

The Retail Observer

November, 2010

YOUR RESOURCE GUIDE TO THE INDUSTRY

Vol. 21, Issue 11

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Business Netiquette

I would like to share with you some simple points to ponder, since so much of today's business communications occur online, the proper use of "netiquette" (internet etiquette) to insure that your messages are received in the manner you intended. It is the end of the year and the holidays are coming. I can already tell that distraction is in the air and communication is beginning to break down a little bit.

Here are a few tips to help you communicate online more professionally and effectively:

- When sending a message to a customer or employee, assume that others will see it. You won't be notified if the recipient forwards your message to others.
- Create an e-mail signature that automatically appears at the end of each message you send, including contact information such as your company's name, website, and telephone number. Set it for your "reply" e-mails as well. Don't make people work to find your phone number. It should be there every correspondence. Signatures should be uniform and consistent within the company. This is not a place for personal expression or anonymity.
- Use a relevant subject line. If you wish to write about separate business issues, send a separate message accordingly.
- If you forward a message, clean up the original message and include a note why you think the forward will interest the recipient.
- Ask before sending large attachments, and find out their restrictions, file size limitations, etc. Compress attachments whenever possible.
- Respond within a reasonable time. If customers don't receive a timely response from you, they will likely take their business elsewhere.
- If you are unavailable to answer e-mails, use an auto-responder such as "out of office" to inform senders when you will be checking messages again.
- Avoiding sending "me too" responses. It is not enough content and is often an annoyance.
- Avoid using emoticons. The meaning of your message should be contained within the words themselves.
- Keep your message short, but don't sacrifice understanding with brevity.

Your personal communications reflect the reputation and standards set by your company. What is your professional grade on your "netiquette" report card? Time to do a companywide conformity check; you would be surprised how many unprofessional and casual e-mails are sent out on a daily basis. Start showing a more successful look to your business communications today.



Here's to an "A" on your netiquette report card,

Eliana Barriga
letters@retailobserver.com

The RetailObserver

NOVEMBER 2010

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 11

CELEBRATING OUR 21ST YEAR

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Deadline for JAN 2011 issue:

DECEMBER 1, 2010

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WHAT GOES INTO YOUR KITCHEN
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To Be Grateful or Thankful, That is the Question...

The holidays are upon us and I can't decide if I'm more grateful or thankful for the past year. By definition:

Grateful (*adjective*) - warmly or deeply appreciative of kindness or benefits received.

Thankful (*adjective*) - feeling or expressing gratitude; appreciative.

Ok, they are different words with very similar meanings, so I guess that I am feeling both. Let me tell you why I feel this way. The last 4 years in business and personally has been a whirlwind of life's ups and downs. Dealing with loss as multiple family members moved on to the great beyond (four loved ones in the last three years), I experienced the warm support of friends and family during these times. Having children grow up and move out on their own (3) and having the oldest daughter get married two weeks ago brings both sadness and joy. Facebook and LinkedIn has brought old friends and family back into my life.

The Retail Observer has officially gone international with its readership. It has achieved double-digit growth in both page count and readership. The website is now receiving over 16,000 hits a month. The magazine has become the official sponsor of the First Connected Home Appliance Pavilion at CES coming up in January. Affiliations with trade associations, buying groups and our readership are in constant growth and getting stronger every day.

Consumer electronics, furnishings, plumbing and even cabinet manufacturers are calling to get involved with us to offer our readers new products to help grow their companies. The openness of the many manufacturers we deal with to invite us to take behind the scenes looks at what they are doing for the future has been amazing. We have grown to have seven official writers, making us one of the best resources in the industry to help our readers thrive in this economy—not just for today, but for tomorrow.

I see the future offering even more to be thankful and grateful for. The sky is the limit. Let us know what you are thankful for. Send an email to letters@retailobserver.com. I look forward to reading your thoughts.



Happy Holiday Retailing,

Moe Lastfogel

moe@retailobserver.com

The
RetailObserver

NOVEMBER 2010

VOLUME 21, NUMBER 11

CELEBRATING OUR 21ST 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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Claims are based on DOE test procedure and comparison to a 50-gallon standard electric tank water heater using 4879 kWh per year vs. the GE GeoSpring Hybrid water heater using 1856 kWh per year.





Showroom Spotlight

SHOWROOM SPOTLIGHT

Salon Blue Ridge

Salon Blue Ridge, located in the mountains of western North Carolina, opened its doors in May 2007 as one of the most unique & beautifully built showrooms in the country. The 8,000 square foot showroom offers cabinetry, plumbing, tile, appliances, countertops, lighting, hardware, & home automation all under one roof.

Wilkinson Supply Company, the parent company of Salon Blue Ridge, was started in 1965 in the plumbing wholesale business and is still family owned and operated today. “We believe our clients recognize the value in supporting local business,” says Andy Wilkinson, owner and CEO. Wilkinson has been an innovator in the plumbing industry and has expanded upon his decorative showroom philosophy in developing Salon Blue Ridge. The focus on the customer experience paired with knowledgeable, honest sales consultants has won the dedication of builders, architects, designers, & homeowners.

“At Salon Blue Ridge we are able to coordinate between multiple aspects of the design process with the superior service & wide variety of products our clients expect,” says Audrey Wilkinson Loder, the manager of Salon Blue Ridge. When a client enters the Salon “decompression zone” they are greeted by a receptionist who takes coats, provides refreshments, and inquires about the clients needs.

They are not immediately overwhelmed by rows of displays and are able to relax. Then the consultants can begin to guide the client through the showroom learning their specific needs & developing trust.

Many of the displays at Salon Blue Ridge, from the plumbing to appliances, are “live” so the clients can touch, feel, and experience the wide variety of designs, finishes & styles offered in the marketplace today. They are able to cook a pizza in the Turbo Chef oven or sear a steak on the 22,000 BTU burner of a Bluestar range. The tile can be matched to the countertop and cabinetry, while also bringing together the finishes for the plumbing fixtures and hardware.

The staff at Salon Blue Ridge believes in educating their customers and finding what is right for their particular project within their specific budget. From the planning stages to the last minute punch-list, they are there to help facilitate the project. Consultants visit client’s jobsites to ensure proper measurements and locations before ordering. All appliances are installed & serviced by an in-house team so they are able to control the kind of service the clients receive in their own home.

Salon Blue Ridge has also taken a different approach to marketing. With minimal print advertising, they rely on more of a word-of-mouth approach. The showroom | *continued on page 10* |

hosts events for local non-profit organizations, such as The Free Clinics and Riverlink, to help gain community exposure. They put on continuing education classes for architects & designers with help from their certified manufacturers. The showroom is also something of an art gallery. They bring in the works of local artists to display and sell, changing the artwork 5 or 6 times a year, to keep the walls fresh and interesting. Many of the artists refer their contacts to stop by and see their show.

There are over 200 different manufacturers represented throughout the showroom, but amazingly it is designed in such a way that is approachable and inspiring. Salon Blue Ridge is a premier kitchen & bath showroom to visit when considering building or remodeling. Come experience it for yourself.

Salon Blue Ridge is located at 518 S. Allen Rd. Flat Rock, NC 28731 (828) 696-1934 www.salonblueridge.com. **RO**





“ We believe our clients recognize the value in supporting local business ”

Andy Wilkinson



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:

BrandSource 2010 National Convention and Buy Fair



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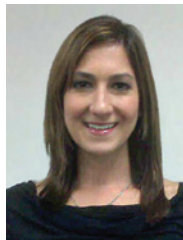
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Promotions — ON THE MOVE

BLANCO WELCOMES PAMELA ANTON IN NEW NATIONAL SALES COORDINATOR POSITION



Pamela Anton

German manufacturer of finely-crafted sinks and faucets, welcomes Pamela Anton, National Sales Coordinator. She will be the internal voice of the customer and act as a liaison between sales and all BLANCO U.S. headquarter departments.

This newly created position will be responsible for supporting BLANCO's sales and marketing teams. Anton comes to BLANCO from eBenefits Partner with 7 years of sales and marketing experience focusing on sales data.

BLANCO is the brand of choice in the luxury sink and faucet category for its unparalleled quality and an inspirational breadth of design possibilities. From the precision craftsmanship and artistic creativity of its STEELART brand to the stunning durability of its ground breaking SILGRANIT® collection, BLANCO has proven that the sink is far more than a mere functional element in the kitchen.

PETRA INDUSTRIES NAMES APPLIANCE INDUSTRY VETERAN TONY HILGEFORT NATIONAL SALES MANAGER, CERTIFIED



Tony Hilgefert

Petra Industries, a leading national wholesale distributor of consumer electronic, custom installation products, mobile audio/video accessories and appliance connection supplies recently announced the appointment of Tony Hilgefert as National Sales Manager.

As National Sales Manager, Hilgefert is responsible for leading Petra's strategic sales initiatives for the appliance industry.

"Tony is a highly respected appliance industry veteran with strong relationships and knowledge of the appliance industry. He joins us with extensive sales expertise from a variety of sales management roles he's held over the years," said Tate Morgan, Executive Vice President. "We believe his new role will be vital as we continue to broaden our customer base in the appliance sector."

"I'm very excited to join Petra," Hilgefert said. "Petra is an well-established company with a terrific team of people. I look forward to leading the charge in the growth of their appliance sector."

Mr. Hilgefert most recently served as the Director of Sales for Menard's at Electrolux/Frigidaire. Prior to that role, he held the Regional Sales Manager position for Electrolux/Frigidaire. Mr. Hilgefert previously held a District Manager position for Frigidaire and Airstream and also has extensive retail experience from holding previous positions as the Sales Manager of West Coast Appliance and the General Manager for Hansbarger Appliance. **RO**

The On-Demand Brand 10 Rules for Digital Marketing Success in an Anytime, Everywhere World

DISCOVER HOW TO CAPTURE TODAY'S GENERATION OF CONSTANTLY MOVING, ALWAYS CONNECTED, WANT-IT-NOW CONSUMERS

How do you create the kind of experiences needed to engage consumers in an increasingly fragmented media universe? How do you identify and capitalize on the right mix of digital outlets and interactions that will build awareness and demand for your offerings—before your audience clicks onto something more interesting?

With so much buying power in the hands of consumers weaned on Facebook, MySpace, iPhones, TiVo, Twitter, YouTube, chat rooms, texting, and IM-ing, these are critical, urgent questions for every marketer. Forget about e-mail blasts, pop-up ads, magazine slicks, and catchy 30-second TV commercials. The members of today's must-target market are accustomed to living seamlessly and simultaneously on- and offline, accessing the content and experiences they want—when, where, and how they want them—using whatever devices they have at hand. In a nutshell, “now” is the new “new.”

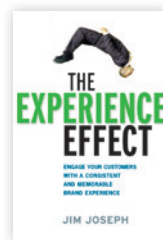
Hailed as “a strategic marketing expert” by Harvard Business School's Working Knowledge, Mathieson presents a core set of rules—some contrarian, but most based on common sense—for building brand experiences that attract, engage, and win the loyalty of digital consumers.

