

The Retail Observer

March, 2011

AN EYE ON THE INDUSTRY SINCE 1970

Vol. 22, Issue 3

LivingKitchen 2011

**GERMAN PREMIERE EXCEEDS
ALL EXPECTATIONS
FULL AISLES, FULL BOOTHS,
BRISK BUSINESS**

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**HIGH ATTENDANCE &
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ATTENDEES THRILLED WITH TURNOUT**

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You Wanna Go Where Everybody Knows Your Name

With Groundhog Day behind us and an early spring on its way, it's time to implement the obvious strategies that are readily available to you to strengthen and grow your company now, as the recovery continues to pick things up. Many retailers are getting back to business as usual, after the long period of economic challenges we have all faced. It's time to rebuild and reconnect with your customers on an up close and personal level.

Chris Thiede, in his column "Your Best Brand Ambassadors", explains how to train *all* of the staff in your employ, suggesting you can use your employees to help you build goodwill and excitement in your community through their charity work and social media interaction, using their personal network of friends and family - as you encourage and support their personal interests all the while building a committed and loyal workforce for you at the same time.

John Tschohl, in his new book "*Empowerment: A Way of Life*", emphasizes that Empowerment = marketing money. All employees should have one single objective each day, and that is to produce *overly happy customers*, in order for you to own the market.

Both Elly Valas and Robert Spector focus this month on the importance of learning your customers name from the get-go, sharing some tricks to help you remember those names. I'm sure most of us remember the TV show *Cheers* — "*Where Everybody Knows Your Name*," the theme song from the 1980s television sitcom by Gary Portnoy and Judy Hart Angelo:

*"Making your way in the world today takes everything you've got.
Taking a break from all your worries, sure would help a lot.
Wouldn't you like to get away?
Sometimes you want to go where everybody knows your name,
and they're always glad you came."*

Just remember, your customers are the heart of your business and are your bread and butter. They will tell you everything you need to know about what they want if you just take the time to listen to what they want and need and give them just that. Don't let them walk out of your store without your knowing what they came in there looking for and offering them a complete solution to their purchasing needs. We'll talk more on this next month, until then...



Cheers,

Eliana Barriga

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The
RetailObserver

MARCH 2011

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 3

CELEBRATING OUR 22ND YEAR

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Our customers are satisfied...
because we are not.

(But it's sure nice to be appreciated!)



J.D. Power and Associates ranked Miele "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Dishwashers"



Miele
FOREVER BETTER

© 2011 Miele Inc. Miele received the highest numerical score for dishwashers in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2010 Kitchen Appliance Study™. Study based on 11,701 total responses measuring 18 brands and measures opinions of consumers who purchased refrigerators from a retail store or their new-home builder during the previous 24 months. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed in March-April 2010. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com

What are You Looking For, Do We Have it, and if Not, Can We Get It For You?

For over forty years people have read *The Retail Observer* in its various forms and have enjoyed the articles, called friends to discuss their picture in the magazine or just caught up on the newest products or events of the latest tradeshow. After speaking with many of our readers all over the country, we are now searching for more manufacturers, distributors and associations that offer a wide array of products and services to fulfill the needs of the Independent Dealer in multiple areas of their business:

Installation companies, plumbing, consumer electronics manufacturers, parts suppliers, advertising agencies, display and design firms, promotional products, furniture & mattresses, accessories and décor, lighting, and the list goes on and on.

We know that your time is valuable and we are trying to help you find what you are looking for to aid in building, running and growing your business today and into the future.

We are currently studying the Digital Signage and Internet products and solutions categories to aid you in the new Digital Revolution. We are working on showing these products in the near future to help keep you abreast of this rapidly growing marketing category as well as many others.

We are also joining with some new Associations to bring you news of what they are doing and what benefits you will find in their networks. From Plumbing and Lighting to Vacuum and Sewing we are looking at what you sell today and what products you can add to your line cards to aid in increasing your traffic flow and of course your bottom line.

We have seen at the various trade shows and buy fairs a lot of products and services that we feel would be a great benefit to many of you. As we broaden our market for you, we would appreciate your feedback as we can't do this alone. After all, this magazine is for you the Independent Retailer. If you feel you have a service to offer, know someone that would benefit by being part of what we do or are looking for something special, we are here for you. Please don't hesitate to email me with your thoughts.



Happy Retailing

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The
RetailObserver

MARCH 2011

VOLUME 22, NUMBER 3

CELEBRATING OUR 22ND YEAR

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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Apparently awards also come in bulk.



That's the Wonder of Samsung.

Based on consumer response, J.D. Power and Associates has ranked Samsung:

- "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Refrigerators, Six Years in a Row"
- "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Clothes Dryers, Three years in a Row"
- "Highest in Customer Satisfaction with Clothes Washers, Two Years in a Row"

SAMSUNG

TURN ON TOMORROW

©2010 Samsung is a registered trademark of Samsung Electronics Corp., Ltd. All other product and brand names are trademarks or registered trademarks of their respective owners. Samsung received the highest numerical score for refrigerators in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates 2005-2007 Major Home Appliance Studies and 2008-2010 Kitchen Appliance StudiesSM. (2007-2008 received award for satisfaction with side-by-side/French door refrigerators). Study based on 15,853 total responses measuring 16 brands and measures opinions of consumers who purchased refrigerators from a retail store or their new-home builder during the previous 24 months. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed in March-April 2010. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com. Samsung received the highest numerical score for clothes washers (2009-2010) and dryers (2008-2010) in the proprietary J.D. Power and Associates Laundry Appliance StudiesSM. 2010 study based on 10,344 total responses measuring 17 brands and measures opinions of consumers who purchased their washer or dryer from a retail store or their new-home builder during the previous 24 months. Proprietary study results are based on experiences and perceptions of consumers surveyed in March-April 2010. Your experiences may vary. Visit jdpower.com.



LivingKitchen 2011 Premiere Exceeds All Expectations

FULL AISLES, FULL BOOTHS, BRISK BUSINESS

—Visitor frequency exceeded expectations on all days of the fair—

—World premieres, trends and shows non-stop—

—Sector banking on the new kitchen event in future, too—



attended the previous event (imm cologne 2010). “Not just the quality but the internationality of the visitor structure was impressive for a premiere event, and no doubt we will improve on that for 2013,” says Frank Haubold, project leader of LivingKitchen. All in all, the event reported an increase in visitors from almost all countries, be it the Netherlands, France, Italy, Switzerland or Eastern Europe, especially Russia. In addition, more buyers were registered from important export markets like Asia, the Near East and North America too. “In view of the leading position that German kitchen furniture producers and the German household appliance industry occupy on the global market, it was in fact only natural that one of the most important trade fairs—perhaps in future even the most important fair—or kitchen furnishings, fitted appliances and fixtures should take place in Germany. The last few days have shown that our assessment of the situation was right in that respect,” says Gerald Böse, CEO of Koelnmesse.

EXHIBITORS IMPRESSED BY THE OUTCOME OF THE FAIR

The diverse activities undertaken in the run-up to the fair certainly made an impact. “On the Preview Day alone, we were able to welcome more than 1,000 visitors to our booth. On the following days of the fair proper, we were almost overrun - by the international public as well,” says Dr. Markus Miele, managing director of Miele & Cie. KG Deutschland. The kitchen furniture exhibitors paint a similar picture. “We had a huge stream of visitors - and it hardly dropped off at all towards the end of the fair. Some of our visitors had come a very long way, either from neighboring countries or from as far afield as Bulgaria, Russia, China, Japan and even New Zealand,” says Thorsten Prée, managing director of Warendorfer Küchen GmbH. “It was an excellent start for this new trade fair and we are convinced that it will establish itself as a major event for the kitchen furniture and fitted appliance sector. We’re already looking forward to returning to Cologne in 2013,” says a positive Roland Hagenbucher, CEO of Siemens-Electrogeräte GmbH.

Elmar Duffner, CEO of Poggenpohl Möbelwerke GmbH, takes a similar view. “The trade fair showed that the trend towards the fusion of the kitchen and living space that has been emerging for some years now has | *continued on page 10* |

Things were definitely cooking in Cologne - it’s hard to think of a more apt description for what took place in the halls of Koelnmesse and the nearby city in the seven days of LivingKitchen. The trade visitors and consumers from all over the world evidently had a huge appetite for new kitchens, appliances and fixtures. Complemented by an excellent supporting program of famous chefs, celebrities and shows, the kitchen - the focal point of our modern lives - has found a new home in Cologne. “The kitchen has returned to Cologne with a first-rate performance,” says Gerald Böse, CEO of Koelnmesse. “After this spectacular premiere, I’m already looking forward to the sequel in 2013,” adds the chief executive.

The unique combination of furnishing and kitchen worlds convinced both trade visitors and consumers. In particular, the mix of innovative manufacturers’ presentations, spectacular cooking shows and an attractive audience participation program proved to be a huge hit. The excellent response from visitors during the entire week of the fair ensured beaming faces on the manufacturers’ side. The high quality of the trade visitors was particularly commended. Around 82 percent of the international visitors were involved in their companies’ decision-making process. 138,000 professional buyers and private visitors from 128 countries flocked to the exhibition halls of the imm cologne // LivingKitchen - 38 percent more than

**Living
Kitchen**

fully asserted itself. We were very pleased to be able to cultivate our business contacts on the international markets that are so important to us. As for the German market - the biggest kitchen and furniture market in Europe, this fair enabled Poggenpohl to underpin its position as a leading premium provider.”

Hans Strothoff couldn't agree more: “Everything we hoped for, all the things we fought for together, have become reality. I'm particularly delighted that the kitchen has returned to Cologne with such a spectacular sensation. Furniture, appliances and fixtures under one roof. There's never been anything like it before. That's why, on behalf of the retail sector, I would like to say a heartfelt thank-you to all the exhibitors for this outstanding achievement,” says the President of the Federal Association of Kitchen, Furniture and Furnishing Retailers | continued on page 12 |





Living Kitchen

(Bundesverband des Deutschen Möbel-, Küchen- und Einrichtungsfachhandels, BVDM). “Mission accomplished” was also the verdict of Slovenian household appliance manufacturer Gorenje. “We’re positively surprised. Besides our existing customers, we were able to welcome a lot of new customers to our booth as well,” says Thomas Wittling, director of marketing and sales at Gorenje Vertriebs GmbH.

LIVINGKITCHEN TRENDS

- Flowing transition between the kitchen and living space, naturalness for all materials
- Synthesis between communication and technology (lighting, sound, entertainment)
- Silky matte finishes in surface design (light, warm and earthy)
- High-contrast freshness (bright colours in combination with white)
- Energy-efficient fitted appliances (Green Living)
- Intelligent and individually programmable kitchen aids
- Healthy nutrition, freshness, vitamin-rich cooking as well as efficient food storage and preparation are becoming hugely important

IMM COLOGNE // LIVINGKITCHEN IN FIGURES:

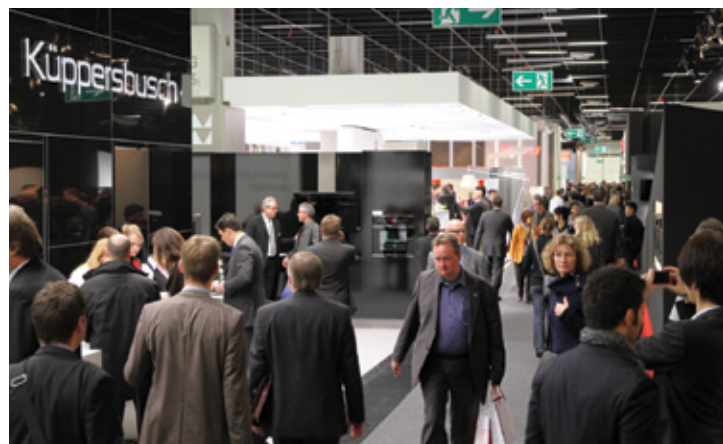
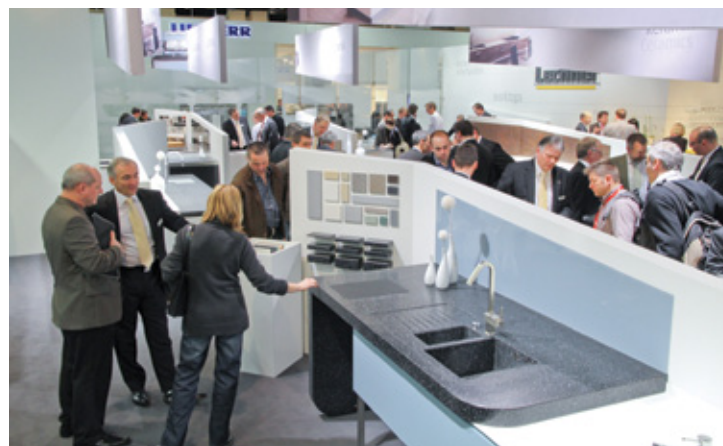
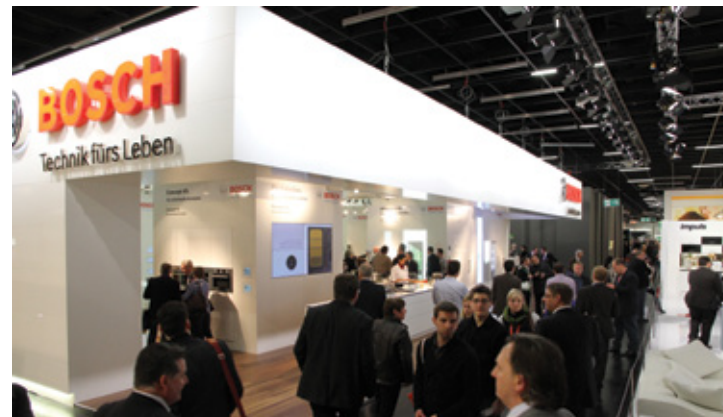
1,213 companies from 48 countries participated in the imm cologne // LivingKitchen 2011 (LivingKitchen: 178 companies). They included 521 exhibitors and 32 additionally represented companies from Germany as well as 614 exhibitors and 46 additionally represented companies from abroad. Foreign companies accounted for 54 percent of exhibitors.*

The next imm cologne will take place January 16 - 22, 2012

The next dual trade fair for imm cologne // LivingKitchen 2013 will take place January 14 - 20, 2013 in Cologne, Germany.

