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Largest selection of Next Day ReadyShip USB Flash Drives.



REASON  
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Complimentary eco-friendly, security-sealed packaging and black neck lanyard\* on all USB flash drives. \*Lanyard applicable on most models.

REASON  
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REASON  
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REASON  
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Industry-leading 100 piece minimum order quantity of over 26 pen styles.

**LOWEST MINIMUMS**

REASON  
⑦

1 hour turnaround on Standard Quotes and Virtual Mockups



REASON  
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Only Nationwide full service decorating for apparel or soft goods, silk-screening, embroidery and specialty decorating.

REASON  
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
**REASON 1** **100%**  Highest quality flash drives offered in the industry, accompanied by a 100% Lifetime Warranty.

**REASON 2**  Largest selection of Next Day ReadyShip USB Flash Drives.


**REASON 3**  Complimentary eco-friendly, security-sealed packaging and black neck lanyard\* on all USB flash drives. \*Lanyard applicable on most models.


**REASON 4**  Award winning customer service and sales, Counselor Supplier of the Year for 2014 and Gold Winner in USB category and Computer Technology for four years in a row.

**REASON 5**  Large selection of Next Day ReadyShip pens.

**REASON 6**  Industry-leading 100 piece minimum order quantity of over 26 pen styles. **LOWEST MINIMUMS**

**REASON 7**  1 hour turnaround on Standard Quotes and Virtual Mockups

**REASON 8**  Only Nationwide full service decorating for apparel or soft goods, silk-screening, embroidery and specialty decorating.

**REASON 9**  3 Day shipping at ground rates on USBs, Pens and Mobile Accessories. FOB Seattle, WA. **3 DAY GROUND**

**REASON 10**  Receive an instant \$2,000 in credit when submitting a purchase order, with iClick's ReadyCredit.



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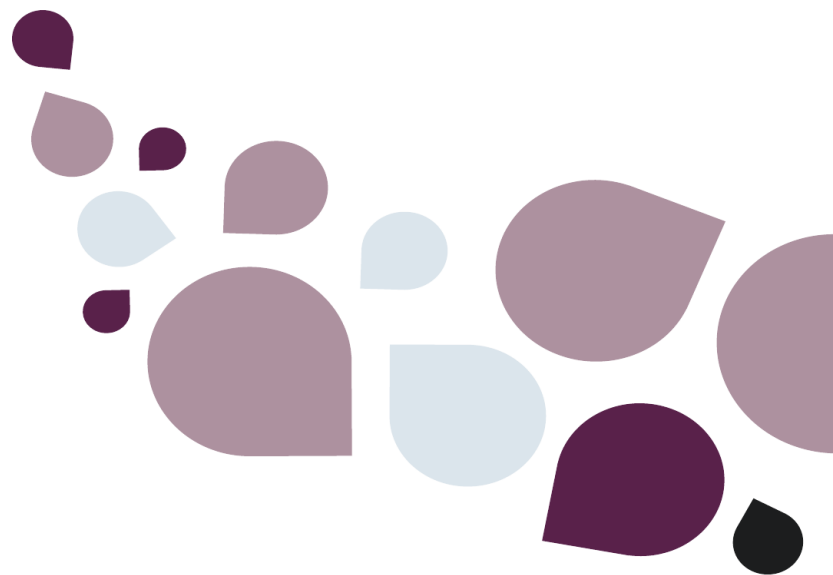
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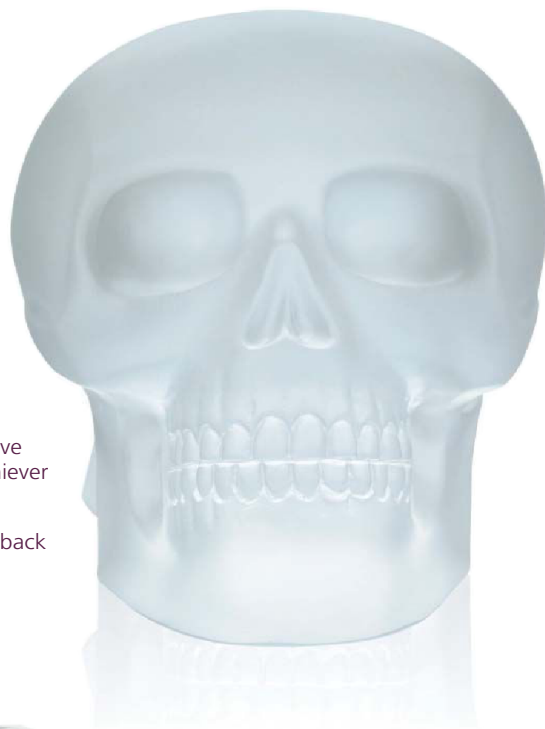


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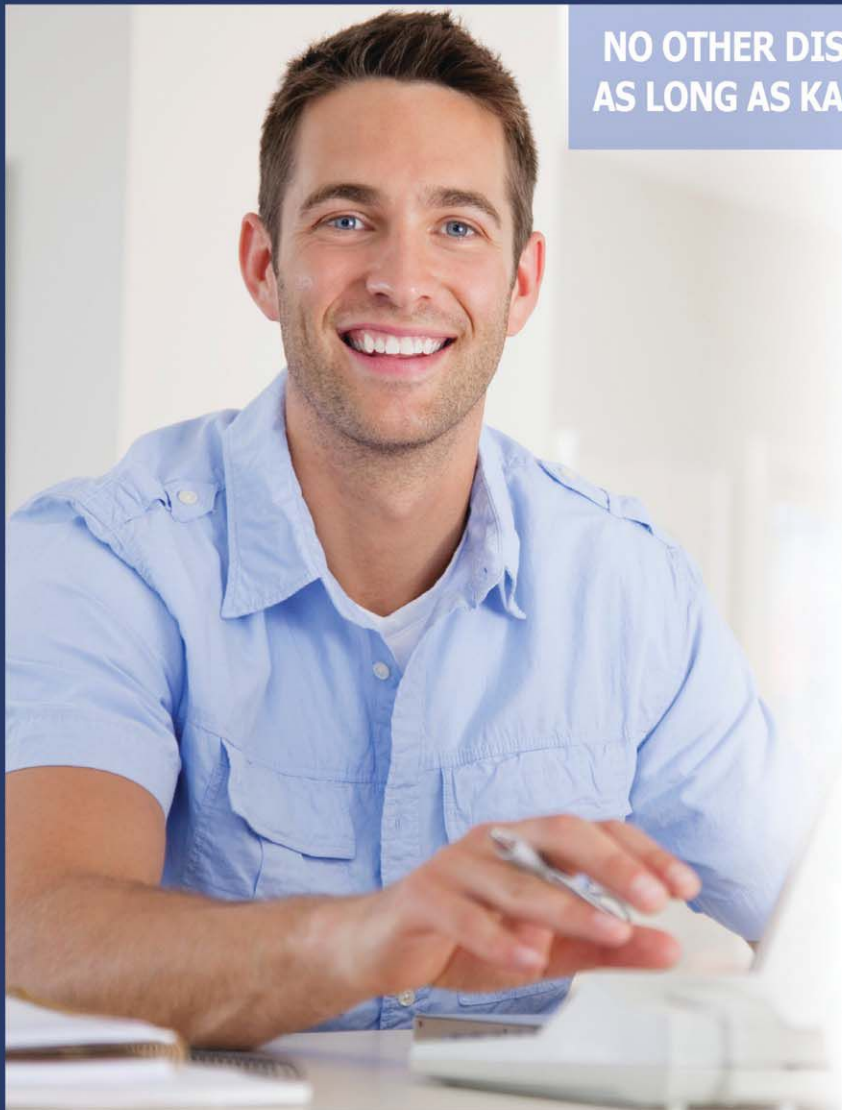