From Rule #1, “*Insight Comes Before Inspiration*,” through Rules #8, 9 and 10, “*Mobile Is Where It's At*,” “*Always Keep Surprises In-Store*,” and “*Use 'Smart Ads' Wisely*,” Mathieson reveals not only exciting twists on viral video, social networking, user-generated content, and mobile marketing campaigns, but also big, bold, and bodacious digital options beyond them. For example, marketers will discover how:

- Showtime, MasterCard, and NBC have literally redefined “viral video” with highly personalizable video content that astonishes those who experience it, while supercharging awareness and demand for their offerings.

- Burger King, Coca-Cola, and AXE have hit pay dirt with “advergams”—and other branded forms of video games—that have directly and dramatically boosted sales of their products.
- Fanta, GE, Doritos, Papa John's, and Ray-Ban are leveraging the power of augmented reality to combine the virtual and physical worlds to create unprecedented blockbuster experiences.
- BMW, Sears, and Pizza Hut use new mobile strategies and apps to redefine the notion of instant interaction between brand and consumer—while ramping up the effectiveness of their print, broadcast, billboard, and direct mail advertising.
- Jeep, Starbucks, and Budweiser use their own MySpace and Facebook pages to promote their brands as lifestyles while making friends.
- Adidas, Lexus, and Chantix have recognized that products aren't just products anymore; they're services—delivered digitally and on-demand...and much more!

By 2012, based on projections from Forrester Research, marketers are expected to spend over \$61 billion a year on digital platforms. With THE ON-DEMAND BRAND to inform, guide, and inspire them, marketers will have an edge on connecting with consumers in powerful new ways, whether their goal is general brand-building or a specific promotion, regardless of the economic climate. As Rick emphasizes, “One thing is clear: If you want to be *in demand*, you've got to be *on demand*—or else.” **RO**



Author: Rick Mathieson is an award-winning writer and vice president and creative director for Creative: Advertising & Interactive Media in Silicon Valley. To learn more, visit www.RickMathieson.com.

Publisher: Amacom

Manufacturer {NOTES}



WWW.LIEBHERR-APPLIANCES.COM

The Stylish Answer to Freshness

LIEBHERR REFRIGERATORS – THE CUSTOM ADVANTAGE

In custom kitchens, integrated appliances are the most stylish option available as they are completely out of sight. Built in appliances fit harmoniously into a kitchen's design, yet there is no secret of which unit is the refrigerator. By comparison, Liebherr's fully integrated appliances are concealed behind cabinet doors allowing you to show off the materials, colors and design of your custom kitchen to the full advantage.

With its integrated product line available in 24", 36" and 48" models, Liebherr is the stylish answer to keep food fresh. After the successful launch of Liebherr's Premium Plus 24" fully integrated refrigerators and the growing popularity of this streamlined size, a full 24" refrigeration tower, the HRB1110 with BioFresh, was introduced.

Liebherr's patented BioFresh system provides the perfect climate for keeping your foods fresh longer and makes a substantial contribution to a healthy diet. With the temperature maintained at just above freezing and at an ideal humidity level, fruit, vegetables, meat and fish retain their vitamins and minerals, delicate flavor and attractive appearance for up to three times longer than in a normal refrigerator.

While the HRB1110 full refrigeration tower can be used on its own, the side by side companion is the full freezer with icemaker, the HF851. If you are looking for additional refrigerator space, another option would be to pair it with the HC1060 refrigerator freezer combination. The fully integrated refrigerator and freezer have the ability to be completely hidden behind cabinetry—perfect for the custom kitchen.

These two new Premium Plus models have all the unique and green features of the previously released 24" integrated products highlighting Liebherr's design ingenuity including:

- Innovative LED light columns in the refrigerator
- Freezer drawers on smooth, telescopic rails and professional freezing technology (FrostSafe) to guarantee continual circulated air
- Easy to install door-on-door technology for better design options
- Soft close door system technology (used by high-end cabinet manufacturers)
- Industry-leading ENERGY STAR® rating ENERGY STAR rated (100% of Liebherr's refrigeration product line is ENERGY STAR rated)

Liebherr is committed to providing products that match the lifestyle of their North American consumers. For further information on fully integrated appliances and to view the entire product line of Liebherr refrigerators, visit www.liebherr-appliances.com.

Driven by innovation and characterized by sophisticated, fresh design, Germany-based Liebherr Corporation brings the best of Europe to the refrigeration category in North America. As the worldwide leader in environmentally responsible refrigeration, Liebherr provides outstanding built-in, freestanding, and fully integrated refrigeration and wine storage units. **RO**

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Whether the exterior is exotic wood, gloss veneer or stainless steel, Liebherr's SBS 2413 can match the décor of your custom kitchen as a side-by-side unit or separately in the kitchen. When you open the doors, take in the advanced features of premium refrigeration. Enjoy the large capacity and energy efficiency of the full freezer and the full refrigeration tower, with LED lighting and Liebherr's patented BioFresh technology. The style of this refrigerator can be yours. But what's inside is Liebherr innovation, and the optimal method for preserving food.





THE FISHER & PAYKEL 36" DISHDRAWER®: THE EVOLUTION CONTINUES

UNVEILS YET ANOTHER ADVANCEMENT TO THE POPULAR DISHDRAWER® PRODUCT LINE



Fisher & Paykel has extended the range of their popular DishDrawer® line with a new 36 inch offering.

At 36 inches wide the dishwasher accommodates nine place settings in a single, ergonomic drawer which incorporate all the features and benefits of the 24 inch version. The company has maintained its focus on innovation, working closely with the design and architect community to develop a 36 inch dishwasher for the high-end market.

This model is the 2nd member of the modular family matching the world's first multi-temperature refrigeration drawer—CoolDrawer. The modular appliance line combines ergonomic effectiveness with sleek sophistication. Each module can be positioned at the optimal ergonomic height and position based on what is comfortable to the consumer, allowing for a design freedom that speaks to both homeowners and design professionals.

The extra size and convenience of the 36 inch DishDrawer comes at no cost to the environment, using as little as 1.95 gallons of water, achieving a Tier 2 Water & Energy rating. As with all Fisher & Paykel appliances the 36 inch model is backed with a one year warranty and the instant service of a 24/7 Customer Care team.

“The 36 inch DishDrawer is the extension of an already impressive lineup. This appliance has been designed from the ground-up to suit every modern family. The extra space is perfect for under-bench installation and ease of use,” says Fisher & Paykel’s Marketing Manager, Scott Davies. “The wider design suits larger pots, plates and extra large platters

up to 12 7/16 inches in size. The fully customizable racking system provides flexibility with loading, allowing the washing of delicate glassware or a heavily stained pasta bowl!”

DishDrawer is a signature product line for the company with its distinctive ergonomic design and cost-saving environmental features that minimizes water, energy and detergent usage. Since launching the DishDrawer in 1998 after years of testing and research, Fisher & Paykel continues to refine the dishwasher of the future and to date has sold more than a million DishDrawers.

To find out more about Fisher & Paykel’s products or its DCS by Fisher & Paykel brands go to www.fisherpaykel.com or call toll free at 888 936-7872.

NEW GE MONOGRAM® 30" REFRIGERATOR AND WINE RESERVE PROVIDES FLEXIBLE INNOVATION FOR METROPOLITAN LIVING



GE Monogram

As more Americans repatriate cities and opt for smaller dwellings, GE Monogram is offering luxury appliances in more versatile options. GE Monogram’s 30-inch fully integrated refrigerator and wine reserve will add a third storage compartment—a “convertible” drawer, which can be set for fresh foods, frozen foods or wine storage to add flexibility to smaller kitchens. The new household refrigerators, available in the first quarter of 2011, will also be the first in the U.S. to use the R600A refrigerant for a lower global warming impact.

“Transitioning to city living or smaller spaces does not mean sacrificing on luxury, style or innovation in the kitchen,” said Merrell Grant, general manager, GE Brand &

Advertising. “Early next year, GE Monogram is launching a new 30-inch fully integrated refrigerator, which can be installed true-flush with surrounding cabinetry, to complement a full suite of appliances that are 30 inches in width or smaller. These new refrigerators will also have a reduced environmental impact, which has become increasingly important to American consumers.”

Cooling it on the emissions: The new Monogram refrigerators and wine reserve will be the first in the U.S. to use the R600A refrigerant, which has a lower global warming impact than common refrigerants in the U.S. today. Additionally, these refrigerators will use cyclopentane as the insulation foam-blowing agent to replace commonly used, higher-emitting HFC foam-blowing agents.

Flexibility for custom spaces: The GE Monogram 30-inch refrigerator and wine reserve offer ultimate cooling, installation and style flexibility.

- **Storage and cooling flexibility:** The new refrigerators include three compartments: a fresh food compartment, a freezer drawer with an ice maker, and a “convertible” drawer that can be set from negative-6 degrees Fahrenheit to 55 degrees Fahrenheit. “Not everyone has room for an extra freezer or wine reserve in their home and this convertible drawer adds great flexibility to meet individual needs,” Grant said. The wine reserve includes an upper and lower refrigerated cabinet that when combined, can store up to 106 bottles of wine. The upper refrigerated cabinet of the wine reserve comes complete with dual zones to allow for storing and serving both white and red wine simultaneously at their optimal temperatures. The compartment also offers six full extension wooden wine racks, along with a display shelf.
- **Fully integrated installation:** Available in 80-inch, which are reversible, and 84-inch heights, the refrigerator doors are equipped with an articulating hinge for a fully integrated installation, enabling them to be completely out of sight behind surrounding cabinetry.
- **Style—GE’s first glass door option:** The new refrigerators will be available with a solid door and also with GE’s first glass door option and the wine reserve will be available with a glass door. The refrigeration panels from GE Monogram come in various style options — including European styling with tubular handles; Professional styling with robust handles; or they can be installed with custom panels from the homeowner’s cabinetry.

Culinary benchmark for food preservation: These new refrigerators also serve as a culinary benchmark for food preservation, equipped with two separate sealed refrigeration systems to help the fresh food section maintain humidity, while preventing odor transfer between compartments.

Luxury in smaller packages: The launch of GE Monogram’s 30-inch refrigerators corresponds to the repopulation of urban areas, as well as a desire for smaller homes. A recent Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) study showed significant growth in the number of residential building permits in “urban core communities” in roughly half of the 50 examined areas. According to the EPA; this demonstrates a “fundamental shift in the real estate market.”

New 30-inch GE Monogram refrigerators will be available in the first quarter of 2011 where Monogram appliances are sold. Estimated retail: \$6,249-\$6,749.

ALMO'S 2010/2011 ELECTRONICS CATALOG

IT'S NOW IN PRINT, ONLINE AND ON YOUR SMART PHONE



ALMO Almo’s annual comprehensive electronics product reference tool now available in print and both full and mobile digital formats.

Almo Corporation, the major national consumer electronics and appliance distributor, announced the release of their annual full-line electronics catalog in both print and digital formats. This product packed tool offers | *continued on page 18* |

their dealers a better way to visualize and share product information with their sales teams and customers.

“Almo’s full line CE catalog was designed as a comprehensive dealer tool. In keeping with that philosophy, we wanted our dealers to have easy access to the catalog wherever they work – in the office or on the road,” stated Warren Chaiken, Almo President and COO. “That’s why we joined with the industry leader in digital publications to ensure that our dealers have access on their Blackberry, Droid, Palm, iPhone, iPad, and laptop too.”

