointed or angry because you're not getting the results you want—did you ask for it specifically?

5. Look for the white space—stay ahead by stepping aside strategically. For leaders, white space is the space you need to carve out for yourself to think, plan and then act strategically. Whether this is an hour before or after the workday, during your commute, a half-day once a month—it doesn't really matter what structure and logistics you choose, it's that you do it. Often, this seems so counterintuitive to what we think we're supposed to be doing with our sleeves rolled up mucking about (see above) but in reality you are absolutely in control of your time and your ability to carve out that white space you desperately need. Make it happen for yourself.

Those who weather the business chaos storm gracefully are those who are willing to question the status quo of their own behaviors, their own assumptions and make changes accordingly. That will get you closer to the results you want—triple-booking and maxing out your calendar will only get you stressfully stuck in the mud. **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. www.libbywagner.com





Wish

by Andrew Bannecker

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Sparks of Improvement in the TV Business

Get Your Share!

For too long the TV business has faced disappointing trends in both average selling prices and in profitability. The margins have achieved levels that cause even the biggest retailers to question their investment in the business. But there are encouraging signs of improvement.

ASP and Margin stabilization—Both areas reflect positive changes from multiyear negative trends. Margin has stabilized, helped by manufacturer MAP/UPP programs and by more conservative promotions from larger public retailers resulting from their own profitability challenges. Average selling prices are helped by the shift to larger screen sizes along with vendor programs which encourage reduced discounting in advertising. These two metrics are key in any business and critical to improving the health of the TV business. We have a long way to go to regain prosperity in the TV business, but for the first time in years there is reason for optimism.

SIGNS OF A HEALTHIER TV BUSINESS

- **Screen Size Shift**—There have always been sweet spots in the TV business. At certain prices points, strong growth occurs and these trends have not changed significantly over time. Remember the breakthrough pricing of pre-HD big screen rear projection TV? Customers were suddenly willing to bring those huge bulky boxes into their living rooms. We are now at that point for 50" to 60" flat panel screen sizes. The strong growth reflects the customer's recognition of the extraordinary value. Seeing substantial unit growth in the most profitable segment of the

business is encouraging.

- **Resurgence of Audio**—The days of ultra high margin amp/tuner separates and phono cartridges are gone. But fortunately, so are the days where \$199 low margin HTiBs were the hot ticket. Audio is coming back in several profitable ways. Sound bars to enhance TV sound. HTiB systems with credible price points and performance. And home theater receivers with state of the art 9.2 THX surround sound. All have compelling margins to perk up the total ticket profit when added to the TV sale.
- **Accessory Opportunities**—One of the additional benefits of selling higher ticket, larger screen sizes is that the big screen customer has proven to be more likely to invest in related products and accessories at the time of sale. From furniture to screen cleaners, receivers to sound bars, these stronger margins can really move the needle of your overall TV department margin mix.
- **Vendor Profit Oriented Programs**—Unlike many programs in the past, the good news is this new crop of MAP/UPP programs are showing signs of working. This is not by luck, but due to several factors which are encouraging to those seeking a profitable TV business. Like most situations, it takes a crisis to create real change. When virtually every retail channel from Big Box to Independent has determined that TV margins are a non sustainable business model, the vendor community has reacted out of self preservation. They need healthy retailers to show and sell their better featured goods. The

vendor's recognition of the value of retailers with showrooms to display, demonstrate, and sell value added features has also led many vendors to create programs that seek to prevent the undervaluing of their products on the internet as well.

LEVERAGE THE OPPORTUNITY!

Increase your benefit from these encouraging trends in the TV business:

1. Focus your assortment, inventory dollars, and marketing on the high growth and more profitable 50" and larger sizes.
2. Understand and support vendor MAP/UPP programs. Be part of the solution, not the problem.
3. Ramp up your assortment in the profitable Audio category. Offer the customer the full range of products including Sound Bars, better featured HTiB, and Component Audio.
4. Sell the full basket of related products and accessories. The larger screen customer is already more likely to buy. Make sure you have a prominently displayed compelling accessory assortment and your sales team is well trained to make the full solution sale. **RO**

Doug Schatz is Vice President of Electronics Merchandising for Nationwide Marketing Group, a leading buying and marketing organization for independent retailers.
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Attracting a Younger Clientele

For most independent furniture retailers there is one prime demographic—the 65+ generation. While it is great to be number one with any consumer segment, owning seniors as your primary customer is a concern for a couple of reasons. For one, seniors are entering retirement and are past their prime earning years. Secondly, seniors do not move frequently and have already made most of their major furniture and appliance purchases.

As we recover from the severe economic conditions of the last four years, we will see an improved housing market and a new generation of furniture shoppers will begin to enter the marketplace. How do we attract this younger demographic and convince them that Main Street Furniture is a great place to furnish their home? Especially ones that are entering the market, have disposable income and will become that long-term loyal customer like their parents and grandparents.

For one, retailers need to determine what this younger demo likes in terms of style and price points. I often visit furniture stores and the floor doesn't look much different than it would have 15 years ago! Unfortunately, many retailers find it easy and comfortable to buy from the same suppliers and reps, and not attempt to move beyond their product comfort zone.

