

November
2012

Doing Good *while* Doing Well ...

**INDEPENDENTS
GIVE BACK
EVEN MORE
IN THESE TOUGH
ECONOMIC TIMES**



***INDEPENDENT DEALER**

a monthly e-zine publication for and about the OP and OF dealer.

**PREVIEW:
United Stationers
2013 Marketing
Program**

Page 38

THE WINNERS' Circle

Seventy Years and Counting for American Office Products, CA Dealer

Congratulations to Alan Bennett and his team at American Office Products in Canoga Park, California, who this year are celebrating their dealership's 70th anniversary.

AOP started out in 1942 as a typewriter repair and office supply company with a retail store that operated under the American Typewriter name.

The company's typewriter business is long gone and today, reports sales manager Dennis Watson, office supplies account for the lion's share of sales—about 70%—with furniture and a growing cleaning and break-room business making up the rest.

As with most dealers, business has been challenging in recent years, says Dennis, but he notes welcome signs of stronger growth this year, particularly on the furniture side, with more project opportunities showing up as more customers decide they've put off that long-planned move or remodel long enough.

That spells new opportunities for the dealership's 28 employees and they've been moving aggressively to make the most of them, adds Dennis.

Chicago Area Chamber Endorses Local Independent as Preferred Office Products Partner

Earlier this year, we had the unpleasant experience of reporting on the El Paso Chamber of Commerce and the way it waxed loud and long about the need to support local small businesses in its marketing materials and then turned around and cut a sweetheart deal with Office Depot to endorse the Florida-based big box as a preferred supplier for its members.

The good news this month, though, is that not all chambers share the El Paso organization's "bucks at any cost" mentality.

In Elmhurst, Illinois, just outside of Chicago, the local chamber has been offering a similar deal to its members but instead of going outside the community, they've partnered with Don Rathje and his team at locally owned and operated West Suburban Office Products.

The deal has been in place now for about three years and, reports Don, it has proved a genuine win-win-win for the dealership, the chamber and the customers they both serve.

"Having the chamber's endorsement doesn't guarantee we'll get the business but it has certainly opened doors and brought us new accounts," he says.

That's good news for Don and his team and also for the rest of the Elmhurst chamber's members. Unlike in El Paso, it's nice to see an organization that not only talks about the importance of supporting local businesses but also is willing to do something about it!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 4

editorial simon De Groot



In Good Times and in Bad, Independents' Commitment to Giving Back Stays Strong

This month we highlight an aspect of our industry that makes it truly special: its commitment to supporting worthy causes and giving back to the community.

As reported elsewhere in this month's issue, the industry once again this year set a new record in fundraising efforts on behalf of the City of Hope cancer research and treatment center.

Independents played an important role in that effort and they're also hard at work on similar causes in their own communities.

Independents are some of the most competitive people in any industry. Most of them know just one speed and that's pedal to the metal, 24/7. But they're also some of the most generous people you'll ever find.

Running a small business has never been easy, and you don't need me or anyone else to tell you how challenging it's been over the past few years.

But none of that has stopped independents from helping those in need. If anything, as reflected in this month's cover story, they've stepped up their efforts and found new and innovative ways to do good at a time when it's needed more than ever.

And they do it all with a minimum of fanfare. Indeed, if you asked most independents why they're so involved in the community, they'd probably be hard pressed to come up with an answer.

Chances are, you'd either get something along the lines of "We've always done it," or a puzzled look that you're even asking the question.

So as dealers wind down their Breast Cancer Awareness Month promotions and start preparing to collect Thanksgiving dinners for the homeless, adopt families in need for Christmas and work on similar efforts, we're proud to recognize what is truly a remarkable track record of generosity and good citizenship.

And as always, if you're doing something special that you'd like to share with the rest of our industry, just drop us an email and we'll take it from there.

The #1 Software Provider for the Office Products Industry

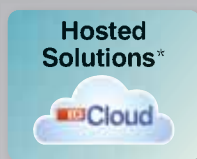


GAME CHANGER

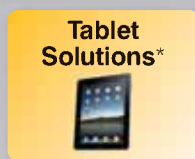


Providing solutions to up your game.

ECi is the **ONLY** software that provides solutions to **CHANGE** the **GAME** in your business. **More than 1700 dealers** are using our software to **EXPAND** into multiple verticals, **LEVERAGE** data analytics for increased margins, **IMPROVE** sales through e-commerce and **PROVIDE** an **MPS** solution for their customers.



ECiCloud for DDMS



Now available



Complete with analytics



Business intelligence



Managed print services tools



Delivery management tools

There is **NO OTHER** Solution that does **ALL** of this and **MORE**.
Changing the Game—one independent at a time!

Give your business the ECI advantage!

www2.ECISolutions.com/GameChanger

*Available only for certain business software.

866-374-3221 • info@ECISolutions.com • www.ECISolutions.com

ECi and the ECI Red Box logo are trademarks or registered trademarks of eCommerce Industries, Inc. All rights reserved.



Showtime at Gulf Coast Office Products, FL Dealer



There was plenty of interest in Gulf Coast Office Products' ad specialty offerings at their recent consumer show.

It was showtime and then some last month at Pensacola, Florida-based Gulf Coast Office Products, as Mark Wright and his team hosted over 600 customers and prospects at their fourth annual consumer show.

The turnout set a new record for the event, reports GCOP's Linda Malamo, due in no small part to the outstanding support provided by the 22 participating exhibitors.

"All our vendors provided door prizes for the event and we had close to 50 of them on offer," says Linda. Prizes ranged from HP printers and HON office seating to travel vouchers and gift certificates.

In addition, the show also provided an opportunity for the dealership to show its outstanding community spirit.

"Every year, we sponsor a local non-profit as part of the show activities and give them a table and organize a raffle to raise funds for them," Linda explains. GCOP also matches funds raised, adding further support.

"Our show has become a great opportunity to give back to our customers and to the community at large and everyone has a great time," reports Linda happily. Not surprisingly, she adds, the GCOP team is already hard at work planning to make next year's event even bigger and better!

TN Dealer Evans Office Supply Hosts Consume Show

Also hosting their annual consumer show recently were Todd Coffey and his team at Evans Office Supply in Morristown, Tennessee.

Evans' fifth annual show drew some 350 attendees to the dealer-

ship's distribution center and furniture showroom and featured 18 different vendors, who all provided door prizes. Among the 50-plus items up for grabs: office seating, shredders and coffee makers.

It was very much an order-writing show, Todd reports, with plenty of show specials on offer to encourage attendees to get their checkbooks out.

Porter's Office Products Announces Merger with WY Dealer Knobe's Office Supply

It's been a busy couple of months for Mark Porter and his team at Porter's Office Products in Rexburg, Idaho.

In our last issue, we reported on Porter's acquisition of the commercial office products business of M&H Office Supply, another independent in Blackfoot, Idaho.

Now comes word of another deal involving Knobe's Office Supply in Jackson, Wyoming. Knobe's owner Chet Knobe has joined the Porter's organization and will serve as account executive for its new Jackson customers.

"We're delighted to welcome Chet Knobe and Knobe's customers to the Porter's family and looking forward to sharing with them our unique brand of Blue Cow service," commented Mark.

The dealership brands itself with Blue Cows service because, Mark says, blue cows are "rare, never before seen and unique, just like the outstanding customer service provided by our dealership for close to 90 years."

New Ownership Team at MD Dealer Rudolph's Office & Computer Supply

In Baltimore, Maryland, new ownership is in place at Rudolph's Office & Computer Supply. The dealership was established in 1985 and has evolved to become one of the area's most successful independents, with a strong emphasis on state and local government contracts.

Heading up the new ownership team is majority owner Mai Anh Jones, who will succeed founder Bonnie Rudolph as chief executive officer.

The company said Bonnie will stay involved with the organization as chief operating officer, providing guidance and leadership as she has for the past 32 years.

The transition came in the form of a stock purchase and it's been business as usual at Rudolph's, reports president Christina Ensley.

And just what does business as usual look like these days? "Wonderful," answers Christina, pointing to the addition of a number of significant new contracts and solid growth in the office furniture and jan-san categories for the dealership this year.

Also driving sales growth is a new business development effort on the commercial side of the house, spearheaded by VP of new business development John Wallace, who joined the dealership from Staples.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 6

Scotch®

3750 Commercial Grade Packaging Tape

Restock & Recharge

Purchase
\$100

of qualifying Scotch®
3750 Commercial
Grade Packaging Tape

Receive a
FREE

iHome® Portable
Rechargeable
Speaker by mail

Sound
Beyond Size!
\$29.99*
VALUE!



- Perfect for iPod® mobile digital device, iPhone® mobile digital device, laptop or MP3 player
- Built-in rechargeable battery
- Includes speaker cable with USB plug for charging speaker

TIME PROVEN PERFORMANCE

- Excellent holding power to seal heavy boxes securely
- Superior performance in a wide range of environments and applications
- Seals out moisture, dust and dirt
- 3.1 mil thick
- Tape made in USA with globally sourced materials



MMM 3750
Roll, Clear
1.88" x 54.6 yd
UPC-00021200724411



MMM 37506
6 Rolls, Clear
1.88" x 54.6 yd
UPC-00051141917641



MMM 37504RD
4 Rolls on Reusable Dispensers,
Clear, 1.88" x 54.6 yd
UPC-00051141318998



MMM 3750CS36ST
36 Rolls with ST-181 Pistol Grip Dispenser,
Clear, 1.88" x 54.6 yd
UPC-00051131846784



MMM 3750CS48
Case Value Pack with 48 Rolls,
Clear 1.88" x 54.6 yd
UPC-00051141902586

Scotch® 3750 Speaker Offer only available by mail using this Official Claim Form

Promotion period: 06/01/2012-12/31/2012



☒ Please send me my
FREE iHome® Speaker

Mail this claim form and the original UPCs from the qualifying products above (only these products with the UPC codes shown above qualify) to:

Scotch® 3750 Speaker Promotion
P.O. Box 8039, St. Paul, MN 55108-0039

Please Print

Name _____

Company _____

Address _____

City _____

State _____

Zip _____

Mail-in offer form. Not redeemable at retail. Purchase of qualifying products to be made between 06/01/2012-12/31/2012 and claims to be postmarked no later than 01/31/2013. To be eligible, each claim form must be accompanied by the qualifying original Scotch® Product Package UPCs. Sponsor assumes no responsibility for late, lost, misdirected, damaged, illegible, postage-due mail, or non-complying claim forms. 3M employees and members of their immediate families, retailers, distributors, dealers, warehouse facilities and their employees are not eligible to participate. No duplication or reproduction of UPCs will be accepted. 3M has the right to substantiate UPCs. All claim forms and their accompanying documentation become property of the 3M Company and will not be returned. Offer good in the USA. Offer void where prohibited, taxed and restricted. For your records, keep copies of all documentation submitted for this offer. Limit two (2) reward submissions per envelope. No more than six (6) rewards redeemed per unique mailing address over the course of the promotion period. Please allow 6-8 weeks for delivery. Offer good while supplies last.

Sponsor: 3M Company, One Innovation Boulevard, St. Paul, MN 55144

IDC

*Suggested Retail Value

iHome is a trademark of SDI Technologies, Inc.

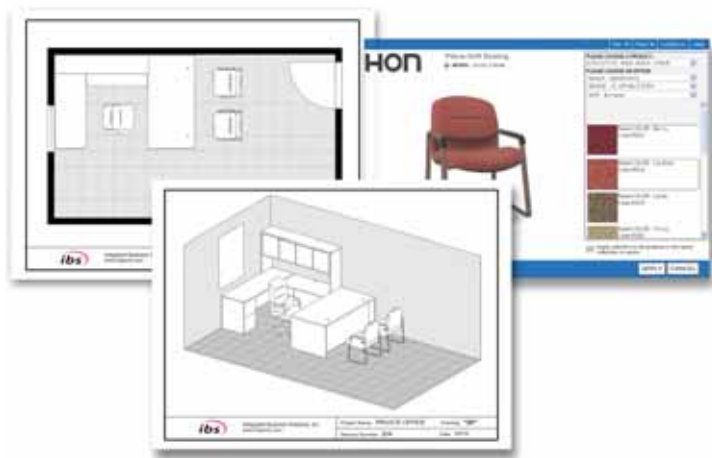
iPod and iPhone are registered trademarks of Apple Inc.

3M, Scotch and the Plaid Design are trademarks of 3M. © 3M 2012. All rights reserved.



3M

Integrated Business Solutions, VA Dealer,
Finds New Technology Opens Doors to
New Furniture Opportunities



One of the private offices in a recent IBS project

For many dealers today, office furniture represents one of their best growth opportunities. But going beyond the basic desk-file-

credenza sale and moving upstream to more project-oriented business is not always easy, particularly with tight budgets and limited resources.

But if Tom Hardee's recent successes at Integrated Business Solutions in Virginia Beach, Virginia, offer any indication, the barriers to more ambitious furniture sales may well be coming down some. Tom recently closed a \$10,000 deal for three offices and a conference room that previously, he says, would probably been out of reach. What made the difference? United Stationers Visual Planner software from Animated Vision.

Using Visual Planner, Tom was able to put together a 2D and 3D view of the floor plan as well as a detailed proposal for the entire project in less than 20 minutes. And just 48 hours after presenting the proposal to his customer, he learned that the job was his!

"Furniture only accounts for about 20% of our business and having access to the design and specification tools to grow has been a challenge," Tom says.

"Visual Planner has certainly changed that," he reports happily. "It's very intuitive and I really didn't need any kind of formal training on the program before I was able to use it. It's made life a whole lot easier for us and opened the doors to some exciting new opportunities, even in these challenging times."



DURAFRAME® SELF-ADHESIVE MAGNETIC FRAME
BYE-BYE TAPE AND THUMBTACKS!

DURABLE's DURAFRAME®—

a contemporary self-adhering display sign with hinged magnetic front to create professional-looking signage/displays quickly and easily. Bid farewell to tape, thumbtacks, etc. DURAFRAME® offers a simple, stylish yet efficient way to organize, display and update important information.

Features

- Adheres to any smooth, solid surface—simply peel, stick, done!
- Special adhesive allows for repositioning from one location to another*
- Sturdy lens cover pulls back effortlessly, allowing for speedy insert updates
- Magnetic seal holds inserts securely in place
- Can be read from both sides when affixed to transparent surfaces, such as glass
- Available in tabloid, letter and half letter sizes, packs of 2

Item#	Description	Size
DBL4890-01	Half Letter	5½" x 8½"h
DBL4891-01	Letter	8½" x 11"h
DBL4896-01	Letter Horizontal	11" x 8½"h
DBL4892-01	Tabloid	11" x 17"h

DURAFRAME® is available from United Stationers.