For more information please visit: www.imm-cologne.de, www.livingkitchen-cologne.de **RO**

* All figures are calculated according to the guidelines of the Society for the Voluntary Control of Fair and Exhibition Statistics (Gesellschaft zur Freiwilligen Kontrolle von Messe- und Ausstellungszahlen, FKM).



Book Review

Empowerment

A WAY OF LIFE

Empowerment: *A Way of Life* will help you learn effective ways to use empowerment to ramp up your career, to build your business, and to take your corporation to the top. John Tschohl does not believe you can be a service leader without empowerment. He wants employees to make decisions on the spot, in favor of a customer. All CEO's believe their employees are empowered. The reality is that it doesn't happen, and empowered employees just don't exist.

The single biggest reason employees won't make an empowered decision is because they fear getting fired. If it's between getting fired or losing the customer, it's an easy choice for the employee. If the employee does not make an empowered decision, the customer will probably leave and not return. Very few customers complain or push the problem up the chain of command.

When you have a live customer in your hands and something goes wrong, your employee could easily solve this problem with empowerment and maybe a small amount of money. You are using targeted marketing money. Maybe there is a problem on the installation. You want your staff to make a decision in favor of the customer. If you have an over happy customer the big box stores cannot compete. What's the worst thing that can happen? An employee might give away too much. Now you have an over happy customer. If you have over happy customers you'll own the market and you'll have more money than you ever dreamed of.

Empowerment is marketing money. All employees should have one single objective each day, and that is to produce over happy customers. The goal of any company should be to hire people who aren't afraid to stand out. Unfortunately, the system is set up to hire those who fit in. The future workforce will be more agile, creative, multitalented, and above all, empowered.

This book is easy to read with only 136 pages. An ideal book for your leadership team and employees you want to develop and train into marketing your company. Available at your local bookstore or Amazon. ISBN 978-0-9826369-0-9. Retail \$19.95 **RO**



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Phone: 952-888-7672
Publisher: Best Sellers Publishing

CALL TO ACTION



SEND US YOUR SHOTS

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

FEATURED THIS MONTH:
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The Smart Fridge

LIEBHERR OFFERS ADVANCED CAPABILITIES IN FREESTANDING, BUILT-IN, AND FULLY INTEGRATED REFRIGERATION UNITS

It's true that a Liebherr can't communicate with you—at least not yet—but it is one very smart refrigerator. That's because so much thought has gone into every last detail, from the look to the price.

- **Smart Styling**

Liebherr refrigerators are stylishly designed. Inside you'll find rugged, scratch-resistant GlassLine shelves and door racks that provide an elegant profile. And you'll see every bit of the smart design (and that elusive jar of olives) thanks to interior LED lighting. For the exterior, Liebherrs come with three front-panel selections—two wood finishes and one stainless steel—as well as other custom options to match your style. With their customizable cabinet depth dimensions, Liebherr units can be seamlessly installed for a sleek and harmonious kitchen design.

- **Intelligent Function**

Some of the smartest functions on a Liebherr aren't visible, such as the two super-efficient, variable-speed compressors. Its Duo Cooling technology allows compartments to be accurately controlled independently of each other, ensuring ideal refrigeration performance for the food stored as well as virtually silent operation. Other Liebherr design elements have to be experienced to be appreciated, such as the refrigerator's patented SoftSystem door hinges, which make sure the doors close gently every time, regardless of how hard they are pushed. And speaking of intelligent, Liebherr's Touch Control System reliably keeps food at the temperature selected and is easy to read with an LED display indicating the temperature in the refrigerator and freezer at a glance.

- **Savvy Storage**

Storage is where Liebherr really excels, with more flexible interiors designed to hold more food. The VarioSpace interior shelving can be adjusted to fit a wide range of different-size objects, and the VarioBox removable food containers allow food to be brought straight from the refrigerator to the table.

- **Wisely Green**

Liebherr is the worldwide leader in environmentally responsible refrigeration. The entire product line meets and exceeds ENERGY STAR® standards. In fact, Liebherr was the first refrigerator manufacturer to become RoHS Compliant worldwide by removing chemicals, solvents, and other hazardous substances during the manufacturing process. Liebherr offers limitless design options and superior technology along with premium features and outstanding performance at a lower price point. It's the smartest refrigerator around. It's so smart that sometimes Liebherr owners feel like it knows exactly what they need!

For more information, visit www.liebherr-appliances.com. **RO**

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In Line With Your Life

NEW FRONT LOAD LAUNDRY LINE INCLUDES TWO ENERGY STAR® RATED UNITS

SHIPS IN FEBRUARY

Haier Haier, the number one laundry brand in the world, began shipping its first Front-Load laundry line for the U.S. market in February. Both front-load washers are Energy Star® rated with an Easy View Ergonomic Display. The line opens with the HWF5000AW washer featuring 4.3 Cu. Ft. Capacity and 1000 RPM max spin speed and 10 wash cycles and steps up to the HWF5300AW 4.3 Cu. Ft. 1300 RPM Energy Star® washer with Touch Sense Controls and 12 wash cycles.

“Haier America is committed to saving consumers money with energy efficient products that provide premium features at a non-premium price point,” said Matt Sekelick, senior vice president of Product Marketing- Major Appliances for Haier America. “With the addition of Front Load laundry, we now offer our retail partners an attractive full line of Haier laundry products that fit specific needs and options of consumers.”

The HWF5300AW 4.3 Cu. Ft. Capacity washer with stainless steel drum includes a Green Wash cycle, which provides up to 80% Energy Savings. By using Tide HE Coldwater detergent and the Green Wash cycle, consumers will save on energy costs without sacrificing performance or quality of the wash.

The Haier Front-Load washer has a smooth edged modern chassis design, with a large front glass window and comfortable door handle. The ergonomic Electronic Touch Sense controls are designed for ease of operation and offer easy viewing and reach while responding to the touch of a finger. The smooth control surface is easy to clean, and wash cycles clearly displayed with LED indicator lights for keeping track of the cycle’s progress.

The Front-Load laundry system also features a matching Haier Front-Load Dryer in Electric (HDE5300AW) or Gas format (HDG5300AW) to accommodate any home owner requirement. The 7.7 cubic foot drum dries even the largest, heaviest loads of laundry. The custom programmable units offer 10 dry cycles and Sensor Dry technology, providing the perfect setting for any load type, without over-drying which can damage clothing fibers and reduce clothing lifespan. Like the washer, the Haier Front-Load dryer features Touch Sense Controls, angled ergonomic [easy-to-clean] control panel, and a convenient shoe drying rack.



HAIER FRONT LOAD LAUNDRY LINE

HWF5300AW- 4.3 Cu. Ft. 1300 RPM Washer

HDE5300AW- 7.7 Cu. Ft. Electric Dryer

HDG5300AW- 7.7 Cu. Ft. Gas Dryer

HWF5000AW- 4.3 Cu. Ft. 1000 RPM Washer

HDE5000AW- 7.7 Cu. Ft. Electric Dryer

HDG5000AW- 7.7 Cu. Ft. Gas Dryer

Haier America is the Sales and Marketing arm of the Americas for the multinational Haier Group, the world’s largest major appliances brand. Headquartered in the Haier Building at 1356 Broadway in New York City, Haier America is a leader for room air conditioner, compact refrigerator, and wine cellar sales, as well as a leading force in major appliances, compact appliances, portable electronics and HDTV sales. Haier is an Official Marketing Partner and the Official High Definition Television of the NBA. www.haieramerica.com.

STYLETHERM™

GROUNDBREAKING NEW THERMOSTATIC SHOWER SYSTEM OPENS DOOR TO LUXURY FOR ALL CONSUMERS



California Faucets has brought a world previously enjoyed only by those who can afford luxury into the average household with the introduction of its new StyleTherm thermostatic shower system. StyleTherm delivers superior technology, high flow rate, independent volume control, and ultimate safety.

Currently, pressure balance shower systems are the standard, due to their more affordable price point. But with the introduction of StyleTherm, advanced thermostatic technology is now available at pressure balance pricing. Creative engineering and years of development are behind StyleTherm's breakthrough technology, according to Jeff Silverstein, president and CEO of California Faucets, who explains that StyleTherm will effectively make pressure balance systems obsolete. "Until now, thermostatic showers have been limited to the luxury market due to their high cost," says Silverstein, noting that StyleTherm makes thermostatic showers affordable for every bath in the house. "Why buy pressure balance when you can get thermostatic technology at the same price," asks Silverstein. "With StyleTherm, it's like getting an iPod® for the price of an audio cassette player. It's no contest."

StyleTherm boasts a lengthy list of features that are absent from pressure balance systems. Besides the ability

to dial in exact temperatures, StyleTherm requires no diverter valve to toggle between shower applications, such as showerhead to handheld shower. Each shower application is operated via its own volume control, allowing for flexibility to use each application independently or in concert with one another. The system includes anti-scald temperature protection with a safety temperature override button, a feature especially comforting to parents of young children, and the elderly. Moreover, a higher water flow rate satisfies even the most challenging design requirements, and can easily supply a variety of shower options, including rain showerheads, body sprays, handheld showers, tub spouts, and a myriad of other applications.

StyleTherm's design offers complete flexibility to match all California Faucets styles, whether contemporary, traditional, or transitional. Select from numerous handle options and finishes to complement any bath décor. Faceplates are available in three decorative styles—Traditional Round, Contemporary Round, and Transitional Square—with no visible screws, for a clean, elegant appearance. Additional aesthetic features include an engraved brass temperature indicator ring and a design-friendly black temperature override button.

List price for the StyleTherm single volume control shower set starts at \$525 in Polished Chrome and includes valve and trim (handle, faceplate, and showerhead). The StyleTherm tub/shower set with dual integral volume controls includes the above plus a matching tub spout, and starts at \$749 in Polished Chrome. A yet higher volume StyleTherm valve starts at \$599 in Polished Chrome and can be teamed with separate volume controls to allow customization that includes multiple applications. Configuration possibilities range from a single, simple showerhead to a complex master bath installation involving rain showerheads, body sprays, handheld showers, and more. For more information, call 1-800-822-8855 or visit www.calfaucets.com.

ABOUT CALIFORNIA FAUCETS

California Faucets has been providing its customers with the very best customer service and delivery of the finest selection of decorative fittings in the industry since 1988. With over 25 styles and more than 34 decorative finishes, California Faucets' | *continued on page 18* |



Custom Faucetry® allows you to combine any spout with any handle in any finish. Design choices now exceed two million, and offerings range from traditional and transitional to contemporary and art deco. And with the Virtual Faucet Creator®, a revolutionary new online tool by California Faucets, you can create thousands of designs with just a few clicks of the mouse.

As part of Custom Faucetry®, California Faucets offers Thermostatic Shower Systems, Tub and Shower Sets, Trim, and Bathroom Accessories. California Faucets' products are sold at prominent decorative hardware and plumbing showrooms and at select kitchen and bath dealers nationwide.

FRANKE CONTINUES ASCENT WITH HIGH ARC FAUCET



Here's a picture of Franke versatility. Contemporary chic housed in a classic silhouette. Look through the high arch of this sleekly sophisticated faucet and see how it evokes the arching beauty of a Renaissance palazzo or a Mission style hacienda. This is a design that is at home in a remarkable spectrum of homes and that makes each one both gracious and practical.

- Dual spray pull-down with all stainless hose for long lasting and dependable performance
- Graceful and practical, high-arc spout provides extra clearance for large pots
- Meets AB1953 (CA) and S152(VT) requirements
- Heavy duty, virtually lead-free solid brass construction
- IAPMO certified
- Ceramic cartridge leak-free operation
- Franke's Lifetime Warranty for the life of the faucet



- Available in 3 finishes:
 - FF2500 - Chrome
 - FF2560 - Satin Nickel
 - FF2580 - Old World Bronze

Visit Franke Luxury Products Group at www.frankeksd.com

SUPERIOR DESIGN AND FUNCTIONALITY MARK THE TWO LATEST APPLIANCE OFFERINGS FROM DACOR

DACOR INTRODUCES THE DISTINCTIVE™ 24" MICROWAVE AND THE EPICURE® 36" RAISED VENTILATION SYSTEM, EACH DESIGNED WITH ADVANCED FEATURES FOR EXCEPTIONAL PERFORMANCE



Dacor®, a market leader in the design and manufacture of luxury kitchen appliances, introduced two new products to bring beauty, innovation and convenience to home chefs – the Distinctive 24" Microwave and the Epicure® 36" Raised Ventilation System.

Available in sleek stainless steel, the Distinctive 24" Microwave is a classic combination of beautiful form and superior functionality, with an affordable price that has become a signature of the Distinctive Series. Loaded with exceptional features, the Distinctive Microwave offers convenience for busy homeowners who still want to serve tasty, well-cooked meals and snacks. Equipped with state-of-the-art Sensor Technology the Distinctive Microwave takes the guesswork out of cooking by detecting the moisture and humidity level of the food inside and cooking it accordingly. A built-in electronic sensor automatically sets the time for cooking or reheating and then "senses" the vapor emitted from the food to determine the duration and power level needed to thoroughly cook the food.

In addition, the Menu Label is clearly displayed on the inside of the oven door, providing a functional list of automatic settings to assist in meal preparation and take the guesswork out of cooking. The label provides a list of menu options, including Breakfast, Lunch, 15 Minute Recipes, Defrost, From the Pantry and Beverages, with meals or drinks listed within each category so users can cook or heat foods for the precise length of time that the dish or beverage requires. Users no longer have to worry that food is burning or remains cold | *continued on page 20* |

So quiet, it screams German engineering.