Designed as a dual purpose tool, the 2010/2011 Almo CE Catalog offers MSRP pricing, product and technical information along with integration to Almo’s B2B dealer portal where inventory, pricing and ordering information are just a click away. This structure allows a reseller to use the catalog as a reference tool when working with a customer without revealing dealer pricing details. Product categories included in this version are Home Entertainment, Portable Entertainment, Photo/Video, Communications, Mobile Electronics and Small Appliances. Almo dealers received printed versions of the catalog recently. The digital version in both full and mobile formats can be found at www.AlmoCEcatalog-digital.com.

LG ELECTRONICS’ NEW DOUBLE OVEN RANGE DELIVERS ADDED CONVENIENCE TO THE HOME KITCHEN

DUAL OVENS AND INNOVATIVE LG INFRAGRILL™ TECHNOLOGY OFFER ULTIMATE IN COOKING PERFORMANCE AND FLEXIBILITY



LG Electronics has expanded its cooking appliance portfolio with its first double oven range for the U.S. market. This freestanding electric range blends high-performance with a striking, stylish

design. With a multitude of advanced features and functionality, including a new infrared broiling system, this new range makes the cooking experience more enjoyable and helps home chefs make “something better” in their kitchen.

Culinary enthusiasts and home chefs will welcome the added convenience of being able to prepare two meals at once or tackle the biggest holiday menu challenges. With two separate ovens, it’s possible to cook different dishes at different temperatures, all at the same time. With a total capacity of 6.7 cubic feet, this range provides the necessary room for an entire holiday dinner.

The upper oven measures six inches—the tallest in the industry—allowing users to bake and broil tall items like a rack of lamb in the top oven without having to preheat the larger lower oven. As most people use the top oven when they cook, this extra height allows for easier access. Even with two separate ovens, the new LG range fits within the standard footprint, so no kitchen modifications are needed.

“LG’s double oven range combines outstanding results with the convenience of dual ovens, new performance options, faster pre-heat times and friendlier controls,” said John Weinstock, vice president of marketing, LG Electronics USA. “This winning combination of intuitive design and state-of-the-art features gives home chefs something better in the kitchen and makes this range ideal for anyone who loves to cook and entertain.”

| continued on page 20 |



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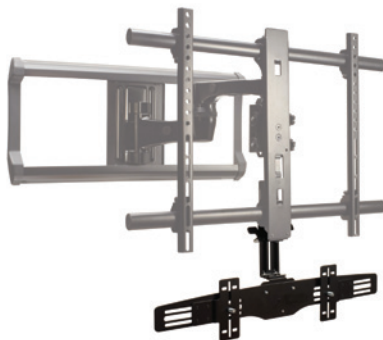
Unique to this model is the LG InfraGrill™ system, the company's first infrared heating element that enables the oven to reach broil temperature more quickly and reduces cooking time by 30 percent for popular items like hamburgers and chicken breasts. Infrared cooking, the same technology often found in premium outdoor grills, allows for juicy cooking results.

LG also makes it easier to achieve great cooking results with the True Convection system that incorporates the ideal temperature and airflow needed for faster preheating and more precise cooking.

Other noteworthy features include LG's attractive and intuitive SmoothTouch™ Controls that are easy to use and effortless to wipe clean. Two dual cooktop elements can easily accommodate a variety of different sized cookware – including an extra-large sauté pan, providing greater overall cooking flexibility. Users will also enjoy the award-winning design that has become the hallmark of LG appliances. With stainless steel touchpoints, sleek controls and a brilliant blue interior, this range helps make any kitchen look its best.

For more information please visit www.lg.com.

SANUS® SHIPS VMA202 SOUNDBAR SPEAKER MOUNT AND ELEMENTS™ ELM701 ANTI-TIP STRAP



SANUS SYSTEMS SANUS, the leading global brand of audio/video mounts, furnishings and consumer electronics accessories, announces it is now shipping the VisionMount® VMA202 Soundbar Speaker Mount that directly attaches to new VisionMount full-motion TV mounts for a no-drill speaker mounting solution.

“The VMA202 saves space by placing a speaker below a mounted TV, and allows the speaker to follow the plane of the TV, so you always enjoy the best sound quality,” said Jeff Lasch, product manager for SANUS.

The VMA202 is easy to install and requires no additional drilling. ProSet™ height and level adjustments allow easy vertical and horizontal correction for perfect speaker positioning. The VMA202's universal design fits soundbars and center-channel speakers weighing up to 35 lbs.

The VMA202 is available for a list price of \$89.99 USD | *continued on page 22* |



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and compatible with VisionMount XF228, LF228, VLF220, VLF210, VMF220, VLMF109 and VXF220 TV mounts.

The Sanus Elements™ ELM701 Anti-Tip Strap features a durable, shock-resistant, polypropylene strap that provides a secure four-point connection. It connects twice to the back of the TV, once to the back of furniture and once to the wall.

A 2009 study by Nationwide Children's Hospital in Columbus, Ohio, reported nearly 17,000 children were admitted to emergency rooms in 2007 (the last year complete figures were available) when furniture or TVs had fallen on them, a 41 percent increase since 1990. The study attributed the increase to the popularity of large flat-panel TVs with consumers and unstable furniture. None of the TVs or furniture they were placed on was properly secured.

"The low-profile design of today's flat-panel TVs and furniture makes them prone to tipping, so even the slightest bump could cause them to fall," said Jason Schmidt, product manager for Sanus. "Our ELM701 Anti-Tip Strap reduces this risk by providing a secure connection of the television to furniture and the furniture to the wall."

The Sanus Elements™ ELM701 Anti-Tip Strap's universal design works with nearly all furniture and flat-panel TVs up to 60". All hardware is included.

The strap is currently available for a list price of \$24.99.

TODAY'S ENERGY STANDARDS FOR REFRIGERATORS REFLECT CONSENSUS BY ADVOCATES

INDUSTRY TO INCREASE APPLIANCE EFFICIENCY



Advocacy groups and appliance manufacturers hailed a 25 percent increase in energy efficiency for most new refrigerators, starting in 2014, thanks to new efficiency standards that the U.S. Department of Energy (DOE) announced today, continuing a 40-year trend of improving energy efficiency for this essential home appliance.

The groups said the new standards are the first step in the department's implementation of the recommendations they proposed to DOE in July for new minimum efficiency standards, tax credits and Energy Star incentives for smart appliances affecting six major categories of home appliances.

"We appreciate that DOE has moved so quickly to adopt the agreed-upon standards," said Andrew deLaski, executive director of the Appliance Standards Awareness Project (ASAP). "The consensus standards not only save consumers a huge amount of energy and money, they also save DOE the energy, time and money that a contentious rulemaking process can require."

"The appliance industry has a strong history in reaching agreement with a broad base of energy and water efficiency advocates, as well as consumer groups, to develop energy conservation standards for home appliances," said Joseph McGuire, president of the Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers. "The new minimum energy standards are a significant part of the agreement, as is the extension of the current super-efficient manufacturers' tax credits, which we are urging Congress to act on, and a soon-to-be-submitted petition to Energy Star on smart appliances."

| continued on page 24 |

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According to the proposed rule, a typical new 20-cubic-foot refrigerator with the freezer on top would use about 390 kilowatt hours (kwh) per year, down from about 900 kwh/year in 1990 and about 1,700 kwh/year in the early 1970s. On a national basis, the new standards would, over 30 years, save 4.5 quads of energy, or roughly enough to meet the total energy needs of one-fifth of all U.S. households for a year. Over the same period, the standards will save consumers about \$18.5 billion. DOE will finalize the standards by year's end, and they take effect in 2014.

"This big step forward for refrigerator efficiency proves that the well of innovation leading to energy savings is very, very deep," said David B. Goldstein, energy program director for the Natural Resource Defense Council and winner of a MacArthur Prize for his work on refrigerator efficiency. "These standards pave the way for manufacturer investments in a next generation of products that demonstrate ever-increasing energy and cost savings."

Based on the July agreement, home appliance manufacturers and efficiency, environmental and consumer advocates have agreed to jointly pursue with Congress and the administration new standards for six categories of home appliances (refrigerators, freezers, clothes washers, clothes dryers, dishwashers and room air conditioners), a recommendation that Energy Star qualification criteria incorporate credit for Smart Grid capability and a package of targeted tax credits aimed at fostering the market for super-efficient appliances. (See agreement at www.aham.org/agreement.)

While DOE or Congress can act on the standards, the extension of the manufacturers' tax credit for super-efficient appliances requires new legislation. EPA and DOE will consider the recommendation to jump start the Smart Grid through incentives for the deployment of smart appliances through the Energy Star program.

As part of the new refrigerator standards, ice maker energy consumption also will be reflected in product energy-use ratings, giving consumers a better way to gauge actual energy use when making a choice among refrigerators.

"Even though refrigerators have become much more energy efficient, they still account for about 10 percent of household electricity use," observed Alliance to Save Energy Vice President for Programs Jeffrey Harris. "With the new standards, consumers will not only save energy, they'll also have a better picture of total energy use, because the ratings will include automatic ice makers."

Several prior refrigerator standards, including those put in place in 1993 and 2001, are also the result of joint industry/advocate agreements.

"This kind of joint recommendation can expedite new standards," said Steven Nadel, executive director of the American Council for an Energy-Efficient Economy. "By moving quickly to adopt the agreement, DOE encourages all parties who are willing to work in a collaborative way to agree on new standards."

The following table shows the percent energy savings achieved by the proposed standards relative to current standards for select categories:

Refrigerator-freezers	Percent savings
Top mount freezer	25%
Bottom mount freezer	20%
Side-mount freezer with through-the-door ice	25%
Compact units	10-25%
 Freezers	
Upright	25-30%
Chest	25-30%

The Appliance Standards Awareness Project is dedicated to increasing awareness of and support for cost-effective appliance and equipment efficiency standards. Founded in 1999, ASAP is led by a steering committee that includes representatives from energy efficiency organizations, the environmental community, consumer groups, utilities, and state government. For more info see: www.standardsASAP.org.

The Association of Home Appliance Manufacturers is a not-for-profit trade association representing manufacturers of major and portable home appliances, floor care appliances, and suppliers to the industry and is headquartered in Washington, D.C. You can visit the AHAM Web site at www.aham.org.

The Natural Resources Defense Council is a national, nonprofit organization of scientists, lawyers and environmental specialists dedicated to protecting public health and the environment. Founded in 1970, NRDC has 1.3 million members and online activists, served from offices in New York, Washington, Chicago, Los Angeles, San Francisco and Beijing. More information on NRDC is available at its Web site: www.nrdc.org.

The Alliance to Save Energy is a coalition of prominent business, government, environmental and consumer leaders who promote the efficient and clean use of energy worldwide to benefit consumers, the environment, the economy and national security.

The American Council for an Energy- | *continued on page 30* |

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Good Things Do Come in Small Packages

FULGOR MILANO'S 24-INCH WALL OVENS PACK A LOT OF STYLE INTO SPACE-LIMITED KITCHENS

Not every kitchen can accommodate oversized pro-style appliances; for those that want to maximize both style and cooking performance in tight spaces, Fulgor Milano offers the 24-inch wall ovens of its 300 Series. Backed by the worldwide OEM-manufacturing reputation of Fulgor Milano's parent company, Meneghetti S.p.A., as well as the industry's best-in-class warranty (which extends for a full two years on parts and labor), these Euro-styled, feature-laden wall ovens are ideal for upscale renovations of smaller kitchens, such as those found in condos, lofts, apartments, and older homes.