DBL312-2011LN



*Non-removable on wallpaper, painted surfaces and wood.

Think Independently

BMI OP Revelation™



The Truly Independent Software Solution for Office Product Dealers

Competition in the Office Product industry is fiercer than ever. Your independence is what sets you apart. OP Revelation™ advanced dealer e-commerce and business management software from BMI lets you remain truly independent.

The choice is always yours in terms of the content you want to feature on your e-commerce site and in terms of the search engine you want to use, regardless of wholesaler. Your choices even extend to how you want to deploy OP Revelation™. Whether its On-Premises or Hosted in the Cloud, BMI will deploy our software in a way that best suits your business model.

See why our dealers are reporting explosive growth. Visit us on the web at <http://www.bmiusa.com/industry-expertise/office-supply> or call us today, toll free, for a free consultation at 888-580-8382, X206.



Warren's Office Supplies, Springvale, Maine

Exceeding Customer Expectations—Every Day

by Jim Rapp



- Warren Roberts, President and founder
- Melissa Roberts Bors, Vice President
- Jen Roberts, Marketing Director
- Supplies, furniture, printing, beverages
- Founded: 1981
- Sales: \$3.5 million
- Employees: 16
- Partner: S.P. Richards, TriMega
- Online sales: 52%
- www.warrensofficesupplies.com

Warren's is a true family business. President Warren Roberts with marketing director Jen Roberts (standing) and vice president Melissa Roberts Bors.

Warren Roberts' first words, when I talked with him for this article were, "I know you're going to ask, 'What's the secret of our success?' so I'll tell you up front: It's exceeding customer expectations every day."

After I heard more from Warren, I will tell you that this is much more than a slogan. "Our livelihood depends on our customers' satisfaction," Warren

states, "and everyone who works here understands that. We focus on what we do well, repeat it over and over again and try not to get distracted by what the competition is doing."

Warren was an outside rep for a retail office product store, then purchased the business in 1981. It's grown over the years, mostly through acquisitions—in Portland, Maine, in 1998, Skowhegan, Maine, in 2003, and three very small dealers recently—one in Bath, Maine, and two in New Hampshire.

Staying Close to the Customer

Warren, along with twin daughters Jen and Melissa and every employee, follows a program that keeps them in almost daily contact with customers.

The program includes periodic personal visits, even to those customers who order online. Drivers don't just make deliveries. They talk with customers, ask if they're happy with the products and the service, regularly drop off gifts and samples and report back about problems or questions customers may have.

Some years ago they adopted the Pencil Man as their mascot, using him in all their advertising and promotion. "We do a monthly e-mail newsletter featuring the Pencil Man, with contests and other means of feedback, reports Warren.

"With increased online ordering, we saw a need to use new ways to stay in touch. The newsletter includes the latest adventures of Pencil Man. We ran him for Governor during the last election. The newsletter always includes a trivia question, and sometimes has a coupon for free Famous Amos cookies, recipes and so on."

Warren says that much of the growth of the business comes from new customers. "We know we need to go out and see a certain number of prospects every day, and everyone gets involved. Our drivers deliver welcome kits prior to our rep going in for the initial appointment. We also make phone calls to prospects introducing our customer service team. When we go in for the appointment, the account is already set up, with their customer code and password, and our rep delivers a complete information packet designed specifically for that prospect."

Warren, Jen and Melissa Roberts have built a very successful and growing family business in this mostly rural coastal part of Maine. Their future looks great—another fine example of what independent office products dealers are doing across the country.



THE *SOURCE*

2013 ADVANTAGE BUSINESS CONFERENCE

JUNE 26-30, 2013
MARRIOTT WORLD CENTER

ORLANDO, FLORIDA



NETWORKING EDUCATION OFFICE PRODUCTS EXPO SPEAKERS

S.P. RICHARDS CO.™

THE ADVANTAGE BUSINESS CONFERENCE IS OPEN TO ALL FIRST CALL INDEPENDENT DEALERS OF S.P. RICHARDS COMPANY.

© 2012 S.P. Richards Company

Special Report: Independents Take a Hit from Hurricane Sandy



Photo: NJ Governor's Office/Tim Larsen

By the time it was over, Hurricane Sandy had killed at least 90 people in the U.S., left 8.5 million without power and generated damage and destruction that one estimate put at as much as \$50 billion.

The good news for the office products community—and it was good news—was that there were no initial reports in the industry of fatalities or serious injuries caused by the storm. But that was where the good news ended, as dealers from North Carolina to Maine struggled to get back to some kind of normalcy in the wake of an unprecedented weather disaster.

With our thanks to Independent Stationers and TriMega for their help, here's a summary of reports from dealers in the states most affected by Sandy on its impact in the days immediately following the storm.

Day Three of the storm and still no power and we have been told by local authorities and our power company that it could be up to 10 days for power restoration. We have hundreds of downed trees over power lines and over 20% of local cell towers are still down, so cell service is still very touch and go. Phones are completely down, as are UPS, USPS and Fedex.

—Chris Corday, Ace Depot,
Northvale, NJ

We were forced to postpone our Productivity Show but our offices are open and working. Our Internet lines and website are running at less than 20% normal speed as Verizon indicates 50% of their routers remain under water.

—Sid Lerman, Weeks Lerman
Group, Maspeth, NY

My family and my staff's families are all well and safe. We are now dealing with the inconvenience of not having electric, phone, Internet etc at home. I decided to drive into the office this morning (the day after the storm) and to my surprise all services were available and two of our three websites are up and running with short staff.

—Alex Minzer, BulkOfficeSupply.com,
Hewlett, NY

Our dealership was not too affected by the storm but unfortunately most of our employees have lost electricity, hot water and heat and have no gas for their cars. One of our employees lost his two-story home and another watched as his car floated together with hundreds others on Coney Island. I counted 130 cars standing in line for gas yesterday and they were only dispensing \$20 of gas per car. Sandy has made a historic impression in the Tri-state area that we will never forget.

—Michael Tsveitel, Plexon, Inc,
Brooklyn, NY

Power out but we are all ok. Operating on iPhones and iPads with car chargers. We lost two days of sales and we'll see what tomorrow brings.

—Rob Mallin, Village Office Supply,
Somerset, NJ

Our New Jersey facility is totally dark and probably will be for a couple of days. Fortunately, we transferred the phones to our Kingston, New York, location so we won't miss any NJ business (not that there is any).

—Buzz McKernon, American Printing
& Office Supply, Kingston, NY

We have power at the business, however I am without power at home and the house is unlivable with about 3 to 4 feet of water on our ground floor. Lots of fun.

—Jordan Kudler, Crest Office
Products, New York City

After getting hit with back-to-back storms last year, we learned our lesson and installed a generator and put together a disaster recovery plan, so we were able to make the appropriate preparations prior to the storm. We closed Monday and Tuesday as we didn't want our employees to have to drive through the wild weather.

Deliveries continue to be difficult, especially by the shore since many roads remain closed and/or flooded. We have offered assistance to our customers and our trucks were used by the emergency response teams in surrounding towns to transport supplies to their shelters.

—Bob Shulman, Suburban Stationers,
Middletown, CT

No power at the business all last week. It just came up today (Sunday). We have been closed all week and unless there is fuel on line this coming week, business will be at a standstill.

—Dave Garbus, Huntington Business
Products Centre, Long Island

City of Hope



THANK YOU

Support for City of Hope by the National Office Products Industry has been tremendous over the past 30 years, and this year is no exception. We would like to extend our sincere thanks to everyone who contributed toward the "Building Hope" initiative. The initiative raised over \$9 million this year and brought our 30 year cumulative total to more than \$100 million for City of Hope. We are grateful for every contribution, as your generosity helps City of Hope push forward the time when cures for cancer and other life-threatening diseases will be found.

To learn how you can get involved, please visit
www.cityofhope.org/NOPI.



SCOTT LIGHT
President, GP Professional Washroom & Wiper
Solutions and Communication Papers
Georgia-Pacific and 2012 *Spirit of Life*® Honoree



Heroes for Hope - \$100,000

3M
ACCO Brands
Avery Dennison
Domtar
Fellowes Inc.
Georgia-Pacific
The HON Company
Newell Rubbermaid
Office Depot
OfficeMax
OPI
Quill
S.P. Richards Co.
Smead Manufacturing
Company
Staples Inc.
The Godfrey Group
The Office City
United Stationers

Champions for Hope - \$50,000

AOPD
Esselte
Frey Gaede
Hewlett Packard
Innovative Storage
Designs
International Paper
Office Partners
TriMega

Diamond Circle - \$25,000

Bic
Independent Dealer
Magazine
Nestle Waters
Pilot Pen
Quality Park
Safco
Saunders
Shurtech Brands
Soporcel

Honoree's Circle - \$17,500

Coca-Cola
Golden State Business
Alliance
Harbinger National
HiTouch Business
Services
HSM of America



INDUSTRY NEWS

New Lawsuit Seeks Triple Damages from Office Depot for Alleged Overcharges

If you have news to share - email it to
Simon@IDealerCentral.com

A whistle-blower lawsuit unsealed last month in Los Angeles Superior Court claims Office Depot overcharged dozens of government agencies by millions of dollars under a contract it held with the U.S. Communities state and local government agency purchasing consortium.

The case, according to the U-T San Diego newspaper which first reported the story, was filed under seal in March 2009 and seeks triple damages for overcharges and a \$10,000 penalty for each inflated invoice, possibly bringing the total damages sought into the hundreds of millions of dollars, the newspaper reported.

The newspaper said the case is known as a qui tam proceeding, under which a whistle-blower aids the government and benefits from any penalty. Such cases start in secret. The government investigates the claims and attempts to reach a settlement before the seal is lifted and litigation proceeds.

All governments participating in the contracts could receive a portion of any settlement or judgment, but some have joined in active litigation — which could entitle them to a larger share of any payout, according to U-T San Diego. They include the cities of Los Angeles, San Bernardino and Pomona, and school districts in Merced, Stockton and Monrovia.

"We believe Office Depot deliberately overcharged the city and are taking steps to recover the overcharges," a statement from the city of Los Angeles said. "We cannot comment further on matters in litigation."

The lawsuit claims Office Depot intentionally misapplied discounts and changed prices in violation of its agreements, the newspaper reported. It also claims the company failed to fulfill lowest-price guarantees and switched some customers to an alternate pricing option without telling them it would likely cost them more money.

Nearly all of the lawsuit's claims were investigated by the Florida attorney general in 2010 and Colorado attorney general in 2011, the newspaper reported. Both attorneys general set aside all but the price plan-switching allegation in settling with Office Depot for a combined \$6.3 million.

In 2011, Dallas County accused Office Depot of not offering its lowest prices through the contract, and is demanding \$1.8 million. Earlier this year, Detroit Public Schools claimed it was overcharged at least \$1 million more than the company's lowest prices and received a settlement for an undisclosed amount.

For more on Office Depot's problems with its state and local government business, please visit the Depot State Contract Watch section of the *INDEPENDENT DEALER* website www.idealercentral.com/Pages/Watch_List.



Industry Raises Record \$9.5 Million in Support of City of Hope

S.P. Richards' Wayne Beecham, outgoing chairman of the National Office Products Council, congratulates Spirit of Life Award honoree Scott Lite while Dr. Michael Friedman, City of Hope president and CEO, holds the check for a record \$9.5 million that was raised by the office products industry during this year's campaign.

The National Office Products Industry fundraising campaign for the City of Hope celebrated its 30th anniversary in style last month, when it concluded yet another record-setting year at the annual Spirit of Life Gala in Chicago.

Over 700 attendees honored this year's Spirit of Life award recipient, Georgia Pacific's Scott Light, whose campaign raised a record \$9.5 million.

Next year's campaign, which will mark the 100th anniversary of City of Hope, officially gets underway March 11-12, with the annual City of Hope Tour.

For more information, visit www.cityofhope.org/nopi.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



PAPER because

sustainability is the only business model that will survive.

Domtar is committed to sustainable environmental policies and business practices, because successful businesses recognize those are actually the same thing. Learn more at PAPERbecause.com.



Continued Dealer Growth, New Programs Front and Center at TriMega National Convention



At this year's TriMega National Convention, the group's president, Charlie Cleary, gave members kudos for their ability to become more effective e-marketers and grow share in hot new product categories like jan-san, managed print services and ad specialties.

Even though margins continue to be squeezed and new account acquisition is tougher than it has ever been, those challenges and others like them have not pre-

vented progressive independents from reinventing themselves to become more effective e-marketers and grow share in hot new categories like jan-san, managed print services and ad specialties.

That was the message from TriMega president Charlie Cleary at the group's 2012 National Convention last month.

TriMega took as its theme for this year's meeting Propel 2012 and the focus was very much on generating forward progress and plenty of it, as members gathered in Orlando to hear updates on TriMega programs, meet with some 120 supplier partners on the tradeshow floor and learn from industry experts and each other.

Citing mega-trends and developments such as the entry of the big boxes into the office products business, the emergence of online ordering and consolidation of players at every point in the channel, Cleary said dealers have witnessed, responded to and at times created some

monumental changes in our industry.

"With the barrage of changes on a non-stop pace, we are still here to tell the story because we've been hungry, we've been resilient, we've been aggressive, we've been decisive, and we've been relentless in our focus to win market share," he told TriMega members.

"We've not been afraid of big ideas and we've been fearless in our desire to keep growing, progressing and advancing," he added.

Reflecting the overall strength of the independent dealer community, Cleary reported TriMega currently is "570 members strong, \$400 million in direct purchase volume, \$1.6 billion in wholesaler purchase volume, and \$32 million in rebates paid out to TriMega members over the past year."

He said members are up 2% in purchase volume year-to-date with outbound sales higher than that and offered kudos to them

CONTINUED ON PAGE 15

Introducing a new member of the Nexus family...the Jr. Partition. Perfect for use while seated.

Check out our full array of Nexus collaboration products at ghent.com/nexus, always made right here in the USA.

Serving Independent Dealers for 30 years.



800.543.0550

ghent.com/nexus

for investing in new technology, embracing the Internet and social media and adding feet on the street to generate market growth. At the convention, TriMega introduced a number of new programs and initiatives designed to help keep the momentum going forward for its members. They included:

- The Orange Project, TriMega's new initiative in partnership with wholesalers S.P. Richards and United Stationers to help members grow their jan-san business
- OP on the GO, the group's first ever iPad and tablet Catalog App
- TriMetrics, a new benchmarking tool to help dealers manage their business better and smarter through insights into best practices dealer metrics and performance data.
- Additional growth from TriMega's Point Nationwide national account program, currently on track to generate its first \$2 million month.