Operating at just 40 dBA, the 800 Plus is
the quietest dishwasher in the U.S.*



Engineered to speak for itself. The 800 Plus cleans with the power of 1,300 gallons using only two, and provides 24/7 peace of mind with exclusive AquaStop® leak protection technology. Protecting your home while silently delivering great cleaning results—it's why we say we're invented for life. www.bosch-home.com/us



BOSCH
Invented for life



© 2011 BSH Home Appliances. *Based on available sound information on competitors' websites, September 2010. BO633-14-96990-2

in the center; the Distinctive Microwave heats each item to perfection.

Proving that speedy cooking does not have to sacrifice taste, the Distinctive Microwave comes with pre-set options for delicious recipes that can be made directly in the microwave. Complete with recipe cards so home chefs can prepare the ingredients, the microwave display prompts users on the recipe's next step. During the cooking process the microwave displays recipe instructions and pauses automatically to allow users to stir, season, or add ingredients as necessary, making cooking during busy weekdays effortless, yet creative and delicious.

Aside from its innovative technologies, the Distinctive 24" Microwave has features that make it truly convenient for busy homeowners. The Auto Start option ensures that a hot, tasty meal is waiting when users walk in the door by allowing them to program the oven to begin cooking at a pre-set time and power level. Home chefs can simply place the food inside, use the menu to set the appropriate time and power level, and their meal will be ready when they get home.

To ensure the Distinctive Microwave is a welcome addition in all kitchens, Dacor has included the Child Safety Lock feature to prevent unwanted oven operation by small children. The oven can be set so the control panel is deactivated or locked to eliminate any safety concerns.

ADDITIONAL FEATURES OF THE 24" DISTINCTIVE MICROWAVE:

- **Keep Warm** – keeps hot foods heated up to 30 minutes after cooking is finished with no loss of quality
- **Four Defrost Options** – quickly defrosts meats and poultry by weight. Specific programs for each category assure excellent, even results
- **Minute Plus** – provides users one minute of high power cooking with a single touch

36" EPICURE VENTILATION SYSTEM

An efficient, high-quality ventilation system is essential to improving air quality in the kitchen. Ventilation Systems not only eliminate kitchen odors, but also help to control the humidity in a kitchen, which inhibits the growth of bacteria. The 36" Epicure Ventilation system offers a stylish solution for homeowners who need a ventilation system but do not want the look of a large

hood hanging from the ceiling. Designed in stylish stainless steel, this innovative ventilation system is installed discreetly under the counter surface and remains out of view when not in use. When needed, the system rises 15" above the countertop to efficiently remove smoke and other cooking odors. When finished, the touch of a button lowers the system back into the surface of the counter for a clear, uncluttered countertop. The ventilation system's slim profile makes it versatile and allows it to be installed behind an oven/cooktop combination.

Dacor specially designed the Epicure Ventilation System to compliment the Distinctive Cooktop and Distinctive Rangetop. The system has an infinite speed blower control and must be vented with a Remote Blower or In Line Blower, which reduce kitchen noise, or a Cabinet Blower. Powerful and efficient design allows Dacor blowers to easily remove the most persistent and dense kitchen pollutants – from heat and odor to steam and smoke.

With industry leading features and design, the two newest appliances from Dacor continue to bring the brand's unique styling, innovation and cooking performance to the kitchen. The Distinctive 24" Microwave rolls out to authorized Dacor dealers in February 2011 with UMRP starting at \$459 while the Epicure 36" Raised Ventilation system will be available to dealers in March 2011 and has an UMRP starting at \$979.

For more information on Dacor, its product line and local dealer locations, visit www.dacor.com, or visit the Dacor Design & Culinary Centers in Atlanta or San Francisco.

TRI STATE DISTRIBUTORS ADDS SPEED QUEEN FOR COLORADO AND WYOMING



Effective February 15, 2011, Speed Queen has appointed Tri State Distributors as their distributor for Colorado and Wyoming. With this additional territory, Tri State is now the Speed Queen distributor for the states of Alaska, Hawaii, Washington, Oregon, Northern Idaho, Montana, Colorado and Wyoming.

| *continued on page 22* |

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“We are very pleased to accept this additional opportunity with Speed Queen,” stated Gary Dickson co-president of Tri State Distributors. “Speed Queen has been a truly exceptional partner these last few years and we look forward to growing their business in Colorado and Wyoming.”

Brands now distributed by Tri State in Colorado and Wyoming include BlueStar, Liebherr, Lynx, Sawtooth Pellet Grills and Speed Queen.

Darrell Turman is the Territory Manager for this area and can be reached at 970-420-5104 or dturman@tristatedistributors.com.

DCS BY FISHER & PAYKEL ANNOUNCES THE DEBUT OF A NEW INDOOR KITCHEN COLLECTION IN STORES APRIL 2011



The 2011 DCS by Fisher & Paykel indoor kitchen collection merges modern sophistication and culinary performance with the durability of professional design to deliver the ingredients of commercial refinement: authenticity, performance, functionality, and substance.

Cooking to restaurant standards can now be the norm rather than the exception: DCS offers

durable, yet luxurious products that appeal to each individual's personal sense of style. The culinary dependability and food science behind the new collection is ideal for consumers who have a passion for entertaining.

“This is the most exciting launch for DCS to date. The newly-styled collection follows our tradition of combining advanced cooking power and technology to deliver cooking accuracy and performance in a distinctive professional appliance,” says Scott Davies, Fisher & Paykel marketing manager. “With a focus on the company heritage and refinements to the

cooking line, DCS continues to bring commercial quality benefits to the home chef,” he adds.

- **Dual Fuel Range** – Convection cooking, a full extension telescopic racking system and illuminated halo's create the ultimate appliances for the at-home chef. Multiple configurations include a commercial grade griddle & our patented Grease Management System
- **Cooktop** – Patented Dual Flow Burners™ create extreme heat and precision for the lowest constant simmer temperature in the category and enable you to cook delicate sauces and simmer chili or stew on an ultra low flame for long hours, always without scorching.
- **DishDrawer®** – Washing dishes has never looked so chic and energy-efficient. The beautifully-styled 24-inch DishDrawer® has an Energy Star rating and boasts an ultra quiet operation while using as little as 1.95 gallons of water per drawer. Drawers can be loaded with ease with the top drawer accommodating 13-inch plates. A fully adjustable racking system with independently movable racks makes doing the dish a breeze.
- **Wall Oven** – With 10 cooking modes ranging from bake to the unique roast function, the DCS Wall Oven has 4.0 cu ft of space with full extension racks that empowers you to confidently cook with predictable, professional results.

Further details about DCS by Fisher & Paykel is available online at: www.dcsappliances.com

| *continued on page 24* |



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ABOUT DCS BY FISHER & PAYKEL

The heritage of DCS by Fisher & Paykel began in the late 1980s as the country's leading engineers and designers created the first line of high-end commercial quality cooktops and outdoor grills. DCS was launched as the leading provider of quality cooking equipment with high performance for the commercial food industry. Recognizing the desire for home chefs to master restaurant culinary cooking, DCS expanded its innovation and design to pioneer high-end commercial quality appliances for the home. The expansion to a full line of indoor and outdoor professional-styled products has inspired the at home chef to not only cook like a professional but live deliciously.

DCS by Fisher & Paykel is a leading manufacturer with focus on product innovation, culinary technology and professional styled premium products. Fisher & Paykel has global state-of-the-art manufacturing facilities in New Zealand, Italy, Thailand, USA and Mexico and are regarded as being the innovators in the appliance industry.

WELLS FARGO EXCEEDS \$8 MILLION COMMITMENT TO HABITAT FOR HUMANITY, PROVIDING \$11.8 MILLION

GRANTS AND COMMUNITY INVESTMENTS SUPPORT AFFORDABLE-HOUSING WORK WITH LOW-INCOME FAMILIES



Habitat for Humanity International announced that Wells Fargo & Company (NYSE: WFC) contributed \$11.8 million in support of Habitat's affordable-housing work in 2010, exceeding the company's June 2010 pledge by nearly 50 percent to help revitalize communities hit hard by the economy.

Wells Fargo also has pledged an additional \$5 million to Habitat in 2011. This pledge is made possible by

the Wells Fargo Housing Foundation, which will provide the funding to support local Habitat affiliates through the company's "Money for Muscle" team-member volunteer program. Additionally, Wells Fargo provided another \$3.4 million in community lending to Habitat for Humanity International last year.

"Wells Fargo has supported Habitat's affordable housing work for nearly 20 years, which is one example of our focus on doing what's right for our communities," said Cara Heiden, co-president of Wells Fargo Home Mortgage. "Together we have made a difference with low-income families who now have homes in which they can take great pride – a mission that Wells Fargo has always believed is important."

In 2010, Wells Fargo team members volunteered more than 50,000 hours to help rebuild or renovate 650 homes in 41 states, and donated 19 properties to create affordable-housing opportunities in local communities. During the year, the Wells Fargo Housing Foundation directed \$7.2 million to local Habitat affiliates to support Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative, which constructs, repairs and rehabilitates affordable housing with low-income families in markets hit hard by foreclosures. In 2010, many of the projects focused on rehabilitating foreclosed and abandoned properties and incorporating green components to make the homes more energy efficient for the homebuyers.

Overall, Wells Fargo's 2010 grants to Habitat for Humanity included return after:

- \$7.2 million for Habitat's local Neighborhood Revitalization Initiative efforts
- \$4.6 million awarded to local Habitat affiliates through the Wells Fargo Team Member Volunteer Program that provides "Money for Muscle" when Wells Fargo team members help build or renovate homes for low-income families

An additional \$3.4 million investment was made in the Flexible Capital Access Program facilitated through Wells Fargo's Community Lending and Investment division.

"Habitat's Neighborhood Revitalization relies on partnership with other organizations to solve a variety of problems associated with foreclosed and abandoned properties throughout the country," said Jonathan Reckford, CEO for Habitat for Humanity International. "With the support of great partners like Wells Fargo, Habitat for Humanity affiliates are able to work with families and neighborhood organizations to help struggling communities thrive."

A portion of the donation also supported the annual Habitat for Humanity Jimmy and Rosalynn Carter Work Project in October. Volunteers | *continued on page 26* |



Home
sweet
home.

In 1976, Habitat for Humanity was founded on one principle: that everyone, everywhere deserves a simple, decent place to live. Since then, through the generosity of our supporters and the hard work of our homeowners, Habitat for Humanity has been able to provide more than 1.75 million people around the world with safe, decent, affordable shelter. Become a part of this life-changing ministry and help us eliminate poverty housing from the world.

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helped to build, rehabilitate and repair 86 homes in Washington, D.C.; Baltimore and Annapolis, Md.; Minneapolis and St. Paul, Minn.; and Birmingham, Ala. Wells Fargo volunteers worked on houses in Minneapolis, St. Paul, Birmingham, Baltimore, and Washington, D.C. as part of the week-long event.

ABOUT WELLS FARGO

Wells Fargo & Company (NYSE: WFC) is a nationwide, diversified, community-based financial services company with \$1.3 trillion in assets. Founded in 1852 and headquartered in San Francisco, Wells Fargo provides banking, insurance, investments, mortgage, and consumer and commercial finance through more than 9,000 stores, 12,000 ATMs, the Internet (wellsfargo.com and wachovia.com), and other distribution channels across North America and internationally. With approximately 280,000 team members, Wells Fargo serves one in three households in America. Wells Fargo & Company was ranked #19 on Fortune's 2009 rankings of America's largest corporations. Wells Fargo's vision is to satisfy all our customers' financial needs and help them succeed financially.

ABOUT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY INTERNATIONAL

Habitat for Humanity International is an ecumenical Christian ministry that welcomes to its work all people dedicated to the cause of eliminating poverty housing. Since its founding in 1976, Habitat has built, rehabilitated, repaired or improved more than 400,000 houses worldwide, providing simple, decent and affordable shelter for more than 2 million people. For more information, or to donate or volunteer, visit Habitat.org.

WALLS + FORMS INTRODUCES VERSAFLEX™ MODULAR FRAME SYSTEM CATALOG



Walls + Forms, Inc. just unveiled a new color catalog on its Versaflex™ modular frame system.

Versaflex features high quality low profile aluminum extrusions with hidden connectors. A design profile has both front and side panel applications, unique to the display industry, which allows for construction of

an array of products. A unique extrusion enables the creation of virtually any design. A patented profile facilitates the creation of three-dimensional design for any situation.

Walls + Forms can design lightweight aluminum construction Versaflex product displays that meet one's needs. The catalog shows how it can be sized to specifications, which can include illuminated side panels with

vertical or horizontal module formats. Their connecting allows for use as corner units.

The catalog showcases Versaflex ease of use and flexibility. It is pictured in display applications including an angled profile for increased customer visibility with a menu light box, a custom fixture and company logo area for brand recognition in a ceiling mounted Light Thief, a



double-sided light box sized to specifications, and an exquisite backlit floor stand display used by a banking institution. It is so versatile it is shown sized to specifications with illuminated side panels for a salon display, as a wireless retailer display, as a power tools display, with illuminated logos promoting a movie at a theater chain, and in floor stand applications (two, three, and four sided formats available), for a major global electronics company.

The literature explains Versaflex is easy to install. Top or side loading, you can switch out in seconds and can assemble in a few seconds with no power tools needed. Pictured is a Walls + Forms lightbox retail application with a stunning visual effect. It was built using 3 panel modules that connect together. You can have one large image, or any look you want. Front loading images are easy to change out and it is also available in freestanding double-sided format.

For free literature, please visit: www.wallsforms.com/illuminated_displays or call the Walls + Forms sales team at 972-745-0800. Walls + Forms Inc., P.O. Box 741112, Dallas, TX 75374-1112 USA. Fax: 972-304-8402. E-Mail: info@wallsforms.com.

| *continued on page 28* |



CH-27 Series

Simple and chic, Under Cabinet or Wall Mount, this 7" height seamless professional hood is sleek and versatile.