While the Fulgor Milano 24-inch wall ovens fit into compact spaces, their interior space is anything but small, with a net cavity capacity of 2.2 cubic feet. The wall ovens offer convection cooking, 2,000 watts of broiling power and a concealed 1,200-watt lower baking element. On the outside, these ovens immediately make clear their hand-crafted Italian origin, with clutter-free European styling that unites

form and function. Available in stainless steel, the ovens feature large windows, with up to three panes of heat-resistant glass, sculpted door handles, and heavy-duty, steady-tilt hinges.

The ovens are also RoHS-compliant, meaning they adhere to strict limitations on dangerous substances (such as lead, cadmium, and mercury) commonly found in consumer products. They also conform to the rigorous requirements of cULus certification for electrical equipment, as promulgated by Underwriters Laboratories. "These ovens are an ideal choice for homeowners, architects, and builders considering the trend of high-end renovations and the creation of space-efficient kitchens," notes Enrico Sasso, Director of Sales & Marketing for Fulgor Milano.

"They exceed all European efficiency standards, which are higher than those in the U.S. and Canada, and are made from 90-percent recyclable material, for peace of mind and harmony with the environment." **RO**



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A glass of fine wine. It thrills the senses and is the perfect complement to a delicious meal. Today's wine enthusiasts and collectors have a great appreciation for the delicate balance that winemakers strive for with each vintage. But you don't have to be an expert to sell them an exceptional wine storage unit that will protect and preserve their investment. A quick read of this article is all you need to offer informative advice.

Wine doesn't necessarily get better with age. Proper storage is vital in ensuring the full flavor and intensity of the wine is preserved, securing a valuable investment.

IDEAL CLIMATE

Different types of wine and Champagne require specific storage temperatures and abrupt or subtle changes can greatly affect quality and taste. The humidity level is another important element in storing wine; low humidity will dry out the corks and distress the seal. These two factors are essential in preserving wine for the long term.

OUT OF THE CELLAR

Miele, a worldwide leader in premium quality appliances for more than a century, has created the ideal wine-storage solution. Their sleek and sophisticated MasterCool™ wine storage products offer three unique cooling zones,



each with independent controls. This allows wine lovers to store white wine and Champagne in a cooler zone and wine ready for consumption in a tempering zone. In addition, an even circulation of air and constant humidity keeps corks moist and bottles sealed tightly.

And Miele's revolutionary RemoteVision™ uses wireless technology to monitor the MasterCool appliance 24/7, immediately identifying any issue that may arise, even something as simple as the door being left ajar. This advanced technology offers peace of mind and assurance that a prized wine collection will remain intact.

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Miele's MasterCool wine storage unit is designed to enhance any room. The unique LED system dramatically illuminates bottles without affecting the temperature in the cabinet, creating an exquisite display of the wine collection. And when the door is opened, the ClearView™ halogen-based lighting system activates for effortless viewing of each bottle. The FullView™ extendable shelves also make it easy to access and choose the perfect wine or Champagne for any occasion.

For more information: mieleusa.com

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Anything else is a compromise

Efficient Economy is a nonprofit organization dedicated to advancing energy efficiency as a means of promoting economic prosperity, energy security, and environmental protection. ACEEE was involved in the legislation establishing federal efficiency standards, and has been active in all rulemakings since then. For information about ACEEE and its programs, publications, and conferences, contact ACEEE, 529 14th Street N.W., Suite 600, Washington, D.C. 20045 or visit www.aceee.org.

Q&A-VERONA

SOME QUESTIONS FOR HARVEY LUBELL OF EUROCHEF USA INC.



RETAIL OBSERVER- What is the current status of new product development?
HARVEY LUBELL- A whole new line of professional style, Italian made product being introduced and currently set in the marketplace.

RO- What is the current US market strategy of Verona?

HL- Sales and marketed through established distributor and dealer networks.

RO- When will we see the first product?

HL- Most of new product is available now in U.S.

RO- What makes your product line unique?

HL- Our line of product is built entirely in Italy. Full line of ranges includes gas, electric, dual fuel, self-cleaning ranges, Built-In ovens and cooktops.

RO- Do you ever think you will add refrigeration?

HL- Would be interested in researching possibilities, but probably will not expand to refrigeration at present.

RO- What do you think is the biggest factor that gives EuroChef its drive and define what that drive is?

HL- Supplying a full range of products that are uniquely designed, highly stylized and quality built.

RO- What does it take to compete in today's global economy?

HL- Providing a quality and value priced product to our customers. EuroChef continues to work every day towards that goal.

RO- Do you make your products under any other name or for any other manufacturer?

HL- EuroChef USA also distributes product for the brands ILVE and Fratelli Onofri.

To find out more you can contact EuroChef at 866-844-6566 or visit the web at www.eurochefusa.com **RO**

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International CES Named Greenest Show by *Trade Show Executive Magazine*

2011 CES BUILDS UPON ITS GREEN INITIATIVES WITH THE SUSTAINABLE PLANET TECHZONE

The Consumer Electronics Association (CEA)[®] announced that the 2009 International CES[®] was named North America's Greenest Show by *Trade Show Executive Magazine*. CEA was awarded the highly coveted "Leader in Green Initiatives" Gold Grand Award for outstanding green presence in producing the world's largest consumer technology tradeshow, the International CES.

Building upon its green initiatives, the 2011 CES will again feature the Sustainable Planet TechZone, sponsored by Earth 911, which will showcase world-changing technologies that benefit the environment, utilize new forms of sustainable energy, renew resources and contribute to the global development. This exhibit area will feature products and services that make it possible for everyone to stay connected, informed and live sustainable lifestyles. The Electric Vehicle TechZone will also highlight the latest technology behind electric vehicles for consumers seeking to live more sustainably through alternative transportation.

"In a very competitive category, the International CES outgreened other contenders," said Darlene Gudea, president of Trade Show Executive Media Group. "CES was heralded not only for the sheer volume of its recycling efforts but also for its numerous creative ideas to reduce the impact of the nation's largest annual show on the environment. *Trade Show Executive* commends Gary Shapiro and his team for their outstanding leadership and the ideas that others can adapt and emulate."

"We are honored to have been named North America's Greenest Show by *Trade Show Executive*," said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO, CEA. "As the world's largest consumer

technology tradeshow, we work with our vendors to make sure that CES is on the cutting edge of green initiatives. We hope to set a new standard for green practices in the tradeshow community."

The Venetian received silver certification by the U.S. Green Building Council's Leadership in Energy and Environmental Design (LEED). Aramark uses eco-friendly utensils and napkins and purchases organic or locally sourced products. GES runs 95 percent of all show contracting equipment on clean natural

gas and installs recycled carpet. CES exhibitors are encouraged to consider green in their exhibit designs through GES' green booth packaging options, which include eco-friendly paneling and carpeting, formaldehyde-free shelves and counters, graphics printed with water-soluble ink and the use of LED lighting.

CEA has invested more than \$100,000 to develop a recycling program in the Las Vegas area, working with Clark County Schools. The fund has already created a recycling and environmental education program

for students and faculty at more than 40 schools. CEA continues to look for ways to positively affect the Nevada market, and recently donated \$50,000 to the Las Vegas Metropolitan Police Department, Convention Center Area Command, to purchase T-3Motion electric vehicles and accessories to reduce the use of fossil fuel powered vehicles. CEA is also working to update the first-ever CE Industry Sustainability report to benchmark the progress the CE industry is making toward eco-stewardship, and to highlight the industry's environmental accomplishments.

A full list of CES green offerings is available online, as is CEA's latest CE environmental sustainability and initiatives. **RO**





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In Review

2010

EXHIBITORS AND ATTENDEES
REPORT A SUCCESSFUL AND
PRODUCTIVE SHOW

CEDIA EXPO



Draws Thousands of First-time Attendees





CEDIA EXPO 2010 drew more than 20,700 attendees to the Georgia World Congress Center in Atlanta September 22–26 for the residential electronic systems industry’s top tradeshow and training event. CEDIA EXPO featured the latest products and technologies from hundreds of manufacturers in the home technology market as well as four days of industry education and training from expert instructors.

The event included 453 total exhibitors, an increase of 6% over 2009. Of those exhibitors, 90 were making their first appearance at CEDIA EXPO. The tradeshow covered a total of 232,515 net sq. ft. of exhibit space.

Attendance held steady with modest growth from 2009-2010. Nearly 20% of attendees were first-time visitors to CEDIA EXPO.

Both attendees and exhibitors reported a valuable show experience. Attendees took advantage of more than 20 new CEDIA University courses and 12 revised courses, and CEDIA members benefitted from a flat-rate education pass that enabled them to save hundreds of dollars when taking multiple educational courses. | *continued on page 36* |





Exhibitors reported a consistent flow of traffic on the show floor as well as high-value interactions with attendees.

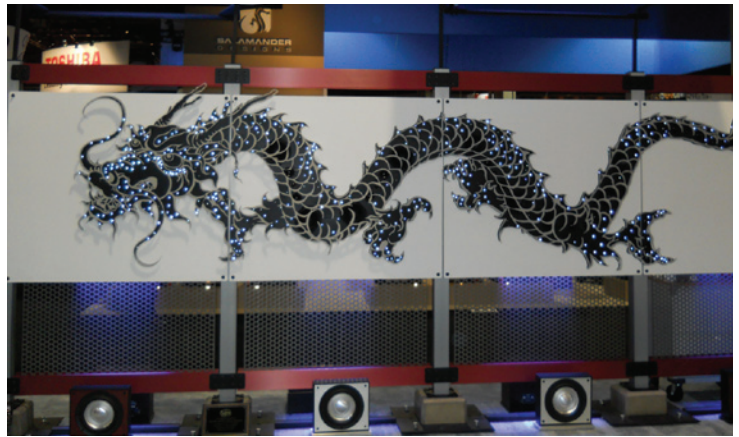
“The show was unbelievable. The dealers were all positive,” said Michael Lakhter, VP of sales for Key Digital. “The dealers now have a long pipeline of projects, and they’re excited about our products as a solution. We’ve hired five people to keep up with demand.”

CEDIA EXPO 2010 also provided a platform for electronic systems contractors looking to diversify. “Dealers came looking for solutions to grow past their core business,” said Randy Blanchard, program marketing manager, ADI. “CEDIA EXPO offered many solutions in adjacent markets. ADI’s strength is offering solutions in multiple categories, so for us this show was a success. We look forward to seeing everyone in Indy in 2011.”

“The steady booth traffic, the increase in exhibiting companies, and the number of new attendees are all early indicators that our industry is poised for a resurgence,” said CEDIA CEO Utz Baldwin. “The product knowledge and education that attendees take away from CEDIA EXPO 2010 will help them take advantage of emerging opportunities and will position their businesses for continued success.”

Highlights from CEDIA EXPO 2010 included the first-ever Future Technology Pavilion, which featured the latest trends in such areas as digital home health and sustainable lifestyles. Also popular was the EST Skill Challenge in the CEDIA/ADI Learning Labs, which allowed technicians to test their skills and compete for prizes.