- Continued growth of the group's education program, with record participation in its TriWebinars and Triumph sales training series
- Launch of the TriMega ThinkTank, a new initiative that seeks to take member networking to the next level by facilitating best practice sharing, peer-to-peer learning, creative brainstorming and problem solving through monthly teleconferences

Also at the meeting, TriMega recognized several members for outstanding support of the organization. They included:

- Office 360, Indianapolis, for greatest dollar growth in direct and wholesale purchases from TriMega suppliers over the past 12 months
- Atlas Stationers, Chicago, for greatest percentage growth in direct and wholesale purchases
- Office Environment Company, Louisville, and Bishop's Office Needs, Houston, for greatest percentage growth in direct purchases

- Missouri Office Systems, Kansas City, MO, and Ables-Land, Tyler, TX, for greatest dollar growth in direct purchases

In addition, TriMega named Brown & Saenger, Sioux Falls, South Dakota, Customer Service Point of the Year under its Point Nationwide program.

The group also honored the following manufacturers for their support:

- Global/Offices to Go—Top Growth Award
- Smead Manufacturing—Top Marketer
- Rubbermaid Commercial Products—Top Emerging Supplier
- ACCO Brands—Champion for Independents, a new award presented for the first time this year

As reported last month, next year TriMega will partner with Independent Stationers to host EPIC 2013, a joint convention set for September 18-20 in San Antonio.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 16

Presenting...

our newest ideas in Presentation Products.

You'll be looking good with these stylish new additions to our complete lineup of high quality report covers and two-pocket folders.

Contact your Office Products Dealer for more information on Smead's complete line of Presentation Products.

www.smead.com



KEEPING YOU ORGANIZED®

© 2011 The Smead Manufacturing Company, Hastings, MN
© Smead, three bars, checkerboard pattern and Lockit Two-Pocket Folders are registered trademarks of The Smead Manufacturing Company.



Accent Series
Poly Report Covers



Lockit®
Two-Pocket Folders



Frame View
Poly Report
Covers



Contemporary
Classics
Two-Pocket Folders

Independent Stationers Rolls Out 2013 M-Power Marketing Program

The Independent Stationers dealer group last month announced an enhanced M-Power Integrated Marketing Program for 2012.

The IS M-Power program was first introduced in 2005 and has expanded with a focus on current marketing trends such as social media.

The program has benefits for both Independent Stationers members as well as participating manufacturers, IS said. The group's members can take advantage of eMarketing through the use of banners, electronic flyers, specials, direct mail marketing, social media marketing, training opportunities and more at no cost as a value-added benefit of membership.

Manufacturers benefit by exposing their brands to all IS members and all of their customers, which strengthens their brand

"The M-Power program is a great resource for our members due to the vast number of marketing tools available to them from our manufacturer partners", said Janet Eshenour, Independent Stationers director of marketing.

"And, because many of the eMarketing materials are loaded to the dealers' websites for them, it's a lot less work for them to up-

date on a quarterly basis. The impact to manufacturers is significant as well because they can reach all members at one time and an unlimited number of customers."

S.P. Richards Launches CampaignAdvantage, New Managed E-Mail and Social Media Program for Independents; Names New Northeast Region VP

Wholesaler S.P. Richards last month announced the launch of CampaignAdvantage, an automated e-mail and social media platform designed to provide independents with a powerful new tool to reach their customers and prospects.

S.P. Richards said the program offers an ideal solution for those dealers looking to consistently deploy marketing campaigns via e-mail and social media, but who have been hindered by time or resource constraints.

For dealers already leveraging e-mail marketing and social media, CampaignAdvantage will provide the perfect complement to their efforts, the company added.

Included in CampaignAdvantage integrated marketing campaigns are promotions sent directly to the dealer's provided opt-in e-mail

CONTINUED ON PAGE 18



Earn Top Dollar for your cartridges

- Enjoy the ease of use with zero cost to you and no handling required!
- Start earning top dollar for your empty cartridges! Sign up today at westpointproductsrecycling.com.
- Want to promote recycling on your website? Contact us today at 800-624-6991.

West Point Products
QUALITY IMAGING SOLUTIONS



Is your current system keeping you competitive?



With office products consumers moving rapidly towards online shopping and margins getting tighter, are you satisfied that your current system provider is giving you the tools you need to remain competitive?

Whether you are a small reseller, or a large distributor, we have proven, scalable solutions from the web to warehouse and everywhere in between. If you want to compete better locally and against national chains, improve e-commerce, get your sales force connected, and reduce operational costs company-wide, consider modernizing your e-commerce and operations with MBS DEV.

What do you want to do?

- Win against the power channel?
- Grow online ordering and cart size?
- Improve the customer experience?
- Connect sales to real time customer data?
- Punch out to your customers' ordering systems?
- Reduce operational costs?
- Market more effectively?



Microsoft Partner

Gold Enterprise Resource Planning

www.mbsdev.com

database of customers, posted to their Facebook page and tweeted from their Twitter account. All these activities take place without any effort on the part of the dealer.

All dealer customer e-mail lists are housed on a secure server and S.P. Richards has no visibility into this confidential information, the company said. Additional program support material will include editable flyers and web banners and be available through S.P. Richards new MarketingOnDemand Portal.

Coleson Chase, S.P. Richards project manager for the program, said, "CampaignAdvantage will provide dealers a turnkey program to jumpstart or augment their e-mail and social media marketing efforts. Combined with the additional tools supporting each campaign, dealers will be able to drive significant product awareness and sales with very little investment in time."

For additional details on the program, contact your local S.P. Richards sales representative.

Separately, S.P. Richards announced the appointment of Ray Sreca to division vice president for its Northeast region. In his new role, Sreca will take on sales and operations oversight of the company's Baltimore, Boston, New York, Philadelphia, Pittsburgh, Richmond, Syracuse and New Jersey distribution centers. Sreca has managed the company's New York distribution center since 2009. Prior to that, he ran the Richmond distribution center which was named the company's 2008 Branch of the Year.

Susan Roberts Elected to BSA Board



Susan Roberts of the Unified Sales Associates rep organization has been elected a member of the Business Solutions Association (BSA) board of directors. Roberts will represent BSA's manufacturer representative members on the board.

"BSA is pleased to have a person of Susan's stature and experience," said BSA president Mike Wilbur. "She adds to a very strong team on this year's board. We look forward to working with Susan and know that she will bring new ideas and energy"

Roberts began her industry career in 1983 as an outside sales rep

CONTINUED ON PAGE 19

Get your customers the fire protection they need at a value that won't weigh them down

SentrySafe Water Resistant Fire Files offer your customers new innovation with better protection at a reduced weight for a lower cost. 25-35% lighter than standard vertical fire files!

Learn more about SentrySafe products at www.sentrysafe.com

PROTECTS DIGITAL MEDIA

2B2100 | 4B2100

for a Dallas-based office products dealer. She had a two-year stint at Container Corporation of America, but was recruited back into office products by Scott Rice of Texas.

In 1994, she joined the Mid America Marketing rep firm as a territory manager and became an equity partner in 1997. In 2005, she merged Mid America with Unified Sales Associates to form the Unified Sales of today and is an equal owner/principal.

Baumgartens Launches SICURIX, In-House ID Systems for the School and Office Channels



School and office supplies manufacturer Baumgartens last month introduced SICURIX, a new program developed to offer comprehensive identification card-making systems.

SICURIX allow any size organization, school or government entity to fulfill a large part of their security initiatives in-house, Baumgartens said.

The program includes name-brand printers and accessories such as ribbons and cleaning kits. Additionally, badge holders, badge reels, lanyards, ID cards and card-holders, and RFID blocking devices are available.

"The school and office supply industry has the power to lead and quickly fulfill the need and increasing demand for secure environments," says David Baumgarten, vice president and general manager. "SICURIX in depth coverage meets these demands. Now a dealer working with any organization can handle the initiation, continuation or expansion of an ID program with SICURIX."

Clover Announces Settlement with Canon

Clover Technologies Group last month announced it has settled its disputes with Canon in the International Trade Commission and the federal district court in the Southern District of New York. The disputes related to certain laser printer cartridges. The settlements will result in Clover's dismissal from both lawsuits, the company said. The terms of the settlement were not disclosed.

Clover said it is pleased to be able to continue to offer its cus-

CONTINUED ON PAGE 20

Big Clean Ups Need a Big Roll

Introducing Our Biggest Roll Yet!

Marcal Small Steps Jumbo 210 Count Paper Towel



210
SHEETS

- 100% Premium Recycled Paper
- Bigger Roll for Quick, Easy Clean Up
- Strong, Absorbent and Virtually Lint Free
- 60% Post-consumer Content

Paper from Paper, Not from Trees

**Take Another Small Step
to Green your Business**

www.marcalprofessional.com



tomers and the market its full line of remanufactured laser cartridges, including the HP and Canon models involved in the lawsuits.

Clover remains committed to producing genuine remanufactured products that respect the intellectual property rights of others, the company added.

Safco Introduces Runtz Ball Chair to Put a Bounce in Children's Seating

Safco Products has introduced Runtz, a new line of seating specifically for children.

Safco said the chairs are designed to create a space that "screams fun, including a bounce factor that allows children to move even when they need to take a seat."

The bright, energy-filled colors coat an anti-burst exercise ball that will put a little bounce in how they sit, keeping their energized bodies moving even when they are seated for a project, homework or snack time. The exercise ball also helps with posture, and many studies are showing that movement can actually help children concentrate better and help them retain more of what they learn, Safco said.

The chair comes with a choice of mesh in Licorice, Bubble Gum or

Sour Apple and features four powder-coated legs and a pump that, according to Safco, ensures every child will be bouncing off the walls before you know it!

AOPD Welcomes Supplies Network as New Business Partner

American Office Products Distributors, (AOPD), the national accounts dealer marketing organization, has announced the addition of Supplies Network to its Business Partner Program. Supplies Network is the largest privately owned, wholesaler of IT consumables in the U.S.

"AOPD is delighted to have Supplies Network join our Business Partner Program," stated Bud Mundt, AOPD executive director. "As a premier wholesale distributor of IT Products and related services, Supplies Network will benefit our dealers in providing world class service to their consumers, in this very important market segment."

Greg Welchans, president of Supplies Network said, "We are pleased to announce the establishment of our partnership with AOPD. Their values associated with high levels of customer service, order fulfillment and problem resolution fall in line with our core values as a distributor. We are particularly pleased with their value associated in working with

CONTINUED ON PAGE 21

don't lose another order

Design and Specifications

Space Planning & Design and Rendering services:

- Design and rendering services can be completely outsourced, ultimately reducing your overhead, or use our services for workload overflow or cover your staff designers' vacations.
- You can count on expert product engineers and designers for a high degree of accuracy and quick turnaround times on all requests -- this lets you get your quote and proposal back to your customers faster, helping you get the order faster.
- Photo-realistic renderings are competitively priced so you can include a rendering with every quote.




Renderings

@MelindaMyers

MelindaMyers.biz

For more information or for a free quote, contact
Melinda Myers: (224) 554-9898 / Melinda@MelindaMyers.biz

dealers and keeping their dollars local in terms of distribution. We are happy to be a part of the team."

Smead Offers Organized Office Facebook Tab



As part of its ongoing program to support dealers' social media efforts, Smead Manufacturing has introduced the The Organized

Office Facebook Tab.

The Organized Office is a Facebook tab with regularly updated organizing content sponsored by Smead, but which is generically branded to match the dealer's communications.

The tab allows dealers to provide valuable content to their fans and encourages visitors to LIKE their page to view the content, Smead explained.

"As dealers, we are always looking for suitable content for our websites and social media pages and the more assistance we can get from our manufacturers the better," said Bonnie Hunt of Perry Office Plus in Temple, Texas.

"The Smead Facebook tab is really easy to install and represents a real win-win for us, Smead and our customers."

Midwest Representatives Rebrands as Midwest Resource Group

The Midwest Representatives independent rep group announced last month it has changed its name to Midwest Resource Group, Inc.



CONTINUED ON PAGE 22

Adaptive, Integrated e-Commerce Solutions for the Office Product Industry



GPS

GUIDED PARTNER SERVICES

- ✓ Keyword Optimization for Search and Browse
- ✓ Timely Banner Ads
- ✓ Branded Landing Pages
- ✓ Visually Enhanced Category Pages
- ✓ Branded Email Campaigns
- ✓ Integrated Microsites
- ✓ **FREE!**



redcheetah

Proven. Powerful. Enduring.™



Call Now to Sign Up for GPS Today!

Sales (866-878-9257) | **Email** sales@redcheetah.com



www.redcheetah.com

©2001 - 2012 Red Cheetah. All rights reserved.

The company said the name change reflects the significant changes and expansion in business activities since it started operating in 1965.

The company's operations today encompass expanded activities that include regional and national channel coverage, national key account coverage, administrative services, integrated content marketing, showroom services and consulting, the company said.

The company will continue to operate with its current management structure and the headquarters will remain in Buffalo Grove, Illinois. New e-mail addresses and a new web domain are being implemented.

"Our repositioning illustrates and conveys the multiple business services we offer," says Steven Glass, managing partner at Midwest.

"The foundation of our organization is sales focused and we successfully deployed services that support the sales process for our manufacturing and reseller partners. The key to our organization's success continues to be a clear understanding of the complexity of the industry and marketplace."

Industry Veteran Buz Baetz Retires

After an industry career that spans 42 years, Buz Baetz has decided to retire, effective December 1.

Buz started in the office products industry in 1967 with Fountain Pen Supply, the business his father co-founded.

Buz purchased the company from his father in 1987. In 1994 he sold the company and joined Sanford Corporation, where his last position held was director of sales, fine writing instruments.

He left Sanford in 2004 and after a brief excursion outside the industry, joined The Highlands Group rep organization in 2008 as an account manager in the Mid-Atlantic.

"Buz has served the company well and he will be missed," The Highlands Group said in a statement.

He and his wife Jackie will continue to reside in Monkton, MD. When asked what he plans to do in the coming years, his response includes plans to spend more quality time with his four children and five grandchildren while also taking time to improve his golf game and work with some local charities he has been involved with like Habitat for Humanity.

Our own best wishes go to Buz and Jackie for much success in the next stage of their lives!

CONTINUED ON PAGE 23



LOST TIME IS NEVER FOUND AGAIN

Ben Franklin

Click here to see Visual Planner in action

Visual Planner significantly improves your productivity and reduces both time and expenses in the office furniture sales process.

- Turn leads into sales by giving customers visuals of what they can expect
- Go from an empty space to a completely specified office in four easy steps
- Specify product options quickly and easily to arrive at correct SKU numbers and pricing

For a free demo contact Ron Danshire at 508.735.7412 or ron@visual-planner.com



VISUAL PLANNER
DRAG. DROP. DELIVER.