CH-27 Wall Mount Style



CH-77 Series

Available in Under Cabinet (top) and Wall Mount Styles (bottom)

CH-97 Series

Available in Under Cabinet (top) and Wall Mount Styles (bottom)



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ALMO ANNOUNCES 2011 DEALER EXPO SCHEDULE

ALMO BRINGS NEW PRODUCTS, MANUFACTURER REPRESENTATIVES AND ALMO DEALERS TOGETHER FOR ANOTHER YEAR OF TRADESHOW AND TRAINING EXPOS.



Almo Corporation, the major national consumer electronics and appliance distributor, today announced their 2011 Almo Consumer Electronics and Appliance Expo schedule. These regional tradeshow and training expositions feature hands-on access to the latest products, free selling skill & technology trainings, door buster show specials, one-on-one meetings as well as peer networking events.

2011 ALMO EXPO SCHEDULE

Mid-Atlantic Expo

May 3rd / 9am-9pm
Radisson Northeast
Philadelphia, PA

Central States Expo

July 19th / 4pm-9pm
July 20th / 8am-2pm
St. Charles Convention Center
St. Louis, MO

Eastern Mid-West Expo

August 2nd / 9am-9pm
Toledo Dana Center / Toledo Hilton
Toledo, OH

North Central Mid-West Expo

August 11th / 9am-9pm
Sheraton Bloomington
Minneapolis, MN

“Each year, we adjust the format of our expo’s to ensure we’re helping our dealer partners remain competitive,” said Warren Chaiken, president & CEO of Almo. “Based on our experience, the latest technologies and tools are often overlooked during the sale due to lack of knowledge. So we’ve modified our 2011 training program to focus on display and demonstration of hot technologies that drive additional business. We’re providing both the technology training as well as valuable selling skills for engaging the customer, and we’re providing take-away tools.”

Registration for the Philadelphia Expo will open March 1st. Agendas and event details will be posted on www.almo.com/events also beginning March 1st, 2011. For those areas not served by Almo’s 2011 Expo schedule, smaller training-only events will be available throughout the year. Interested dealers should contact their account team for more information.

Dealers interested in joining the Almo team, may contact our New Dealer Specialist via email or by calling 866-430-2566. Instant credit lines are available. **RO**

| *continued on page 30* |



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ZEPHYR ANNOUNCES 2010 "INSPIRE MY KITCHEN DESIGN CONTEST" WINNERS AND KICKS OFF 2011 CONTEST

CONTEST COALESCE CULINARY AND DESIGN COMMUNITIES, AND AWARDS HOMEOWNERS & DESIGNERS WITH EXQUISITE PRIZES

Zephyr, the innovators of design-forward ventilation hoods, recently announced the winners of its 2010 "Inspire My Kitchen Design Contest." The competition brought together culinary aficionados, and awarded homeowners and professional designers with prizes for incorporating a Zephyr range hood in to their kitchen. After an initial open entry period, Zephyr's world-renowned judging panel announced the winners on October 14, 2010.



and his award-winning team; the dinner was elegantly paired with premier and rare wines and champagnes from around the world.

Additionally, three kitchen designers won cash prizes, with Dana Jones from Long Beach, California taking home the grand prize of \$10,000 for excellent kitchen design using a Zephyr range hood.

"The 2010 'Inspire My Kitchen Design Contest' exemplifies Zephyr's core values of discovery, design, and the ultimate in culinary experiences," noted Arcadio Lainez, director of marketing at Zephyr. "This contest brought together homeowners, kitchen designers and culinary professionals, and fostered a once in a lifetime experience for all of those involved. We look forward to launching the 2011 contest next month."

Zephyr recently announced the 2011 "Inspire My Kitchen Design Contest" dates: submissions will be accepted in March 2011, with winners being announced on October 14, 2011. To learn more, visit www.inspiremykitchen.com/winners. **RO**



First, contestants submitted digital photos and a brief narrative describing their kitchen's design. After thousands of users elected their top five kitchens, Zephyr's expert panel of distinguished judges – including artist Fu-Tung Cheng, industrial designer Robert Brunner, and celebrity chef Tom Hurley – evaluated the contestants based on a rigorous criteria. Points were awarded based on materials, aesthetics, utility and the X-Factor – the kitchen one would most enjoy entertaining guests in.

Preston and Katie Roper of Los Altos Hills, California, won the homeowner Dream Dinner grand prize. The prize included a hands-on cooking class and a dinner prepared by celebrity chef Tom Hurley the night before the Dream Dinner event. Gathering under their Zephyr Trapeze range hood, the Ropers and 16 of their closest friends enjoyed a 5-course gourmet dinner tailored to their tastes by Hurley



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Consumer Confidence in Overall Economy Highest in 35 Months

CONSUMER CONFIDENCE ON TECH
HITS ALL-TIME HIGH FOR JANUARY

Consumer confidence in the overall economy reached its highest level in nearly three years this month, according to the latest figures released today by the Consumer Electronics Association (CEA)[®]. The CEA Indexes also show consumer confidence in technology reached an all-time high for the month of January.

For the sixth consecutive month, consumer confidence in the overall direction of the economy improved. The CEA Index of Consumer Expectations (ICE) rose one point in January to 175.7. That's the highest the ICE has been since February of 2008. The ICE, which measures consumer expectations about the broader economy, is up more than nine points from this time last year.

"The economy continues to improve and individuals are taking note," said Shawn DuBravac, CEA's chief economist and director of research. "With consumer sentiment higher than it has been since early 2008, and six straight months of growth, consumers are feeling better about the economy and their financial futures."

Consumer confidence in technology is the highest it's ever been in the month of January, despite dropping from last month's record high. The CEA Index of Consumer Technology Expectations (ICTE) fell 5.6 points to 88.1 this month. The ICTE, which measures consumer expectations about technology spending, still recorded its

highest level ever for the month of January and is up more than four points from this time last year.

"Spending on technology is influenced by regular seasonal purchasing patterns and in December, technology was atop every consumer's holiday wish list," said DuBravac. "While a drop from December to January has happened every year of the index, the record high this January suggests consumers are still showing a willingness to purchase tech."

The CEA Indexes comprise the ICE and ICTE, both of which are updated on a monthly basis through consumer surveys. New data is released on the fourth Tuesday of each month. CEA has been tracking index data since January 2007. To find current and past indexes, charts, methodology and future release dates, log on to: www.CEAindexes.org.

ABOUT CEA

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA) is the preeminent trade association promoting growth in the \$165 billion U.S. consumer electronics industry. More than 2,000 companies enjoy the benefits of CEA membership, including legislative advocacy, market research, technical training and education, industry promotion, standards development and the fostering of business and strategic relationships. CEA also sponsors and manages the International CES – The Global Stage for Innovation. All profits from CES are reinvested into CEA's industry services. Find CEA online at www.CE.org. **RO**

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In Review

HIGH ATTENDANCE NUMBERS AND AGGRES

‘A RIP-ROARING TO 2011 WINTER LAS VEG





LAS VEGAS MARKET™

EXCLUSIVE SALES KICK OFF START, AS MARKET

ATTENDEES THRILLED WITH OPENING
DAY TURNOUT FOR MARKET,
GIFT+HOME AND VEGASKIDS

Winter Las Vegas Market 2011 got off to a robust start as attendance soared and enthusiasm reigned during the first major total home furnishings market of the year January 24-28. The combined forces of Winter Las Vegas Market, Gift+Home and VegasKids attracted more than 150 new-to-market exhibitors.

Opening day attendance and order-writing was stronger than expected with many World Market Center exhibitors reporting record-breaking sales. By close of day Monday, buyer attendance was up 19 percent over the Summer Market and 7 percent higher than Winter Market a year ago. Market officials reported significant increases in international buyers, designers, and gift retailers.

The new participants joined 1,200-plus exhibitors at Winter Las Vegas Market, including hundreds of permanent showrooms featuring home furnishings and accessories, children's must-haves and top gift and décor lines.

| continued on page 36 |





LAS VEGAS MARKET™

Enthusiasm was particularly high among attendees to Gift+Home. “Gifts and home decor is a \$300 billion business and recessionary effects are not as pronounced with this sector. Gifts and holiday purchases can’t be postponed, despite economic conditions,” said Robert Maricich, president and chief executive officer of World Market Center Las Vegas.

The opportunity there is huge, and we offer a compelling platform for gift stores west of the Mississippi. That is being validated by new leases with the best anchor tenants in the gift arena.”

According to Jeff Hiller, owner of Proaction Marketing Group and president of the Sustainable Furnishings Council, retailer confidence are up, and that can only bode well for Market. Hiller discussed the economic outlook during his opening day seminar, stating that the industry will continue to see moderate sales gains through the first half of 2011 due to the lag effect on home sales gains the year before. Hiller quoted a recent Forbes report that said 49 percent of retailers see recovery as an opportunity to grab market share.

“Smart businesses see stabilization in the economy as an opportunity to get ahead,” he said. Hiller went on to offer retailers a road map to a successful year. “The single most important thing to do to improve sales is instill confidence throughout your organization by your actions not just words. It affects the ability of your staff to perform at their best and also influences your customer’s decision. People are drawn to optimism; we all want to do business with winners. Attending markets, flooring new products, and communicating the news with excitement are all part of it.”

BUYERS AND EXHIBITORS WERE EQUALLY ENTHUSIASTIC

Gene Lunger, vice president, sales with South Florida-based City Furniture-Ashley HomeStores, said that from a buyer’s perspective, Las Vegas Market is extraordinary. “World Market Center Las Vegas is a fantastic forum for retailers. There is no market I am able to visit where it is possible to accomplish more with such great time efficiency,”





he said. “We love to visit Las Vegas from the fabulous resort hotels, to the glitz and glamour of the casinos, restaurants and shopping, the design architecture and innovation is tremendous.”

Edward Nader, a buyer and owner of Nader’s Gallery in Shreveport, La., said that his store had an impressive year last year and he was looking forward to finding new and different products to add to his current lines. “We had a great year and we are looking to expand our business. We are here looking for furniture and accessories,” he said. “From the moment we got off the elevator we started seeing great new stuff.”

Ken Siemers, executive vice president with the Wayne, New Jersey-based Russ Berrie said he was impressed not only with traffic but also order writing in the gift arena. “The buyers are buying and not just here to browse,” he said. “Las Vegas offers a different experience for the shopper on and off the property. World Market Center Las Vegas is a comprehensive market with gift, home, lighting, rugs and more. World Market Center was designed for this business. It is a primary stop on the gift buyer’s trail.”

Eric Hinshaw, CEO with Kingsdown, said that he, too, was impressed by the traffic. He said nearly 75 percent of his traffic has been from new customers, including those from Thailand, Turkey, Mexico, the United Kingdom and Australia. Hinshaw said he could feel the buzz about the new concepts the showroom is introducing within the Kingsdown Inc. Brand Portfolio. “We are seeing a lot of enthusiasm. People don’t come to Market to talk about lines they have. They want to see things that are new and different. That creates a lot of excitement.”

Rick Lovegrove, director, design and sales with Montreal, Canada-based G. Romano said he was pleasantly surprised at the volume he saw during opening day. He said that G. Romano, who exhibits in the juried showcase Design & Living, is introducing three new collections and buyers from Latin America, Mexico, Canada and the United States were responding well. “This has been the best first day at Market that I can remember in many years. | continued on page 38 |





LAS VEGAS MARKET™

Right from the start, we wrote orders all morning. It has been really upbeat,” he said. “The buyers who have been coming have been very focused. They are here to work.”

Connie Post, CEO of Affordable Design Solutions, is working with Furniture Origins, a licensee of the Disney line, and Theo Kalomirakis, aka “The Father of Home Theater,” to introduce The Walt Disney Collection. The line drew quite a crowd on opening day. “I’m seeing a real turnaround and uptick,” said Post. “We are working with retailers to create a gallery in their stores with the Walt Disney-branded product.”

David Gebhart, president and CEO of Dallas, Texas-based Global Views, said he was amazed at the crowds before Market even began. “We couldn’t believe the traffic waiting to get into the building today,” he said. “We have had a great five years here, and we relocated to a new expanded space on the first floor. We’re glad we made the move—we have an opportunity to really serve our customers.”

Tom Baldwin, vice president, marketing with Morristown, Tennessee-based Berkline said he saw a dramatic increase in traffic today—20 percent over last year’s Winter Market. “We’re delighted at our day one attendance,” he said.

Following a successful first day, attendees were treated to a show-stopping opening reception, inspired by the hit show, “Glee.” The production included a special choreographed “Salute to Bedding,” celebrating one of the most profitable and innovative markets within the home furnishings industry. Dancers jumped across a stage of mattresses to Van Halen’s “Jump” and other numbers, while guests enjoyed the cozy surrounding of fire pits, festive hors d’ oeuvres and cocktails.

It was an energizing start to a fully loaded week as attendees prepared to take advantage of a rebounding economy. Winter Market offered targeted speakers, exhibits and events to educate and prepare attendees for a year of optimism and growth.

The next Las Vegas Market takes place August 1-5, 2011. For more information visit: www.lasvegasmarket.com. **RO**





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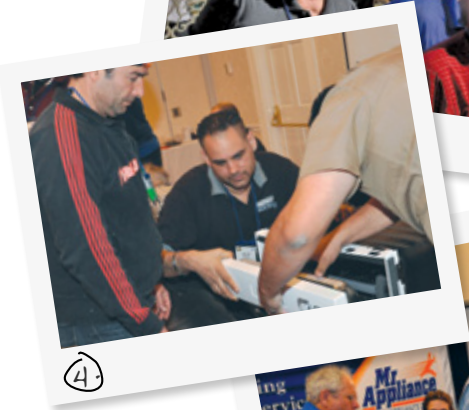
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A Rose by Any Other Name

When I check out at the grocery store, I look at the clerk's name tag and greet him with something like, "How's it going today, Tom? Keeping you busy?" I'll greet the teller at my bank with "Hi Monique. How's the money biz today?" At my dry cleaner where I've noticed the employee of the month plaque, I might say "Wow, Luis, you were the best in the chain last month. Great job."