Retailers should make a conscious effort to look at new resources. Attend the furniture markets to look at new introductions and take advantage of show

specials. But how often do we make a concerted effort to look for new lines at furniture markets that can bring a fresh look to our store and attract a new type of customer? Attending these furniture markets is also invaluable for display ideas for retailer showrooms as well. Manufacturers spend millions of dollars each year creating these fabulous showroom displays. Snap shots with your phone or jot down ideas to revisit later.

Also take a close look at your marketing and advertising efforts. Do they reach this younger customer? For example, if you are advertising in the newspaper, you can bet that you won't reach a younger clientele, who gets most of its news from the Internet. In fact, you can apply this to nearly every demographic with the exception—you guessed it, the 65+ crowd. Younger people are prolific TV watchers, but often buzz through commercials on a DVR. Even worse, they download shows from Hulu or iTunes, which have zero local commercial content.

Take a look at your Website. What does it offer the younger customer? A decade ago, having your address, hours and handful of product images might have been adequate. Today, customers want to see design ideas, product options, specifications, interactive room settings, and easy-to-navigate product catalogs.

Social media, like Facebook, Twitter, and YouTube, are all extremely effective marketing tools that the furniture industry

has started to embrace. The issue is how (and how not) to use these tools to reach the new generation of customers.

If you do some searching on Facebook, you can easily find numerous furniture retailers that effectively use the medium to connect with a younger customer. You can also see furniture stores that do such a poor job that it becomes counterproductive. These retailers then alienate the very target they strive to reach. It's also important to realize that Facebook is not another advertising vehicle in the traditional sense. Too often retailers feel that every post needs to make an offer, shout out "Sale!" or promote the latest new introduction. Experts on social media say this is absolutely the wrong course to take.

Think of all social media pipelines as going to a party or class reunion. If all you did was talk about your upcoming sale or new bedroom collection, you would soon be standing alone talking to no one. Use these as a way to connect! Your customers want to know about you, your employees, your community involvement, design trends, product education, and, finally, that you are having a Tent Sale next weekend. **RO**

E. Michael Allen, Brand-Source VP of home furnishings, has been with the organization for 15 years and overseen the growth of the category to one of the largest in the country.



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The Retail Observer

AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1970

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The Emerging Rental Nation

Rent-to-Own in an Evolving Economy

Time magazine published a fascinating article in its September 24 issue entitled “Rental Nation: Welcome to the ‘Sharing’ Economy.” The premise of Roya Wolverson’s feature is that renting is no longer a “humdrum affair” for low-income families who must scrape by on used appliances and dated furniture. Instead, as Americans are coming out of the Great Recession, they are shifting their thinking from “the ideals of ownership and what they want out of the dollars they spend.” Wolverson writes that, “this new wave of spenders have come to see renting, rather than owning, as the surest path to achieving their dreams.” Sociologists are referring to this consumer trend as the “sharing” economy.

Unlike previous recessions, where people temporarily toyed with renting essentials only for the duration of the economic downturn, we are seeing signs that renting is becoming a more viable lifestyle choice, particularly among the younger generation. As more people discover the advantages of renting movies via Netflix, iTunes or any one of the dozens of other online entertainment providers, the notion of renting has become more acceptable. “The migration to more—flexible living has seeped into all facets of life,” writes Wolverson, and this trend makes renting a more appealing option.

The emergence of this “sharing” economy places the rent-to-own industry in a favorable position to expand its customer base. For more than 20 years, the rent-to-

own industry has been espousing the many benefits of its transaction, including its inherent flexibility, which is right in line with the concept of the “shared” economy. With rent-to-own, the customers, not the dealers, have the control—the option to rent for any period of time, return the product at any time or purchase it at any time. Additionally, a rent-to-own customer can stop renting and later re-rent the same or an equivalent product, and if the customer wants to acquire ownership, the sum of all rental payments, including those from the first renting period, count toward the purchase.

Another reason rent-to-own is enticing in the “shared” economy is that there is no long-term commitment in the transaction. A rent-to-own customer is only committed to rent for a week or a month with no further obligation, or they can continue to rent merely by making another payment. Renting affords a customer more variety than he or she could afford by buying retail; for example, a customer can return a brown sofa for a green one at any time during the rental period with no penalty.

“As an evolving industry, we must do a better job of explaining the many benefits of renting,” says Bill Keese, executive director of the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations, the national trade association of the rent-to-own industry. Keese is adamant that rent-to-own is a great business model for America’s evolving 21st-century economy. “These are interesting times where we are seeing a

convergence of economic and social forces that have the potential of changing the way American consumers view their world,” Keese says. “The potential for the rapid expansion of the rent-to-own industry cannot be underestimated.”

In order for the rent-to-own industry to capitalize on this changing economy, Keese believes it is imperative that the industry closely and realistically examines key operational factors, including store locations, store design, merchandising and advertising. “A revolution in retailing is going on in America today and that means our industry needs to pay attention and adjust accordingly,” Keese contends. “Business-as-usual is not sufficient to prepare us for the new economy and the ways in which consumer behavior are evolving. We must modernize our look, feel and image in order to better present our unique transaction to an expanding customer base. In order to entice consumers to take a new look at rent-to-own, we must first embrace a new, updated perspective of our business,” Keese says. **RO**

Bill Keese has been the executive director of APRO, the national trade association for the rent-to-own industry since 1989. He can be reached at his office in Austin Texas at APRO, 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, TX 79703. His email is bkeese@rtohq.org. APRO’s website is www.rtohq.org.