United Stationers dealers: Make sure to visit the Alera booth (#552) during the Vision Conference on November 15th at the Venetian Las Vegas to sign up for a FREE TRIAL for the remainder of 2012.



NewsMaker Interview:

Sharon Avent, President / CEO of Smead Manufacturing

When Smead president and CEO Sharon Avent received the 2012 Leadership Award from the Business Solutions Association (BSA) at its annual meeting in Dallas last month, it represented industry-wide recognition of a truly remarkable career.

Avent got her start in the industry as an hourly office employee at Smead back in 1965. She has come a long way since then, as reflected in an equally long list of honors that includes not only the BSA Leadership Award but also the City of Hope's Spirit of Life Award and recognition from the National Association of Women Business Owners' (NAWBO) as its "Business Owner of the Year."

In the following interview, Avent discusses the nature of leadership in the office products industry and offers her own perspective on some of today's critical business issues.

■ Sharon Avent received BSA's 2012 Leadership Award from immediate past president Joe Templet of United Stationers (left) and current president Mike Wilbur of Cosco Industries at the association's annual meeting in Dallas last month.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 24

NOW INTRODUCING! Customizable Vertical market flyers

The flyers are targeted to markets that dealers sell in today with a mix of products used everyday in point of sale and back-office operations of a business or organization.

Simply open the flyer, drop in prices and contact information, and save. You can then email or print the flyers for selling.

We offer these focused channel flyers for:

- Healthcare
- Convenience & Grocery
- Education
- Banking
- Restaurant/Retail
- Legislative
- Government

Please contact our PM Sales Team for support and direction:

John Purcell, Eastern Region: 513-823-1099 or john.purcell@pmcompany.com

Tony Turner, Western Region: 513-448-5738 or tony.turner@pmcompany.com

Deanna Fay, Customer Service: 800-523-4552 or deanna.fay@pmcompany.com

Restaurant and Retail Supplies

Established in 1905, PM Company has historically striven to support sustainable operating practices. In 2009, PM became the first paper rolls converter to receive forestry certifications from Forest Stewardship Council (FSC®), Sustainable Forestry Initiative (SFI®) and Programme for the Endorsement of Forest Certification (PEFC®). Certified ATM and POS Paper Rolls are now available.

POS Rolls
Top-quality, ink-free paper provides crisp, clear images.

THERMAL				
Product #	Description	Size	List	Sale
0508	Thermal, 50 Rolls	2-1/2" x 80"	\$38.05	\$0.00
07903	Thermal, 50 Rolls	2-1/2" x 85"	\$48.82	\$0.00
05030	Thermal, 50 Rolls	3-1/2" x 220"	\$109.50	\$0.00
05214	Thermal, 50 Rolls	2-1/2" x 230"	\$113.44	\$0.00
05213	Thermal, 50 Rolls	3-1/2" x 273"	\$132.10	\$0.00

BOND				
Product #	Description	Size	List	Sale
07624	Bond, 50 Rolls	2-1/2" x 190"	\$105.19	\$0.00
07903	Bond, 50 Rolls	3" x 165"	\$102.80	\$0.00

Your Company Here
1234 Street Avenue Lane
Somewhere, USA 56789

■ First of all, congratulations on your award. I'm wondering, as the recipient of this year's Leadership Award from BSA, how do you personally define leadership in the office products industry?

AVENT: I think leadership is a combination of factors. Consistency is really important in our industry but so are quality of service and the level of representation we offer to our dealers. Leadership is also about our ability to listen and respond to our partners in the channel and the common customers we serve.

Leadership in our industry also involves being able to change quickly and proactively, not just in terms of providing a steady stream of new and innovative products but also in the way we communicate in the marketplace.

There are a whole range of new communications methods and media and if we aren't using those new tools and giving our dealers the ability to use them as well, we're not fulfilling our role.

I would also consider our efforts to protect the integrity of our products an aspect of the leadership we provide.

We patent a lot of our items to protect our intellectual property and also to protect our dealers and the customers we serve together from inferior, copycat products.

High ethical standards and support of industry trade associations like BSA and NOPA are also important. I think people know that we're very ethical and that comes from the top management down. And our people have always been involved in industry organizations and working to advance the industry as a whole.

The City of Hope is the most visible cause in our industry and we have a record of giving there that's second to none. But there are many other charities and non-profits that benefit from our industry's generosity. For an industry our size, we provide remarkable leadership when it comes to giving back.

Finally, a commitment to giving back is a key component of leadership in my view. Our industry supports so many worthy causes and that's something we can all be very proud of.

■ One of the key aspects of the BSA meeting where you received your award was technology and the association's drive to develop standards for e-content and other marketing elements. How important is this effort from your perspective and how would you rate BSA's own leadership in this area?

AVENT: The standards development effort that BSA is undertaking is extremely important for everyone in our industry.

As a manufacturer, we spend a lot of time and effort putting together e-content and if everybody wants it in a different format, it becomes very difficult and time-consuming.

If we can come up with standards that everyone can accept and use, it will be a tremendous benefit, not just for the manufacturer but for the rest of the industry as well.

Putting it simply, what saves the manufacturer time and money will translate into savings for our partners in the supply chain.

■ There have been growing efforts in recent years to provide a more hospitable place in the industry for women—I'm thinking in particular of the Office Products Women in Leadership organization (OPWIL). Do you think women get fair treatment in our industry today?

AVENT: It's certainly better than it was. There are more women in top positions in their companies—I'm thinking of Bonnie Swayze at Alliance Rubber and Iris Rubinfeld at Master Manufacturing, for example—and it was encouraging to see the recent election of Susan Roberts of Unified Sales Associates to the BSA board and the growth of the OPWIL organization.

At the manufacturers meeting during the BSA Forum, I was also pleasantly surprised by the number of women in the room.

We are making progress, but there's still a long way to go and I hope we will see more growth opportunities for women emerge in the industry so we can continue to move forward.

■ Predictions of a paperless office are hardly new but a number of factors—the advent of iPads and tablets, thumb drives and cloud computer, for example—do seem to be driving down demand for paper quite significantly. As the chief executive of a company that is heavily paper-intensive, what's your own take on what's happening?

AVENT: We've been talking about the paperless office for many years but it's certainly been slow in coming. There are a lot of people out there still who like working with paper—I know I'm one of them! Having said that, there's no question there are some significant areas of our economy where paper use has either disappeared or is seeing some significant declines.

Healthcare is an obvious example, where the walls and walls of traditional files and filing systems have been replaced by electronic data storage.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 25

We certainly can't ignore those trends and we don't. They make it more important than ever for us to emphasize the development of innovative new products, so that we and our dealers can remain relevant in the new environment.

- Smead was one of the very first supporters of our new "Made in the USA Central" website and it is clearly a key part of your overall value proposition. How do you think consumers view that "Made in the USA" message?

AVENT: We see support for Made in the USA growing stronger and stronger. We get a lot of comments from consumers through our social media platforms and they tell us they're thrilled that we're still Made in the USA and that we have such a broad range of Made in the USA products that they can purchase.

People have seen so many jobs exported to China and other places and it's become a big concern. It's certainly a major issue for the American worker.

When we highlight Made in the USA, it's a plus for all of us and if we don't promote it, we're not doing our own job.

The other point worth making is that the Made in the USA message fits very nicely with the Buy Local campaigns that so many independent dealers have organized in recent years. Those are two messages that complement each other very well.

- Any final words for the dealers?

AVENT: Only to thank them for their business and to emphasize our belief that independent dealers are not only important to Smead's business but to the office products industry as a whole.

Whether they have a store, a traditional commercial operation or an online-only business, the independent dealer, even with all the changes we've seen, is still very much a factor in our industry.

At Smead, we're very proud of our record of support for independent dealers and very open to any suggestions they might have on ways we can build on what's in place and make that support even stronger.

Introducing an exciting new online resource from
INDEPENDENT DEALER
 showcasing the very best in office products made right here at home.

www.idealercentral.com/Pages/Made_in_the_USA





OFFICE DEALER TURNS PROBLEMS INTO PROFITS

By Jennifer Niziolek



AFTER JUST A FEW MONTHS, FRIENDS BUSINESS SOURCE ALREADY HAS OVER 90% OF THEIR CUSTOMERS ORDERING CUSTOM STAMPS ONLINE.

In April 2012 Friends Business Source began using uTypia's integration with ECinteractive for custom products on their website. The majority of Friends' customer base was educated on how to use the new online ordering system within two weeks. A few months later more than 90% of their custom stamp orders are coming in via their uTypia site which means Friends is realizing considerable savings on every order, turning a problematic product category into a profitable one.

With such impressive results, I'm sure you're asking yourself, how'd they do it? uTypia and Trodat have integrated a websolution with ECI's ECinteractive microsite tool. This unprecedented collaboration allows office dealer customers to purchase custom stamps, signs, and badges in addition to standard office products all within the same shopping experience and cart. As an added bonus most dealers are able to keep their existing supplier!

There are several reasons why an office dealer and their stamp supplier would find this integration appealing. One advantage is the tremendous internal time saving realized on all parts, customer, office dealer and stamp manufacturer alike. Friends has noted that even with the initial education process of each customer, the time savings they have seen internally is substantial. Another inviting benefit: ease of use! The site has received customer praise for that very reason. But don't take it from us; here are some quotes direct from the customers of Friends Business Source: "I ordered it. Boy do I like this!" and "Thank you so much for this. I already placed the order. This is great!"



“ My advice would be not to worry so much. I thought of so many things that could go wrong and so many things actually went right! ”

Also keep in mind the growth potential that the integration has brought to both Friends and their stamp supplier. The integration, when communicated to their customer base, generated more than 5 new stamp customers in the first month alone. Friends has taken the time to publicize their new capability, bringing new customers to the site all the time. It's a great premise for a marketing push letting people know what's available.

And lastly... keep it simple! The uTypia ECI integration has an effortless ordering process while boasting a very full selection of Trodat products. Friends can confirm they have not had a customer unable to find exactly what they need.

Some great advice given by Carrie at Friends when asked about other dealers evaluating the integration: "My advice would be not to worry so much. I thought of so many things that could go wrong and so many things actually went right!"

For More Information, Contact Jennifer Niziolek At Jennifer.Niziolek@Trodat.Net

Online Fraud on the Rise Again in the Office Products Industry

The benefits and efficiency of online ordering are hard to dispute, but a number of dealers are urging greater industry caution in light of a recent series of episodes involving fraudulent orders placed online to GSA vendors.

This latest scam has some familiar elements, but it comes with a new twist. This time the perpetrators of the online fraud have made it appear that the orders were generated by a large government agency, the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency (EPA).

According to reports NOPA has seen from federal law enforcement officials, investigated dealer losses amount to more than \$100,000 since the scam was first reported in July. It seems to have been launched in late 2011. Here are some common features of this latest scam:

- Perpetrators of the fraud have hacked government databases to obtain the names and e-mail credentials of actual federal employees and have then used those credentials to set up accounts with Schedule 75 vendors. Order sizes have ranged from several hundred dollars to as much as \$20,000 using stolen government credit card numbers.
- Federal investigators believe that this scheme is orchestrated with help from recruited "repackagers," individuals who knowingly or unknowingly have accepted work-from-home positions and who serve as intermediaries to receive the shipped goods at their residences. Once the order has been placed online, the orchestrator of the fraud "spoofs" a disconnected phone number to call the GSA vendor and obtain shipping and tracking information, which is then passed along to others who pick up or in some instances steal the goods from the doorsteps of the "repackagers."

To date, dealers in New Jersey and Texas in particular, as well as some in Georgia and possibly New Hampshire, have been impacted by this scam.

While known cases of fraud so far have been linked only to misappropriated EPA employee names and e-mail addresses, other federal agencies' employees' information may also have been compromised.

Government officials advise that any orders for HP toner cartridges placed in the name of the EPA or its employees should be verified before acceptance through the EPA Office of the Inspector General.

You also can utilize Google Maps using the "street view" function to determine if the shipping address is a residence or business location.

If fraud is suspected, dealers are encouraged to contact the FBI, ideally before processing the incoming order, in case there is an opportunity to process the order under their supervision.

NOPA members may contact NOPA president Chris Bates in confidence at cbates@nopanet.org to obtain contact information for the federal investigators handling these fraud cases and more detailed information on how to best assess the possibility of a fraudulent transaction.

In all instances, it is important that dealers receiving suspect toner orders document the occurrence with copies of e-mails, online chat conversations or audio recordings of telephone conversations.

Federal officials caution, however, that you must first advise someone that you plan to record the telephone conversation following the rules set forth in your state's consensual recording regulations.

In sum, knowing your customers still matters—perhaps more than ever—given the growing problem of identity and credit card information theft and the ease of arms-length web-based ordering.

When in doubt, check, and establish internal processes within your business systems whenever possible to provide "trip wires" that will flag suspicious incoming online orders, as well as orders from customers that exceed your established size limits.

E-Commerce

Catalogs & Flyers

Flipbooks

Email Marketing

Websites

We Deliver



E-COMMERCE • CATALOGS • FLYERS
FLIPBOOKS • EMAIL MARKETING • WEBSITES



Office Products Marketing & Advertising
4211 North Division
Comstock Park, Michigan 49321
616.785.6061



Doing Good *while* Doing Well

**Independents
Give Back
Even More
in These Tough
Economic Times**

When it comes to community involvement and supporting deserving causes, no one does it better than today's independent office products dealers.

by Jim Rapp

When it comes to community involvement and supporting deserving causes, no one does it better than today's independent office products dealers. But some do it better than others and as a result, they gain the attention of just about everyone in the markets they serve, which certainly contributes to the dealer's long term success.

Investing in your community has many rewards and helping your business is only one of them.

"Think about it as a win/win for everyone," says Jennifer Smith of Innovative Office Solutions, Burnsville, Minnesota. "Anything you do or your people do makes your community a better place. It doesn't matter whether big or small, everyone wins."

Dealers all across the country tell me their cities and towns have much greater needs in these tough economic times. I'm happy to report that they and their employees are doing more than ever before to help their communities.

We should all be proud of what the independent community is doing in this regard.

As you read about the fine work of the dealers noted in this article, please keep in mind that there are many more that we would like to mention, but that would require dozens more pages. We will be mentioning others in future issues of *INDEPENDENT DEALER*. Just drop us an email (simon@idealercentral.com) to let us know what you're doing.