I don't usually know these people at all. I certainly don't have a serious relationship with them, but I have found that in almost every case, when I use someone's name, their humor brightens and I get much better service. Some, thinking I remember them from a previous visit complement me on my great memory. Sometimes, the associate is almost stunned that I know their name until she realizes I read it off her nametag.

Lesson one: the importance of using nametags in your store.

We're hoping that prospects coming into our showrooms will spend hundreds and even thousands of dollars with us. In order to be successful, though, we have to create a relationship with the customer. Name recognition can be the foundation of a good relationship. The more solid the relationship—the more trust generated—the more likely the purchase will be profitable.

In knowing your name, the customer knows he can hold you accountable. He can also ask for you again on future trips to the store or refer others to you if he thinks you've

given outstanding service. Seeing your name on a tag or embroidered on your shirt will help the customer remember your moniker more easily—even if you've introduced yourself.

Lesson two: the value of using the customer's name.

When do you find out the customer's name most of the time? If you answered honestly, you probably said "when I go to write it up." Way too late! You've just managed to create the ultimate bad blind date. You've spent a half hour with a prospect and you don't know enough about him to create a bond. Because you don't know and use his name, he is anonymous. No one wants that.

Although we don't bother to get our customers' names, we don't hesitate to introduce ourselves and seek the name of our new acquaintance in almost every other business and social situation. It seems to come naturally everywhere but on the sales floor.

Like any other skill, there are a number of ways to properly introduce yourself and get the customer's name. You have to practice and rehearse your introduction until it feels like something you've always done. Here's what works for me.

When I approach the customer and establish eye contact, I'll ask a few non-threatening questions that have nothing to do with the sale. "How was the drive over here? When I came in this morning it took me twice as long as usual because of the ice." Wait for the prospect to answer. "Looking at that hat, I'd guess that you're a Broncos fan, right?"

Customer's response might give you your next line...if he says, for instance "a big fan. I'm sure excited about our coaching change. We should do much better next season." You can answer, "We won't do any worse!"

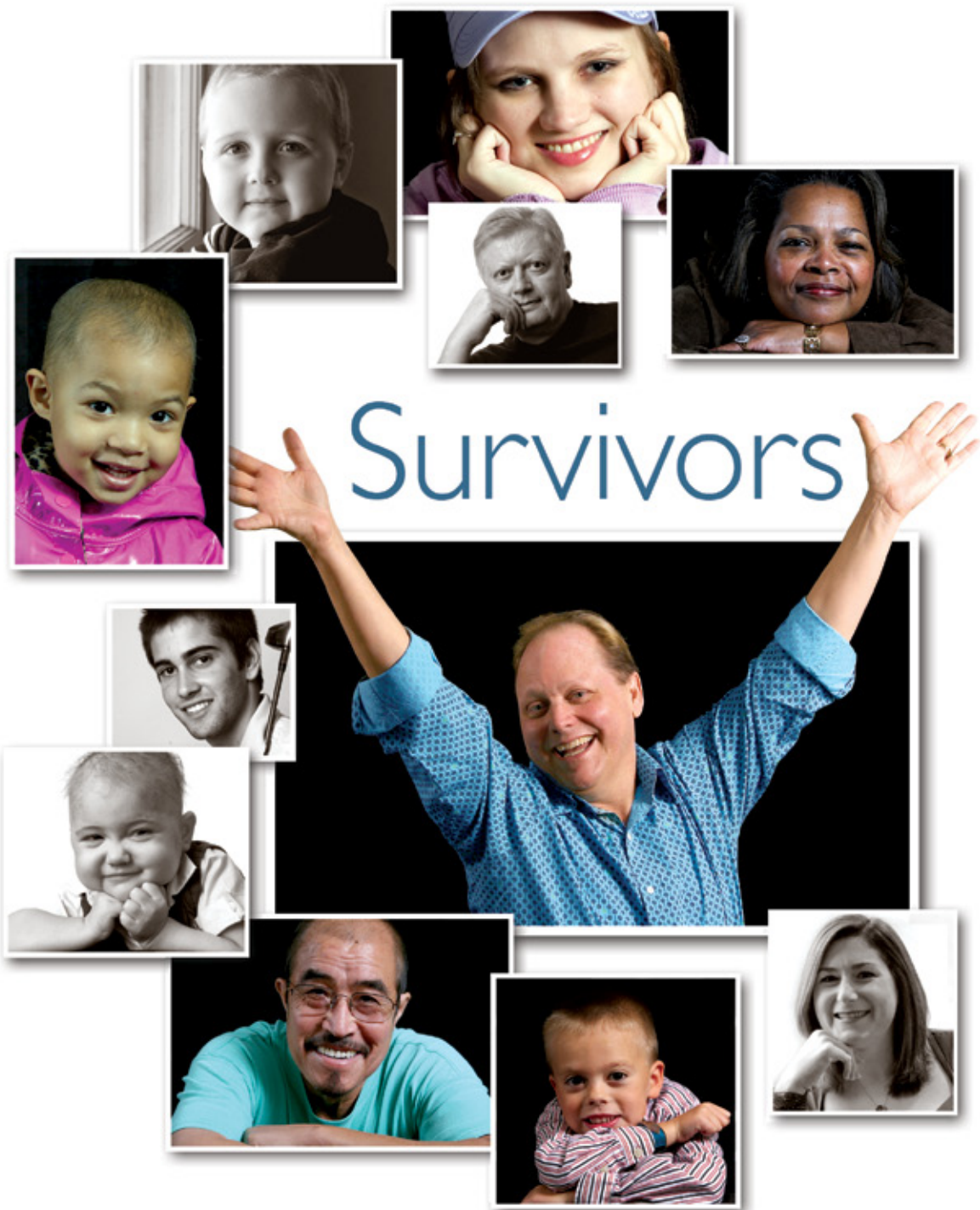
After a few minutes, you'll see that the customer is comfortable and has relaxed. At that point, I put my hand out and act like I've forgotten to introduce myself. "By the way, my name is Elly and yours is..." Wait for the customer to shake your hand and give you his name. I've had folks who didn't want to take my hand, but I always get their names. If you're meeting a couple, get both of their names.

Do whatever you need to do to remember that name. Write it down, rhyme it with something, think of someone else with that name, say it back a couple of times. A good transition from meeting to getting to know what the customer wants might be "Glad to meet you Tom. What are you looking for this morning?"

I'm willing to bet that your closing rates will improve if the associates on your floors do a better job getting to know their customers—and their names—early in the selling process. You'll have more repeat business and sell more profitable products. **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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Where are the Role Models?

VERNON HILL AT METRO BANK IS EXTRAORDINARY

They are athletes, Nobel Prize winners, and heads of state. They are role models who inspire others not only to follow in their footsteps, but to do better, dream bigger. But, where, I ask you, are the customer service role models? Where are those people who have made providing customers with the best service possible not only a priority but an art?

Sadly, they are few and far between. That doesn't mean they don't exist, however. In fact, the most customer-driven executive I have ever had the pleasure to meet is Vernon Hill, founder of Commerce Bank in the United States and, most recently, of Metro Bank in the United Kingdom. Banks are notorious for bad service, but Hill set a standard that no bank in either country has ever been able to replicate. He changed the banking industry in the United States—and now he's doing it in the United Kingdom.

Since I founded the Service Quality Institute in Minneapolis, Minnesota, 39 years ago, I've dealt with clients and businesses throughout the world. I've preached the importance of customer service through several books and in speeches to thousands of employees around the globe. And I have never met anyone who comes close to Hill; he is the master of customer service.

If you have ever doubted the power of customer service, consider this: Hill started Commerce Bancorp in New

Jersey in 1973, when he was just 27, with \$1.5 million in capital and just nine employees. By 2007, Commerce was the 18th largest bank in the United States, with more than 500 branches and 15,000 employees. Hill sold Commerce Bancorp the following year for a whopping \$8.5 billion.

How did he do it? How was Hill at such a young age to take on some of the giants in the industry? He did it by realizing he was in the customer service business, not the banking business. He referred to his branches



as stores and designed and decorated them more like retail stores than banks. He offered customers and noncustomers, alike, use of free coin counters. His employees handed out lollipops and dog biscuits. And he scoffed at “bankers’ hours,” keeping his stores open seven days a week to better serve his customers. Hill proved that, if you build your business around the customer's experience, you can own the market.

In 2010, three years after selling Commerce Bank, Hill took his

customer-service strategy to London, where he opened the first new bank in that city in more than 100 years. The new bank was an instance success, opening 3,000 accounts during its first month of operation. Hill credits his success in banking to his customer service model. While testifying before Parliament's Treasury Committee in December 2010, he said he sees his bank as a retailer “that happens to sell bank products.”

“They often call us the anti-bank bank,” he said. “We do things in a reverse way. We care about service. We care about convenience. We care about hours. We care about call centers with human beings. It's almost the anti-banking view of life.”

Hill said his banking model in Great Britain, as it was in America, is to “build customers as fans. Great companies build fans who stay with the company and recommend [it] to a friend,” he said.

Hill is predicting that, within 10 years, Metro Bank will have 10 percent of the market in the United Kingdom—and more than \$31 billion in deposits. Given his focus on customer service, I don't doubt him for a minute. **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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Your Best Brand Ambassadors

One of the best, most effective ways to market your company is to have brand ambassadors. People who are true believers and fans of your company that they will tell all of their friends about how great your company is and how wonderful your products and services are.

Brand ambassadors are effective because people trust their friends' opinions, much more so than an ad on TV. The problem is good brand ambassadors are hard to find and expensive to develop. You potentially have a crew of great brand ambassadors right in front of you. They not only know your company well, but also have a vested interest in spreading the word. They are your employees.

Here are some ideas for maximizing your employees' potential as brand ambassadors. Keep in mind these are general ideas to get you thinking; what works for your specific situation might be totally different. Also, these ideas assume you have a positive work environment and a good relationship with employees. If you don't, this column can't help you.

- **Training:** Any employee can be a brand ambassador. Not just your marketing and sales staff, but your receptionist, accountants, loading dock workers — everyone. You just need to make sure they know your brand.

Every month or so, have a short brand training session with your employees. Tell them what the brand promise is, what you stand for as a company. Take them through your marketing materials and the rationale behind them.

Just by knowing what your brand is and how important it is, employees will automatically be powerful representatives for your brand in the community.

- **Community Involvement:** It is common for companies to be involved in giving back to the community. There are so many causes, and your company can't be involved in everything so, in order to cast your community involvement net wider, try supporting your employees philanthropic interests to the degree you can. Give them time off to pursue charity work. Support them financially, if you can. The more employees you have representing the brand in the community, the more your image and public goodwill will be enhanced.
- **Materials:** If you're going to send your employees out into the world to represent your brand, you should arm them with the right tools for the job. That can be as simple as giving them business cards. But why not take it a step further? Make the business cards a coupon that entitles the holder to a special prize or discount. Put a special Web address on the card that leads to your Facebook page or to a special offer.

You can also give your employees brochures and other tools, but the easier it is for them to carry and distribute, the more effective they will be.

- **Social Media:** Chances are, most or all of your employees are active on Facebook, and some of them are also on Twitter or Foursquare. Companies have typically been leery of this, forbidding their employees to engage others as

company representatives. But there is also tremendous opportunity in having an army of Facebookers and Twitterers all working for you.

The key is training. Make sure your employees know how to engage people through social media and how to represent the brand. Bring in a social media specialist to teach them about the pitfalls of misrepresenting the brand. If you can find a way to turn your employees social media activity in your favor, you can quickly expand your reach online.

- **Make It Fun:** The most important thing you can do as you send your employees into the world as brand ambassadors is to make it fun. It shouldn't feel like extra work. Recognize your employees for their extra efforts. Hold contests or drawings for people who participate.

Your employees, just like all consumers, talk to friends and family about the places they work, the things they buy and more. By virtue of their jobs, they are (or should be) invested in the success of your company and brand. They may not have the reach of a national advertising campaign, but they are an easy way to build awareness and goodwill for your brand in your own backyard. **RO**

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Christopher Thiede owns BUILD Communications, a branding and PR firm. Read Chris' blog at www.buildcommunications.com.



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Will Business be Better Because the Economy is Better?

A FEW THINGS TO CONSIDER

Before we get too excited about this recovery that Wall Street is experiencing, let's look behind the curtain. Corporate profits are up because of what I refer to as The Technology Benefit. Because of computers, companies are able to do more business with fewer employees. They are also able to do more business with less physical space. More and more companies are closing regional sales offices and even my company is made up of employees and associates in Salem, MA, Cleveland, OH, Houston, TX, Sacramento, CA, Orlando, FL, Burlington, VT and even a resource from Madras, India.

We all meet on a regular basis as if we are in the next office. So what does all that mean? The small office building market is not about to boom when you can hire temporary people who are more efficient and cost less than hiring full-time employees. Stop and think about part-time, temporary, and self-employed workers who are certainly taking away from companies hiring full-time employees with the additional tax and benefit concerns. So when you hear these economic pundits talking about a jobless recovery, they are right on the mark.

The next issue is that although the consumers are spending more, we should not lose sight of the fact that the value of homes in this country

continue to lose value. It wasn't too long ago that re-financing a house meant that it was boom time for business. Someone would take \$50,000 of equity out of the house and would add an addition, go on a trip, buy jewelry, or payoff some back bills. Now when someone re-finances they don't spend money on the extras, they reduce the size of the mortgage payments.

The other concern is that when business conditions improve, we get increases in competition. Wall Street becomes more willing to finance and expand new retail concepts, therefore, increasing the already competitive marketplace. Another concern is that many times because we have this feeling of well-being, we start to purchase some extra little goodies for the store, such as new computers and fixtures. This is because we believe all the stuff we hear on TV and how the recession is behind us. Yes, that's true, but let's take a page out of Andy Gove, the founder of Intel, when he wrote the book *Only the Paranoid Survive*, and that is what we have to become. Instead of paranoid, I prefer the term "cautiously optimistic."