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BrandSource Appliance App Beats Competition and Group Forms Alliance with NHFA

BRANDSOURCE APPLIANCE APP RANKS AS MOST DOWNLOADED APPLIANCE APP

BRANDSOURCE APPLIANCE APP BEATS COMPETITION FOR MOBILE CONSUMER ENGAGEMENT, CONSISTENTLY RANKING WITHIN THE TOP TWO APPS FOR IPHONE, IPAD

BrandSource reports that its new Appliance App for iPhone and iPad is the most downloaded appliance app for consumers, attracting more shoppers than any other organization, including independent groups and big box stores. The easy-to-use, feature-packed appliance app is designed to change the buying experience for customers and help BrandSource members remain competitive as increasing numbers of shoppers reach for their smartphones as part of the shopping and decision-making process.

"We're creating an ecosystem to help both customers and BrandSource members have information immediately in the palm of their hands and this is a huge, game-changing advantage," said Bob Lawrence, CEO of BrandSource. "No more running to the counter with a salesperson and looking things up on a computer, no more rifling through books or brochures. It's all right there in the palm of their hands."

The BrandSource Appliance App offers 12,000 appliance skus including product names, images, features, pricing and rebate information. Product comparison charts display up to three items at a time. The BrandSource Appliance App also features store locators with driving directions and email or telephone contact information

According to Greg White, BrandSource Appliance App developer, increasing numbers of consumers are relying on apps over websites for information.

"We're seeing a very interesting dynamic," White said. "Just five years ago, we didn't even have the iPhone. Look at how it's changed people's lives in a short time. Our younger customers are early adapters, so they see the value of the BrandSource Appliance App very quickly. Older customers also appreciate the app because once they try it, they find that it's easy, convenient and seamless. Most importantly, the customer gets information quickly – and when they're in the mood to buy. It's a win-win for everyone involved."

BRANDSOURCE FORMS ALLIANCE WITH NATIONAL HOME FURNISHINGS ASSOCIATION PROVIDES FINANCIAL SERVICES TO MEMBERS

NHFA MEMBERS AND AFFILIATES NOW ELIGIBLE FOR INVENTORY FINANCING THROUGH BRANDSOURCE FINANCIAL

BrandSource has formed an alliance with the National Home Furnishings Association (NHFA) to provide NHFA members and its affiliates with inventory financing services through BrandSource Financial, its wholly owned wholesale finance company.

BrandSource Financial will provide central billing services for retailers purchasing products from a list of approved home furnishing manufacturers. Under the program, manufacturers will be guaranteed payment in a designated timeframe with extended repayment terms or "early-pay" discount options offered to NHFA members.

"This is a terrific opportunity for all NHFA members and affiliates, and it's mutually beneficial to both vendors and retailers," said Steve DeHaan, executive vice president, NHFA. "Even though we're in the early stages of implementation, feedback from the retail community has been overwhelmingly positive."

NHFA affiliates, which include the Western Home Furnishings Association (WHFA), Southeastern Home Furnishings Association (SEHFA) and Southern Home Furnishings Association (SHFA), will also be able to take advantage of the programs that BrandSource Financial has to offer.

"We're very pleased to offer BrandSource Financial to NHFA members and provide them with highly competitive inventory financing services," said Bob Lawrence, CEO of BrandSource. "This is a phenomenal opportunity and we encourage NHFA members and their affiliates to take full advantage of what BrandSource Financial has to offer."

National Home Furnishings Association is the nation's largest organization devoted to home furnishings retailers. NHFA's membership comprises 2,000 corporate entities representing nearly 5,000 stores. Its mission is to help members operate highly profitable businesses that provide an exceptional level of service to the consumers who buy their furniture. **RO**



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TRADE SHOWS, SHOWROOM OPENINGS AND SPECIAL EVENTS

COAST WHOLESALE APPLIANCES



①



②



③



④



⑤



⑥



⑦



COAST Wholesale
APPLIANCES

Innovative Products for Builders, Designers & Home Owners

1. & 3. Golf Tournament sponsored for the Canadian Home Builders Association Central Okanagan—Samsung and Coast Wholesale Appliances on the course with CHBACO

2. Kelowna Chamber of Commerce Event held in the showroom—Chamber of Commerce Business After Hours at Coast Wholesale Appliances

4. Golf Tournament fundraiser for the BC SPCA. Caption "Dent the Dryer for the SPCA!" We set up on the tee box, golfers made a donation towards the purchase of a new set of laundry for the local SPCA and were given a chance to do some damage to our dryer!

5. In-store event for the Boys and Girls Club Race for kids. Teams of 4 had to race to different checkpoints and complete a task to advance. "How fast can you load the dishwasher?"

6. Center Stage at The "REAL" Home Show 2012 featuring Coast Wholesale Appliances

7. Coast Wholesale Appliances and Jennair on the course at the annual CHBACO Golf Tournament

www.coastappliances.com

Re-Think, Re-Market & Re-New Planning for 2013 with Nationwide

Finally, the presidential election is behind us and we can all get back to work, including our elected officials. After all, the holiday season is upon us and we have only a few weeks to wrap up 2012 and get to work on 2013. Nationwide Marketing Group's independent retailer members are reporting that their sales team and customers are appearing more confident and feel that a brighter economic future lies ahead.

More than that.....