Get Everyone Involved

"Don't be afraid to get everyone involved in your good work," advises Jeff Gau, Marco, Inc., St. Cloud, Minnesota. "We're an employee owned company, so any money we give takes away from our bottom line. Yet we've agreed to give about 5% of our profit to worthy causes and have been doing so every year since 1981.

"Our major effort each year is the United Way, with funds divided among the 23 locations we serve. This year we raised \$115,000.

"Fund raising activities go on through the year. We have our own rock and roll band that plays at various fund raisers. We have a soup cook off that raises money for food pantries. We try to put some fun in



CONTINUED ON PAGE 30

everything we do, to support the charities where employees are involved, and to provide work time to accomplish their goals.

"There's no question that all this effort helps our business. We say, 'all things being equal, why not buy from a good corporate citizen?' And our customers do."

In Memphis, Yuletide Office Solutions gives back 9% of its net company income each year and sometimes even more, reports Yuletide's Justin Miller.

In addition, every Yuletide employee is required to be involved in at least two company volunteer activities each year. "There's a lot to choose from and something is happening every month of the year," Justin says. "We partner with a number of customers, so our people get to know a lot of customer people. Memphis is known as the most giving city in the country, so there's no shortage of community work to be done."

Yuletide is a major supporter of Meritan Case Management, which provides services for seniors, foster care for children, and assistance for the visually impaired and the developmentally disabled. One of their biggest fund raisers is the Midnight Classic Bike Tour, when hundreds of cyclists start out at midnight on a 23-mile race through the streets of Memphis.

Yuletide follows the riders with four of their trucks, picking up people having trouble completing the race, along with their bikes. Other employees serve as spotters, stationed all along the route.

Yuletide is also a major supporter of the Church Health Center, which provides affordable healthcare for uninsured people and their families. It is the largest faith-based clinic of its type in the country, caring for more than 50,000 patients last year. Phillips Office Solutions in Middletown, Pennsylvania, is another independent with

an outstanding record of support for worthy causes.

"We notify all employees, on a monthly basis, of the various things that they can be involved with in the various communities where we operate," HR director Christy Meyers told us.

"Typically, these are causes that someone here has an attachment to, such as autism, Down Syndrome, prostate cancer, cystic fibrosis and many more. One of my favorite fund-raisers is our 'soup lunches' program," explains Christy.

"One day each week, an employee or employees donate one part of the lunch and everyone pays \$5, with all proceeds going toward the adoption of a number of needy families. Our service to these families includes an enormous Thanksgiving feast. Our employees also select gifts for these families and personally deliver them.

"Our fundraising has gone far beyond just

CONTINUED ON PAGE 31



Create unique business materials that leave a lasting impression.



Avery® Branding, Merchandising and Promoting Products, let you create print-to-the-edge labels as unique as your business with free templates and designs at avery.com/print. Available in a variety of shapes, sizes and textures. Little things that work in a big way.™



©2012 Avery Dennison Corporation. All rights reserved. Avery and all other Avery brands, product names and codes are trademarks of Avery Dennison Corporation. Personal and company names and other information on samples depicted are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual names and addresses is purely coincidental.

soup," adds Christy. "When employees made their favorite dishes, lots of people asked for recipes. This led to the development of a cookbook featuring employees' favorite recipes, with sales benefiting the holiday program."

Phillips also has a kickball team that raises money for Downtown, Inc., a York, Pennsylvania group working to reduce urban blight.

Al Lynden (second from left) and his team at Chuckals Office Products had good reason to be smiling after raising \$14,000 divided between the City of Hope and a local organization that maintains a golf course designed specifically for disabled soldiers and veterans.

An additional layer of engagement with employees, customers and vendors regarding community involvement comes in the form of dealership's social media presence. "We use Facebook, Twitter and so on on a daily basis," Christy reports, "showing pictures of all our activities and keeping everyone informed of upcoming events."

Schools Get Special Attention

Of all the causes that dealers and their employees support in their communities, education tops the list.

Last year, Marco employees took on a "Build a Fence" project at a local youth organization. Employees constructed a wooden fence at the rear of the building and returned this year to complete the project by painting the fence.

"Some years ago we decided that instead of giving Christmas presents to all our customers, we would use that money to support one charity in a substantial way," reports Peter Ives, The Ives Companies, New Orleans.

"We selected St. Michael's Special School, which helps students with major learning difficulties. It's been a wonderful experience



Artlite's Bert Light gets ready to take to the skies one more time to help a sick child in need.

for us all, because we get involved with their activities and fund raisers. It's developed into a lot more than simply making a financial contribution.

"We support many other causes, including adopting a needy family for Thanksgiving, but helping this special school is the highlight for us."

Friends Business Source, Findlay, Ohio, gives up to \$500 worth of supplies to any teachers who submit one-page essays about any innovations they're doing in their classrooms. Five winners are selected.

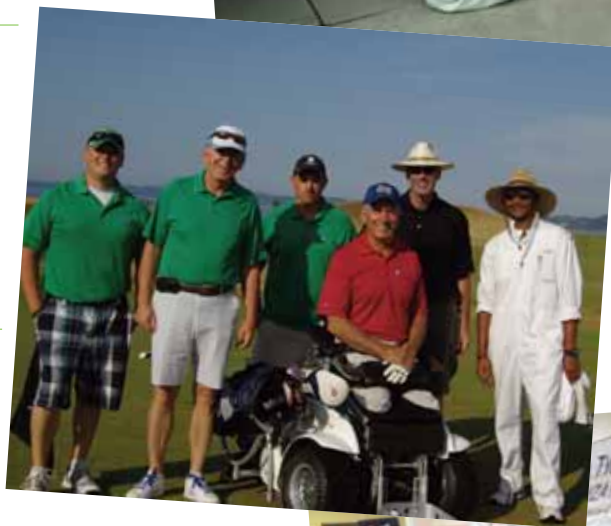
"We wanted to recognize these teachers who go beyond the ordinary to help their students," say Friends' Ashley Barger. "It's a natural since school supplies is an important part of our business."

Some of the hundreds of backpacks Innovative Office Solutions helped fill and donate to local area school kids in need.

Innovative Office Solutions (IOS), Burnsville Minnesota, gets lots of publicity by being the official supply partner for both the Minnesota Vikings football team and the Minnesota Wild hockey team, while helping charities they promote.

"Every time the Vikings make a field goal, we donate \$250 to the Vikings Children's Fund," explains IOS's Jennifer Smith. "We partner with a customer, with the donation going to their charity of choice."

"The Wild team picks a charity of the month during their seven-month season and we do a huge package for each one. It's a program that generates a lot of television exposure and we are always mentioned as a contributor."





A 35-member team from Miller's Office Products helped raised more than \$16,000 for City of Hope at a Walk for Hope fundraiser in Washington, DC, earlier this year.

"Every month each department in the company has some charitable activities going on, and each quarter one charity is selected that the whole company is involved in.

"Most recently, it was a shelter for battered women and children. The employees select the charity, then everyone here gets involved, including the employees' families. This goes far beyond giving money. We develop relationships that continue on and on over the years. I'm so proud of our employees for all the great things they're doing to make this a better place to live."

Speaking about making a better place to

live, Garrigans.Com, Springfield, Ohio, has been doing just that through its annual "Pay It Forward" scholarship awards program.

Local high school seniors submit a short essay on how they would make Springfield a better place, with the winner receiving a \$500 scholarship.

Over the years, Garrigan's has also worked with interns from the local junior college, enlisting them on new business development efforts.

Joe Garrigan also participates as a judge at the local college where students develop business plans, competing with one another.

"It's not only a lot of fun," Joe says, "but it keeps me in touch with the business challenges of today."

"There's nothing more important to the future of our country than the education of our children," states Addison Jones, The

CONTINUED ON PAGE 34



Wrap up your shipping on time with Avery® Labels.

You'll be out the door with time to spare.

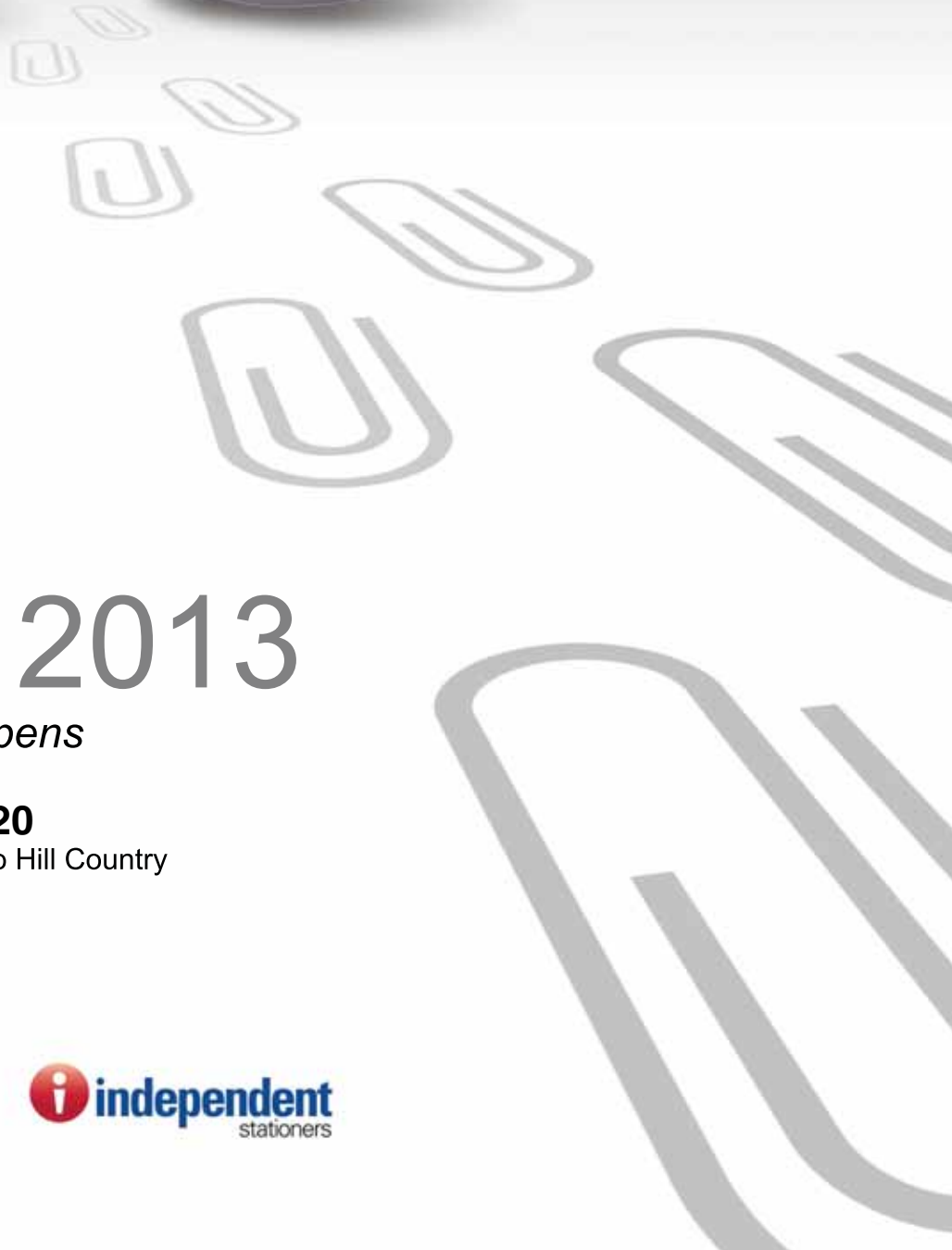
Avery offers easy solutions for mailing and seasonal communications that work together to help take the stress out of this busy time of year.

Little things that work in a big way.™



©2012 Avery Dennison Corporation. All rights reserved. Avery and all other Avery brands, product names and codes are trademarks of Avery Dennison Corporation. Box Tops for Education is a registered trademark of General Mills used with permission. All other brands are trademarks of their respective owners. Personal and company names and other information on samples depicted are fictitious. Any resemblance to actual names and addresses is purely coincidental.

It's going to be BIG...



EPIC 2013

Where BIG Happens

September 18 - 20

JW Marriott San Antonio Hill Country





Phillips Office Solutions team members get involved in the dealership's annual adopt-a-family program, donating toys, clothing and other gifts to local families in need. The dealership also publishes a cookbook featuring employees' favorite recipes with sales of the cookbook benefitting the holiday program.

each of the teachers' schools or classrooms \$2,000 of supplies.

Supply Room Companies, Ashland, Virginia. "The education market is an important part of our business, and we need to give back as much as we can."

The Supply Room Companies do just that. They're a cosponsor with the Virginia PTA of the Virginia Lottery's Super Teacher Program. The lottery recognizes one teacher in each of their eight districts, with a \$2,000 cash award. Addison's company gives

Last year, a middle school in their territory was nearly destroyed by a tornado. Another school had a very destructive fire. The company collected furniture and supplies for both, spearheading a major effort in those communities.

Another fundraiser that not only raises close to \$700,000 for the Special Olympics organization but also draws thousands of supporters and spectators is

the annual Polar Plunge at Virginia Beach. The event takes place in February and the Supply Room sends a team of their hardiest people to join the thousands of participants who take the plunge into the icy Atlantic Ocean to "seize the freeze" for a worthy cause!

Further afield, the dealership has donated furniture and supplies to schools in Afghanistan, and supports the City of Hope, by sharing manufacturer incentives through the AOPD program.

Getting Customers Involved

As I talk with dealers around the country, more and more of them are working side by side with customers to be good corporate citizens. It doesn't matter whether a particular effort was started by the dealer, customer or someone else, the resulting

CONTINUED ON PAGE 35

The National Office Products Alliance (NOPA) is Proud of its Unique Role in Advancing the Independent Channel's Interests and Future:

- Advocates to influence government procurement, legislation and regulations
- Acts as the dealers' voice in Office Product Industry Data Standards (OPIDS)
- Drives new business to dealers through the Independent Dealer Locator (IDL) search tool that includes links to industry manufacturers' websites
- Helps members save money through discounted FedEx and other programs
- Invests in future generations through Members-Only college scholarship program

STRONGER TOGETHER
Your Business
Your Industry
Your Association



National Office Products Alliance

800.542.6672

www.nopanet.org



Part of the promotion for the "Help Us Help Tulsa" campaign from SunDANCE Office Supply

Last year, SunDANCE Office Supply in Broken Arrow, Oklahoma, just outside of Tulsa, started a special "Help Us Help Tulsa" campaign that has proven very successful on several levels.

Under the program, SunDANCE donates 3% of one day's sales each month to a particular charity. They pick a day when sales are the highest, usually Wednesday or Thursday. On Monday of that week, they send emails to all customers, announcing the charity—the list includes a local food bank, Habitat for Humanity, the American Red Cross, or a homeless shelter.