Now let's look at some of the advantages that are taking place today. We have tools to attract people to our stores like never before, such as Facebook to Twitter to mobile

commerce to coupons of every variety. And let's not forget the business model of free. In this instance I refer to free as the amount of free services available to an independent retailer today. Look at the services Google is offering a retailer, such as Google Local which can be the single biggest source of generating new customers than anything else we have used in the past. And it's free. Then there is Yahoo Places and social media of every variety.

The commodity of this decade is not going to be money but time. How are we going to have time to do all these things? Don't worry, we can outsource that to someone who can work out of their homes, be very efficient, keep us on track, and help the cash register ring. The bottom line is that there is good news and bad news. The bad news is the recession might be over but the long recovery has just begun. The good news is the long recovery has just begun and we now have tools to help us take advantage of the challenging, but favorable, economic times in which we now live. **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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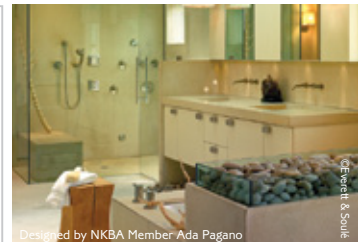
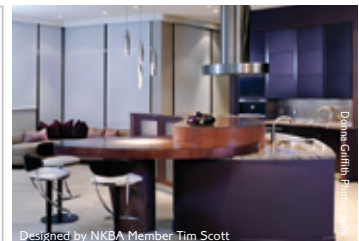
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The Birth of the Tribal Kitchen

We find that the kitchen is one of those rare universals truths that can be found around the world. The kitchen you find in Los Angeles is almost identical to one in Venice or Bangladesh. As a matter of fact you will find that the traditional layout of any kitchen can be found from a mud-hut in the Amazon to a 5th Avenue penthouse. We find the same pattern in archeological excavations from Taos, New Mexico to the ruins of Pompeii.

Today, for all our technological advances, we still face many of the same quandaries that plagued our predecessors in ancient times. Ever since Og brought home his first mastodon kill and invited the clan over for Sunday brunch, leaving poor Mrs. Og to wonder...were there enough rocks for all the guests to sit on? What about this new thing called fire? And where was she going to store two tons of leftover hairy elephant meat?

At the core of the “primal” kitchen we find three basic elements; fire, water and storage. The only real evolution that we find is in the appearance and technology. We went from the “hearth”, to the “wood-burning” stove, to the “induction cook top”. Then we went from the water-bucket, to hand-pump, to the integrated dishwasher and from the “apple-cellar” to the “icebox” to the “Integrated Refrigerator”. It is not about how the kitchen has changed, but more how we have changed the usage of this once purely functional space.

At the turn of the last century, the kitchen was designed to be out of the way, a place for the cook and servants to gather and prepare the days meals, as well as double as a place to stay out of the main household. It was sparse, functional and easy to wash-down.

By post-war America, the kitchen was designed as a functional laboratory for a single participant - the woman of the house, the little lady, for Mom. It was laid out with assembly line efficiency with a window centered on the sink so mother could watch the little ones in the back yard.

The evolution of the modern kitchen has grown far from its primary function of food preparation, to that of “the social center of the home”. A place where the family, both nuclear as well as tribal, still gather to share, rejuvenate and commune together.

Today the kitchen is still the gathering place of the tribe, but the walls have come down and this once hidden and secluded place is now part of a larger social arena, the Tribal Kitchen. It serves as a meeting place, a dining room, a home-office, a place to do homework; it can even serve as a hide away for quiet reflection or a place to gather for fun and entertainment.

The Tribal Kitchen has become a place that defines the home and those that live in it. This once private domain of the feminine world has now given way to the new social order and reflects

the world that we live in. Today we find that everyone is welcomed in the Tribal Kitchen. More and more family members and friends are invited, if not encouraged to participate in the ritual of preparation.

With this increased activity and additional bodies, all in a high-traffic ballet of fire, boiling water and sharp pointy items, we find that the assembly-line kitchen of the past century, with its uniform horizon of sink, dishwasher, cook-top, oven and refrigerator, forever locked in its limited one-person “work-triangle”, must make way to a new way of thinking.




In our recent past, the collective thought of modern kitchen design was to create the “illusion of order”. This was accomplished by hiding the true function of the kitchen. By hiding the food, the waste and the appliances, we create the illusion of productivity and efficiency by hiding the process. In the new school of thought, the belief is that the kitchen must be efficient to be productive, an environment that is conducive to the task at hand. It is about changing the way we think about this space we call “kitchen” and our individual relationships to it. **RO**

Kevin M. Henry is an international speaker on market trends and sustainable kitchen design in the kitchen industry for more than 30 years. Contact: Kmhenry@group42.net



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The Wisdom of Mom & Pop: The Neighborhood Hardware Store Lives!

Fragers' Hardware, in Washington, D.C., is the quintessential neighborhood hardware store. Despite the onslaught of the Home Depot and Lowe's, Frager's is a survivor. Located on Pennsylvania Avenue within sight of the Capitol, Frager's has combined knowledgeable, friendly service and convenience to become a local icon.

It's the place where people who live in the Capitol Hill neighborhood go to find hardware. Frager's is clogged with every home-repair or improvement item you would need—as well as things you didn't even realize that you needed, such as natural geranium-scented floor wash. Despite the narrowness of the aisles and the crowdedness of the displays, Frager's is as comfortable as your favorite shoes, and the employees are as reliable as your best friend.

The store was founded in 1920 by Fritz Frager, an immigrant from Russia, who was trained as a carpenter. His two sons eventually took over the business and ran it until the 1975, when they sold it to two longtime friends, John Weintraub and Edwin Copenhaver. Prior to purchasing the store, Weintraub worked in sales for a Fortune 500 company and Copenhaver in large, industrial construction.

Why buy a hardware store? Weintraub called it, "a process of elimination. We looked at a bunch of other businesses. When we first took a look at this place, we weren't impressed. Then, we looked at other businesses, and came back to this."

The closest big-box store, Home Depot, is just four miles away, but because of the way the streets are laid out in the District of Columbia, and the preponderance of block-long government buildings, monuments, and parks, it could take thirty minutes to get there.

"If you want lumber for a deck, if you want drywall, then you go to Home Depot. But if your faucet malfunctions, your toilet breaks, your lights don't work, you go to Frager's. You don't go to Home Depot—unless you know exactly what you want," said Weintraub.

He and Copenhaver have made sure that Frager's has succeeded by offering good old-fashioned customer service. "Sometimes, in hardware, people will ask for the wrong thing," he said. "When it doesn't ring true, you ask them additional questions. What's your project? What are you trying to do? You can solve their problem."

When you walk into Frager's, an employee will actually talk to you. "We have people here who are capable of answering questions, having an intelligent conversation, and getting you to where the merchandise is," said Copenhaver. "You can buy it, and get out—without spending twenty minutes roaming cavernous aisles. That's one of the big appeals. The fifty-plus people who work here know what they're doing, and know how to give customer service." Frager's reach extends into the Maryland and Virginia suburbs, where many longtime customers have moved. "They go to their local home center,

can't find something, and they remember, 'I know who'll have this. Frager's.' So, they'll drive into the city," said Weintraub.

As the neighborhood has evolved, with many homes being bought and renovated, Frager's has responded by adapting to the changes.

"We're always trying to remerchandise, to look at products that don't turn," said Weintraub. "We bought the building next door seven years ago, and moved better quality paint over there. Today, paint and garden are our biggest departments."

Frager's remains a neighborhood fixture and a beloved institution in a community where people are committed to buying locally with businesses that embrace them.

"The important thing is to get to know your customers by their first names," said Weintraub. "They are your bread and butter. You should be down there talking to them, asking them what they need. If you're doing that, you'll know what products to carry, because they'll tell you. People are not shy about telling you what they want. That's the heart of the business. If you sit in the office and stare out the window, it doesn't work." **RO**

Robert Spector is the author of The Nordstrom Way to Customer Service Excellence and The Mom & Pop Store. Robert can be contacted at robert@robertspecter.com.



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National Kitchen & Bath Association Market Index Points to Better 2011

FINDS OPTIMISTIC DEALERS THANKS TO Q4 2010 RESULTS

According to the National Kitchen & Bath Association (NKBA), kitchen and bath dealers are entering 2011 optimistically with increased showroom visits, sales volumes, remodeling budgets and revenue the final quarter of 2010. The NKBA Kitchen & Bath Market Index (KBMI), which forecasts the confidence of kitchen and bath dealers on a scale of -60 to +60, is +37 for Q1 2011 or up 23 points from last quarter. This KBMI is based on dealer optimism across various indicators highlighted this quarter by 78 percent who anticipate an increase in kitchen and bath revenue.

“The NKBA Kitchen & Bath Market Index really mirrors a number of other industries that saw improved fourth quarters following several very difficult years,” stated Don Sciolaro, chief executive officer of the NKBA. “Consumer

spending this holiday season was significantly up from the previous three years, yet still well short of levels enjoyed the first part of the decade. Hopefully this KBMI is a sign that the kitchen and bath industry is also on the right path and that the economy is slowly moving towards recovery.”

NKBA KBMI METHODOLOGY

The NKBA KBMI is determined by averaging expectations of NKBA member kitchen and bath dealers during the next quarter based on expected increases (+1), decreases (-1) or no change (0) in each market condition. That total is divided by the number of dealers surveyed and multiplied by 10, which gives the KBMI a range of -60 (pessimistic) to +60 (optimistic). The NKBA KBMI surveys approximately 150 kitchen and bath dealers across North America each quarter.

NKBA KBMI HIGHLIGHTS:

Showroom visits

- Up 38 percent from previous quarter; up 21 percent from previous year
- 79 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 1 percent anticipate a decline

Kitchen remodels sales volume

- Up 113 percent from previous quarter; up 110 percent from previous year
- 82 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 2 percent anticipate a decline

Kitchen remodeling prices

- Up 20 percent from previous quarter; up 9 percent from previous year
- 34 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 2 percent anticipate a decline

Bathroom remodel sales volume

- Up 105 percent from previous quarter; up 50 percent from previous year
- 72 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 2 percent anticipate a decline

Bathroom remodeling prices

- Up 22 percent from previous quarter; up 18 percent from previous year
- 39 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 4 percent anticipate a decline

Kitchen and bath revenue

- Up 155 percent from previous quarter; up 117 percent from previous year
- 78 percent anticipate an increase in Q1; 3 percent anticipate a decline

NKBA KITCHEN & BATH PLANNERS TURN LEADS INTO CLIENTS



NKBA members can purchase bulk copies of the new NKBA Kitchen Planner and NKBA Bath Planner to offer potential consumers. These full-color brochures are packed with advice to help consumers define the scope of their projects, finalize budgets, select NKBA professionals, refine product choices, and plan for installation.

Choose the option that best meets your sales and marketing needs:

Standard Planner - No customization: \$2 per copy*

Custom Cover Planner - Add company logo, contact information, and photos to the cover: \$3 per copy*

Premium Custom Planner - Customize content with your brand: Contact the NKBA for pricing*

*Minimum quantities and shipping and handling fees may apply.

NKBA[®]
National Kitchen & Bath Association

▶ Visit [NKBA.org/Store](https://www.nkba.org/Store) to order or e-mail partnerships@nkba.org to learn more.

Not a member? Visit [NKBA.org/Join](https://www.nkba.org/Join)

 Follow us at [Facebook.com/TheNKBA](https://www.facebook.com/TheNKBA)

 Join the NKBA group on LinkedIn

Points to Keep in Mind When Choosing a Tax Preparer

If you pay someone to prepare your tax return, the IRS urges you to choose that preparer wisely. Taxpayers are legally responsible for what's on their tax return even if it is prepared by someone else. So, it is important to choose carefully when hiring an individual or firm to prepare your return. Most return preparers are professional, honest and provide excellent service to their clients.

Here are a few points to keep in mind when choosing someone else to prepare your return:

- **Ask if the preparer is affiliated with a professional organization that provides its members with continuing education and resources and holds them to a code of ethics.** New regulations require all paid tax return preparers including attorneys, CPAs and enrolled agents to apply for a Preparer Tax Identification Number — even if they already have one — before preparing any federal tax returns in 2011.
- **Check on the preparer's history.** Check to see if the preparer has a questionable history with the Better Business Bureau and check for any disciplinary actions and licensure status through the state boards of accountancy for certified public accountants; the state bar associations for attorneys; and the IRS Office of Professional Responsibility for enrolled agents.
- **Find out about their service fees.** Avoid preparers who base their fee on a percentage of your refund or those who claim they can obtain larger refunds than other preparers.
- **Make sure the tax preparer is accessible.** Make sure you will be able to contact the tax preparer after the return has been filed, even after the April due date, in case questions arise.

- **Provide all records and receipts needed to prepare your return.** Most reputable preparers will request to see your records and receipts and will ask you multiple questions to determine your total income and your qualifications for expenses, deductions and other items.
- **Never sign a blank return.** Avoid tax preparers that ask you to sign a blank tax form.
- **Review the entire return before signing it.** Before you sign your tax return, review it and ask questions. Make sure you understand everything and are comfortable with the accuracy of the return before you sign it.
- **Make sure the preparer signs the form and includes their PTIN.** A paid preparer must sign the return and include their PTIN as required by law. Although the preparer signs the return, you are responsible for the accuracy of every item on your return. The preparer must also give you a copy of the return.

You can report abusive tax preparers and suspected tax fraud to the IRS on Form 3949-A, Information Referral or by sending a letter to Internal Revenue Service, Fresno, CA 93888. Download Form 3949-A from www.irs.gov.org. Order by mail at 800-TAX-FORM (800-829-3676).

LINKS:

- Form 3949-A Information Referral (PDF 94K)
- The Office of Professional Responsibility (OPR)
- Where Do You Report Suspected Fraud Activity?