- Many Nationwide Marketing Group (NMG) members are attracting and experiencing more floor traffic than the industry trend!
- Many NMG members are reporting significant growth in sales, while maintaining or improving their achieved gross margin contribution year after year!
- And yes! Many NMG members are taking industry share, growing dollars and average selling price (ASP) beyond the industry trend.

Why are many NMG Members making more sales and generating more profits?

What changes did many NMG members make in their business that allows them to prosper or even thrive, while other retailers only survive?

There's a long list of Nationwide Marketing Group member exclusive programs and benefits that have proven to assist members to "Sell Smarter and Compete Tougher," but here are a couple of things you might really like to know about what Nationwide offers their members:

- While many of the most astute independent retailers are members of Nationwide Marketing Group - every member, in every market, benefits from NMG's Member aggregate \$12 Billion plus purchasing and marketing power. NMG's merchandisers know that for a product to be of outstanding value, it needs to be feature rich and offer exceptional significance for the consumer. All of this, while making a profitable and successful marketing opportunity for the member retailer. NMG's merchants develop strategic yet focused product assortments that include a compelling list of market competitive price points, value rich models designed to "Draw" consumer traffic and attention. NMG's merchants and vendors also develop two or more additional models within the assortment to assure consumers can also choose a more feature rich "Escape"

model, typically within a price point or two and an innovative fully featured "Sell" model. The narrow focused "D-E-S" assortment model means bigger retailer profits!

- That's just the beginning! Nationwide and Nationwide's Vendor Partners work together to create compelling PrimeTime! specials off invoices and Cash Back Now instant savings. Including after PrimeTime! promotional period buy in programs on many of these same "D-E-S" assortment models to help members seed the right variety on their showroom floors to help achieve enhanced margins.

Still yet, consumers have a lot of great shopping options. Nationwide Marketing Group has developed the industries most robust consumer promotional offerings including group exclusive consumer rebates and interest free/ 0% consumer finance programs for 6, 12, 18 and 24 months and even longer 36 and 48 month programs at low group subsidized costs. When members use the group exclusive and group funded rebates they are able to offer compelling consumer values and tremendous savings after rebate consumer net pricing - while often achieving their desired average selling price and profit margin.

Did you follow that financial trail to profitability and customer traffic?

- Negotiated Draw, Escape and Sell Assortments (D-E-S).
- Supported PrimeTime! buy in programs.
- Driven through to the consumer with group exclusive and group funded mail in rebates and interest free financing.

With the Holidays and the New Year quickly approaching, it's time to create a plan to win for 2013. It's time to re-think how you market your business! It's time to do new things that will drive profitable traffic to you. It's time to rekindle past customer relationships and create new customer relationships. It's not just time for a new coat of paint, but a completely fresh look at how you take your store and business to market. Give your business the opportunity and more profit!

Don't miss out on these exciting offers and programs with Nationwide Marketing Group - learn more at PrimeTime! at the Venetian in Las Vegas March 3-6, 2013.

Register today at www.nationwideprimetime.com. **RO**

2013 •

UPCOMING EVENTS

• 2013

THANKSGIVING—NOVEMBER 22

2013

JANUARY

7-10

NATIONAL APPLIANCE SERVICE CONVENTION 2013

Sheraton Miami Airport Hotel

MIAMI, FL

www.psaworld.com

8-11

INTERNATIONAL CES CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW

Las Vegas Convention Center

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.cesweb.org

14-20

LIVING KITCHEN 2013

Koelnmesse Fairground

COLOGNE, GERMANY

www.livingkitchen-cologne.com

22-24

2013 NAHB INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS SHOW

Las Vegas Convention Center

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.buildersshow.com

28- FEB 1

WINTER 2013 LAS VEGAS MARKET- GIFT+ HOME – VEGAS KIDS

World Market Center

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.lasvegasmarket.com

FEBRUARY

10-12

VDTA/SDTA CONVENTION & SHOW

Las Vegas Convention Center

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.vdta.com

17-20

BRANDSOURCE NATIONAL CONVENTION & EXPO

Marriot World Congress

ORLANDO, FL

www.brandsourceconvention.com

26-28

DIGITAL SIGNAGE EXPO 2013

Las Vegas Convention Center

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.digitalsignageexpo.net

MARCH

2-5

INTERNATIONAL HOME + HOUSEWARES SHOW

McCormick Place

CHICAGO, IL

www.housewares.org

3-6

PRIMETIME! BY NATIONWIDE

Venetian Hotel

LAS VEGAS, NV

www.nationwideprimetime.com

6-9

APPLIANCE SERVICE TRAINING INSTITUTE "ASTI"

Disney Coronado Springs

Walt Disney World

ORLANDO, FL

www.asti.us

9-12

MEGA SPRING NATIONAL CONVENTION

Gaylord Texan

DALLAS TX

www.megagroupusa.com

13-16

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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.

MEGA Group USA Unveils Mattress of Consumer Electronics Plus

MEGA Group USA launched a new mattress gallery program and hosted a record breaking number of consumer electronics dealers at their bi-annual convention in Louisville, KY.

In partnership with Serta, The America's Mattress Gallery program was unveiled to the more than 700 attendees at the September 6-9 show receiving an overwhelming response. The 1,200 square foot display consists of (16) sku placements including popular brands iComfort, iSeries, Sleep To Go, Dreamhaven Elite Perfect Sleeper, and Dreamhaven products. More than half the sku's are MEGA Group USA exclusives offering strong retail price points from \$299- \$999 giving the members generous margins.