After having spent two years in Atlanta, CEDIA EXPO will move to the Indiana Convention Center in Indianapolis for next year’s show, which will be held Sept. 7–11, 2011. Additional information will be available soon at www.cedia.org/expo.



CEDIA Announces 2010–2011 Leadership

CEDIA announced its 2010–2011 volunteer executive committee and board of at its Electronic Lifestyles® Awards Banquet during CEDIA EXPO. The volunteer

leadership will be responsible for guiding the association's strategic initiatives for the 2010–2011 term. The Executive Committee is as follows:

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& Entertainment
Portsmouth, VA

Vice Chairman

Randy Stearns
Engineered Environments
Alameda, CA

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Gordon van Zuiden
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Mesquite, TX

John Stiernberg
Stiernberg Consulting
Sherman Oaks, CA

Randy Wilson
Wilson Home Theater Systems -FM-
Tarzana, CA

CEDIA Announces Electronic Lifestyles® Awards Winners

CELEBRATION HONORS OUTSTANDING PROJECTS, PRODUCTS & INDIVIDUALS

CEDIA recognized the outstanding work of its members at its annual Electronic Lifestyles® Awards Banquet. The honorees included more than 40 winning projects in the Designer Awards competition, 15 Manufacturers' Excellence Awards winners, three inductees into the CEDIA Fellows program, and the 2010 Lifetime Achievement Award recipient. Also honored were the year's top volunteers.

The Designer Awards competition, which honors the best projects completed by CEDIA electronic systems contractors (ESC) members in the past year, featured winners in such categories as Best Integrated Home, Best Media Room, Best Hidden Installation, and Best Large Home Theater. The Designer Awards winners were determined by a panel of expert judges that included ESCs, architects, and interior designers. Also recognized were the three winners in the first-ever CEDIA/HGTVPro.com Audience Choice Awards, which were voted on by visitors to HGTVPro.com.

The Manufacturers' Excellence Awards honorees included 10 Best

New Product winners, one Sustainable Lifestyle Product Innovation winner, one Horizon Award winner, and two inductees into the Product Hall of Fame. The winners were selected by a panel of ESC judges. CEDIA also announced the winner of the first-ever Attendees' Choice Award as voted on by ESCs attending CEDIA EXPO.

Individuals recognized at the Electronic Lifestyles Awards Banquet included the second group of CEDIA Fellows and the Lifetime Achievement Award recipient, which were announced prior to CEDIA EXPO. CEDIA also honored the year's top volunteers and announced its 2010-2011 Board of Directors and Executive Committee.

"CEDIA's Electronic Lifestyles Awards represent the electronic systems industry's best work," said CEDIA CEO Utz Baldwin. "These award winners are at the leading edge of the innovation that will keep this industry moving forward."

The full list of award winners can be viewed at: www.cedia.org/awards. **RO**

The 12 Small Business Marketi

HOW DO YOU
RECONCILE THE
HIGH-PRESSURE
NEEDS OF YOUR
SMALL BUSINESS
WITH YOUR
FAMILY'S DESIRE TO
ROAST CHESTNUTS
ON THE OPEN FIRE?

...these 12 small
business phone
tips 'til Christmas
may help make
your season a little
brighter.



Ah, the holidays. That wonderful time of year when families gather 'round the fireplace to drink a little eggnog, trim the tree, and experience the joy of being together.

For most of us, the holidays are also a very hectic time of year. Especially the 12 days leading up to Christmas. And that's true even if you don't happen to celebrate Christmas, because it still sets a very short deadline to get the word out about your business' holiday promotions via a marketing campaign, and for getting business done in general since most of the business world seems to come to a stop from December 25 until around January 3.

How do you reconcile the high-pressure needs of your small business

with your family's desire to roast chestnuts on the open fire? Having a virtual phone service can help. Toward that end, these 12 small business phone tips 'til Christmas may help make your season a little brighter.

TIP 1: Use smart call forwarding to carve out a little time for yourself

A small business owner's time is not his/her own anytime during the year. But during the holidays it's especially precious. With smart call forwarding you can sneak out to do a little extended shopping, trim the tree with the family, or a holiday lunch without losing touch. Simply forward your calls to your mobile, home or other number and you can answer just as though you're in the office.

TIP 2: Record informational messages that answer repetitive questions.

Rather than taking time to answer the same questions about what days you'll be working over the holidays or what time the business is open, pre-record a message and make it an option on your virtual receptionist. This tip is extra helpful for businesses whose hours will be varying greatly during the holidays. Retailers can also use these messages to post updates on the status of hot holiday items.

TIP 3: Spur holiday sales by offering door busters.

Add a burst to your ads and/or

ng Phone Tips for the Holidays

direct mail/email promotions encouraging customers to call a particular extension you set up to promote the door buster of the day. You can even use different extensions for each advertising vehicle so you can track which ones get the most calls – thus telling you which are the most effective at driving customers to action.

TIP 4: Enable the virtual receptionist to greet callers during peak times.

Many businesses still prefer to have calls answered by a live person. But during the holidays, the high volume of calls can make it tough to answer every call promptly. Rather than forcing callers to leave a message or call back when you're not available, use the virtual receptionist as a backup to provide a friendly, professional greeting and help callers connect with the person or department they want quickly.

TIP 5: Use voicemail transcription to scan through messages.

Voicemail messages always seem to multiply during the holidays. Choose a virtual phone service that has the ability to turn voicemails into text, so you can have those messages sent to you via email or as a text to your phone. That way you can quickly skim through them rather than listen to them one at a time. It's a great way to stay on top of the priorities, especially when you're out shopping yourself.

TIP 6: Give Santa his own extension.

Businesses can get in on the holiday spirit by letting kids call to speak with Santa directly at the North Pole. This works particularly well if you have a toll-free phone number.

TIP 7: Put a 'Call Me' button on your web site.

These days customers often gather information on the Web then use other means to make the purchase. Make it easy for them to call by adding a 'Call Me' button to your Web site. Customers click the button, input the phone number they want to use to receive the call, and are connected quickly – while they're still looking at the product or service on the screen. It's doubly important if you're a retailer without a Web purchasing capability.

TIP 8: Make business calls while you're out shopping with the family.

But when you do, be sure the caller ID appears as if you're calling from the office. With the myIvoice virtual calling card you can make outgoing calls at any time and from anywhere.

TIP 9: Use caller ID tagging to identify business V. personal calls.

By assigning a unique number to appear in front of the caller ID of incoming calls, you can tell at a glance what phone number the caller dialed—your myIvoice number or your direct number. Knowing beforehand if a call is business or

personal gives you the ability to choose which calls to answer so you can make more effective use of your time.

TIP 10: Don't stay behind waiting to receive a fax in your home office while your family heads out to the in-laws for a pre-holiday feast.

Treat fax delivery the same as you do with your voicemail messages: by having faxes sent directly to the email inbox on your laptop or smart phone. Never be stuck somewhere waiting for a fax again!

TIP 11: Use smart call forwarding to offer 24x7 customer support.

When customers need help during the holidays, they usually want it right now – even if it's 2:00 in the morning. With a small staff you can't be in the office 24x7. But you can use smart call forwarding to forward calls to any phone you choose. Have each person on staff take a night to provide that support during the holidays—then advertise it's available.

TIP 12: Make your holiday bright.

Not really a phone tip but still good advice. Take the time to relax, enjoy and refresh yourself for 2011. Happy holidays! **RO**

Kevin Baker is the Product Marketing Manager for myIvoice (www.myIvoice.com) the cost-effective, feature-rich virtual phone service for small business. Kevin can be reached at kbaker@protus.com.

Welcome Back!

A simple phrase, but it sure made a difference to me on a recent trip to Lexington. You see, I travel about three weeks each month and for the most part, things are pretty routine.

I check in for my flight online; stand in line at security where I disrobe and take out all my potentially offensive lotions and potions and get jostled a bit by the folks behind me who are undoubtedly even later than I am.

On a good day, I have time to grab a salad, a bottle of water and a cup of coffee to take on the plane. I usually use the time in-flight to catch up on reading or perhaps to start writing a column. Arriving at my destination, I get into a rental car, plug the hotel address into my GPS and generally get there fairly easily.

As a member of most hotel chains' frequent guest programs, my key packet is usually ready when I get to the front desk. If I'm lucky, the front desk staff may smile and ask if I need a wakeup call or a bottle of water. Next trip, same thing.

When I walked into the Hilton Garden Inn in Lexington, KY, this week, it was a different experience. James, the night manager greeted me with "glad to have you back with us Ms. Valas. It tells us that your stay here last time was probably a good one. We appreciate your business and hope you come back here whenever you get to town. "James went on to tell me he'd be there all night and to let him know if there was anything else he could do for me. As he handed me my key packet, I immediately saw "Welcome back!" written on the front of it.

In contrast, as retailers, we spend

much of our time, money and effort in attracting new customers. Perhaps we assume that those who've already bought from us will surely be back next time they need to buy what we sell; or maybe we think that since the purchase cycle in big ticket products is so long we can't count on our current customers needing more of what we offer; or maybe we don't stop to compute the lifetime value of our patrons or how much we've already invested to get them to buy from us in the first place.

Unlike hotels, airlines and even restaurants, we don't do much in the way of frequent buyer programs. We don't offer discounts or free products for those who come back to us again and again. And I wonder how well we really welcome them back when they do return again.

In fact, satisfied previous customers are more profitable than new buyers. Having already experienced your value pricing and perhaps even compared your prices with your competitors, they don't haggle as much as those in search for a fair price. If they were satisfied with your delivery and installation service and with the tremendous knowledge your associates have, they're willing to pay more to get that level of experience again.

It's not hard to make your customers to come back, you just have to make sure they remember you when they're shopping.

Hold real private sales open to just those who've bought from you before. Offer them special discounts they won't find anywhere else.

Remember them between visits to your store. Send them birthday cards, Halloween cards or just a note reminding them that you'd like to see them again.

Create a wish list registry. Ask each buyer what their next purchase might be—maybe a new TV as a holiday gift for someone else; maybe a new range before the in-laws come for Christmas; maybe new bedding after the holidays; or maybe a 3D TV when prices drop even more. Keep a calendar and contact those customers to remind them about their planned purchases.

Hold special in-store events like celebrity chef cook-offs or beer and brat nights and give your customers first shot at getting tickets for these limited space events.

Ask your customers to opt in to your email marketing list. Tell them that you use the newsletter to give tips on community events, saving energy, new recipes, upcoming sales and new product launches. Offer email specials or coupons only found in those blasts.

People want to feel special and appreciated. The best way to thank your customers for doing business with you is to make them feel important. Invite them back frequently and really make them feel welcome when they come back in. **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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Remove the Roadblocks

LET YOUR EMPOWERED EMPLOYEES GROW YOUR BUSINESS

When I talk about empowerment, I have difficulty controlling my excitement—and my frustration. I am excited about the potential empowerment you have for creating loyal customers who will drive a business—and its revenues—to great heights. I am frustrated, however, at the lack of support most employers give to empowerment, so I thought I'd reiterate what I wrote before on the subject, as I feel it is that important to your success.