YOUTUBE VIDEOS:

Choosing A Tax Preparer:

www.youtube.com/watch?v=ujqdzMn7PX0

www.irs.gov/newsroom/article/0,,id=234071,00.html

RO

2011 •

UPCOMING

EVENTS

• 2011



MARCH

6-8

INTERNATIONAL HOME AND HOUSEWARES SHOW

McCormick Place
CHICAGO, IL
www.housewares.org

9 – 13

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APRIL

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www.highpointmarket.org

25-28

KBIS – KITCHEN & BATH INDUSTRY SHOW

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

APRIL 30 - MAY 2

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SAN ANTONIO, TX
www.homefurnishingsconference.com

MAY

10-14

AIA 2011 NATIONAL CONVENTION AND DESIGN EXPOSITION

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NEW ORLEANS, LA
www.aiaconvention.com

17-19

LIGHTFAIR

Pennsylvania Convention Center
PHILADELPHIA PA
www.lightfair.com

18-20

HOSPITALITY DESIGN EXPOSITION & CONFERENCE

Sands Expo & Convention Center
LAS VEGAS, NV
www.hdexpo.com

21-24

NATIONAL RESTAURANT ASSOCIATION SHOW

McCormick Place
CHICAGO, IL
show.restaurant.org

JUNE

14 – 16

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AUGUST

1-5

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Steps to Consider Taking in your Business for a Successful 2011

When asking many retailers and service companies what they felt the best thing about 2010 was, a very common response was “Well, at least it’s over.” It’s very likely that as you read this article and think about the past year you will likely give thought to a company in our industry who went out of business, reduced the number of locations, or at the very minimum - cut staff. Our economy is cyclical, and most companies that have been around for a long time have seen these types of things before, but most will agree that 2010 was one of the worst years in recent memory.

Whether 2010 was a year to remember or a year to forget, it largely depends on how well you were prepared for it. Brand Source Service knew the storm was coming and implored independent service companies to take steps that would allow them to weather what many expected to be a very tough year. If you didn’t prepare for it, you are now the worse for wear, and there is no better time to prepare now in 2011, as it looks like things will be slow going back to the way they were. So here are a few steps to consider taking in your business to keep it strong for the challenges that still remain ahead:

- **Determine Your Cost of Doing Business**—If you are an appliance retailer, how do you determine what price to sell your products at? Most people will say that they add a desirable profit margin to the cost of

the product. How do you determine the cost of your service? Too many service providers will say that they charge what they feel the market will bear, or charge what the other service company in town is charging. This is risky and dangerous! It’s impossible to know what to charge for service if you don’t know what service costs you. You need to determine your cost of doing business which can be done with relative ease in less than an hour, and only after knowing this critical piece of information, can you determine if you are charging a rate that will allow you to be competitive and profitable. Email services@brandsource.com for more information on how to determine the cost of doing business for your company.

- **Convert to flat rate pricing**—One of the most common questions from customers requesting service is “How much is this going to cost me?” Service companies charging traditional time and material will then launch into a lengthy and complex explanation about “first half hours” and “travel time” and so on and so on. Ultimately the customer is even more nervous about the charges after the explanation than before it. After the service call, the office must then pull out the calculator and run an algorithm to figure the bill. None of this is efficient or simple. The best service companies have adopted a simple flat rate pricing system that

allows them to give easy answers to customers about their bill and quickly determine what those charges should be. There are a number of flat rate systems available, and more information is available by emailing services@brandsource.com.

- **Pay Your Service Technicians on a Commission Basis**—A common concern of most service managers is how much time is being wasted by technicians between calls, and how many more calls could be completed per day if the techs were motivated to do so. A technician paid on an hourly basis has basically zero motivation to get more done in a day. In fact, a person could argue that they are motivated to do less since they will get paid the same anyway. Companies that are the most profitable and efficient pay their technicians a percentage of the labor sales they generate. This way the tech is motivated to get as much as possible done in a day, and will usually take a call late in the day or squeezed into the schedule gratefully. Commission structures vary widely and for more information please email services@brandsource.com. **RO**

J.R. Zirkelbach, Director of BrandSource Service. BSS: Bringing profitability to the independent services. For more information, call 714.502.9620 or e-mail services@brandsource.com



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Nationwide Marketing Group Continues to Expand Web Services

ANNOUNCES NEW PARTNERSHIP WITH SITE ON TIME AND CMIC DATA

Nationwide Marketing Group (NMG), the premier buying and marketing organization for independent appliance, electronics, and furniture dealers announced their new partnership with web developer Site on Time and CMIC Data that will provide NMG dealers with more ways to build a competitive online presence.

“Site On Time’s website platform coupled with CMIC’s extensive product database will offer dealers a quality, effective, and affordable website while offering their customers the optimal online shopping experience,” said Bill Ward, president of CMIC Data.

According to Ward, the advantage is that NMG dealers are already familiar with the CMIC extensive database system which drives many of the organization’s current programs. The database keeps track of dealers’ brands, product catalogs and promotions so that each website will have a personalized front end that takes full advantage of the company’s local presence and brings it online.

“This addition to our existing web services fills an important niche of step-up websites that can capitalize on the growing number of consumers who research products online before they make a purchase,” said Frank Sandtner, director of member services operations for NMG. “These fully featured sites lead online product searches directly to the store where sales teams can then provide additional information on pricing,


package quotes, and full service store advantages that make and complete the sale.”

According to Site on Time, NMG dealers can choose from four complete website packages that are priced to include website hosting, product catalog, optional shopping carts, payment options, and continuous support. Attractive add-ons include an outlet store, service inquires, and even gift registries.

 SITE
on TIME CMIC Data
SITES™

“Any of our packages will allow the dealer to create a unique presence on the internet. We have been working side by side with Bill and CMIC Data for years. This new partnership with NMG will only serve to enhance the web services they already offer to their members,” said Jennifer Danko, owner of Site on Time.

Site on Time and CMIC Data exhibited at PrimeTime!, North America’s largest buying show and conference for appliance, electronics, and furniture independent dealers (www.nationwideprimetime.com) February, 2011 at The Venetian—Palazzo in Las Vegas, Nevada.

To learn more about Site on Time’s website development services call 877-449-1069 or email jennifer@siteontime.com. For information on all of Nationwide Marketing Group’s affordable website solutions tailored to the independent dealer, call 1-800-471-8952 or email webservices@nationwidegroup.org. 

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BrandSource Announces Kathy Ireland as New Ambassador

BrandSource has announced that leading lifestyle designer and Forbes celebrated CEO, Kathy Ireland will serve as Ambassador for the BrandSource organization and its 4,500 independent dealer members. The Fashion CEO, mom and chief designer of kathy ireland Worldwide will appear in advertising and promotional campaigns and leverage her expertise in social media to generate greater awareness of the BrandSource brand. Kathy will also collaborate with BrandSource on new product development and expand her collections in Brand-Source member stores.

“It is very exciting to serve as Brand Ambassador for BrandSource,” said Kathy. “BrandSource members are powerful and respected. Their organization of independent dealer members and branded stores are crucial for American families to have true retail choices. BrandSource members bring support, service, expertise and value to the communities they serve. BrandSource members truly care about their customers. From innovative products to non-profit giving, BrandSource is a great resource that fulfills our mission of ‘...finding solutions for families, especially busy moms.’ This is a great honor,” continued Kathy.

Kathy officially began her role as BrandSource ambassador at the organization’s 2011 Summit in Orlando, where she met with members and actively participated in workshops and planning sessions.

Kathy represents a key target customer for BrandSource:

the 90 percent of women who make final purchasing decisions for the home and who are utilizing the Internet and social media to find the most up-to-date information as they research and shop for appliances, home furnishings and consumer electronics.

“We look forward to working with Ms. Ireland to support our members and build greater awareness of our brand,” said Bob Lawrence, CEO of BrandSource. “Ms. Ireland relates very well to our female customers and really understands, first hand, what it’s like to be a busy mom who wants the best for her home, family and career. We believe that she offers us enormous potential for influencing women and ensuring our brand’s success.



ABOUT KATHY IRELAND WORLDWIDE®

kathy ireland Worldwide® (kiWW®) is the design and marketing firm founded in 1993 by CEO and Chief Designer, Kathy Ireland. The mission statement of kiWW® is “...finding solutions for families, especially busy moms.”™ kiWW® turns to design experts in many areas.

Forbes.com names Kathy Ireland one of the 20 Best-Branded Women on Twitter. In 2011 Forbes reports kiWW annual sales at over \$1.5 billion. 2010 License Global Magazine names kathy ireland Worldwide #28 most powerful licensed brand globally.

kiWW® maintains offices and design studios in Los Angeles, Rancho Mirage, and Santa Barbara, CA, Hawaii and Israel. Additional information is available at kathyireland.com. **RO**



Research shows children heal better and faster with their family nearby. So, while Ronald McDonald House Charities® (RMHC®) can't make medicine taste better or take away painful treatments, we can help ensure children have the most important weapon close by during their fight—their family. Without steadfast supporters, like BrandSource® who donate thousands of home appliances to our U.S. Ronald McDonald House® programs every year, and people like you, RMHC and our network of local Chapters couldn't serve over four million families and children a year.

This holiday season consider giving the gift of RMHC. **Go to rmhc.org to donate.**

Is 2011 to Sell You

BY DOMENIC RINALDI,

WHILE WE DID SEE SOME POSITIVE SIGNS, 2010 WAS STILL SLOW TO PRODUCE A SIGNIFICANT JUMP IN THE ECONOMY, SPECIFICALLY THE BUSINESS-FOR-SALE MARKETPLACE. AS WE PROCEED IN THE NEW YEAR, THERE MAY BE SIGNS THAT THE INDUSTRY FINALLY KICKS INTO FULL GEAR IN 2011.

Last year was especially strong for owners with a solid business that entered the market with reasonable pricing. Many of these sellers found out that there was a large buyer pool just waiting for good opportunities to come forward.

During these tough economic times, only the smart (or lucky) have been able to keep revenues up. But a good sign in 2010 was that many businesses saw their cash flows increase slightly. In fact, oftentimes the bottom-line 'cash flow' of many small businesses was healthier than their top-line sales.

Why the improvement? Mostly because business owners have found ways to cut unnecessary expenses and become more efficient. This may have included issues like improving a lease term, negotiating down vendor prices, a move towards higher margin products and services, reduction in non-vital expenses and an overall more efficient business plan. But certainly there is still a long way to go before companies are experiencing the rejuvenation they'd like. Pre-recession levels are still far off for most small businesses, but the worst appears to be behind us. Most experts are optimistic in what 2011 could bring and several factors show this could hold particularly true for the business-for-sale marketplace.

So what should we expect to see in 2011?

- **Increase in Buyers**

We have seen a steady and increasing pool of buyers in the market for a business. Perhaps the most active buyers of small businesses this year were those looking to buy themselves a job. With larger companies eliminating many middle-to-senior level executives, a group of buyers with decent capital and a will to succeed emerged. While more capital-intensive than simply trying to find a new job, these buyers realized that purchasing an existing business with built-in revenues, clients and employees could provide the most concrete employment option.

- **Increase in Sellers**

While many of the unemployed are looking to buy jobs, it's the baby boomer population who currently own many of them. Baby boomers control almost eight million small businesses in the U.S and many experts expect about half of them to begin selling their businesses near the end of this decade. However the recession and resulting low values forced many baby boomers to hang on to their business

1 the Year r Business?

CHICAGOLAND SUNBELT

longer until they could get a better price. But that generation is rapidly approaching or is already at retirement age; and they will have to sell at some point. When that time comes, expect a huge shift in the balance of buyers and sellers on the market. With a larger number of businesses available for sale, sellers will need to show exceptional results to beat out the competition for buyers.

- **More Lending Opportunities**

In addition to more buyers and sellers on the market, there could also be more borrowing available. Based on current and anticipated behavior, banks are returning to the small business acquisition lending market. For a business broker, it's been a long time since bankers called to source deals. But we've begun to see exactly that and as it becomes more common, so will the buyer's ability to gain capital for a business purchase. While most of the deals we saw in 2010 were smaller in size, the trend bodes well for the coming year. Business with a strong cash flow should ultimately see more overall activity in terms of bank lending in 2011.

- **Higher Business Values**

Those companies with solid fundamentals should finally see their values increase this year. As more buyers emerge and lending increases, it will be common for the top businesses to attract a bidding war amongst a large number of buyers. With this auction-type atmosphere, buyers will need to up their prices and terms in order to win. This may sound counter-intuitive given current market conditions, but it is basic supply and demand. There are still a lot of prospective buyers in the market and they'll all be chasing the small number of healthy businesses. Thus, those business owners who have fought successfully through the recession will be the benefactors of a lopsided market.

- **Advisors in Need**

Business owners have been understandably nervous about spending money for any service that may not produce a near-term return. But hiring good advisors such as a business broker, lawyer and accountant will pay off when comes time to sell a business. Common mistakes like holding on to their business too long, settling for below-market value or panicking into a bad contract can have a drastic effect on a seller's future. Coming out of a recession, maximizing profits and business fundamentals will be at a premium. Advisors are there for just that and the smartest owners will be taking advantage. Hiring these experts allows owners to concentrate on keeping the business running smoothly while the advisors handle details of the sale.

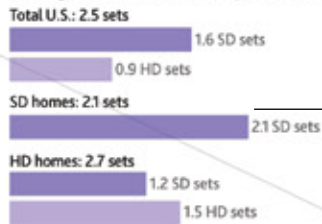
Regardless of how 2011 plays out, one prediction will certainly hold true -- businesses that take the proper steps to prepare their business for sale will have a much better chance of achieving a successful exit than those that don't. **RO**

Domenic Rinaldi is president and managing partner of Chicagoland Sunbelt, a business brokerage firm that focuses on helping people buy, grow and sell businesses in Chicago and the surrounding Midwest area. Domenic holds the professional designation of Certified Business Intermediary (CBI) from the International Business Brokers Association and is considered an expert in the business brokerage field. He is a seasoned executive who brings more than 24 years of proven experience in merger/acquisition, sales, service, marketing and operations to the business brokerage arena. Chicagoland Sunbelt is proud member of Sunbelt Midwest with offices in Minnesota, Wisconsin and Illinois.