The America's Mattress Gallery program is a turnkey package offering over \$35,000 of products and displays. Qualified candidates receive launch support, training, business analytics, advertising, local field support, and a \$2,500 Advertising Show Special Bonus.

"This gallery program provides our members yet another competitive advantage in the market place," stated Jerry Honea, MEGA Group USA COO and furniture division manager. "We have already identified over 30 qualified candidates for the gallery and expect to start installing very soon."

In addition to the launch of the mattress

gallery, MEGA Group USA brought members the most comprehensive line of consumer electronics offerings in the history of their conventions. MEGA added two new consumer electronics suppliers to their roster of more than 85 vendors. D&H Distributing and the Powerhouse Alliance both debuted in Louisville.

Powerhouse Alliance, leaders in custom installation and home automation, constructed several CEDIA-like home theater rooms as well as an outdoor patio featuring weather proof A/V components. D&H Distributing (\$3B annual sales) unveiled an overwhelming assortment of consumer electronics, computers, laptops and tablets, gaming and accessories, and a wide variety of seasonal and housewares products. MEGA Members enjoy fast overnight order delivery and high operational efficiency which translates into competitively priced products.

"Partnerships with companies like Powerhouse Alliance and D&H are just smart for our members as they help drive new, profitable categories," stated Jim Sendrak, MEGA Group USA Consumer Electronics division manager. "It excites us to constantly bring these types of programs to our members and impact their bottom line."

Long standing MEGA partner ALMO Distributing was also on board leading with Samsung, Panasonic and Sharp Electronics

combined with Frigidaire, Samsung and other appliances.

Web Marketing remained a strong focus at MEGA's convention this year with the launch of their revolutionary MEGA RetailDeck application and WebFronts Basic Version 3.0.

Formerly called MEGA Merchandiser™, MEGA RetailDeck™ brings together all the moving pieces a retailer needs to efficiently merchandise, price, tag and sell their floors.

"MEGA RetailDeck gives my sales force the tools they need to be even more successful," stated Ed Bergmann of Bergmann Appliance and TV. "This application provides real time vendor and competitor pricing, complete product specifications, allows them to print high quality, professional price tags as needed, and even creates QR codes for our tech savvy customers. We now have it all!"

Constantly enhancing their WebFronts offering for their members, MEGA Group USA also launched a new version to their Basic package at the annual convention. WebFronts Basic version 3.0 was unveiled that included new designs, enhanced SEO, free mobile site support, upgraded product menu, and an enhanced image gallery. The strength and effectiveness of the MEGA's Webfronts package can be evidenced by the number of members that employ the programs. More than 1000 members are currently using

ss Gallery Program, Extensive Line s More at Annual Convention

WebFronts Basic sites and over 250 utilize WebFronts Premium Sites. Webfronts Premium Plus now includes over 700 vendors, 400,000 products in the content database, free mobile site support, an enhanced catalog and product pages.

"Since launching my MEGA WebFronts website, I have experienced additional store traffic and sales have increased by at least 10%," continued Bergmann. "MEGA understands how important it is for us to be able to aggressively compete on the web. WebFronts not only allows us to compete, but positions us ahead of our competition, including the big boxes!"

Not only did MEGA launch many vendor partners and programs in Louisville, but the national buying group also released several new business services. The business services division of MEGA announced a Product Protection Program (PPP) for their furniture members. The program features an increase in coverage, easy claims process and value pricing. In addition, MEGA added a furniture service repair vendor partner to the PPP program that makes dealers more profitable while satisfying their customers.

An experienced and trained sales force is crucial to the success of any retail outlet. In order to help MEGA members better train their customer service and sales representatives, the buying group announced a new MEGA U on-line

training module. This 4 part process is designed to improve sales, business management, customer service and personal development at an efficient low cost with the opportunity to earn the cost back upon completion of the one year process. The program requires staff certification which adds a level of confidence for the MEGA member.

Other new business service launches included a new program with Profit Management Promotions to assist dealers in their efforts to create positive long-term promotional events and special show only deals with GE Capital, Why Not Lease It, Capital Solutions and TCFIF.

MEGA's ongoing line of business services programs that were also on the show floor assisting members with their business needs include but were not limited to MEGA Insurance Services, delivery tracking, fleet performance and signage.

"Assisting our members with strategic and cost efficient means to run the operations of their business is a priority for us," stated Mallory Parker of MEGA Group USA. "These new services are designed to help them grow their business while spending less time on 'running the business' and more time 'with their customers.'"

This year's convention in Louisville featured two key note speakers. Don Hutson, co-author of NY Times Best Sellers *The One Minute Entrepreneur* and *The One Minute Negotiator*,

addressed the crowd Friday morning sharing his techniques for maximizing retail sales performances in competitive times. He also conducted several smaller workshops throughout the show.

Friday afternoon's keynote speaker was Dr. Stephen Happel who addressed the hot topic of "Election 2012, what it means for the US economy over the next two years." The three day show also included breakout sessions, furniture, consumer electronics and appliance industry updates and numerous training opportunities. And in usual MEGA Group USA style, members were treated to a fun evening including dinner and dancing to the band *Live Revival*.

"I was extremely pleased by the success of the Louisville show," stated Rick Bellows, president of MEGA Group USA. "Our vendor partners expressed that attendance and dealer participation was the best they had ever seen. We had great response to the appliance manufacturers product training, furniture roundtables featuring peer reviews and discussions, and outstanding attendance at all the workshops and sales mentoring sessions. We now look forward to our spring show in Dallas, March 9-12 next year!"