I can't say enough about the importance of empowered employees in helping a business survive and grow, even in the worst of economic situations. When you empower your employees to make decisions quickly to take care of your customers, the results will be amazing: increased customer loyalty, increased sales, decreased employee turnover, and word-of-mouth advertising that is less expensive and more credible than anything you could buy.

Most employers—and employees—actually fear empowerment. Employers think customers will take advantage of employees, who then will 'give away the store' in an effort to satisfy them, while employees are afraid they will be fired if they make a decision their employees don't agree with.

The latter was apparent when Heidi Heise, an employee at a Subway franchise in Dartmouth, Nova Scotia, Canada, gave a foot-long sandwich to two men who had been left homeless and hungry after an apartment fire. She was fired for doing so, and news of her situation spread throughout Canada, as well as to other parts of the

world. That Subway franchise probably realized upwards of \$100,000 in negative publicity—all because it fired an employee for making an empowered decision to give a \$6 sandwich to two distressed men.

On the other hand, Quiznos franchisee Steve Webber, recognized in Heise the type of employee he wants to have working for him and immediately hired her. The reaction of the Subway franchisee to an empowered employee is exactly the type of roadblock that must be removed in order to employees to make empowered decisions. If they fear they will be fired for doing so, none of them will ever use empowerment.

There are several roadblocks that prevent employee empowerment—and that stagnates the growth of a business. Remove these four roadblocks in order to develop a truly empowered workforce:

- 1. Fear** - Employees fear they will be fired for making an empowered decision, while employers fear that customers and employees will abuse empowerment. When you train your employees and support their decisions, you will eliminate that fear and allow your employees to be creative, yet responsible, in serving your customers.
- 2. Distrust** - Employers must trust their employees to make decisions that will keep their customers—and their money—coming back. Employees must be able to trust that their employers will not deride or, even worse, fire them if they make a mistake in an attempt to solve a customer's problem.
- 3. Micromanagement** - Nothing will kill empowerment more quickly than

micromanagement. When you micromanage your employees, you destroy their capacity for even the most basic creative thinking and problem solving. Let your employees know what you need from them, then get out of the way and let them do what you've asked them to do.

- 4. Lack of recognition** - The need for recognition is universal. Everyone needs to be told when they are doing something well, but all too often the only time employees get feedback is when they have made a mistake. The more you recognize the empowered decisions and achievements of your employees, the more likely they will be to use their creativity in dealing with situations in the future.

Eliminate these four roadblocks, and you will have an empowered team that will drive your business and crush your competition. Empowered employees also will save your company tens of thousands of dollars over the course of a year, because customer problems will not have to progress up the chain of command in order to be solved. When customer service decisions are made on the front line, management is freed up to address big-picture issues. **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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What Is Your Brand?

SOME QUESTIONS TO ASK YOURSELF

For the better part of three years, I have been writing in this space about branding, and all the many things that go into building and maintaining a strong brand.

There are, of course, many schools of thought about what brands are and how important they are. I think brands are almost always important, especially when it comes to building recognition and trust among your customers. The human mind loves simplicity, so you want to make it as simple as possible for your customers to choose you. A strong brand can help you do that.

But what is your brand, really? What are the things that affect the strength of your brand and how well you set yourself apart from your competition?

I will list some of the elements that make up your brand, along with some questions you should be asking yourself. This is by no means an all-inclusive list. I invite you to agree, disagree, or comment on my blog or on the Retail Observer discussion group on LinkedIn. So, what is your brand?

IT'S YOUR LOGO

More accurately--the graphic signature of your brand. Is your logo clean and well-designed? Are its look and colors executed consistently across all your materials? Is it strong and easy to recognize? Does it set the tone for the image you want to project?

IT'S YOUR WEB SITE

The first place people go to learn about

you. Does it grab people's attention on the first page? Does it say who you are and what you do strongly and concisely? Does it provide the information people need? Is it easy to navigate? Does it give people a reason to share it and keep coming back?

IT'S YOUR ADVERTISING

The messages you put out to educate and remind people who you are. Is it in the right media, targeting the right audience or are you wasting money advertising in a medium that doesn't reach your customers? Are the messages clear? Are the ads memorable and give a clear call to action? Do you advertise enough or too much? Do you even need advertising at all?

IT'S YOUR STORE

Your location(s) where people can truly interact with your brand. Do your locations live up to (or exceed) the expectations you set up in your marketing or do they disappoint? Is the store clean and easy to find? Do people get a positive feeling as soon as they walk in the door?

IT'S YOUR PEOPLE

Your best brand ambassadors are your employees. Do your people reinforce your brand image with every customer interaction? Does the service they provide live up to the promises you make? Are your people a positive reflection of your brand, on the clock and off? Do they help spread the word about your brand?

IT'S YOUR PRODUCTS

The things you sell. Do the brand promises of the products you carry match the brand promise of your company? Can customers get your products anywhere, or only from you? Does your product mix make sense? Are there any products you should stop carrying? Are there any you should start carrying?

IT'S YOUR CUSTOMERS

Perhaps the most accurate representation of your brand is the people who choose to do business with you. Are your customers a specific set who have specific needs and wants or are they just anyone? Are they the kind of people who help you spread the word about your brand? Are they influential among their peers? Are they the people you want to work with?

Your brand is made up of many elements—all the elements listed above, and probably many more. Each element will have different levels of importance, depending on your situation. The trick is to know which elements are the most important, make sure those are doing their jobs, and keep working down the line to perfect your brand. **RO**

BUILD

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





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Exception-al Service is Just Bad Policy!

“Business would be a heck of lot easier if not for all these pesky customers and their unreasonable demands!”

-Anonymous

The quote may be anonymous, but anyone who makes a living serving the public has uttered similar words on many occasions. Ultimately, everyone understands that customers are the lifeblood of any business. There are moments, however, when we just sit back and watch in bewilderment as customers make demands that any reasonable person would view as...well, unreasonable. I'm not talking about the common mistakes any business can and will make in attempting to serve the customer that creates a mea culpa moment. No, I am referring to the jaw-dropping, head scratching, try not to slit your wrists with a butter knife moment we all experience when the customer is just irrational.

WHAT WE HAVE HERE IS A FAILURE TO COMMUNICATE!

So, what is the root cause of this sudden increase in irrational behavior? Is it because the consumer feels empowered by the wealth of information they can capture on their own from the internet? Is it the state of the economy, where the consumer is pressing retailers more than ever because they are financially pressed themselves? Maybe they feel entitled to higher levels of service because they

have selected your establishment as one of the lucky few to have the honor of earning their business? The internet and the economy have become easy scapegoats. The problem is more likely the result of a failure in policy communication and consistency.

FLEXIBILITY = FAILURE?

Just for the record, consumers have always been demanding. That's just the nature of the retail business. We may feel it more today, as we have fewer customers, and every deal is critical in this environment. No doubt consumers are asking more questions, negotiating deeper discounts, and demanding higher levels of service as they are more conscious than ever about every penny they spend. So is the answer to simply capitulate, and give the customer everything they demand (reasonable or not) in an effort to make the sale? Logic dictates that flexibility in the terms of service will allow you to better serve the customer...right?

WHEN EXCEPTION IS THE RULE...

Making exceptions in an effort to “better serve the customer” may initially convey a commitment to customer service, but in reality exceptions simply set the stage for the inevitable meltdown moment. Why? Exceptions are rarely well executed. Every time you circumvent policy to “serve the customer” you create an expectation of service that extends beyond the business' normal capacity to

serve. In short, if you had the resources to perform these exception services efficiently, they wouldn't be exceptions. The end result is an angry customer who won't give you any credit for jumping through all the hoops, and then either cancels the order, or demands compensation for the inconvenience when we fail. Either way you lose the customer, the profit...or both.

AVOIDANCE IS NOT A STRATEGY!

The key is creating matched expectations between the services you provide, and what the customer can expect from those services. Oh, and one other point, don't keep it a closely guarded secret! Develop a checklist that details the conditions required to perform the services (e.g. normal delivery and install) that is reviewed and signed by the customer at the point of sale. This will eliminate confusion, create a matched expectation of service and ultimately result in increased customer satisfaction. So drop the butter knife and pick your jaw up from the floor. Those pesky customers will be far less demanding when everyone knows what to expect! **RO**

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Is Your Website Working For You, or Are You Working For Your Website?

If a display in a store is considered a silent salesperson, then shouldn't our website at least have the same status? The unfortunate part is that too many people spend all sorts of money or not enough money and create a website that is as bad as displaying last year's merchandise or merchandise that is shop worn or outdated.

It's funny how you get into interesting niches and specialties. Four years ago, I started reviewing websites-- not only on a one-to-one basis, but also in small groups, seminars, workshops and webinars. It is amazing the things that you learn when you take the time to review various websites within your industry. There are certain key elements that you see over and over again in successful sites that you don't see in other sites. So many times they are the smallest and subtlest things that can be the deciding factor if the site is going to be successful or unsuccessful.

It is also interesting how people learn from listening to comments about other people's websites. The interesting part about evaluating a website is what you are evaluating the website for. If you are evaluating a website because it plays great music when you get there then you will be happy with a website that starts off with playing music as

soon as you open it up. If you are evaluating a website because of the beautiful pictures it has on it, then you will be happy with a site that has few words and beautiful pictures.

I don't evaluate websites using those criteria. Websites are not about just being pretty. They should work for you just like a store display works for you. It needs to make the register ring by either selling things from that website or influencing customers to visit your store. I focus on the marketability of a website, not necessarily the graphics or just the physical look.

One of the strange things I have learned after reviewing hundreds of sites, is the prettiest sites are not always the best sites. The best sites are those that are easy to navigate and are not intimidating in any shape or form. You know what they sell, how they sell it, and you know where you are at all times. The web is about convenience, not about being the lowest price. The web is about value as perceived in the mind of the consumer and value is translated in so many ways to so many different people.

When I review a website there are certain elements I look for, such as a category for events. Retailing has become event driven (as we learned in last week's article). I want to see a series of calls to

action whereby a visitor can become a part of your community by signing up for a free newsletter, blog, a booklet of tips, or a webinar. It can also include a how-to series or anything that will engage that customer whereby you can collect informational data about that customer and be able to keep in touch with them in the future. They might not buy today or tomorrow but if you keep your name in front of them they will eventually buy or could refer someone to your store.

I want to see videos of all different varieties from product reviews, customer testimonials, instructional videos on how to use the product and even interviews with your sales reps on how the product should be used. Customer's comments about the product-- do they like it or would they recommend it? This is the perfect segue into the true purpose of the website and that's to get people to come back again and again. What tools do you offer on your website? What calls to action are you using to make your site more interactive? **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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The Last Environmentalist

In October of 2009, I was invited to attend the Governors Conference on Climate Change, the Road to Copenhagen in Los Angeles, California. This was the final gathering the troops, so to speak, before the Conference on Climate Change at Copenhagen in December of that same year.

The event was attended by Governors of other states, UN delegates, international media, scientists and engineers as well as non-profit organizations and corporate leaders... and all on the same page regarding Climate Change. All those attending were there for one purpose... to find solutions to a problem of global proportions.

I left the conference with a new vigor as well as a new commitment towards the future. No matter what the talking heads on TV may say, it was clear that Climate Change is real and that a clear path on both a local as well as global level had been defined and that through our individual, as well as collective actions, we could make a difference.