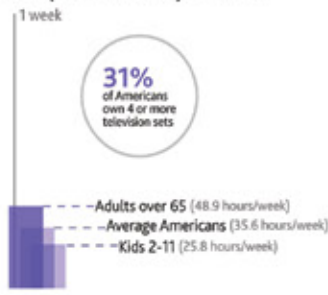
STATE OF THE MEDIA 2010

Media Universe

Average number of TV sets per household¹

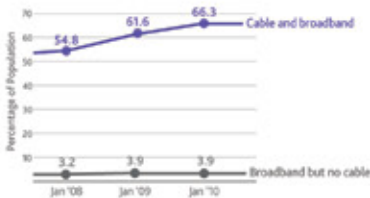


How (and how much) we watch¹



Broadband vs. Cable²

While the percentage of consumers with broadband but no cable has remained relatively stable, presence of both cable and broadband has increased, indicating there is limited evidence of cord cutting.

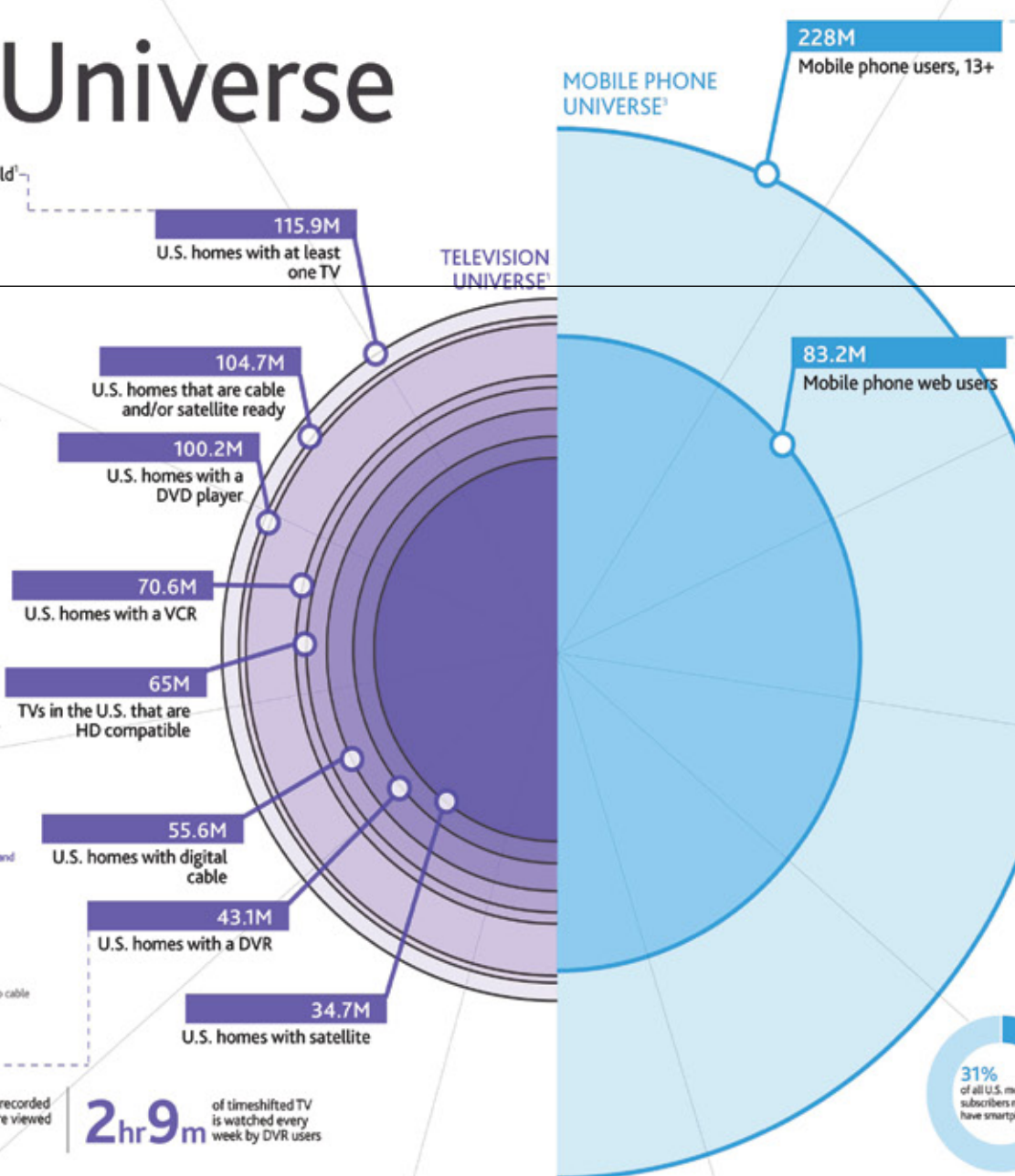


DVR PLAYBACK

21% of all viewing in DVR homes is DVR playback

45% of all recorded ads are viewed

2hr 9m of timeshifted TV is watched every week by DVR users



31% of all U.S. mobile subscribers now have smartphones

U.S. AUDIENCES AND DEVICES

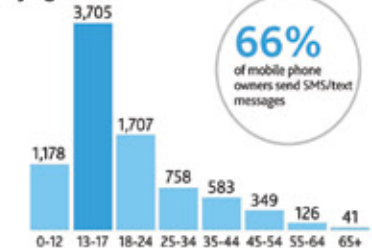
Top 10 Mobile Phones⁵

1. Apple iPhone 3GS
2. Samsung SCH-U450 Intensity, DoubleTake
3. Motorola Droid
4. RIM Blackberry 8500 series Curve 8520, 8530
5. Apple iPhone 4
6. Apple iPhone 3G
7. RIM Blackberry 8300 series Curve 8310, 8320, 8330, 8350i
8. LG VX9200 enV3
9. Samsung SCH-U350 series Smooth, Glim
10. RIM Blackberry 9700 Bold

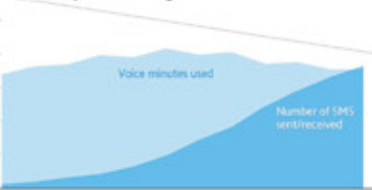
Top 10 Mobile Video Channels⁴

1. YouTube
2. FOX
3. Comedy Central
4. ESPN
5. MTV
6. ABC
7. CBS
8. AdultSwim
9. NBC
10. Discovery Channel

Number of SMS sent/received per month by age⁶



Mobile phone usage: Voice vs. SMS/texts⁷



Women talk and text more than men do⁸

In the U.S., women talk 28% more than men (818 minutes a month compared to men's 640); they text more, too, sending or receiving an average of 716 SMS messages a month compared to the 555 monthly text messages sent or received by the average American male.



U.S. mobile internet time by category⁹

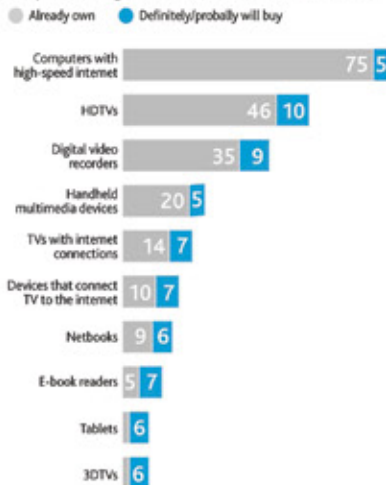
Share of mobile internet time based on total time at an individual site-level* May 2010



The average number of apps that smartphone app downloaders have on their phones is **27**

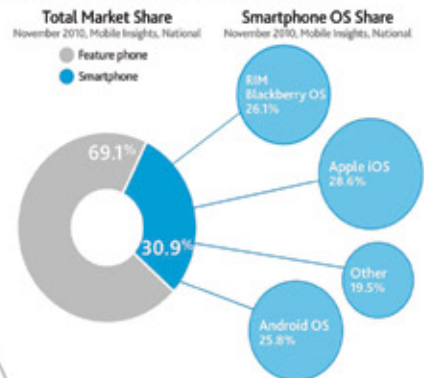
Emerging media devices⁸

Adoption amongst "connected consumers" in the U.S.



Total U.S. mobile market & smartphone market¹⁰

While 40 percent of those who purchased a smartphone in the last six months chose one with the Android operating system (OS), when it comes to overall consumer market share, Android OS (25.8%) is still behind Apple iOS (28.6%). RIM Blackberry's position is less clear: its share (26.1%) puts it within the margin of error of both Apple iOS and Android, making it statistically tied with both Apple for first and Android for third.



Intent to purchase a 3DTV in the next 12 months⁸



Source

For the latest information about consumer media use please visit nielsenwire.com.

Please source all information to The Nielsen Company.

1 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Nielsen's National People Meter (NPM) sample in Sept. 2010.

2 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Nielsen's National People Meter (NPM) Sample from Jan. 2008 to April 2010.

3 The Nielsen Company. Data from Oct. 2010 Nielsen Mobile Media View Internet. Results collected from survey data.

4 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Oct. 2010. Results collected from survey data.

5 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Jan. to Sept. 2010. Top phones among consumers who have acquired a new device in the past year. Results collected from survey data.

6 The Nielsen Company. Data from Nielsen Consumer Value Metrics panel in Q3 2010. Results collected from analysis of over 60,000 phone bills in the U.S.

7 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Nielsen's Global Online Survey conducted Sept. 2010. Nielsen surveyed 26,644 online consumers ages 15+ in 53 countries (with translation), but only U.S. and Canadian consumers are included here.

8 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from May 2010. *The original share of time analysis was based on the average time spent at a category-level. **The Videos/Movies category refers to time spent on video-specific (e.g., YouTube, Yahoo! Videos, Hulu) and movie-related websites (e.g., IMDb, Blockbuster and Netflix) only. It is not a measure of video streaming or inclusive of video streaming on non-video-specific or movie-specific websites (e.g., streamed video on sports or news sites). **New Analysis.

9 The Nielsen Company. Note: Data from Nov. 2010. Results collected from survey data.

Whirlpool Corporation Touts Standout Kitchen and Laundry Appliance

With appliance options for a wide variety of lifestyles, Whirlpool Corporation and its portfolio of brands have introduced a number of new appliances for 2011.

“As Retailers gear up for the new year, Whirlpool Corporation is pushing innovation forward with several exciting new appliances,” said Terri Connett, senior manager contract marketing and design at Whirlpool Corporation.

The Maytag®Ice2O®Easy Access Refrigerator offers homeowners extensive refrigerator storage, while not infringing on freezer storage space. The refrigerator drawer — illuminated by four LED lights — holds up to five bags of groceries, while the freezer drawer provides easy access for all family members. The freezer maximizes usable space with slide-out bin organization systems to accommodate frozen grocery items. The ENERGY STAR®qualified, 25-cubic-foot refrigerator is the most energy-efficient four-door refrigerator in the industry. Equipped with an external ice and water dispenser, the refrigerator also includes an interactive color LCD touch screen that offers homeowners nutritional information and quick tips.

The Maytag®High-Capacity Maxima™ Front-Load Laundry Pair offers increased capacity and features a PowerWash™ cycle, which provides extra-cleaning action to loosen deep, set-in stains using an internal water heater. Washer models use up to 82 percent less water and at least 84 percent less energy*, meet CEE Tier III qualifications and can handle up to 29 towels per load. To help keep clothes fresh and wrinkle free, the washer is equipped with a Fresh Hold™ option with Dynamic Venting Technology™, which allows homeowners a 16-hour window to transfer laundry to the dryer. The 7.4-cubic-foot dryer models include Quad Baffles and Advanced Moisture Sensing, which combine to provide even drying on some of the largest loads.**

The New Premium Whirlpool®Duet®Laundry Pair is designed to be the industry’s most resource-efficient laundry pair. The washer, which uses as little as 11.5 gallons of water per

load, exceeds the minimum federal energy standard set for appliances by more than 160 percent on average. The washer’s EcoBoost™ option decreases water temperature and increases the agitation duration, producing excellent cleaning results while reducing water and energy use. Estimated to save as much as \$3,300 in lifetime energy costs***, the pair is designed to keep clothes looking newer longer with gentle wash and dry actions.

The KitchenAid®Freestanding Double-Oven Range offers the industry’s largest oven capacity available.**** Available in dual fuel, gas and electric models, these ranges feature an Even-Heat™ True Convection System in the lower oven. The system offers a hidden element and innovative bowtie-shaped design to promote better circulation and more air flow for consistent temperature management. Both electric and gas models offer the most even baking across all racks.***** The dual-fuel models offer the precision and responsiveness of a gas range with two electric ovens that allow for preparation of multiple dishes at differing temperatures. Both upper and lower ovens throughout the double-oven collection include a slow-cook function, a variable time self-cleaning system and a Sabbath mode.

Celebrating its 100th anniversary in 2011, Whirlpool Corporation’s influence on home and family life has shaped trends in the kitchen, laundry area and beyond. The company strives to exceed expectations with appliances that help building professionals create homes of distinction. **RO**

* Compared to pre-2004 traditional top-load washers

** Based on testing of an 18-pound load

*** Compared to pre-2004 traditional top-load washers and dryers, based on normal cycle, average use, 11-year washer life and 12-year dryer life, electric models only

**** Among leading brands based on a combined capacity of both ovens.

***** Electric models based on those with 14.5 kW or lower rating. Gas models based on conventional double-oven configurations.



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The new Maytag brand Easy Access Ice₂O® refrigerator features removable and adjustable dividers, creating flexible storage sections within the full-extension drawer for up to five bags of groceries. An ergonomic design aligns the drawer with a typical counter height. Plus, this is the industry's most energy efficient 4-door refrigerator. For additional information, visit maytag.com.

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