"As you might imagine," says SunDANCE's Dyan Condry, "sales on that day increase dramatically, yet sales the day or two before or after do not drop off.

"We get the word out by blog, website,

tweeting and flyers that our drivers deliver. When we talk to potential clients, this effort has been most helpful. On each of these days, we already give away \$800 to \$1,000 and we're hopeful the amount will continue to increase as time goes on."

Customers of Chuckals Office Products in Tacoma, Washington, not only know president Al Lynden but just about everyone else who works there. That's because Chuckals supports the charities of its customers, as well as its own, and everyone gets involved.

"This is the fifth year of our charity golf tournament," Al explains, and this year we raised \$14,000, with half going to the City of Hope and half to the Friends of American Life golf course, which is designed specifically for disabled soldiers and veterans.

Chuckals supports many other organizations throughout the year, including the holiday dinner fund, which provides holiday dinners for needy families during

CONTINUED ON PAGE 36

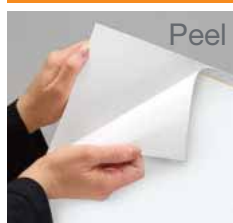
friendship is a benefit that money can't buy. Social media has become an important contributor to this working together, as messages fly back and forth but between employees at all levels.

AT-A-GLANCE®

WallMates®

Self Adhesive Dry Erase Wall Planners

NEW
Yearly Calendar
4 QUARTERLY
PANELS



Peel



Stick



Done



Dry erase wall planning, simplified.

New AT-A-GLANCE® WallMates® make it easy to have the dry erase planning surfaces you need in the places you need them.

**Quick. Easy. No tools.
No damage. Just peel,
stick, and you're done.**

AW6062-28

A full year of planning in four individual quarterly panels

- Each panel is 9"x 24"
- Includes dry erase marker
- List Price \$31.99



Learn more at www.peelstickdone.com

PLAN. WRITE. REMEMBER.®

Thanksgiving and Christmas.

"Last year we raised \$2,000 by collecting toner cartridges and this year we expect to raise at least \$2,500," Al said.

So Much More to Tell

In Atlanta, Bert Light of Artlite Office Supply serves as a volunteer pilot for Angel

Flight Soars, which flies people who need medical treatment in other cities, all at no charge. Bert has flown more than 40 times this year. The organization flew more than 3,000 mission last year. Bert works hard raising money for the cause, and asked that we mention S.P. Richards and United Stationers as important contributors. Their website is: www.angelflightsoars.com.

"We support many individual employee causes throughout the year," says Wayne Stillwagon, Miller's Office Products, Lorton, Virginia, like walking to end Alzheimer's and providing school supplies for children in an employee's church.

"Earlier this year, 35 of our people participated in the Walk for Hope, a fundraiser to benefit the women's cancer research, treatment and educational programs at City of Hope, raising more than \$16,000."

They recently did a Jeans Wednesday initiative whereby staff can "buy" the right to wear jeans on Wednesdays, with the proceeds also going to the City of Hope.

"We patterned it after a similar program at United Stationers," Wayne explained.

An intrepid team from The Supply Room Companies gets ready to brave the element in support of the Special Olympics organization at the annual Polar Plunge in Virginia Beach, VA.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 37



OPWIL

OFFICE PRODUCTS WOMEN
in LEADERSHIP

CONNECT UP!



Office Products Women in Leadership (OPWIL)

is a professional organization connecting women in leadership roles within the Office Products industry. Together we can learn, develop and grow while forming professional connections and developing lasting friendships.



LinkedIn

Join our conversation on Facebook and LinkedIn for more information.

Miller's are strong supporters of the American Red Cross, Salvation Army and Joy Ranch, a home for children in distress. The company provides computers, monitors, printers and furniture for the facility.

"If everyone does a little bit, a lot gets done," contends Nathan Goldberg at Specialized Office Systems in Phoenix and Las Vegas. "We support many causes throughout the year, many that our employees favor and many that all of us participate in. We contribute a portion of sales dollars to all first orders going to the Cerebral Palsy Foundation. We participate in a cancer awareness program, we work with special needs children and adults, and always adopt several families for the Christmas holidays."

Office Products Plus, Ridgeland, Mississippi, donates \$5 to a charity for each toner cartridge returned. "This has amounted to thousands of dollars over the years," says market development man-

ager Kimberly Cleland. "We keep customers informed of all our charitable activities in our monthly emails, as well as those of our customers."

They also support and promote "Box Tops for Education," where more than 200 brands work together, including Avery, Boise, Kleenex, Scott paper towels and Hefty products. Last year the national organization raised \$59 million.

Karen and Dwight Bogart at Convenience Office Supply, Austin, Texas, are well known in Austin for their charitable work, which we've mentioned in *INDEPENDENT DEALER* a number of times.

Most recently, the company partnered with The HON Company to donate a chair to the silent auction at a big fashion show supporting Hospice, attended by more than a thousand women. "Of course, the chair was pink" Karen reported.

One of their major efforts, working with customers, supports a shelter for abused

women. "It's important that we get the word out to everyone in the community," Karen explains, "not just about what we're doing but what the needs are of those organizations we support."

A Proud Tradition

Independent dealers should feel good about everything they've done and continue to do to make their communities better places.

As you know from reading this article and from your own experience, independents are leaders when it comes to helping their cities and towns in a hundred different ways, outshining the big boxes, chain stores and online sellers that have no local community involvement of any kind.

So don't be shy. Tell the world what you're doing and promote the causes you believe in. And let us know about your community involvement, so we can let the rest of the industry know about it in future issues.

Office Snax '9-5' Coffee is flavorful, aromatic & smooth. A perfect way to start your day! We are **EXCLUSIVE** to the Office Products Channel, which means you won't find our coffee in any mass retail outlets. We're trying to do our part to help save the planet, so it's important to note that our composite cans are made from 100% recycled paperboard. With no artificial flavors, colors or preservatives, Office Snax '9-5' coffee gives you a fresh rich cup of Office Snax coffee all day, every day!

NEW ITEMS AVAILABLE NOW

Item #OFX-00058
Full Strength

Item #OFX-00059
Half Caffeine

Made in the USA

100% Recycled Paperboard
RECYCLABLE

OFFICE SNAX

9to5

100% Premium Arabica Pure Coffee
medium roast

NET WT 33.9 OZ (2 LB 1.9 OZ) 961 G

OFFICE SNAX

9to5

half-caf
100% Pure Coffee
medium roast

NET WT 23 OZ (1 LB 7 OZ) 652 G

INDEPENDENCE UNLEASHED

MARKETING GUIDE 2013

OWN THE EXPERIENCE

Mapping Reseller Success for 2013 – Much More than Marketing

By Megan Ogden, Senior Manager, Marketing, United Stationers Supply

Today's successful reseller doesn't just carefully monitor more diverse elements of their business than ever before; they also proactively map out how those elements combine to create the "total customer experience."

That means how the customer perceives and reacts to the reseller's business depends not just on the sales rep, or the website, or the email strategy, but a whole range of different touch points—the delivery, the invoice, the customer service rep, the hours of operation, etc.

And making a promise in one area of the business that is not fulfilled in another creates a disharmony that can—and often does—adversely impact customer satisfaction and loyalty that cannot be fixed by marketing alone.

United Stationers is focused on helping re-

sellers understand all customer touch points, so you can move beyond just "marketing," to understand how to build a winning business culture and total customer experience that generates greater mind share, market share, and profitability—and that cannot be successfully attacked or replicated by the competition.

It is a balanced blend of all elements of the business into a holistic customer approach.

To map out this level of success first requires understanding the importance of each of these elements:

- Observe and understand the end consumer
- Build your brand
- Maximize the power of integrated marketing
- Achieve the "total customer experience"

Observe and Understand Today's Diverse Consumers

The office products market is changing. While the economy has a major impact on office products, there are other forces at work as well. Understanding, responding to and tapping these forces is vital to your profitability.

Buyers are changing: demographics, expectations and priorities are shifting, and with those shifts come new ways to approach potential buyers.

The Empowered User

Office purchasing has long been the duty of purchasing agents and office managers,

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39

but United Stationers' consumer research indicates that is changing—and quickly.

While purchasing agents may still hold power with regard to contracts, empowered users purchase 61% of what a typical company buys. Empowered users:

- Buy what they need when they need it, using company credit cards or expense accounts and they are less likely to go through formal purchasing functions.

- Work in businesses of all sizes.
- Respond to convenience and may purchase what they need for the office while doing their personal shopping.
- Are less aware of supplier contracts, spending limits or options.

Part of the key to reaching empowered users is to understand the difference between B2B marketing and B2C. Traditional business purchasing agents are B2B buyers and are typ-

ically marketed to using B2B techniques of relationship selling. B2C buyers need to be marketed to using consumer techniques such as targeted email campaigns and website marketing.

The Generation Consumer Gap

The workforce is now three generations strong and you need to customize your approaches to reach each type of consumer: Generation Y/The Millennials (born between 1980 and 1994), Generation X (born between 1965 and 1979) and the Baby Boomers (born between 1946 and 1964).

The demographics of decision makers and empowered users working within your customer base can vary greatly in their value systems, communication preferences and consumer behavior.

As you plan the future of your business, you need to address how you will reach and interact with all three generations of consumers in your market.

Understanding consumers is not a one-time event; it must be built into your business strategy. Understanding macro demographic trends can be accomplished

CONTINUED ON PAGE 40



AT-A-GLANCE®

PLAN. WRITE. REMEMBER.®

Planning with plenty of note taking

Weekly/Monthly Appointment Books

12 months, January – December
Printed on high-quality ivory paper
Ribbon page marker
Perfect-bound cover in Black with bungee closure

Item #	Description	List Price
70-6950-05	Hourly appointments 7 am – 6 pm; 7 1/2 x 10	\$22.49
70-6100-05	Open schedule; Gusseted pocket; 5 x 8 1/4	\$19.69

www.meadsalestools.com

YOU NEED
*** signage ***
WE HAVE

**INKJET/LASER
NAME TENTS & HOLDERS**

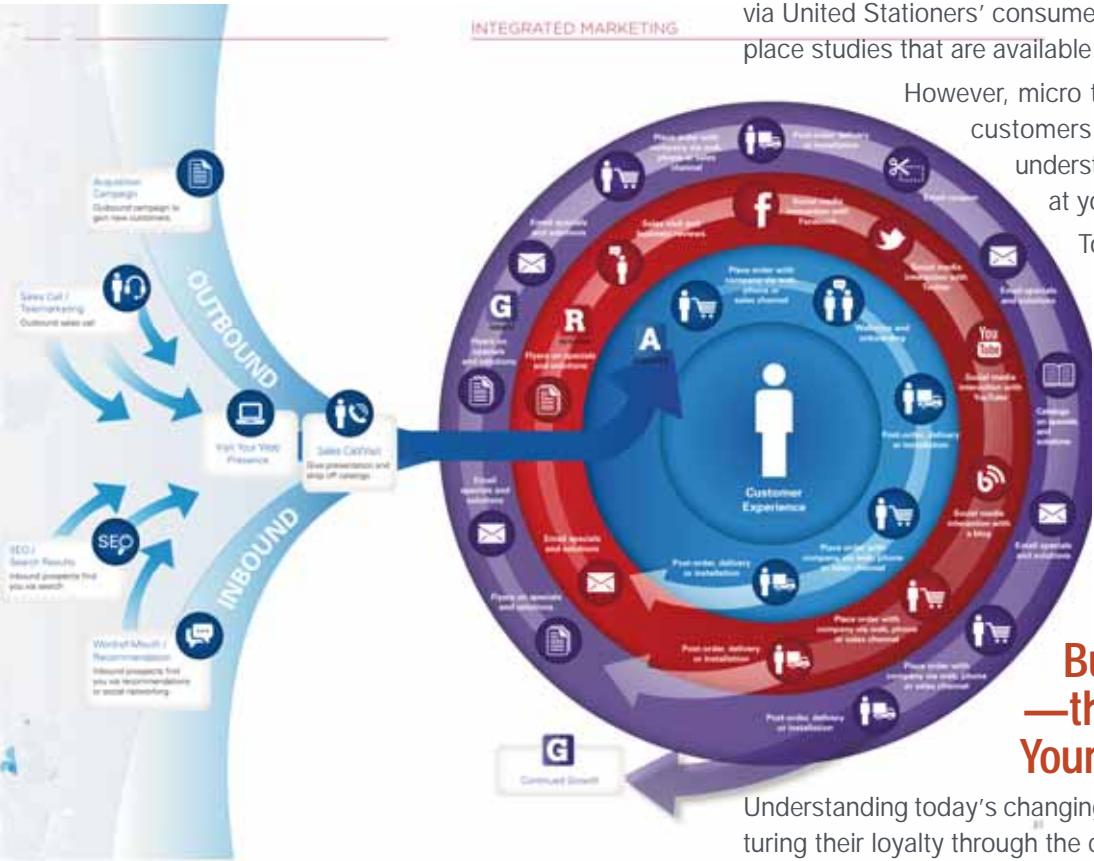
- Create name tents & signs
- Cardstock scored for easy folding
- Sits on desk, table or any flat surface

Available in large and new small & medium sizes.
Cardstock and holders sold separately.

Free! SAMPLE for the first 25 people in U.S.
that email customerservice@c-line.com
with NTHNOV in subject line

C-LINE®
PRODUCTS, INC.

(800) 323-6084
c-line.com



via United Stationers' consumer research as well as other market-place studies that are available.

However, micro trends—those impacting your own customers buying from you today—must be understood by analyzing the data you have at your disposal.

Today, there are many CRM (Customer Relationship Management) systems available that help you mine and analyze your customers' buying information to determine not only what they're buying, but what they're NOT buying—and based on market trends—who else might they be buying from besides you?

Build Your Brand —the Foundation of Your Business

Understanding today's changing consumers is one challenge; capturing their loyalty through the customer experience that you build

CONTINUED ON PAGE 39

Notebook. Evolved.

The new Ampad® Versa™ Notebook's "cross-over" design takes the best of notebooks, binders and dividers and puts it all in one. The easiest way for you to organize your notebook any way you like. It's your organizational destiny.