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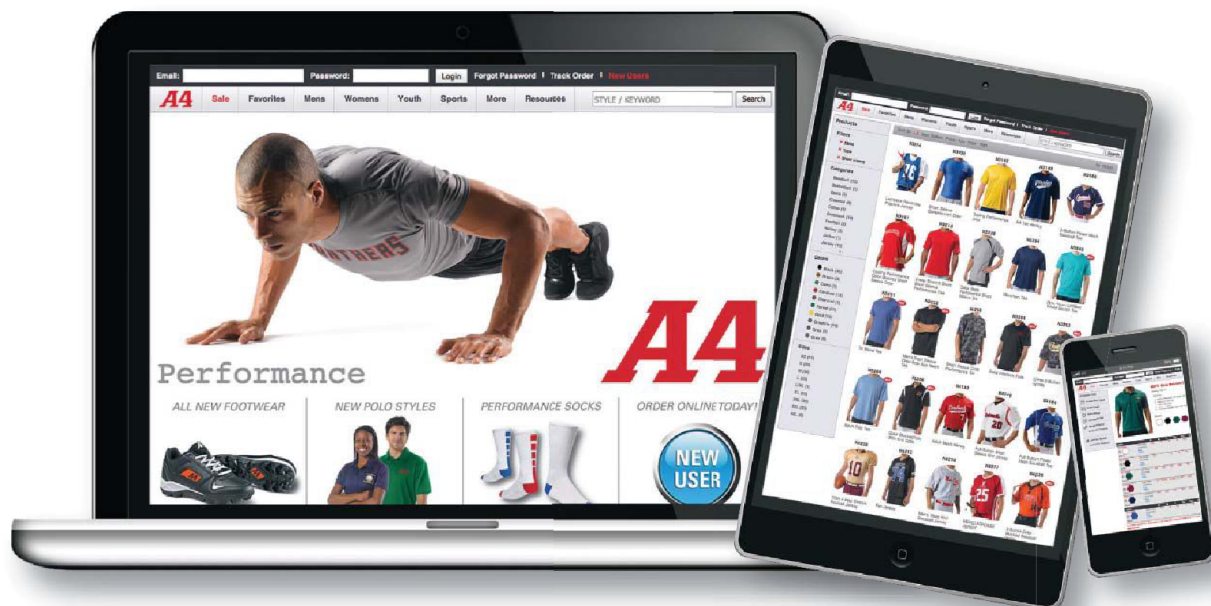


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Alexa's distribution network translates to a huge freight advantage. "Our competitors ship from one location as we can ship from six locations strategically placed to cover the whole U.S. at a very low cost," Sorokwasz says. "We deliver product via full truck load to these distribution centers, enabling us to bypass the use of LTL (less than truckload) carriers over long distances. This forces our competition to outsource their bottling to outside bottlers in different regions of the country which in return causes our competition to have an inconsistent product offering that is completely out of their control."

Another advantage is the customization options Alexa Springs offers. Choose from an array of bottle sizes and shapes; different cap and/or bottle colors; as well as four-color printing, with no set-up fees, on either our polypropylene or paper substrates. Whatever market you target, you'll find a need for custom water bottles. A few key markets to consider: Car Dealerships, Banks, Universities, Schools, Hospitals, Dentists, Law Firms, Insurance Companies, Funeral Homes, Golf Courses, Home Builders, Realtors, Title Companies, and of course Events.

Just ask for Alexa's support on how to sell water bottles to your client and we'll give you a competitive edge. "We offer free virtual samples, free spec samples, free art production, free proofs and no set-ups," Sorokwasz says. "It won't cost you a dime to get a sample in your hand and walk into a client's office with a bottle of water with their name on it and sell them on the benefits of custom label water. When you have a sample in your hand, it increases your likelihood of selling the customer tremendously."

You can also share information about the effectiveness of a brand's imprint on a water bottle. "This product is a walking billboard," Sorokwasz explains. "The average time the water is in front of somebody is four hours. The effectiveness of the advertisement is unmatched in the industry. This is a food product. People are going to read the label of anything that they ingest. It is guaranteed to get the consumer's attention. The distributors should love selling the product because it is a low-cost product that is consumable, which means repeat orders and increased revenue."

Sorokwasz shares an appealing case study: "We have a distribu-



tor that currently sells to a golf course in the Dallas/Fort Worth area which gives away water on the golf course. It is a high-end club with a small membership. The golf course goes through 144 cases/3,456 bottles a week in the winter and 288 cases/6,912 bottles a week in the summer. The dealer put \$1.50 in markup on the cases of water and makes around \$900/month in the winter and \$1,800/month in the summer off of one account. This is a great example of a profitable repeat account. This is like having a payroll check deposited in your account on a monthly basis."

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# D&J Specialties Is On-Point, Online With WebJaguar

*Responding to clients' needs on time with efficiency and ease were top priorities for this busy distributor. Here's how D&J did it.*

As a promotional products company, tracking orders in realtime and quickly addressing customers' needs are key to success. D&J Specialties makes such on-point service its primary focus. However, doing so wasn't always easy; the distributor had not yet found the right technology.

"Our previous system was locally driven, and we had to log in to access the ordering system if we were on the road," explains Dan Goo, vice president of D&J. "We were not Web-based; customers could not order online from any of our websites. Our eCommerce tools were static and informational only. We basically needed to use several programs, such as Outlook, Quickbooks, etc. to run our office."

Frustrated by the situation, D&J began looking for a comprehensive eCommerce solution. Particular requirements and challenges focused their effort. "We wanted a complete shopping cart with the specific suppliers that we do most of our business with," Goo says. That prerequisite alone led the distributor to AdvancedEMedia, the developer of the WebJaguar eCommerce platform. The solution provides small to mid-sized promotional products companies an ability to easily automate and manage business with a fully featured website, e-catalog/content management, shopping cart, CRM and lead generation technologies. "We've provided a front-end and back-end solution to sell products online," says Bachir Kassir, president and founder of AdvancedEMedia. "We worked closely with ASI to develop data feed based on the ASI database. This gives distributors access to hundreds of thousands of products as a complete turnkey eCommerce solution."

Goo was convinced; D&J quickly went live with WebJaguar. "We have been using it for seven months now and find the data to be accurate and complete," he says. "With our new system we can do online specials, monthly specials, e-mail promo codes, discount codes, etc. We now have clients logging in online and ordering via our system. We get an e-mail that our customer has placed an order through our website, and the order is basically done for us. We just forward the purchase order to the suppliers, which would not be possible if the data was incomplete or we had to input all the items manually. With ASI SmartLink and WebJaguar's program, all this is possible."

Selectivity also makes a difference for D&J. "We are able to pick the suppliers we do most of our business with and have only their products listed on our website," Goo says. Convenience is another benefit. Goo continues: "We travel a lot and wanted a cloud-based system in which we could work from virtually anywhere in the world. For example, we just travelled to Austria and Germany, and I could do work from a small town called Hallstatt, which is in the Alpine Mountains and surrounded by water." That's just the sort of reach D&J desired.

The experience has been positive all-round. Aside from a



short learning curve and customizing the program to fit D&J's requirements, Goo and this team are more confident than ever when it comes to servicing customers' needs. "Our staff is much happier with the new system," Goo says. "They say it is much easier and much quicker to use than our old system. We can do all of our communication, order writing, sale promotions, etc., within WebJaguar."