About two weeks before the conference in Copenhagen was to begin, the Environmental Protection Agency [EPA], announced that climate change is a real threat to the planet as well as all life forms and that it was being driven by human activity. A simple statement, with global implications and coming from a US Government agency as a statement of fact could alter the vote of global delegates attending the conference.

Then, like a pack of rabid dogs, the attacks on the agency and its proclamation began from all sides, first with outright challenges to the findings as “bogus” and “pseudo-science” and then the real war

began with the leaking of private communications among various scientists about undisclosed errors in the 2007 IPCC Assessment Report. The final blow came in the form of select leaked e-mails from the Hadley Climatic Research Unit at Britain’s University of East Anglia. This “smoking gun” appeared to vindicate climate change skeptics by suggesting scientists were deleting information that contradicted climate change.

This media “blitzkrieg” completely derailed the conference, forcing complete delegations to back down or not vote at all and the majority of the conference was left to defend the data and the reputations of



thought-leaders and leading scientists. The fallout was devastating...the Kyoto Accord failed to pass, scientists, educators and environmental leaders were fired or quit under a cloud of shame. This coordinated action, by persons unknown, countered the Gore-effect and set the movement back almost 30 years.

Now, almost a year later, the EPA has announced that the allegations made against their original findings were not substantial enough to outweigh the decades of evidence the EPA had amassed that clearly indicated that: greenhouses

gases have risen to unprecedented levels; that the accumulation of these gases is warming the planet; and that climate change is visible through shrinking Arctic ice, rising oceans and rising temperatures. It also restated that the rate of climate change is increasing and that greenhouse gases are the driving force behind this increase. It is a sad commentary on our society that not one word about these new and reaffirmed findings made the evening news.

So...now what? Like a bad call at a ball game, where the winning runner was later determined “out” after reviewing the tape...the game is over and score is in the books to be forever debated. It is easy to all “foul”, but the crowd has moved on and gone home. We now need to pick ourselves up and dust ourselves off and regroup and rethink our next move.

The new environmentalist must bridge the ground between the two schools of thoughts, one of control versus harmony and man over nature as well as to seek new paths to a more sustainable, eco-centric and bio-diverse world. Certain aspects of climate change are beyond our control and I fear, “the train has left the station”. It is no longer about control or change... it is now about survival of the species. Evolution is at hand, there are those who hunt, those who prepare and those who just eat. Where will you fit in? **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— Working Alongside Mom & Pop

There are few businesses other than a family-run store where the children of the owners can appreciate what their parents do for a living. We are there to see it firsthand, to make our own contribution to the family enterprise, to learn what's good and what's not so good about the business, and to consider whether we want to do this for a living. If I hadn't worked alongside my father, I would have missed a significant part of who he was.

How are you educating your kids about your business? Are you grooming them to take over? Are you encouraging them to find their own path?

John Nese, owner of Galco's Old World Grocery in Los Angeles, recalled "the first time my father took me to work at the store when I was five years old. I dusted the shelves and snacked on the Twinkies."

After graduating from the University of Southern California in 1967 with a major in food distribution and history, John decided that he wanted to work in the store.

"I told my father how important it was for me to walk in here and to be able to hear the motors running. I had lots of ideas for the store. He shook his head, and said, 'You're a damn fool. Make the money,'" recalled John, who eventually revamped the grocery store into Galco's Soda Pop Stop, which specializes in boutique sodas and candies.

Ever since brothers Michael and

Marc Brummer were kids, they loved visiting their father, Sam, at his restaurant, Hobby's Delicatessen in Newark, New Jersey.

"We loved to come here in the morning to watch the place open up," said Michael. "It would be pitch black, then the lights would come on, and all the turkeys would be put up. And all of a sudden the smells of the food would come in. The delivery men started coming in. It was fun to hear the stories, the joking, the schmoozing. On school vacations, we'd bus tables, wash dishes, sweep the floors. We had such a pride in this place."

Although he enjoyed having his sons helping out, Sam told me, "I wanted them to be a lawyer or a doctor, anything but the deli business. There are easier ways to make a living."

Marc and Michael are close with their father because they've had the opportunity to work with him.

"I know my father better than ninety-nine percent of kids know their fathers," said Marc. "You talk about rich. There is nothing in this world that makes you wealthier than what we have together."

Sometimes, of course, it's a challenge to work with members of your family.

Over the course of several decades, Howard Fink who owns Fink's home furnishings in Perth Amboy, New Jersey has worked side by side with his grandfather, his father, and now his sons, so he's an authority on communication among generations in

a family business.

"It was easier for my dad and me to communicate on a one-on-one basis than it was for him to communicate with his father," said Fink. Asked which one he listened to—his father or his grandfather—Howard laughed and said, "Whoever was yelling louder."

And then you have to know when to let go and allow the next generation to make changes.

In Pittsburgh, the Weiss family transitioned, renamed, and rebranded their family business from Modern Curtain and Rug Company to the more upscale home furnishings store, Weisshouse, with the blessings of founder Jack Weiss.

"Our father has given my sister, Stacy, and me free reign," said Lou Weiss. "In a lot of family businesses, the passion is squashed by the founder."

Stacy agreed. "What stops family businesses from growing is that the founder doesn't want to let go. We learned by stepping in and making decisions. You learn from your failures."

Are you willing to let your children fail? That's the only way they will learn to succeed. **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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Bosch 800 Plus Dishwasher Makes Cleaning Up After a Holiday Party a Breeze

Entertaining friends and family means that even the savviest of holiday hosts will be stuck with heaping piles of dishes, pans and utensils to clean during the festivities, and well after the guests go home. Thankfully, the Bosch 800 Plus dishwasher was engineered so that holiday hosts can spend time in a tryptophan induced coma instead of scrubbing dishes at the kitchen sink. Here are four ways the Bosch 800 Plus dishwasher makes holiday entertaining a breeze:

As guests enjoy a delicious dinner, there are never enough plates, forks or knives to cover each course of a holiday meal. Instead of running a noisy dishwasher sure to disrupt a soiree, the Bosch 800 Plus operates at an ultra-quiet 40 dBA – so low that holiday hosts can quickly turn over dishes for the next course without guests noticing that the whisper-quiet dishwasher is running.

The holidays are a time to bring out your finest china, crystal and silverware. While hosts may worry about a dishwasher destroying heirlooms, the Bosch 800 Plus has a built-in water softener that prevents lime deposits by adjusts water softness to keep the machine efficiently running without damaging the contents.



Nothing derails a party faster than a dishwasher leak. The 800 Plus features AquaStop™ Plus, a patented four-part leak protection system – the most comprehensive dishwasher safety package in the U.S. – so holiday hosts can comfortably run their dishwasher without worrying about bursting hoses or slow, floor-ruining leaks.

Even if party hosts wash dishes during the party, piles of pans will inevitably spill out of a kitchen sink as guests file out the door. To tackle even the largest jobs, the Bosch 800 Plus features a V-shaped third rack that fits up to 15 complete place settings and bigger cutlery items. An easily adjustable rack and a silverware basket offers flexible loading within the cavity to fit everything from the large roasting pan that housed a succulent, golden brown turkey, to the pie dish used to make Grandma's famous pecan pie.

Additionally, the 800 Plus is an eco-friendly solution. Using as little as 1.5 gallons of water per cycle, 70 percent less than the average dishwasher, and operates on only 180 kWh/y of energy, an industry best.

For more information and tips on making holiday entertaining a breeze, please visit:

www.bosch-home.com/US **RO**

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PARTNER OF THE YEAR

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Service Department Efficiency Delivers Increased Profits and Customer Satisfaction

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

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

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

Customer expectations in the service

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

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

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

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

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

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

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

Are first call completes on your radar? If not, they need to be. Come to the Appliance Service Training Institute (ASTI), February 9-12, 2011 in San Diego, CA. You'll learn 10 or more ways to increase your service company's efficiency that will deliver increased customer satisfaction and increased service profits. For more information visit www.asti.us. **RO**

Paul Mac Donald
Executive Director
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2011 •

UPCOMING EVENTS

• 2011

JANUARY

6-9

INTERNATIONAL CES CONSUMER ELECTRONICS SHOW

LAS VEGAS, NV
www.cesweb.org

12-15

NAHB INTERNATIONAL BUILDERS' SHOW

ORLANDO, FL
www.buildersshow.com

18-23

LIVING KITCHEN 2011

Koelnmesse Fairground
COLOGNE, GERMANY
www.livingkitchen-cologne.com

24-28

LAS VEGAS MARKET – GIFT+ HOME – VEGAS KIDS

World Market Center
LAS VEGAS, NV
www.lasvegasmarket.com

FEBRUARY

20- 23

NATIONWIDE PRIMETIME! CONVENTION

Venetian
LAS VEGAS, NV
www.nationwideprimetime.com

20 – 23

BRANDSOURCE SUMMIT

World Marriott Center
ORLANDO, FL
www.brandsourceconvention.com

MARCH

9 – 13

MEGA 2011 SPRING NATIONAL CONVENTION

Grand Hyatt
SAN ANTONIO, TX
www.megagroupusa.com

APRIL

25-28

NKBA KITCHEN & BATH INDUSTRY SHOW (KBIS)

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

MAY

12-14

LIGHTFAIR

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

JUNE

10-12

AIA 2010 NATIONAL CONVENTION & DESIGN EXPO

Miami Beach Convention Center
MIAMI, FL
www.aiaconvention.com

11 – 16

ASID NATIONAL CONFERENCE

NeoCon - Merchandise Mart
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AUGUST

21-24

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Nationwide Marketing Group's New Growth in Membership Adds Over \$200 Million in Increased Volume

Nationwide Marketing Group (NMG) announced that recent growth in membership has increased their total sales volume by over \$200 million.

"I was a member of Nationwide during its earlier days and it is great to be back," said Roddey Player, CEO of Queen City of Charlotte, NC. "I am blown away by how much they have developed their member services. Their marketing tools are second to none and their special interest free promotions and tabs are a wonderful addition. These will definitely help us compete tougher and take our company to the next level."

For decades, NMG has provided buying and marketing services to thousands of appliance, electronics and furniture independent dealers. Earlier this month, NMG welcomed dealers and vendor partners to their PrimeTime! buying show and conference held at the Gaylord National in Maryland.

"We finally got what we hoped we would get from a buying group and took full advantage of the savings and programs available at PrimeTime!," said Sylvia Worner, CEO and Owner of Friedmans of Pleasant Hill, CA. "I have to admit we never walked away from a show with that much money in our hands, which was great, because we were able to invest those savings into other areas of our business."

PrimeTime! is known to provide independents with presentations on retail trends and business strategies from the industry's leading experts. However, it's the networking opportunities and camaraderie among dealers from across the country that is the true testament to the strength of NMG's membership.

"We have been in businesses for 35 years, so we have heard it all

before. But at the show, we got a lot out of listening to other dealers talk about their experiences. You learn so much from the people who are in the trenches with you and finding out what they are doing to succeed," said Worner.

According to Robert Weisner, executive vice president of Nationwide Marketing Group, Nationwide is continuing to grow, "4 of the top 20 appliance dealers in the US are now members of Nationwide Marketing Group. With the current economy, it's absolutely necessary for dealers to inject fresh, new ideas into their business in order to take it to the next level and that's exactly what dealers get at PrimeTime!"