Ampad® VERSA™ Crossover Notebook

- Reposition papers and dividers like a binder
- Group, add or remove notes as needed
- Sticky notes and flags to label and highlight
- Pockets to hold loose sheets

By **Esselte** Corporation

Touched by Genius™



PRIME PROTECTION A COMPLETE SOLUTION ID/SECURITY ID CARD HOLDER SETS

Features

- DURABLE's shell-style ID/security card holders offer a complete solution, easy to use all-in-one sets
- Attractive holders securely hold and protect both security identification passes and magnetic card passes
- Made of high-quality clear acryl, the single-card holders are enclosed for highest protection and secure hold of an ID or security card and magnetic strip. Pass removes easily using thumb slot.
- Flexible format—can be used portrait or landscape
- Card holders are compatible with all marketed card holder accessories



Item#	Attachment	Qty
DBL8005-19	Strap	25
DBL8012-19	Reel	10
DBL8268-19	Safety Necklace	10

Now available from United Stationers

DBL367-2012LN

is another. That's why building a powerful brand is so important.

Your brand is the foundation of your business. It is the reason customers recognize you and try you, and it is also the reason they keep coming back. It is the promise you make, and how you consistently deliver on the promise.

Today, consumers have more control than ever. They have the power of choice, and with the proliferation of social media, they have the power of voice. The brands that are winning in a consumer-controlled environment are the ones that consistently deliver an exceptional customer experience.

Your brand point of difference guides your customer experience. Some brands are built on price, others style, selection or unique service. But successful brands all have a framework that enables the organization to integrate and proliferate the brand beyond marketing to every aspect of the operation, which in turn guides every customer interaction.

What is your brand? Your brand consists of multiple elements:

- Logo + tagline + message—your company's face and voice to the world.
- Your brand promise — a promise you make to follow fundamental principles with every customer interaction
- Only YOU do—it is built on your point of difference
- Your customer experience —it exists in the minds and perceptions of your customers
- Consistently executed branding—it must come through in EVERY marketing touch point and customer interaction

The importance of presenting a consistent image is why United Stationers' dynamic marketing cover portfolio now offers 136 cover tracks offering an array of brand styles and personalities, so that you can choose one that's appropriate for your business.

- Graphic Focus features covers that are engaging,

creative and filled with personality. They bring fun to catalogs and customer experience.

- Product Focus makes products the hero of the cover theme. They feature everyday products that lend a more professional and sophisticated aspect to the customer experience.
- Patriotic covers offer a patriotic flavor and approach for a timeless look and feel.
- Lifestyle covers show people going about their workday. Resellers can use this track to bring their customer-service focus to the forefront.

Maximize the Power of Integrated Marketing

The consumer landscape in today's multi-channel market continues to shift. Websites, mobile platforms and social media networks are growing more and more important and catalogs and flyers remain tried and true marketing tools.

In order for your brand to consistently reach your target audiences, you will need to utilize multiple communication channels and integrate them effectively.

Every aspect of your marketing mix shapes your customer experience. Consistent and thoughtful integration of every marketing touch point will shape that experience and impact your brand perception.

Customer touch points represent an interaction between you and your customer. The optimal number of annual touch points may be over 200, requiring a balance among different types:

- Marketing touch points—inbound and outbound marketing activities
- Service touch points—customer service calls, business reviews, service visits
- Operational touch points—product delivery, drivers' visits impacted by uniforms, trucks and packaging, packing slips and invoices

Because consumer demographics and behavior are changing, so is the way that customer touch points should be utilized. For example, younger consumers communicate much more heavily via social media, which require a commitment not just to sending messages, but receiving messages and acting on them.

We have entered the era of "content marketing," often referred to as inbound marketing. It is the concept of attracting customers to you with compelling content, information and engaging conversations.

Inbound marketing activities help you get found by people who are looking for what you are selling. Inbound marketing includes activities such as:

- Search engine marketing (SEM)
- Search engine optimization (SEO)
- Blogging activities and participation in social media (Twitter, Facebook, YouTube, Pinterest and LinkedIn)
- Public relations

Inbound marketing is a way to gain the attention of your market. People who are attracted to your content through inbound marketing activities are more

CONTINUED ON PAGE 42



likely to buy because they are actively looking for products or information and have found your dealership in the process. This is the future of marketing and resellers need to get ready for it.

Outbound marketing, on the other hand, refers to the messages resellers send out into the world to generate leads and sales with the hope that the recipients have an interest in what you are selling and will respond. Outbound marketing includes:

- Traditional advertising (newspaper, magazines, radio, TV and outdoor)
- Direct mail and direct response such as catalogs, flyers, mailers and email
- Tradeshow participation, sales calls and telemarketing
- Events

While inbound marketing has not yet replaced outbound marketing, it is rapidly gaining attention, particularly when it comes to acquiring traditional B2B customers.

Today, resellers need to create more in-

bound marketing opportunities, and resellers need to be smarter about their outbound marketing efforts. To be successful with inbound marketing, resellers need to integrate and extend content across every touch-point.

Inbound marketing can't be solely the domain of your marketing team. It must be central to your entire operation. This means resellers need to look at the way they communicate with their customers.

Your sales and marketing team needs to understand the importance of social media, connect with customers via social media, and use those channels to advance the sales conversation.

Part of the reason that communicating is shifting to inbound techniques is because consumers are hit with thousands of messages on a daily basis. The actual number of messages may vary—some say 2,000, others 5,000; either number is significantly more messages than a human being can process. As a result, consumers have had

to become effective at tuning out and filtering these messages.

What's more, we live in a world with information readily accessible on a wide range of topics. Consumers who have grown up in the digital age expect to learn about what they buy. They will seek out content sources and are most easily reached with inbound marketing tactics.

The most successful inbound marketing efforts will occur only when resellers have refined their brand platform to make the transition.

Start by building a cross-functional team that communicates and converses in a socially networked world. Then create a website that supports content for inbound marketing.

As the front door to your business and the central hub of all your marketing activities, you'll want to evaluate how your website measures up to the websites of your prime competitors.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 43

Note-Taking. Evolved.

Introducing the next generation of notepads—
Built for efficiency, flexibility and the highest level
of note-taking customization.



AMPAD
SimpleSort™
Crossover Writing Pad

Sort, group and re-order your notes so you can organize your thoughts the way you need them.

AMPAD
EZ Flag™ Writing Pad

Built-in "flags," let you label and highlight notes as you take them so you can find them again - quickly and easily.

By **Esselte** Corporation

Touched by Genius™

AMPAD

WESTCOTT®
The World's Favorite Scissors™

iPoint. évolution
Axis ELECTRIC PENCIL SHARPENER

Axis iPoint Evolution Pencil Sharpeners bring a design flair to the traditional shaped sharpeners on the market today with the innovative technology of iPoint®.

NEW

Item #
ACM-15510



Item #
ACM-15509
Heavy Duty

For these and other great new products
see the 2013 United Stationers Catalogs



Westcott® is a registered trademark of Acme United Corporation. © 2012 Acme United Corporation.

Those are the sites that empowered users visit on a regular basis, so if your website doesn't compare favorably, and especially if it's not friendly for mobile users, you won't be able to attract and hold this vital customer group.

Integrated Marketing Campaigns

Your inbound and outbound marketing activities help lay the ground work for outstanding acquisition, retention and growth campaigns.

The most successful efforts will involve integrated campaigns that employ a variety of messaging tactics to capture the greatest number of business opportunities.

While many resellers may not have the wherewithal to develop integrated marketing campaigns on their own, United helps simplify the process with its SmartMaps included in the 2013 Marketing Power kit. The SmartMaps offers sample campaigns

that target small business customers (businesses with 5-19 employees), medium-sized customers (20-99 employees) and large business customers (100-249 employees). All three of the SmartMaps offer sample campaigns for acquisition, retention and growth.

As an example a retention campaign for a medium business customer starts by distributing an Everything for the Workplace catalog, a Marketing Distribution Kit with sample products and literature, a SmartDeals Xtra flyer and an eDeals email. For top results the Marketing Distribution Kit can be personalized with your company's logo.

Growth campaigns are designed to cross-sell new categories to existing customers and expand the share of business you get from them.

There are a number of ways to grow current business but the most common approaches are to guide customers to purchase additional product categories from you or to expand the items within a

category that they are already purchasing from you.

Position your firm as a single-source provider and point out the comprehensive nature of your product offering.

You can do this by targeting medium sized companies with your offering of furniture, Jan/San or technology products.

Promote your Jan/San offering with customers, for example, by sending them United's Janitorial, Breakroom & Safety Source catalog followed by mailings of the quarterly Safety & Security Zone flyer.

A sample acquisition campaign for a medium business customer employs consistent weekly touch points to remind prospects of your dealership and drive their buying behavior.

Start by sending a welcome postcard, followed a week later by a flyer and followed a week after that with a telephone call.

Keep track of your results and repeat the process with a second flyer and another follow-up call if needed.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 44



NEW

PhysiciansCARE
Care Made Easy Since 1965

Looking for EXCEDRIN?

Try our **NEW PhysiciansCare® Extra Strength Pain Reliever**

COMPARE TO EXCEDRIN

Contains same active ingredients as Excedrin

- For temporary relief of minor aches and pains
- Coated, easy to swallow tablets
- Packed in a perforated dispenser box to allow easy access
- Includes 50 Individual dose packets

Mfr. # ACM-90316
Qty: 50/BX
List Price: \$22.50

MADE IN U.S.A.

See our full line of PhysiciansCare medications in the United Stationers full line catalog



AT-A-GLANCE®
Recycled Mini Wall Calendars

Perfect for small spaces

- One month per page
- 12 Months, January – December

Large, easy-to-read numbers for quick reference
Printed on quality paper with 30% post-consumer waste

www.meadsalestools.com

Each mini wall calendar has it's own unique feature:

Item #	Description	List Price
PM5-28	Wirebound for hanging on wall or easel for upright desktop viewing, 6 1/2 x 7 1/2	\$6.89
PME5-28	Dry erase backer for to-do's & reminders, 6 1/2 x 15	\$8.59
PMN5-28	Notes Pages flip separately as needed, 13 x 7 1/2	\$8.59

At any time during the campaign, when a prospect becomes a customer send a Welcome Kit identified with your logo. If no

order or appointment is made, delete the prospect and try again in three months.

Achieve the Total Customer Experience

Companies that provide an exceptional and fully integrated customer experience are winning in today's market.

To accomplish that, first you must observe and understand consumer behavior—both macro trends and the behavior of your own customers. You must build and constantly reinforce your brand. And you must maximize your use of integrated marketing, employing a mix of both inbound and outbound techniques in which every member of your staff reinforces your brand experience at every touch point.

Today, mapping your success is about much more than just "marketing" to your customers; it's about solving their problems in a way that builds loyalty and repeat business.

United Stationers' Marketing Power system and other resources are important elements you can rely on as you build a business that stands out from the crowd, giving you the edge today's ever more crowded and noisy marketplace.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 46

Flexible *connecting form with today's office function.*



Maxx Legroom™
Folding Tables



CaféWorks™
Café & Bistro Tables & Seating

Creative, free standing furniture that moves with you... for spontaneous meetings, new comfortable and casual touch down spaces, and work surfaces that fold-up or down as needed.



Maxx Legroom™ & CaféWorks™ tables.
NEW ARRIVALS for 2013





ONYX™ MESH COLLECTION THE WAY YOU WORK HAS NEVER LOOKED SO GOOD

Customize how you organize, and add a little style to how you file! Onyx™ mesh organizers in classic black offer intriguing design to help your workspace become elegantly organized. It's how messy turns into meshy!



Furnish Profitable Solutions

Furniture marketing has never been more about having the right products and right marketing tools to reach the market profitably.

With United Stationers you are able to get the furniture and accessories you need, where you need them, when you need them, as well as Marketing Power components to help you profitably target furniture buyers.

United offers products from more than 60 industry-leading suppliers with in-stock, quick ship and special order (fabrics, finishes and sizes) availability.

Over 4,000 furniture items are available for next-day delivery from the multi-million dollar inventory at our 30 regional distribution centers.

From the breakroom to the boardroom, we have everything you want to sell: desks (contemporary and traditional), chairs (executive, management, high performance task, task and specialty), files (lateral and vertical), bookcases, storage cabinets, shelving, tables, reception furniture and more.

Reaching furniture buyers with the right vehicles is critical to your success. That's why we have created a comprehensive assortment of tools including annual catalogs, promotional flyers, sales

support aids and value-added services and made all of them easy to incorporate into your marketing strategy.

The Furniture Solutions catalog is the backbone of any furniture marketing program and features a best-in-class selection of more than 5,500 in-stock furniture products.

Appealing to both transactional and contract buyers, the catalog promotes single and multi-unit project purchases. Within the Furniture Solutions catalog, items are organized by a "good-better-best" merchandising strategy and arranged by major product categories to help customers quickly find the product they require.

The catalog also contains information icons, tips, solutions and facts together with suggested companion and accessory products to simplify the office planning process. Reference guides, planning guides and an industry glossary help your customers understand the furniture market better.

According to United research, dealers who employ the Furniture Solutions catalog generate four times the furniture revenue compared to dealers who only use the full-line catalog. Quarterly Furniture Solutions flyers promote additional furniture sales and can be used effectively as tools in your acquisition, retention and growth campaigns.

CONTINUED ON PAGE 47



DURAFRAME® SELF-ADHESIVE MAGNETIC FRAME Now available from United Stationers

DURABLE's DURAFRAME®—

a contemporary self-adhering display sign with hinged magnetic front to create professional-looking signage/ displays quickly and easily. Bye-bye tape and thumbtacks. DURAFRAME® offers a simple, stylish yet efficient way to organize, display and update important information.

Features

- Adheres to any smooth, solid surface
- Special adhesive allows for repositioning from one location to another (non-removable on wallpaper, painted surfaces and wood)
- Magnet assures insert can be exchanged effortlessly
- Can be read from both sides when affixed to glass



Item#	Description	Size	Qty
DBL4890-01	Half-Letter	5½" x 8½"h	2
DBL4891-01	Letter	8½" x 11"h	2
DBL4896-01	Letter Horizontal	11" x 8½"h	2
DBL4892-01	Tabloid	11" x 17"h	2

DBL366-2012LN

Call for FREE Samples
800-273-3118

Visit us on the web to learn
more about DURAFRAME®

DURABLEOFFICEPRODUCTS.COM
Click on DURABLE LIVE!

Discover the Difference.



WPF is too good a secret not to share, so they've gone viral with their own newsletter.



WPF helps office furniture dealers grow their top line sales, while enhancing their bottom line profitability.

WPF

Read this quarter's issue now

visit oob.wpfdealer.com to read our quarterly news

WorkPlace Furnishings, Inc. | (513) 563-0048

Email promotions build awareness, create inquiries, generate phone calls and are an effective tool to increase furniture sales. Email offerings include monthly and bi-monthly vehicles to help increase your furniture sales.

Monthly Flyer on the Fly promotions showcase furniture items with aggressive pricing and feature customizable PDFs that dealers can send to their customers.