In fact, D&J recently did a special for a discount of 10% on any order from its website. The success was immediate. "Within the first two days, our clients placed four orders through our system," Goo says. "Then the orders were basically written for us; we just needed to complete the art file and make a few changes on the purchase order, then we're done. The system sends the PO to the suppliers."

Such automated ease comes from the relationship D&J has with the WebJaguar team. "AdvancedEMedia's service is excellent. They are easy to work with, and tech support is always there at a moment's notice," Goo says. "They easily make changes to our system to match our specific needs."

All that's needed for other distributors to get started on their own WebJaguar eCommerce solution is a Web browser. No special hardware is required nor does any software have to be installed. WebJaguar is a cloud-based, turnkey solution. For more information, visit [www.webjaguar.com/asi](http://www.webjaguar.com/asi) or call (888) 718-5051 for a free consultation and demo.



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## Features

### SALES 71

#### The Fastest-Growing Firms

With astonishing sales gains over the last three years, these are the companies surging ahead in the ad specialty market.

### PRODUCTS 76

#### Counselor Product Design Awards

The winners in 13 categories.

### MARKETING 78

#### Best Ad Awards

Counselor recognizes winning advertisers (determined by industry votes) in nine categories – in both print and digital media.

### POWER SUMMIT 80

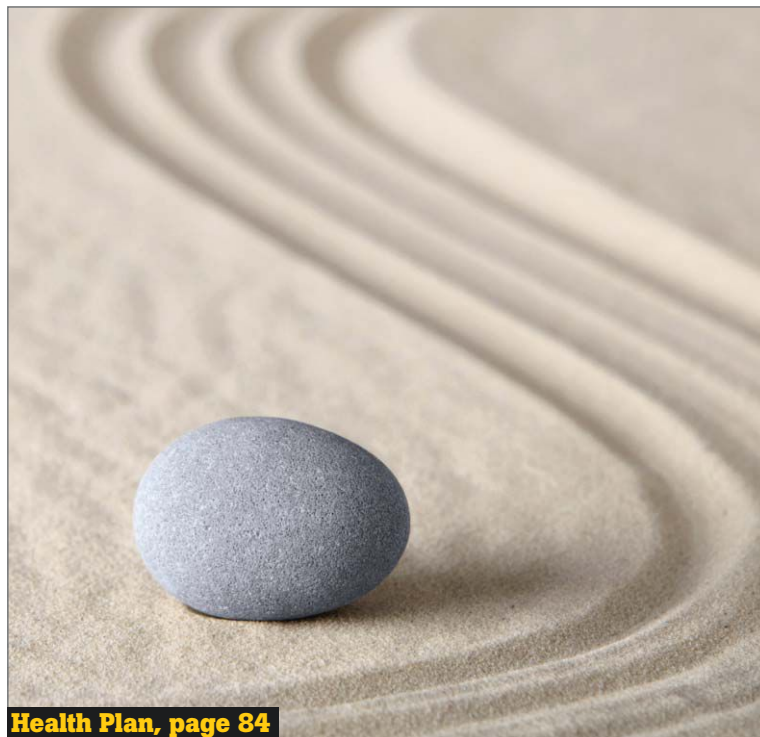
#### Oh, Canada!

Set in an idyllic location, ASI's second annual Canadian Power Summit attracted the promo market's top talent, brought together to discuss the health of their industry, issues facing them in the near future, and hot markets throughout the great, white North primed for growth.

### STRATEGIES 84

#### Health Plan

Wellness programs can help to reduce rising health care



Health Plan, page 84

costs. Here, a doctor and management expert provides five low-cost ways to implement corporate wellness initiatives.

## News

### THE LEAD 35

Will the Federal Reserve raise interest rates before next summer?

### CHATTER 36

What's the best way for distributors to tap into new markets?

### SUPPLIER NEWS 38

American Apparel ousts Dov Charney.

### INTERNATIONAL 40

England to charge for

plastic bags.

### LEGAL 41

Canada unveils anti-spam legislation.

### SALES 43

Ad spending set to rise.

### M & A 45

Crystal D acquires Crystal Impressions.

### COUNSELORMAG.COM 46

Keep your clients coming back.

### STOCK REPORT 49

Suppliers top distributors.

### NUMBER CRUNCH 51

Promo jackets generate advertiser recall.

### PRODUCT PICKS 53

18 items in the spotlight.

## Case Studies

### PROFILE 57

How to grow through RFPs.

### MANAGEMENT 58

Be a better boss.

### PROMO CLOSE-UP 62

Running on Dunkin'.

## Apparel

### TRENDS 65

Check patterns are hot.

### STRATEGIES 66

Athletic apparel is gaining traction.

### SHOWCASE 68

Get active!

## Social

### PROFILE 89

Kathy Cheng heads fastest-growing Canadian firm.

### APPOINTMENTS & PROMOTIONS 90

This month's people on the move.

### BEST PLACES TO WORK 96

Time off and employee benefits motivate this distributor firm.



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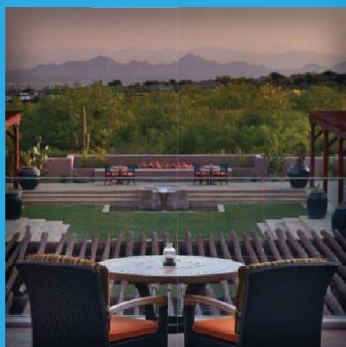
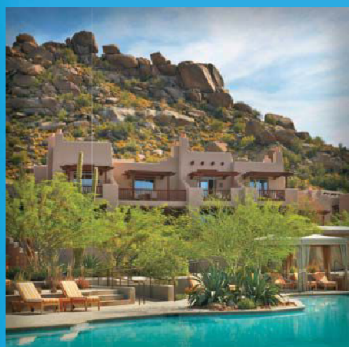
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# Editor's Letter

## Fine-Tune Your Workplace

Are you providing a flexible enough work environment to attract today's best workers?

By Andy Cohen

In the hunt for top available talent today, flexibility may be the key attraction. Yes, there are many people who are looking for jobs today, but companies in the ad specialty market are still finding it difficult to adequately fill open jobs at growing organizations. It was a common theme during the recent *Counselor* Best Places to Work Road Tour, in which three editors traveled the country to meet with a dozen of the companies on this year's Best Places to Work list.

An oft-heard complaint? We're growing, but we're having difficulty finding good people to hire and keep up with our growth. And, these are companies with employee-friendly work environments, where staffers are treated like partners in the business and provided the leeway to succeed on their own. Imagine what the recruiting market is like for traditional companies that believe a decent salary is all they need to provide to receive a motivated and loyal work force.

Appealing to new hires and job candidates today takes more than the bare HR minimum. And, many of *Counselor's* Best Places to Work companies are succeeding by offering workplaces that don't thrive on the typical 9-to-5. Take eCompanyStore (asi/185782), for example. The Alpharetta, GA, Top 40 distributor believes that time off is the greatest

benefit it can provide to employees, says Craig Callaway, CEO of the company. "There's only so much money you can pay people," says Callaway. "What you can really give them that makes the difference is free time to spend with their

companies say they're family friendly, but we actually are. So people stay here 15, 20 years, and work hard."

The Road Tour also stopped at SnugZ USA (asi/88060), which offers "recess" once a week, in which employees

City-based supplier firm HandStands (asi/59525), whose employees work in a flexible environment that affords many opportunities for growth. The company recently instituted a program for about 30 of its production staffers in which



### Appealing to new hires and job candidates today takes more than the bare HR minimum.

families."

Callaway doesn't just pay lip service to the idea of work/life balance. eCompanyStore practices what it preaches by awarding all employees, with the exception of highly-commissioned salespeople who are eligible for incentive trips, with 21-day mandatory sabbaticals every five years. That's in addition to any regular vacation time they're entitled to.