For more information on MEGA Group USA and their leadership in Web Marketing, visit www.megagroupusa.com. **RO**



Finding and Training Service Technicians

How do you find and train qualified service technicians? I recently found myself in need of a technician and utilized several local resources to find qualified candidates. I also found a great resource to assist me in training new service technicians.

The first thing I did was reach out to a counselor at a local vocational high school and advertised the job opportunity on Craigslist.com. Although I did receive several responses from interested candidates that led to follow-up calls and interviews, none of them were the right fit for the position.

I then reached out to an employment agency that specialized in finding temporary and direct hire employees. It couldn't have been easier! After meeting with an agent and explaining what I was looking for in a candidate as well as the type of compensation my company was willing to offer, they immediately went to work for me. The agency handled job postings and pre-screened candidates to make sure they met the minimum requirements. I then received information on those candidates who passed the first round of screening. When I was interested in a candidate, the agency setup the interviews for me. However, I was responsible for the background checks and the drug screening tests; which I found out was a benefit covered under my insurance.

Unfortunately, the first person I hired did not work out. The employee wasn't showing

up to work regularly so I let them go and explained all of this to the agency. They immediately started looking for a replacement and found just the right candidate that has been working for me for the past four months. Overall, it took the temp agency a couple of months to find the first candidate then about three more months to find the second technician. The cost for the agency's services was a



percentage of the employee's first year wages and I was only charged for the candidate that worked out.

The service technician I hired had no prior appliance repair experience but completed two years of a sheet metal apprenticeship. So for training, he rode alongside one of my senior technicians who has over 35 years of experience. I also found an excellent online training resource by Uncle Harry of Raker Appliance Repair (www.rakerappliance.com).

This program was setup for people who want to start their own appliance repair business but also has resources employees can use to train their own team. After talking to Harry Raker himself, I decided to purchase one of their comprehensive training programs. The cost was around \$2,500 and other than a small fee for online access, I will not have to repurchase any other materials to train new technicians.

The program came along with a fully loaded iPod with 200 training videos. These videos demonstrate various step by step repairs. So, if the service technician is on a call and gets stuck s/he can rely on these videos to help get them through the repair or go online to get more help to diagnose problems. In addition, the program includes color manuals that teach tricks-of-the-trade with easy to understand on the job photographs. I have been giving our new technician one manual to read at a time and he is already running service calls on his own.

Better yet, I have been reading the "How to Start and Run a Business" portion of the program and getting fresh new ideas and a different perspective on the business side of repair service. **RO**

Kyle Barnhart
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Brick and Mortar vs. Online

Have you noticed a lack of retail sales lately? Have you wondered if it is still worth the effort to keep your brick and mortar business open? Does the online competition seem too overpowering?

These are all questions we try to answer every day and as frustrating and hopeless as it seems, there is hope on the horizon.

One of the major factors to losing retail sales is that online-only retailers have an unfair advantage over the brick and mortar establishments due to an outdated tax loophole that enables them to bypass collecting sales taxes. This unfair tax advantage threatens our Main Street brick-and-mortar businesses, jeopardizes local jobs, takes away money from state revenues, and creates unnecessary confusion for consumers regarding the sales tax they owe for online purchases.

Below is a re-print from the Stand With Main Street website:

SYSTEM: *"Common sense would dictate if someone buys a product online, they should pay the same sales tax as anyone would if they had gone to the store in person.*

But a massive loophole is being exploited whereby online-only retailers aren't collecting sales tax at the point of purchase despite the fact that the tax is still due; and small brick-and-mortar businesses are at a significant disadvantage as they are collecting the tax as required by law. This is an antiquated system that needs to be modernized for 21st Century commerce.

The truth is: a sale is a sale is a sale. Whether it takes place online or at a local business, a sale is made, a transaction has occurred and the sales tax is owed. The same rules should apply online that apply on Main Street. It is a question of fairness and evenhandedness.

SMALL BUSINESSES / COMPETITION: *The unfair disadvantage our local small businesses are experiencing leads to less commerce at brick-and-mortar establishments that contribute so much to our community. These employers can't compete with online giants that don't collect sales taxes and don't have the same local presence in our communities.*

Local businesses support our civic organizations, sports teams and are permanent members our community. But unless the system is corrected, local retailers will become endangered species as they are being punished for following the law and collecting sales taxes while their competitors are not.

INDIVIDUALS EXPOSED: *Just because the online merchant doesn't collect the tax, doesn't mean it is not due. Stores like Amazon and Overstock are leaving individuals who purchase items on their Web sites exposed as these purchasers are carrying an unmet tax liability. In fact, individuals can be audited and penalized for any unmet sales tax obligation that hasn't been paid.*

Each year, our tax forms make specific inquiries with regard to purchases made online or through other remote sellers and whether the sales tax was paid. Due to the fact that these online-only retailers do not collect the tax at the point of sale and do not inform purchasers it is their responsibility to record the amount of sales tax due and pay it directly to the state, their customers are exposed as they are carrying an unmet tax liability that could result in an audit."

Few Americans are aware of and even fewer abide by this law, most consumers do not comply. The result is a savings to the consumer of up to 10% (depending on their states sales tax rate) and with margins at an all time low, trying to compete for another 10% is almost impossible. This tax loophole affects all of us whether you sell major appliances, parts or service. As long as your customer can save

money by not paying sales tax, you will most likely lose their business.