Bi-monthly dealer cards feature promotional items available for 60 days. An HTML email with dealer pricing is included as well as a customizable PDF for end-user pricing.

In addition, eDeals Furniture Boosters are available as a single offering for furniture-only resellers. These email promotions can be customized with reseller branding and delivered to a list of customers the first Thursday of every month.

Alera is United Stationers' proprietary office furniture line designed to meet the needs of all size offices and all levels of employees across a broad range of professional industries.

Alera office furniture offers an impressive balance of quality, innovative design, precision styling and premium ergonomics. Its broad line of high-quality furniture is comparable to large name brands at big box stores.

Marketing tools that support the Alera line include the quarterly Alera Flyer which features Alera desks, chairs and other furniture items at aggressive consumer pricing up to 50% off.

The Alera SmartMap is a great tool that shows the depth and breadth of the Alera chair line and makes it easy for end users to find the ideal seating solution. In addition a full line of PDF brochures covering the entire Alera line are housed on United's Solutions Central web portal at solution-scentral.ussco.com.

New for 2013 is the Alera website—MyAlera.com—which provides furniture buyers with real-time product information.

MyAlera.com uses state-of-the-art Internet marketing technology and a dealer network tool known as Local Lead Engine. Using the Alera website's optimized strength and Local Lead Engine's precise technology allows each individual dealer to achieve unmatched search marketing results.

Each Alera office furniture dealer can now be part of a virtual dealer network that major search engines can index and rank. As such, Alera dealers increase their online exposure and maximize lead generation from local customers who are actively searching for their products and services.

To simplify the process of designed workspaces for customers United makes available Visual Planner. This user friendly tool lets you design customized workspaces so that you can provide a visual presentation to your customers and close the sale more quickly.

Developed with the needs of the furniture salesperson in mind, Visual Planner is a web-based layout and presentation tool

that lets your—or your customer—be the office space designer.

With just an Internet connection you can go from an empty space to a fully designed suite complete with proposal in just four easy steps. In addition, Visual Planner includes all the furniture available in the Furniture Solutions catalog, including quick-ship and special order furniture, so there is nothing to download, install or maintain.

United Visual Planner uses a drag-and-drop function so you don't need to spend time learning complicated CAD-based design programs.

Even though the program can be learned independently, training and support are included. Plus, it allows up to 25 users per license per location, which makes it extremely cost-effective.

With United Visual Planner you have the convincing power of illustration to close large furniture sales.





Time to Give Your Sales Force Their Annual Checkup

By Troy Harrison

It's getting near the end of the year and that means it's time to celebrate your 2012 successes and plan for even greater success in 2013. And it's also time to give your sales force their annual checkup.

You do that for your own health so why not do it for your sales health, too? The biggest obstacle to doing though is knowing just what to check, so that's what we're going to talk about in this month's column.

Being a sales manager in this industry can be a challenge but the good news, when we're talking about positioning ourselves for an outstanding 2013, is that there really aren't that many things to consider.

As a manager, you only have two variables to work with in order to generate results, and only two methods by which to maximize those variables.

The two variables are quantity of sales activity and quality of sales activity. The basic equation looks like this: (Quantity of sales activity) x (Quality of sales activity) = Results.

In other words, the more you do of something and the better you do it, the better

your results will be. Your job, as sales manager, is to maximize the number of activities performed in your sales funnel, as well as the quality of those activities. To do this, you have two things to work with: your people and your processes.

The first thing to ask yourself, as part of your checkup, is: "How many of my people are capable of achieving my 2013 goals?"

I like to rate my salespeople in three categories: Green, Yellow, and Red.



Green salespeople are those who either are currently meeting goals and that we expect to continue

to do so, or who are properly ramping up to meet goals (in the case of new salespeople or salespeople who have been on a performance improvement plan).

These are the ones that you're not worried about. You'd still like to work with them to improve their performance, but you're not losing sleep over whether or not they're going to be with you. Your main task with

these salespeople is to continue to develop their skills and work to retain them.



Yellow salespeople are in doubt. Their performance is not meeting goal and you're unsure if they are capable of meeting goal.

You should be troubleshooting these people. In fact, any salesperson who is Yellow should currently be on a Performance Improvement (or Probationary) Plan. These could also be salespeople who are so new that they don't have an established performance pattern yet.



Red salespeople aren't going to make it. You've been working with them and you realize that it's simply not going to work out.

Projecting their achievement out into the future, they simply don't have a time when they will reach goal. If you have any of these people, you should be in the process of releasing them.

[CONTINUED ON PAGE 49](#)

Now that you've done the big picture categorization, it's time to look at each one of your sales reps individually.

Do you conduct a formal annual evaluation of your sales reps? If not, this is as good a time as any to implement that process.

If your company doesn't have an evaluation form that they use, there are several available on the Internet for a free download; get one and tailor it to your needs.

In looking at each of your salespeople, evaluate their performance with our two variables: quantity of activity and quality of activity.

You should have sales activity metrics in place. If not, I'll discuss those in a moment when we talk about sales processes.

Start with quantity of activity. For each of your people, compare their activity numbers from 2012 (use the entire year if possible; that levels out spikes from big weeks and small weeks) with your activity metrics.

Are they doing enough prospecting calls? Initial Appointments? Proposals? If not, you know there is untapped potential available simply by getting them up to standard.

Don't neglect this with your top performers. Your instinct probably is to leave your top people alone. Remember, however, that every call your top performers make is more valuable than your average performers, simply because it has a higher likelihood of turning into a sale.

Making Top Performers

That's what makes them your top performers. If they're not maximizing their time, you are losing potential sales.

For each rep, create a strength and weakness matrix. What are they especially good at? What do they struggle with? What can you do to alter and improve their quality of activity?

Again, don't neglect strengths. Sometimes it can be more beneficial and profitable to build on a strength than to fix a weakness,

especially if the weaknesses aren't preventing them from hitting your goals. For Yellow salespeople, it's a bit different. You'll want to focus on fixing whatever weaknesses create a barrier to results.

A Professional Development Plan

Create a Professional Development Plan for each Green and Yellow rep (remember, the plan for Red reps is termination).

Make it part of the evaluation we discussed earlier and work toward achieving those goals on a consistent basis. Yellow reps should have a deadline for hitting goal and making the transition to Green.

Now, let's take a look at your processes. You should re-evaluate and validate your sales metrics at least once a year.

If you don't already have sales metrics, start with the simple version: Sales metrics are the amounts of each activity that your sales rep performs in a given time period (I prefer to manage by the week).

I like to keep it simple by using Calls for Appointments; Initial Appointments; Proposals, and Sales (sold deals).

These are the major junctures in the sales process. Work backwards from number of sales needed in a given time period and then use your expected ratios to get your numbers.

For instance, if you need one sale per week, figure up your closing ratio from proposals to sales. If it's 50%, then you need two proposals per week. How many initial appointments yield a proposal? How many calls get you an appointment?

It's not hard to get these numbers with a little study. This creates a road map for sales achievement, as performed by a competent salesperson who can use these numbers to achieve your goals.

For those of you who have these numbers, you should re-validate them annually. Ratios can change over time. For instance, when voice mail became prevalent, it took more calls to get an appointment because salespeople were able to get hold of fewer prospects by phone.

Similarly, when the economic downturn happened, closing ratios on proposals moved downward.

Once again, take the activity results of your Green salespeople only to re-validate the ratios and numbers. Are you seeing big changes in the ratios? It might be time to revise your metrics.

Don't use Yellow or Red salespeople on this. It will skew your ratios downward. What we want is to mirror and match the results of your successful people.

One other piece of advice: Don't revise your metrics down, instead revise your goals up.

For instance, if you're finding your closing ratio is improving, the idea isn't to allow your salespeople to perform less sales activity. It means that your results (sold deals) should get better.

The Best Time to Hire

After you've terminated Red salespeople, don't worry about "the best time to hire." The "best time" to hire is always NOW. Get your hiring processes started.

Finally, this is also a good time to think about any other needs you might have from management or even programs (such as lead development programs) you'd like to set up with other departments. Get those on the agenda as soon as possible.

We all wish we could hit the ground running for the new year with 100% Green salespeople who are ready, willing, and able to knock it out of the park. For many of you, that won't be possible. But now is a good time to take a look and see where you really are today and put the right steps in motion for 2013.

Troy Harrison is the author of "Sell Like You Mean It!" and the president of SalesForce Solutions, a sales training, consulting, and recruiting firm.

For information on booking speaking/training engagements, consulting, or to sign up for his weekly E-zine, call 913-645-3603, e-mail TroyHarrison@SalesForceSolutions.net, or visit www.SalesForceSolutions.net.

If I Could Only...

By Tom Buxton

If we could sell only \$10,000 more per month, I would be happy and not worry anymore!"

Same person five years later: "If we could only sell \$150,000 more per month everything would be fine."

Ok, so I confess, that person was me when I owned an office products dealership. It took my wife's wise counsel to focus more of my energy on being thankful, rather than worrying and being ungrateful.

Her words were something like, "Would you stop whining and be grateful for what your company has accomplished?"

But thankfulness is an emotion that we typically don't spend much time cultivating. However, if our life goal is to be happy at home and within our businesses, most studies seem to indicate that the best way to achieve it is through being thankful.

Would it not make more sense, especially at this time of year, to seek thankfulness rather than happiness?

But what do we have to be thankful for this year, personally and in the office products business? Take just a minute to reflect and I think that you will find many things to give thanks for. The following is a short list of things I am thankful for:

Personally: Living in a great country, living next to a great country called Canada, not having an election for two more years, celebrating 30 years of marriage with my wife Jenny, having survived the college education of our daughters, knowing that God loves me.

Professionally: Opportunities for sales and margin growth still exist for all independent dealers; wholesale partners are helping broaden the base of products that dealers can deliver to their customers; a more level playing field between us and the so-called "big boxes;" buying groups beginning to cooperate with each other.

There's more: More younger people beginning to get involved in the business; significant improvements in the Internet ordering

platforms available to independents; the legality of the "S" corporation.

See, I told you there were lots of things to be thankful for and isn't it great that we have a day on November 22 to celebrate it.

I urge you to be kind that day and even give your co-workers or employees permission to not come to work.

Find some time to be thankful for everything that you have, as well as the lottery you won by being born at the time and place that you were.

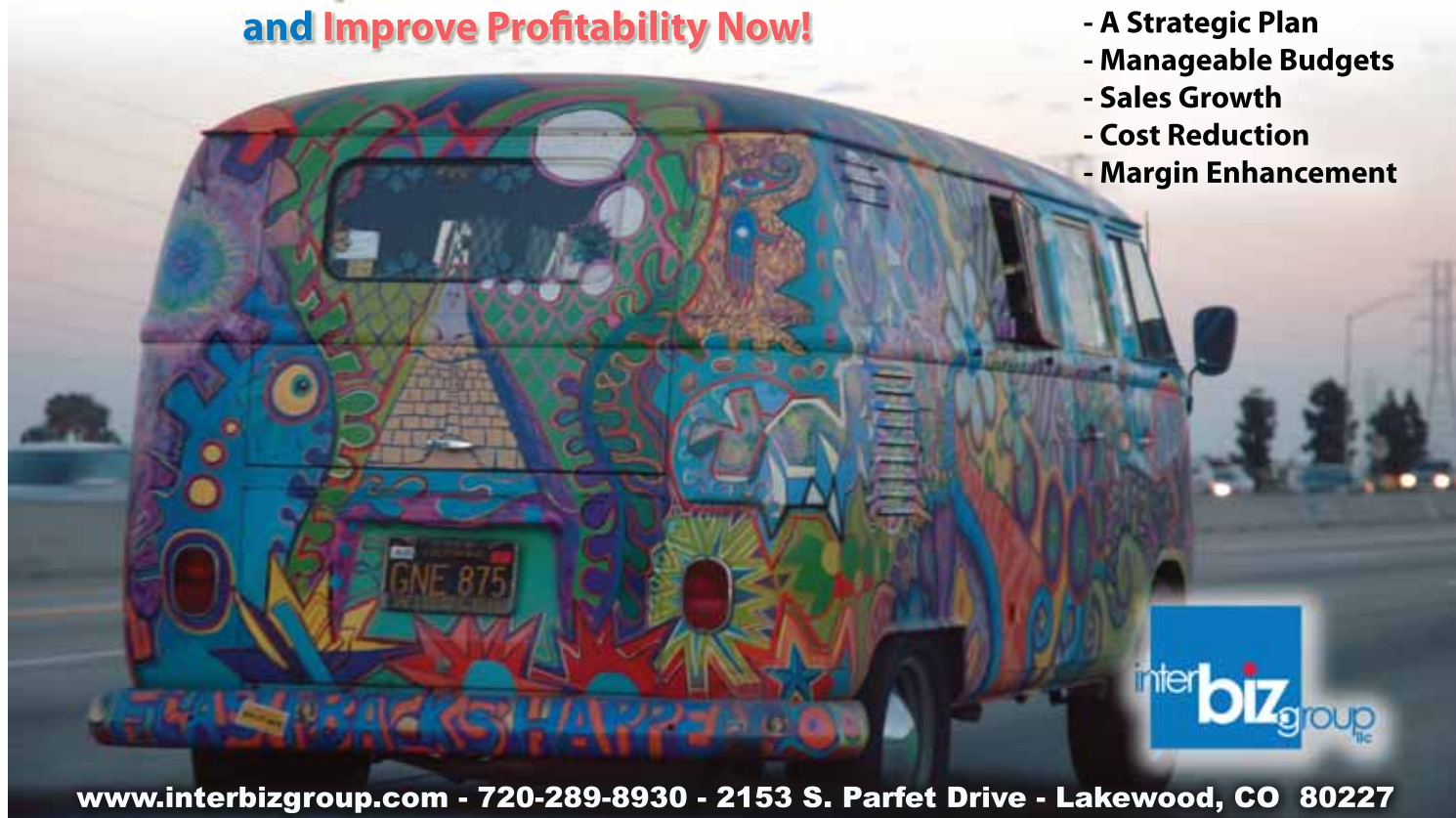
And maybe, if you want to be really wild, you could work on being thankful for one extra day. Crowds on "Black Friday" are horrible anyway. Happy Thanksgiving!

Tom Buxton, founder and CEO of the InterBizGroup consulting organization, works with independent office products dealers to help increase sales and profitability. For more information, visit www.interbizgroup.com.

Is your business a bit behind the times? We Can Help You Transform Your Culture and Improve Profitability Now!

Measurable Outcomes

- A Strategic Plan
- Manageable Budgets
- Sales Growth
- Cost Reduction
- Margin Enhancement



www.interbizgroup.com - 720-289-8930 - 2153 S. Parfet Drive - Lakewood, CO 80227