"I want people to take the kind of trip they'd never take in a regular week's vacation, whether it's going on a mission trip or tracking down a long-lost second cousin," Callaway says. "We want people to do life-changing stuff and come back revitalized. That's really our differentiator here. A lot of

can take time off from work during the day to go outside and play soccer. The casual and fun vibe of the pick-up game perfectly fits the atmosphere that President & CEO Brandon Mackay seeks. "We work really hard, and if we want to go outside and play for an hour, we will," says Mackay.

Success enables what he calls "earning the right to make choices" – of the fun variety. In addition to "recess," yoga is taught by one of the company's sales reps during the day and SnugZ sponsors fun activities like staff softball teams and even a 200-mile relay race. Company-wide Halloween parties and barbecues are annual traditions.

And then there's Salt Lake

they can come in to the office to pick up packaging projects and then work on them at home. "We can call on them when we get busy or ramp it down when we're less busy, and they really appreciate the flexibility," says Ryan Wood, the company's production manager who has been with Handstands for 16 years.

Community and flexibility: It just might be the recipe for workplace success today, especially at a time when new hires aren't just looking for a job. They're searching for a place to fit in and call home. If that's not how you'd describe your company today, you may want to take a "recess" from the traditional approach.

Enjoy the issue!

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# News

## WILL THE FEDERAL RESERVE RAISE INTEREST RATES BEFORE NEXT SUMMER?



**Tonia Allen Gould**  
Tagsource (asi/341358)  
“No, the Fed shouldn’t and probably won’t raise rates before next summer. I think that’s still a couple of years away.”



**Gene Geiger**  
Geiger (asi/202900)  
“They’ve been low for a long time, so I’ll say rates are going up, but not by much. Any rise will be moderate.”



**Ira Neaman**  
Vantage (asi/93390)  
“No. The government is the largest borrower and spender, so any rate increase would cost the government in interest charges and hamper its ability to make payments.”



**Jim Franklyn**  
Inkhead (asi/231159)  
“I believe we are trending upward as an industry and a small hike in interest rates will not impact that. But sooner or later, rates are going up.”



**Mitch Mounger**  
Sunrise (asi/339206)  
“Not before next summer, but it will happen in 2015. We still have room to lower the unemployment rate without a significant inflation problem.”



**Memo Kahan**  
PromoShop (asi/300446)  
“I don’t think it will. The fact that rates have stayed this low for a long time has given small and large companies the ability to stay in business. A change in rates would add pressure.”

## Inflation Measure Hits Two-Year High



Federal Reserve Chair **Janet Yellen** has said rates will stay near zero in the short term, although rising inflation could change her mind.

► The price index for personal consumption expenditures hit 1.8% in the second quarter, the highest level since the fall of 2012.

► The consumer price index, was up 2.1% in May, as energy prices jumped 5.8%.

► Federal Reserve officials are targeting 2% annual inflation for price stability. Higher inflation could lead to a sooner-than-expected rate hike, as the economy strengthens later this year.

► U.S. consumer price gains have averaged more than 3% annually since 1950.

# Chatter

## Now Trending



“Managing a hyper-growth company is like putting a rocket into space; if you’re off by inches at launch, you can be off by miles out in orbit.”

JEFF WEINER, CEO OF LINKEDIN (VIA TWITTER)

“The changes headed our way require more than incremental progress. They demand meaningful, systemic change and, for businesses, that starts with a new mindset about corporate responsibility. We have to look beyond our walls to inspire sustainable practices throughout our entire ecosystem, making sustainability easier for our customers and partners.”

MICHAEL DELL, CEO OF DELL, VIA A LINKEDIN ARTICLE ABOUT IMPLEMENTING SUSTAINABLE PRACTICES INTO CORPORATE WORKPLACES



“While passion is clearly important, this is probably the most misleading cliché about starting your own business. Lots of businesses fail, and most of the people who started them had plenty of passion. What they may have lacked is business acumen, or money, or customers who were willing to pay the right price.”

JAY GOLTZ, SMALL BUSINESS WRITER FOR *THE NEW YORK TIMES*, VIA A BLOG POST ON THE 10 WORDS ENTREPRENEURS SHOULD USE WITH CAUTION.

“Great entrepreneurs have a mix of unstoppable optimism and scathing paranoia. Without optimism, you’re not going to make it.”

ANGELA AHRENDTS, SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT OF APPLE RETAIL, VIA TWITTER IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT HOW TO ACHIEVE ENTREPRENEURIAL SUCCESS TODAY



Facebook  
Feedback

What's the best way for distributors to tap into new client markets?

► **Ryan Schade** Keep up to date on trends outside our industry and then look for ways we can effectively use existing products available to capitalize. i.e. Red Solo Cup craze.

► **Erich Campbell** Immerse yourself in the media and culture surrounding the market. The best niche is one you know – if there is a niche that falls within your personal interests, so much the better. They reward insiders and special understanding of their market.

► **David Garthwaite** Use your connections to make contact with discussion makers. Networking groups, Chambers of Commerce, and LinkedIn are great resources to enter new markets. Once you get a couple of orders going, you now have a cornerstone to build upon with others in that market.

► **Margaret Joyner** Everyone I meet is a potential customer. I speak to everyone everywhere I go. I attend many festivals, 5k's, walks, and shows at convention centers. I met my largest customer as he was doing a live radio remote at one of his clinics and I stopped and introduced myself and told him that I could help him be more. He said to call him on Monday... that was Friday and I did and he is my biggest customer today. Sometimes you just have to be BOLD and step out in faith and DO IT!!!

@**Kimgarst** You will never be truly happy if you hold onto the things that hold you down. Let things go and move on!

@**TimothyNichols** “Those who have the privilege to know, have the duty to act.” - Albert Einstein

@**TygrScott** “If you accept the expectations of others, especially negative ones, then you never will change the outcome.” - Michael Jordan

@**GeoffTalbot** Do not be afraid when you hear someone knocking on the door, his name is opportunity and he has been waiting for this moment.

@**Entripy** Entripy clients know where it's at! Always a wise decision to keep your custom apparel stocked.

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## “It’s been time-consuming getting up to speed on the new legislation.”

Danny Braunstein, Talbot Promo (see page 41)

# American Apparel Ousts Dov Charney

Beginning a process that will most likely end in a protracted fight and possible litigation, the board of directors of Top 40 supplier American Apparel (asi/35297) voted in June to oust Dov Charney, the company’s CEO. The board said the action “grew out of an ongoing investigation into alleged misconduct,” later revealing that it found Charney to have misused company funds.

Following the company’s annual meeting, the American Apparel board voted unanimously to replace Charney as chairman immediately and “notified him of its intent to terminate his employment as president and CEO for cause,” according to a statement. Charney’s attorney, Patricia Glaser, says her client was illegally fired by American Apparel’s board of directors – in part, she claims, because the termination violated the Age Discrimination in Employment Act.

The law, according to Glaser, requires American Apparel to provide 21 days to consider any proposed severance agreement. The board told Charney, who earned \$1.07 million in total compensation from the company in 2013, around midday on June 18 that he had until day’s end to accept a \$4 million severance package that would have had him serve as a creative consultant for several years – or be terminated.

He did not resign.

“By presenting Mr. Charney with this absurd and unreasonable demand, the company acted in a manner that was not merely unconscionable but illegal,” Glaser wrote in a letter to American Apparel’s counsel. Speaking to the *Los Angeles Times*, American Apparel co-chairman Allan Mayer said the Top 40 supplier was on firm legal ground in its firing of Charney. “It’s what we would expect from Dov’s attorney in a situation like this,” said Mayer, “but we continue to believe firmly that we did the right thing, for the right reasons, in the right way.”