So how can we, as small business owners help to close this loophole? How do we ensure our business has a level playing field with the online giants? Support the Marketplace Fairness Act. SB 1832

This bill, if passed, will:

- Close the loophole exploited by online only giants to the detriment of traditional Main Street brick and mortar retailers and creates a level playing field.
- Give states the authority to manage their sales tax laws as they see fit.
- Provides a simplified system for states collection of sales tax.
- Relieves consumers of the reporting burden.

The Marketplace Fairness Act is Co-sponsored by Senators Alexander (R-TN), Enzi (R-WY), Boozman (R-MO), Corker (R-TN), Whitehouse (D-RI), Durbin (D-IL) and Johnson (D-SD). The Marketplace Fairness Act is a bipartisan, Federal solution to the problem of Internet retailers' unfair competitive advantage over their brick and mortar counterparts.

Since this is a bipartisan bill, there are many ways to voice your support. The best way certainly would be to contact your local Senator and voice you concern. Another would be to contact The Alliance for Main Street Fairness.

www.standwithmainstreet.com

Don't let this opportunity to create a level playing field pass you by. **RO**

*Ralph E. Wolff
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Industry Relations, PSA
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alternating writers dis-
cussing topics of the
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1st Source Servall Opens

New Enormous 65,000 Square-Foot Distribution of Inventory of High Quality Appliance and HVAC



1ST SOURCE SERVALL'S NEWEST DISTRIBUTION CENTER WILL ALLOW FOR EVEN MORE EXPEDITED DELIVERY SERVICE THAN ALREADY OFFERED TO ITS GROWING CUSTOMER BASE THROUGHOUT THE MIDWEST, WHILE HOUSING ONE OF THE LARGEST INVENTORIES OF HIGH QUALITY APPLIANCE AND HVAC PARTS IN THE COUNTRY.

1st Source Servall, one of North America's largest distributors of appliance parts, announced that the company has just become larger, as it opened its newest distribution center at 511 76th SW Street in Byron Center, MI, to meet its growing customer demand for high quality appliance parts throughout the Midwest United States. The facility will be called The Kenneth Adler Distribution Center in honor of the late Kenneth Adler who was the former president of 1st Source Servall for 35 years, the son of the founder of the company and an innovator within the appliance parts distribution industry. The company invested more than \$1 million to build out the 65,000 sq. ft. distribution center and has stocked it with more than \$8 million of appliance and HVAC parts. 1st Source Servall is in the process of hiring more than 30 full time employees to staff the new location. In addition, the new facility also contains a 1st Source Servall branch operation to serve the greater Grand Rapids community.

1st Source Servall's newest distribution center will allow for even more expedited delivery service than already offered to its





New Distribution Center

Center Will Warehouse More Than \$8 Million Parts and Create More Than 30 New Jobs

growing customer base throughout the Midwest, while housing one of the largest inventories of high quality appliance and HVAC parts in the country. The distribution center's inventory will contain some of the hardest to locate appliance parts in the industry, while having ample supplies of more common parts to fulfill almost any size order and to provide the best customer service possible. The new distribution center is the largest, of the eight distribution centers that 1st Source Servall owns and operates across the country.

"As we continue to grow in both the Midwest and nationally it became apparent that we needed to increase our distribution capabilities and after a close examination of our infrastructure and capabilities it was clear that this location would best serve our loyal customers in the Midwest," said Kim Adler, president, 1st Source Servall. "Our newest distribution center is specially designed to allow for quicker processing and shipping of orders. We are also very proud to be hiring more employees and adding to our workforce, especially in Michigan where 1st Source Servall was founded 83 years ago."

The new distribution center will make it possible for even more customers who order in stock parts to receive next day UPS ground delivery. This one day delivery will drastically increase the delivery times thereby providing customers with the shortest wait time in the industry.

"Congratulations to 1st Source Servall! Businesses like 1st Source Servall are committed to strengthening our economy by investing in new state-of-the-art facilities right here in West Michigan," said U.S. Senator Debbie Stabenow. "I wish them continued success as they expand their operations and create new jobs."

1st Source Servall's new distribution center is integral to its national growth strategy that involves both expansion into new markets and increasing the size of current stores to better service customers. Within the past five years, the company has grown from 13 locations in Michigan and Ohio to 52 store locations in 13 states and now employs more than 500 trained appliance parts specialists.

The new distribution center will be in full operation six days a week, Monday-Saturday. Mr. Michael Resma will serve as

the distribution manager, bringing 20 years of warehouse management and appliance parts expertise. The local store will be managed by Mr. Ken Allen who has worked for Servall in excess of 25 years.

"Byron Township is very pleased to have 1st Source Servall opening its flagship distribution center in Byron Center and we wish them great success," said Audrey Nevins Weiss, Byron Township supervisor. "The township looks forward to cultivating a great business relationship with 1st Source Servall and I would like to thank the company for investing in our community and local economy."