Robert Weisner, Executive Vice President of Nationwide Marketing Group, welcomes member dealers to the PrimeTime! buying show and conference held earlier this month at the Gaylord National in Maryland.

Worner walked away from PrimeTime! with a general feeling of optimism that she never experienced at other buying shows, "All of the members I met were friendly and outgoing and willing to share. It was a real morale booster for us and we in turn brought that back with us and passed it on to our sales people. Everyone on our team has been happy with the decision to join Nationwide. And that's really important for today's independent dealers; we need that passion to successfully compete against the big box chains."

"Yes it is difficult, yes it is challenging but there are still a lot of opportunities, especially with all of the new technologies and expansion

of product lines. Independents can move much faster and keep up with these market changes better than big box stores can. That's the exciting part of it and that independent spirit is what Nationwide Marketing Group was built on," said Weisner.

For more information about the many benefits of membership with Nationwide Marketing Group, including an invitation to the upcoming Primetime! buying show and conference in Las Vegas, visit www.nationwidemarketinggroup.org **RO**

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There Some in the Pa

BRANDSOURCE
2010 NATIONAL CONVENTION

After several years of converging on the Paris Hotel in Las Vegas each autumn, the thousands of attendees at Brand Source's 2010 National Convention and Buy Fair said "au revoir" in preparation for the move across the Strip to Caesar's Palace in 2011. Despite being in the midst of what Brand Source CEO Bob Lawrence described as "the toughest 60 days" he'd seen in his career, the show, held August 29 to September 1, was exceptionally well attended, and there was an indescribable buzz in the air that members and suppliers alike were feeling.

The event kicked off with a robust palate of educational seminars and training opportunities. One of the best attended classes was a seminar presented by Expert Care, BrandSource's in-house health care program, focused on health care reform bills that making sweeping changes to the U.S. health care system. The seminar was standing room only, and attendees left with the realization that there is

1. Everything is ready as the convention welcoming ceremony is set to begin 2. J.R. Zirkelbach and Bob Donaldson of Brand Source's Anaheim office are joined on-stage by the King of Rock-n-Roll during The Stampede 3. 1976 Olympic gold medal winner John Naber stops for a photo off between speaking and autographs 4. GE Appliances & Lighting President

e was thing Air in ris

RCE HOSTS ENTION AND BUY FAIR

much preparation to do in order to be in compliance with the new laws and to protect their businesses.

A huge hit was BrandSource's introduction of the new Expert Lease program which provides credit challenged consumers an alternative to traditional retail financing. The standing-room-only crowd learned how they can keep their full margin with no discount fee and give the customer the selection, service and shopping experience that they desire. "The reality is that in today's credit environment there are thousands, perhaps millions, of consumer that will not qualify for traditional retail financing. Expert Lease gives those customers an affordable alternative and allows our members to close more sales" said J.R. Zirkelbach, BrandSource director of communications.

GE Appliances & Lighting President and CEO Jim Campbell delivered a keynote address to the group, stating that the current economic recession has extended past his | *continued on page 62* |

and CEO Jim Campbell delivers his keynote address 5. Bob Lawrence addresses the group during the convention opening 6. Mark and Adrianne Pardini of Pardini Appliance in Ukiah, CA get Footloose with Kenny Loggins 7. Naoko Young of Young Appliance Co.in Alpena, MI is joined by her family after winning a Harley Davidson motorcycle





company's projections. "You can't let one sale walk out the door" Campbell said, and encouraged members to stay price competitive and diversify in order to retain market share.

Each BrandSource convention features a unique event called The Stampede, a limited timed event featuring deep discounts on a variety of products. The Stampede has emerged as one of the highlights of the show, with products included in the event ranging from traditional merchandise like appliances and electronics, to traffic building items, installation materials, and case goods. One Stampede supplier was heard to exclaim "We did more business during The Stampede than we did during the entirety of another event we attended recently!"

Each year BrandSource recognizes the dealers who best exemplify what it means to be a BrandSource member. The recipient is chosen by their peers, and the selection process can be very challenging given the fact that there are many worthy candidates. Selection criteria include dedication to customer service, demonstration of leadership, participation in organization events, utilization of BrandSource business tools and programs, and BrandSource branding. The 2010 recipients were recognized on-stage by BrandSource Director-at-Large Andy Kersey. "These dealers stand for what it takes to succeed in their businesses and set a great example of service to the organization and their communities. Every dealer should strive to accomplish what these dealers have" said Kersey.

1976 Olympic gold medal winner and motivational speaker John Naber regaled attendees with the story of his swimming success and applied the lessons he learned through challenges to what BrandSource members face today. "In 1976 I had to be the best in my field for 55.49 seconds to beat a world record and win a gold medal" he told the group, "and you have to be the best in your field every single day" After his presentation Naber autographed copies of his book *Awaken the Olympian Within*.

As a special treat, musician Kenny Loggins, familiar to many for his hits on the *Top Gun* and *Footloose* movie soundtracks, rocked the crowd with an amazing live performance. Revelers screamed and jived for 90 minutes as Loggins played one hit after another.

The 2011 BrandSource Summit will be held February 19-23 at the World Marriott Center in Orlando, FL.

ABOUT BRANDSOURCE

BrandSource has over 3,000 locally owned appliance, electronics, bedding, home furnishings and floor covering stores all across the country, combining for \$14 billion in buying power. For more information about BrandSource, please visit: www.brandsource.com or email information@brandsource.com. **RO**

1. The 2010 Dealers of the Year gather onstage for a group photo 2. BrandSource CEO Bob Lawrence and Executive VP Jim Ristow share a light moment 3. Executive VP John White gives members a visual of the cash incentives to buy at the show



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①

BRANDSOURCE2010 NATIONAL CONVENTION
AND BUY FAIR

1. Members gather around 1976 Olympic champion John Naber as he autographs copies of his book. Proceeds from book sales were donated to a Brand Source scholarship fund.
2. Northern California members gather for a group photo as Kenny Loggins rocks on in the background.
3. Members crowd the stage for an up close view during Kenny Loggins private performance. In the foreground (with baseball cap) is "Big Ed" Wernsing of Wernsing's Appliance and Video in Litchfield, IL.
4. Mark and Maria Taylor of Michigan Rent to Own in Kalkaska, MI take a break from convention activities to pose together.
5. The Geis family of Geis Electronics and Appliances in Batesville, IN is presented their Dealer of the Year award by Andy Kersey (right). Pictured with Andy are son Chris (holding the award), mother Rosalie, and father Al.
6. J.R. Logan of Logan's Appliance Center in Bishopville, SC is joined by "Cher" and "Tina Turner" during The Stampede.



③



②



⑤



④



⑥

Consumer Products [News]

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2



3



4



5



6



7



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9



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www.unc9000.com **12** POLK FX WIRELESS SURROUND www.polkaudio.com **13** LG LHB975 www.lg.com/us **14** CUDDLEBAG-PILLOW-CHARCOAL www.cuddlebag.com **15** DENON 100TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION www.denon100.com **16** CHIEF PXRU_AUTOMATED SWING ARM MOUNT www.chiefmfg.com **17** SAMSUNG HT-C9950W www.samsung.com/us **18** DPI TITAN&LIGHTNING 3D PROJECTORS www.digitalprojection.com **19** BOSTON ACOUSTICS TVEE MODEL 30 SOUNDBAR www.bostonacoustics.com

Maytag® Unveils the Industry's Most Energy Efficient Four-Door Refrigerator – Ice2O® Easy Access

NEW FOUR-DOOR MODEL HAS AN EXTERNAL PANTRY DRAWER FOR FRESH FOOD AND HEALTHY FAVORITES

Maytag® brand's latest French door refrigerator, the Ice2O® Easy Access, includes an external refrigerator drawer that holds up to five bags of groceries. Four LED lights in the external pantry drawer provide a clear view of the contents for easy access, plus the convenient counter height drawer is easily accessible to the whole family. When using the full extension drawer, 80 percent of the refrigerator remains closed, which equals less energy consumption that may add up, considering the refrigerator is the most touched appliance in the house.

“Maytag Ice2O Easy Access is redefining refrigeration space and provides fresh food on a whole new level,” said Gail Bruce, Maytag kitchen marketing manager. “We are delivering on consumers’ needs for more usable space while creating a better built appliance that can help them use less energy every day.”

This innovative configuration also creates a surprising amount of refrigerator storage, while not infringing on freezer space. The freezer and refrigerator drawers maximize usable space with slide out bin organization systems. In the main compartment of the refrigerator, five door bins are designed to accommodate beverages such as milk and juice, while also providing a designated space to chill a bottle of wine.

There is room for large party trays and small fresh food items like deli meats and cheeses in the designated deli drawer. Various other items will easily fit on one of the three split Spill-Catcher™ full glass shelves or on the mini shelf. A nice feature is the glass floor in the main compartment, which allows a clear view into the Easy Access

drawer below for a quick glimpse of the inside contents so you can keep track of fresh food items – even when the door is closed.

NUTRITION TIPS AND FILTERED WATER AT YOUR FINGERTIPS

The Ice2O® Easy Access refrigerator has an external ice and water dispenser and an interactive color LCD touch screen offering up nutritional information and quick tips bringing technology to the forefront of the kitchen. Consumers can also control the temperature on the LCD screen and select Measured Fill to accurately fill a reusable water bottle with PUR® filtered water in ounces, cups or liters. The ice maker can produce up to eight pounds of ice in 24 hours, and the ice cubes are “right sized” to slide perfectly into refillable water bottles.

BETTER BUILT FOR DEPENDABLE PERFORMANCE

Built strong to last long in Amana, Iowa, the refrigerator is engineered with durable components including a high-efficiency compressor combined with Rapid React sensors and a patented door seal minimize temperature fluctuations to help keep food fresh and ice frozen. The unit also boasts a durable power outage indicator, easy-to-use temperature controls and door alarm ensure more consistent temperatures.

The capacity of the newest Ice2O Easy Access refrigerator is a generous 25 cu. ft. It is ENERGY STAR® qualified and is the most efficient four-door refrigerator in the industry. MSRP starts at \$2,999 with a 10-year limited parts warranty on the compressor. For more information on Maytag refrigeration, visit www.maytag.com. **RO**





Visit maytag.com for warranty details.

FRESH FOOD

on a whole new level

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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The **clear choice** in undercounter refrigeration.

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Undercounter refrigerators are the ultimate in convenience. Place a refrigerator wherever it's needed: next to a food prep area, your child's playroom, in your bar or home gym - even in your bathroom to keep cosmetics and medications cool. Featuring the widest selection of refrigerators, U-Line offers the most usable refrigeration capacity, bright and open interiors, flexible shelf locations and generous in-door storage. Committed to environmental sustainability, U-Line offers the largest selection of ENERGY STAR® efficient undercounter refrigerators.



U-LINE GLASS DOOR REFRIGERATOR FEATURES:

- Touch glass digital control featuring easy view command center
- Digitally controlled convection cooling system
- Refrigeration capacity of 5.4 cubic ft
- Three 6mm tempered glass shelves
- Dual-lighted black interior
- Standard commercial stainless steel handle is interchangeable with professional handle option
- LowE coated, argon gas filled thermopane glass door
- ENERGY STAR® and CEE Tier 1 rated

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