Charney, though, is making moves to work his way back into American Apparel’s operations. Following his ouster, at which point he owned 27% of the company’s shares, Charney struck a deal with New York investment firm and hedge fund company Standard General to acquire an additional 16% of the compa-

ny’s shares. As part of that deal, Charney agreed to give Standard General complete control of his shares in the company, giving the investment firm 43% control of American Apparel.

At press time, the hedge fund had parlayed that control into a deal with American Apparel to provide it additional financial backing (necessary because of a looming loan payment) in exchange for the right to nominate up to five new members of the company’s board.

Still unclear is what role, if any, Charney will play at the company going forward. Standard General is reportedly conducting an investigation into his actions and how he ran American Apparel. Depending on the result of that investigation, Charney could reportedly return to the company in some capacity, though not necessarily as CEO, industry analysts say. But he definitely won’t be back as a director of the company, as his agreement with Standard General stipulates that he can’t seek a seat on the board.

Meanwhile, in the wake of Charney’s firing, American Apparel named John Luttrell, its current CFO, as interim CEO. The company also installed Mayer and David Danziger as co-chairmen of the board, and officially suspended Charney for 30 days from the company under the terms of his employment. Mayer said the decision



came after the board launched an investigation earlier this year into Charney’s actions when “new information came to light.”

“This is not easy, but we felt the need to do what we did for the sake of the company,” said Mayer, who has been a member of the American Apparel board since the company went public in 2007. “Our decision to do what we did was not the result of any problems with the company’s operations. Dov Charney created American Apparel, but the company has grown much larger than any one individual and we are confident that its greatest days are still ahead.”

American Apparel ranks as the 14th-largest supplier in the industry, and reported its promotional market revenues for last year as \$99.2 million. Charney has been a member of the *Counselor* Power 50 since the list’s inception in 2006. The company’s stock (NYSE: APP) price increased by more than 30% in the three weeks following the news of Charney’s ouster.

– AC & DV

**“This is not easy, but we felt the need to do what we did for the sake of the company.”**

Allan Mayer, American Apparel



2014

# Favorite Things

HOLIDAY



Sicily Wine Bag  
#SICWINBG

150	250	500	1000	2500	
3.99	3.79	3.49	3.19	2.99	5C



Stainless Vintage  
Uno Cup #SVNUNOCP

72	144	288	576	1008	
7.85	7.45	6.99	6.49	5.99	5C



Master Tool  
#MASTRTL

50	100	250	500	1000	
6.85	6.55	6.25	5.75	5.35	5C



The Hancock Pen  
#HANCKPN

50	100	150	300	600	
9.99	9.70	9.49	9.29	8.99	5C



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# England to Levy Charge For Plastic Bags

Queen Elizabeth II has announced that large retailers in Great Britain will soon be required to charge customers five pence (\$0.08) for each single-use plastic bag at checkout. The mandate – which mirrors rules already in place in Wales and Northern Ireland – will go into effect in October of 2015.

“My government will continue to implement major reforms to the electricity market and reduce the use of plastic carrier bags to help protect the environment,” the queen said.

Officials expect the 5p charge will raise millions of pounds

every year for charities nominated by stores. The law will not affect businesses with 500 employees or fewer and only targets single-use plastic bags, not paper carriers.

“We are very clear that none of this money will come to government – we are not trying to tax people,” said Britain’s Energy and Climate Change Secretary Ed Davey. “We are trying to change people’s behavior and encourage much more environmentally friendly behavior.”

Environmentalists claim that more than eight billion dispos-

able bags are used in England each year, which amounts to 130 per person. The measure has significant political support and was backed by groups like the Campaign to Protect Rural England and the Marine Conservation Society. Proponents of the 5p charge point to the success realized in Wales, where single-use carrier bag distribution fell 76% in the year following the law’s implementation there.

In England, supermarkets and large retailers were put on notice in 2011 when Prime Minister David Cameron announced



a likely charge unless plastic bag usage dropped. Instead, data showed stores gave out more single-use bags, prompting the eventual mandate that was formally announced in June. – DV

# Flexible Hours Key for Employee Retention

Allowing employees to work flexible hours is important if you want to retain top talent. That’s according to a new study from BMO Harris Bank, which discovered that 53% of business owners believe schedule flexibility is the most valuable offering they can provide to keep high performers – other than a pay increase.

While BMO Harris officials expected that flexible hours would be considered a valuable retention tool, they were surprised by how far it outpaced other potential offerings. “What really blew us away was that it was so far ahead. It was 20% above the rest,” said Dave Casper, BMO Harris Bank’s

executive vice president and head of commercial banking.

Casper isn’t exaggerating: The second most valuable talent retainer was investing in employee growth, but only 33% of owners selected it. Increased health and dental benefits came next (27%). Although some businesses likely will not be able to offer flexible hours, Casper expects the trend toward letting employees work a non-traditional schedule to grow.

“We see much more than a third of the clients we support being fine with flexible hours,” Casper said. “There may be a cap, but I think we’re at the early stages of this, especially in terms of new business formation.”



Beyond examining owners’ attitudes toward talent retention, the survey looked at how these executives view the Millennial generation that’s starting to fill the workforce. Encouragingly, 57% of business owners say today’s college grads are either more prepared or equally prepared to enter the workforce today.

Further, the study found, companies that are hiring junior employees look for a variety of attributes when considering their ideal candidate, including skill set (43%), work experience or internship (32%), degree earned/school attended (18%), and references and recommendations (18%). – CR



# Canada Unveils Anti-Spam Legislation



The Canadian Radio-television and Telecommunications Commission (CRTC) has finalized the new Canadian Anti-Spam Legislation (CASL), which took effect on July 1, and now all commercial electronic messages (CEMs) sent within Canada and into Canada from foreign countries, including the U.S., must meet certain requirements. CEMs include e-mails, automated software updates and text messages sent by mobile phone. Non-compliance will incur significant penalties, including a maximum of \$1 million for individuals and \$10

million for businesses.

All senders of CEMs to Canada must have expressed or implied consent. Under expressed consent, the recipient has given permission, either in writing or orally, to a sender that they will accept CEMs. If express consent is obtained before July 1, 2014, that consent is valid until the recipient actively withdraws it. Implied consent applies where there is an existing relationship, which includes CEM transmission, between the sender and recipient prior to July 1, 2014. Senders have a 36-month

transition period after July 1 to obtain express consent. Besides the consent mandate, all CEMs must also include a clear identification of the sender. Every CEM must include a way for the recipient to unsubscribe.

Industry companies in Canada have been working to meet the requirements. "We'll continue to connect with our customers via e-mail, as long as they want to receive our messages," said Jennifer Roney, marketing manager for Accolade Promotion Group (asi/102905). "The legislation will impact how we set up our

online platforms, both our website and CRM, and how we run our national promotional campaigns. We'll make sure we're giving customers good reason to opt in, and we'll ensure any CEMs provide value."

Danny Braunstein, VP of sales and business development at Talbot Promo (asi/341500), says his company is taking CASL seriously. "It's been time-consuming getting up to speed on the new legislation and educating our team," he said. "The unknown is how it will affect us from a prospecting perspective." – SL

## Logomark Launches New Marketing Software Program

Marking its entry into a new product category, *Counselor* Top 40 supplier Logomark (asi/67866) has announced the launch of MyLogomark Marketing Hub, a software program that allows distributors the ability to create custom catalogs, marketing materials and custom packaging options. The supplier, a traditional hard goods company, announced its intention to enter the printing and packaging category at an event it hosted in June in Newport Beach, CA.