Founded in 1929, 1st Source Servall is a third-generation family-owned and operated distributor of appliance parts. With branch offices and call centers located throughout the Midwest, Southwest, Southeast and Northeast, 1st Source Servall is the country's second-largest distributor of appliance parts, employing more than 500 appliance part specialists. For more information about 1st Source Servall, please visit www.1stservall.com or [Facebook.com/1stsourceservall](https://www.facebook.com/1stsourceservall).

| *continued on page 64* |



| continued from page 63 |

Fact Sheet: The Kenneth Adler Distribution Center



- 1st Source Servall new flagship distribution center is located at 511 76th SW Street, Byron Center, MI, and cost more than a \$1 million to build out.
- The new facility will be called The Kenneth Adler Distribution Center in honor of the late Kenneth Adler who was the son of the founder of the company, its former president for 35 years and an innovator within the appliance parts distribution industry.
- The facility also contains a 1st Source branch operation to serve the greater Grand Rapids community.
- It consists of more than \$8 million of appliance, HVAC parts and accessories in its inventory, with capacity of more than \$10 million of inventory.
- It has 60,000 skus, the broadest inventory concentration within the appliance and HVAC parts industry, with a 97+% instant order fulfillment rate.
- The new distribution center features 24/7 distribution operations.
- The distribution center is 65,000 square feet with 25 foot ceilings and eight loading docks.
- It has more than eight lineal miles of shelving for inventory storage.
- It is outfitted with numerous specially designed auditing stations to ensure quality control, and 1st Source Servall's industry leading customer service commitment.
- 1st Source Servall has partnered with UPS and its Worldwide Premier Center to ensure the distribution center provides the quickest delivery for all incoming orders accompanied by the latest shipping times.
- The distribution center will employ more than 30 people once it's fully operational.
- All new employees will be UPS trained packers to ensure error-free shipping.
- The new distribution center features the largest inventory of appliance parts and supplies in North America.
- The facility will serve more than 40 million people in Michigan, Illinois, Ohio, Wisconsin and Indiana with guaranteed next day ground service.
- All orders received by 7p.m. will ship same day.
- The facility will be able to provide all Michigan & Chicago area customers same day shipment of orders received by 10 pm.
- The new distribution center is capable of serving more than 1/2 of the US population with two day UPS guaranteed ground service. **RO**

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Even-Heat™ Technology is available on select wall ovens, cooktops, and freestanding ranges. Innovative features allow cooks to get the consistently even results they crave without the need for traditional cooking or baking secrets such as rotating pans or using baking stones.

“As the holidays approach, a cook’s heart turns toward their passion for creating a delicious meal for their family and friends,” says Gail Bruce, Senior Brand Manager. “Even-Heat™ Technology can help them make the most out of the time they spend in the kitchen.”



WALL OVEN PERFORMANCE THAT APPEALS TO THE MOST DEMANDING COOKS

Even-Heat™ Technology combines two features: Even-Heat™ Preheat and Even-Heat™ True Convection. Both features address a common problem of hot or cold spots that can prevent the oven from heating evenly on all three racks. The result is ovens that deliver the most even baking.*

Even-Heat™ Preheat heats the oven above the set temperature so that the walls and racks are blanketed with heat. This means that the temperatures start even and stay even.

The Even-Heat™ True Convection System helps ensure that the properly preheated air circulates over, under, and around every rack. This creates perfectly baked centers and golden browning without the burnt edges.

“Our new line of built-in ovens and freestanding ranges are designed for

our consumers,” says Gail Bruce, Senior Brand Manager. “They are passionate about cooking, understand convection, and expect more from their appliances. Even-Heat™ Technology meets their high standards by delivering exceptionally even heat, every time.”

COOKTOPS THAT OFFER EXCEPTIONAL CONTROL AND VERSATILITY

KitchenAid® electric cooktops offer outstanding performance and sleek design. Every model includes one or more elements that distribute heat in a way that is similar to gas cooktops. This creates the proper conditions to quickly boil water, find the ideal simmer for a delicate sauce, and hold low temperatures for melting without scorching. For even more versatility, select models feature one or more of the following elements:

- Even-Heat™ Ultra Elements provide the versatility to go from the gentlest simmer to extreme highs for searing, boiling, and stir-frying.
- Even-Heat™ Melt is a dedicated setting that provides ideal temperatures for melting foods like butter and chocolate.
- Even-Heat™ Simmer is a dedicated setting that provides the right temperature for every sauce, stock, or stew.

RANGES THAT BRING IT ALL TOGETHER

KitchenAid® freestanding ranges combine the benefits of Even-Heat™ Technology. Most electric models have one or more Even-Heat™ Elements that let you get precise boiling and simmering. Many ranges also offer a convection oven that delivers the most even baking across all racks.**

To help maximize the benefits of Even-Heat™ Technology, KitchenAid® ranges offer the largest capacity available.† More usable interior space helps create perfectly even results whether you’re using one, two, or all three racks.

EVEN-HEAT™ TECHNOLOGY FITS MANY COOKING STYLES

Your customers can enjoy the innovative benefits of Even-Heat™ Technology in a configuration that fits their kitchen. Even-Heat™ Technology is available on 30- and 27-inch single, double, and combination wall ovens; 36- and 30-inch electric cooktops; and 30-inch freestanding electric, induction, and gas ranges. **RO**

*Among leading premium brand 30" wall ovens.

** KitchenAid models K*RS306B and higher versus highest MSRP models of leading brand 30" electric and gas single cavity freestanding ranges, based on browning performance.

† Versus leading brand single cavity 30" freestanding electric and gas ranges.



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²Based on AHAM washability test protocol for leading brand front-load washers with normal cycle times less than 60 minutes.