Trevor Gnesin, CEO of Logomark, said his company is launching this new product and service as a way to help the ad specialty industry compete

even more effectively with other advertising mediums. "This technology platform will change the way brand managers view promotional products, placing them at the absolute forefront of effective advertising campaigns rather than an afterthought for allocating remaining marketing dollars," said Gnesin.

Distributors in attendance at the launch event were intrigued by the new offering. "Logomark has shown great initiative and foresight in developing the new technology that will provide distributors with a fully integrated platform for the design and production of custom packaging and other collateral materials," said Larry Cohen, CEO of Top

40 distributor Axis Promotions (asi/128263). "While we have always had the ability to make custom packaging, it has usually required using a third-party manufacturer and the cost was usually high, especially for low quantity items."

Logomark said it made a "huge financial investment" and spent two years to develop this new offering. Ultimately, it's a technology product that provides distributors with the ability to create printed materials and custom packaging for every item in Logomark's product line.

"Although the notion of using custom packaging to enhance the deliverable of the products we sell is not new, it has traditionally

been an expensive and dysfunctional process, making it difficult to achieve," said Mike Eloff, CEO of distributor firm Shumsky (asi/326300). "What Logomark is launching is a bold move within an industry where the distributor sales teams are relatively slow to change. It will be interesting to see how many distributors embrace this and how soon other suppliers follow suit."

Logomark's entry in to the printing and packaging space will be rolled out gradually between now and next year. It will be beta tested between August and December 2014, and the company is expected to widely launch the program in early 2015. – AC & MB

# Barton Nelson Shuts Down

As first reported in a Breaking News Alert, Top 40 supplier firm Barton Nelson (asi/38670) has closed and shut its operations. *Counselor* has confirmed that the company recently laid off 60 employees in its Kansas City office and about 300 in its facility in Mexico. Contacted by *Counselor*, Bart Nelson, CEO of the company, and Vickie Woodruff, owner/vice president and a member of the Nelson family, declined to discuss the situation publicly.

While nobody at Barton Nelson is currently answering calls, the company's outgoing voice message on its main phone line right now says: "After 53 years, BNI is being forced to close its doors by our lenders. We will not be accepting new orders and are



unable to ship current orders. We are extremely sorry our lenders put us in this position. On behalf of BNI employees and the Nelson family, we thank you for your friendship and loyalty. Wishing you the very best."

In early 2011, Advantage Capital Partners, an equity company with offices across the country, provided \$5.7 million in financing to Barton Nelson.

At the time, the company said the capital would be used to fund its operations and growth initiatives.

"We were struggling to maintain the business when we partnered with Advantage Capital," Bart Nelson said at the time in an Advantage Capital newsletter. "Their willingness and ability to provide funding when conventional lenders had turned

us away means that we can continue to serve our customers, meet our financial objectives, grow our business, and provide stable jobs during a challenging time for the industry."

Barton Nelson was founded by B.J. Nelson as an ad agency in 1961. The company purchased BEBCO in 1975 and entered the ad specialty market as a result. By 1980, it had phased out its ad agency business to focus solely on being a promotional products supplier, and since 1985, it has been listed by *Counselor* as one of the largest suppliers in the market.

Barton Nelson was ranked 35th in *Counselor's* Top 40 last year, after reporting 2012 North American promotional product sales of \$39 million. —AC

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# Advertising Spending Set to Rise

Improving economies and popular events like the World Cup and Winter Olympics will compel advertisers to drive the largest increase in global ad spending in four years in 2014. That's according to a report from Magna Global, which predicts worldwide ad revenue will rise 6.4% to \$516 billion this year.

"The global advertising economy returns to robust growth as digital media spend is growing by double-digits and television is benefitting from the various non-recurring events of 2014," said Vincent Letang, director of global forecasting at Magna Global.

In North America, ad revenues will accelerate 6% to \$168 billion, Magna predicts. Beyond the World Cup and

Winter Olympics, the rise is being bolstered by American midterm elections and sizable outlay from insurance companies, health-care institutions and local governments, which are communicating about the implementation of the Affordable Care Act.

As part of the ad revenue upsurge in North America, digital is expected to do particularly well, increasing by 14.4%. Perhaps unsurprisingly, mobile and social media ad spending will play key roles in powering the digital increase on this continent. Magna forecasts that mobile spend will soar 110%, while social media will jump 53%. Worldwide, spending on digital media will grow by \$20 billion to \$140 billion, Magna



World Cup Bounce?

predicts. "The only losers in that picture are other traditional media categories that are losing market share at an accelerated rate," said Letang.

Elsewhere, Western Europe will see ad spending increases of 2.2% this year, Magna predicts,

while ad spend in China will shoot up by \$5.5 billion. After the U.S. and China, Brazil and Indonesia are the individual markets that will experience the most growth, increasing a combined \$4.5 billion, according to the Magna report. – CR



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# New Loan Service Available for Small Businesses

Square, the mobile payments company, has introduced a new service to give loans to companies. In June, Square launched Square Capital, which advances money to small businesses that are in a cash flow crunch or need quick access to capital to grow their companies. Square will at least initially only make the service available to merchants that are already using its mobile credit-card processing service.

Small businesses won't need to apply for a loan, but rather they'll pay it back over time by Square taking a varying percentage of the company's

future sales that come through its payment processing service. Square usually takes 2.75% of each transaction, but a small business that took a Square cash advance might pay back 10% on top of the 2.75% until their advance is paid off.

Unlike a traditional loan, Square's cash advance has no timetable for repayment, meaning businesses pay more when sales are good, but aren't handcuffed with payments when things slow down.

"Square Capital is part of a holistic suite of services we're building," says Gokul Rajaram, Square's product engineering



lead. "When we think about what we should work on or what we should build, it's all about asking, 'Do these services help sellers run and grow their business?' Square Capital helps them grow their business."

Square says that it has been piloting the cash advance program with "thousands" of businesses since last year, but is now rolling it out to its full user base. So far, the company says it has loaned out "tens of millions of dollars," according to Rajaram. "We want to advance as much capital as we can," he says. — AC

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## Mergers & Acquisitions

# Crystal D Acquires Crystal Impressions

Minnesota-based supplier Crystal D (asi/47759) has acquired Las Vegas-based Crystal Impressions (asi/47782) in a deal that was completed on June 2. “We are fortunate to acquire this high-quality company,” said Chuck Dahlgren, president of Crystal D. “This acquisition is a strategic decision, focused on growing our business portfolio and offering more options to our customers.”

Per the terms of the agreement, Crystal Impressions will retain its brand identity, although it is relocating its

production facility to St. Paul, MN. Orders will be processed as usual and Crystal Impressions is not expecting any interruptions in service. Crystal Impressions’ Chris Robbins, Allison Robbins, and Jessica Ellis will be moving to Minnesota to continue the company’s operations. “We truly believe that this acquisition will give our customers, and Crystal D’s customers, a diverse product offering that is unavailable anywhere else in the crystal award and gift industry,” said Chris Robbins, executive vice president.

### ► Halo Acquires Chesapeake Business Solutions

Top 40 distributor Halo Branded Solutions (asi/356000) has acquired Hanover, MD-based distributor Chesapeake Business Solutions (asi/161467). As part of the transaction, Chesapeake’s sales team and key administrative personnel will now join Halo, as will Neil Van Malderghem, the company’s founder and president. “Neil and his team have built a great business and will help us expand our footprint in an important market with blue-chip clients,” said Dale

Limes, Halo’s senior vice president of sales. “We are pleased to reward them for their efforts.”

Halo’s Baltimore-area salespeople will now relocate to Chesapeake’s office. “Halo recognized the value we place in our client relationships, and shared our vision of the potential we can achieve with strong financial, technological, and marketing support,” said Van Malderghem. “The end result is an opportunity to better serve our current clients while we focus on acquiring additional business.”

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# CounselorMag.com

Trends and insights from our website

Commentary



## ◀ Growth Plans

The strategies that create highly successful companies can be rather varied. For Kathy Cheng and Redwood Classics Apparel (asi/81627), *Counselor's* Fastest-Growing Canadian company in the ad specialty market, it took a near going-out-of-business and complete reevaluation of their business plan before achieving hyper-growth. "We considered shutting down completely," says Cheng, "but our staff motivated us to continue on." For *Counselor's* Fastest-Growing Supplier and Distributor this year, rapid success is the result of a diverse client base and innovative product designs. Check out their stories now at [www.CounselorMag.com](http://www.CounselorMag.com).

## Only Exceptional Counts

An excerpt from a recent *Counselor Commentary* on our website. Go to [www.CounselorMag.com](http://www.CounselorMag.com) to view the complete archive.

When something happens you can't control, what will really keep your clients coming back? The answer is exceptional, unrivaled customer service.

No matter the size of your company, you should have a personal and authentic relationship with your clients. Know their needs, their struggles, their birthdays, their pets' names. Respond faster, deliver more accurately, write notes not e-mail, and consistently give them more than they expect.

Ritz-Carlton recently showed why its service is legendary. A little boy vacationing with his family at the Ritz in Amelia Island, FL, accidentally left behind a stuffed animal named Joshie. When the family got home and realized Joshie was missing, the only way the boy's dad could get him to fall asleep was to tell a little lie: Joshie was just taking an extra-long vacation. Fortunately, that same night, staff at the Ritz found Joshie in the hotel's laundry and called the family. But instead of just mailing the stuffed animal back, Ritz staffers gave Joshie an actual, extended vacation, taking pictures of him wearing sunglasses on a poolside lounge chair, getting a massage, and making friends with other furry creatures. Eventually, Joshie was returned to the boy, pictures in tow, all rested up.



## Safe and Sound

"Safety items can appeal to markets such as automotive, health care, and education. There's a wide application for this category."

— Dave Vagnoni, *Counselor* senior editor, in the latest episode of *Counselor Product Close-Up*, online now.

## By The Numbers

# 55%

The number of distributors who say they are currently using e-commerce to attain revenues.

## Facebook Comments We Loved

What is your favorite summertime song?

Gina Barreca Sherman  
*Everything sounds better in the summer but if I'm picking a fav - "Don't you worry 'bout a thing" - Stevie Wonder*

Pumice T. Mendola  
*"Summertime," DJ Jazzy Jeff & the Fresh Prince*

Zach Lowery  
*"Summer Nights" by Rascal Flatts*

Fran Ford Jr  
*"Help Me Rhonda" by The Beach Boys*



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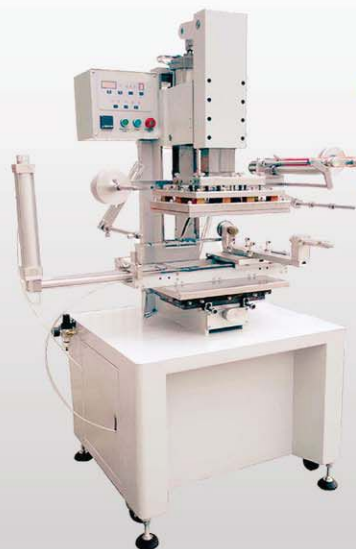


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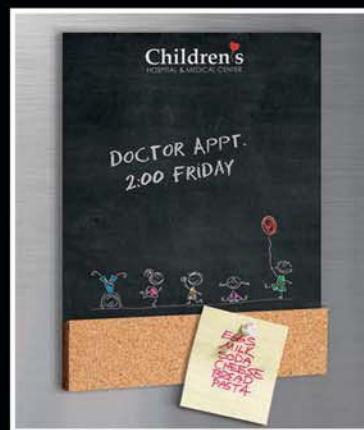


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simplicity...leave some  
open white space.

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Include a tagline or  
marketing mantra.



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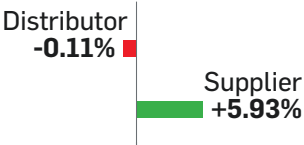


# Stock Report

## Suppliers Top Distributors

Manufacturing stocks outshine sellers in June.

► **Index Watch**  
May 30-July 1



5/30/14-7/1/14								
Company	Stock Exchange	Symbol	52-week high	52-week low	Per-Share Price (7/1/14)	Market Capitalization (in millions)	Per-Share Change	Percent Change
DISTRIBUTORS								
► 4imprint Group	LSE	FOURL	£7.52	£5.05	£6.46	£169	(0.34) ↓	-4.93%
► Ace Marketing & Promotions Inc.	OTC	AMKT	0.78	0.32	0.43	29	(0.03) ↓	-6.52%
► Inner Workings Inc.	NASDAQ	INWK	12.29	5.54	8.50	433	0.78 ↑	10.10%
► New England Business Services Inc. <i>(Div. Deluxe Corp.)</i>	NYSE	DLX	60.52	35.16	58.58	3,010	2.84 ↑	5.10%
► Tic Toc <i>(Div. Omnicom Group Inc.)</i>	NYSE	OMC	76.87	59.70	71.22	18,560	0.16 ↑	0.23%
► Staples Promotional Products <i>(Div. Staples Inc.)</i>	NASDAQ	SPLS	17.30	10.70	10.84	7,120	(0.53) ↓	-4.66%
SUPPLIERS								
► 3M Promotional Markets Dept. <i>(Div. 3M Corp.)</i>	NYSE	MMM	145.53	108.21	143.24	94,580	0.85 ↑	0.60%
► American Apparel Inc.	AMEX	APP	2.09	0.46	0.90	151	0.29 ↑	47.54%
► BIC Corp.	PAR	BIC	100.75	75.01	99.78	4,751	3.92 ↑	4.09%
► Cutter & Buck <i>(Div. New Wave Group)</i>	STO	NEWAB	47.30	31.20	41.20	1,921	(3.50) ↓	-7.83%
► Delta Apparel Inc.	AMEX	DLA	19.23	13.25	14.32	116	(0.70) ↓	-4.66%
► Ennis Inc. <i>(Parent company of Admore and Alstyle Apparel)</i>	NYSE	EBF	19.59	13.54	15.26	406	0.06 ↑	0.39%
► Fossil Special Markets Division	NASDAQ	FOSL	134.99	98.53	104.52	5,620	0.12 ↑	0.11%
► Hanesbrands	NYSE	HBI	99.99	51.81	98.44	9,850	14.54 ↑	17.33%
► Hilton Apparel Group <i>(Div. Jarden Corp.)</i>	NYSE	JAH	64.01	42.88	59.35	7,700	2.62 ↑	4.62%
► J.M. Smucker Co.	NYSE	SJM	114.72	87.10	106.57	10,880	3.57 ↑	3.47%
► Johnson Worldwide Assoc./JWA	NASDAQ	JOUT	28.75	19.61	25.80	254	1.33 ↑	5.44%
► Lancer Label <i>(Div. Mail Well Inc.)</i>	NYSE	CVO	3.92	1.96	3.71	252	0.61 ↑	19.68%
► Lee Printwear <i>(Div. VFCorp. Acquisition Co.)</i>	NYSE	VFC	64.08	46.40	63	27,270	0.32 ↑	0.51%
► Pfaelzer Brothers <i>(Div. ConAgra)</i>	NYSE	CAG	37.28	28.09	29.68	12,670	(2.49) ↓	-7.74%
► Sanford Business-To-Business <i>(Div. Newell Rubbermaid)</i>	NYSE	NWL	32.54	24.32	30.99	8,690	1.61 ↑	5.48%

All prices in U.S. dollars unless otherwise noted.

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Dye Sublimated  
Velvet Pillow



# Number Crunch

## Score With Outerwear

Data shows that promotional jackets generate the best advertiser recall of any promotional product.



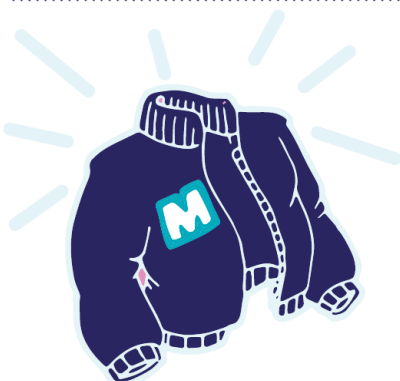
# 95%

### Total Recall

Jackets have the best advertiser recall of any promotional product. A whopping 95% of those who own logoed outerwear can recall the advertiser's name.

# 9%

## OF U.S. CONSUMERS HAVE PROMOTIONAL OUTERWEAR

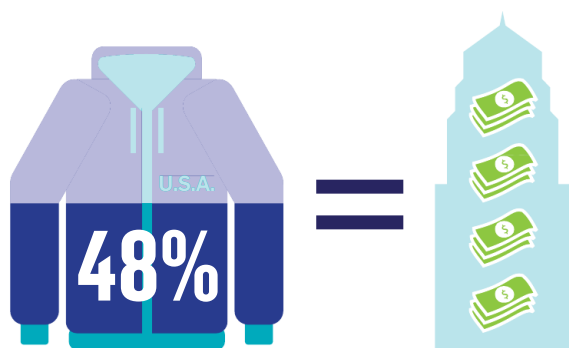


### Bundle Up!

Outerwear recipients think very favorably about the advertiser — especially in Sydney, where 86% of consumers think more positively about an advertiser after receiving a promotional jacket.

### In the Money

Those with household incomes above \$100,000 are slightly more likely to have branded outerwear than those with lower incomes.

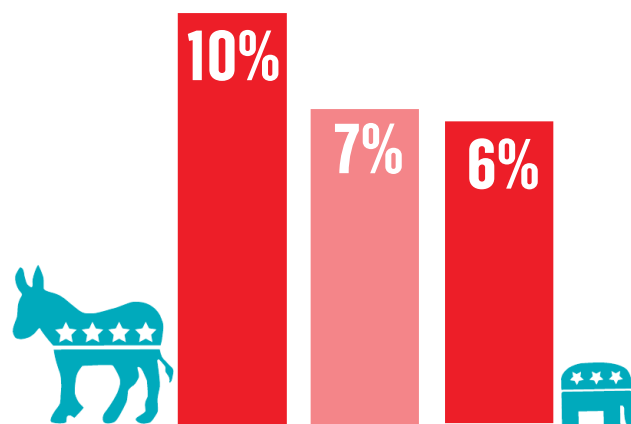


### Business-Builder

In the U.S., nearly half (48%) of all outerwear recipients say they were more likely to do business with an advertiser after they were given a logoed jacket.

### To the Left

Democrats are more likely to have logoed jackets than members of other political parties.





# PICTURE PERFECT



Tam Chandler: Art Department

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# Product Picks

A collection of unique products

By Chuck Zak



1



2

## 1. LAUNCH BREAK

Have a blast with this soft-throw rocket (26583) that flies far and lands softly and safely. Good-time giveaway for holiday parades and picnics or for businesses promoting speed of delivery. Available from Alpi (asi/34415); [www.ALPI.net](http://www.ALPI.net)

## 2. MOBILE COMPUTING

The intuitive design of the Scout backpack (31305103) includes a padded 16" laptop compartment and electronic device pocket, both with anti-scratch lining. High-value incentive for college programs or to promote university presses. Available from TRG Group (asi/90507); [www.trgcorporate.com](http://www.trgcorporate.com)

## 3. HEAT BEATER

Simply remove the plug and fill this easy-to-grip hand mister (FA510) with water for a quick refresher at any hot event. Includes battery and carabiner and makes a great promotion for outdoor concerts, fairs or church functions. Available from Way2Cool (asi/95735); [www.way2coolpromo.com](http://www.way2coolpromo.com)



3

## 4. PORTABLE POWER

Charge smartphones on the go with this compact keychain swivel USB car charger (51116). Just insert into the lighter port then attach your own cable. Nice item for used-car dealers or credit unions. Available from Innovation Line (asi/62660); [www.innovation-line.com](http://www.innovation-line.com)

## 5. UNLOCK POTENTIAL

The retro, handmade appearance and antique brass finish of this die-cast bottle opener (BOL170) brings a high perceived value in a small promo. Perfect for upscale pubs or the growing craft brewer market. Available from EMT (asi/52263); [www.emteasy.com](http://www.emteasy.com)



4



5

## 6. SLAM DUNK

Share the team spirit with this 100% cotton velour sport ball towel (FRBK-20) collection in a variety of stock fiber-reactive designs. Fun for college or company teams and charity tournaments. Available from Pro Towels (asi/79750); [www.protowels.com](http://www.protowels.com)

## 7. BRAND THE HAND

This finger-shaped rally hand (RH2) is made from high-density 12-pt. poster board with liquid lamination on both sides for a high-gloss finish. Big fun for celebrating corporate achievements or to rally kids' sports or academic teams. Available from Lion/Circle (asi/67620); [www.lioncircle.com](http://www.lioncircle.com)

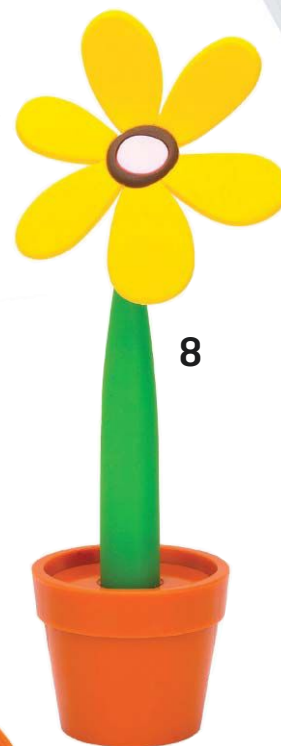
## 8. PETAL POWERED

This whimsical flower pen (FLP66) features a rubber flower topper that wiggles when you write and an orange pot-shaped pen holder. A humorous product for parks, nature preserves and flower shops. Available from Lincoln Line (asi/52710); [www.lincolinline.com](http://www.lincolinline.com)

## 9. WITH A TWIST

Get a quick jolt of citrus and chill your water at the same time with this 24-oz. dishwasher-proof bottle (J1) that features a freezer unit to keep water cold. Great to promote health food stores, farmer's markets or clients in agriculture. Available from Ad-N-Art (asi/31518); [www.adnart.com](http://www.adnart.com)

9



8

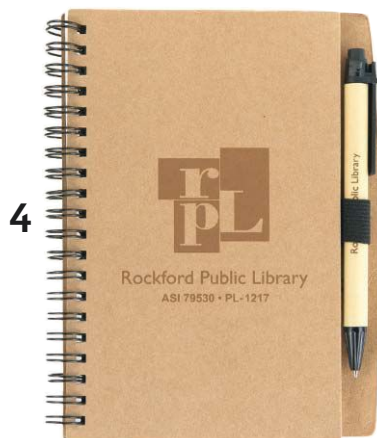


6



7





### 1. SMUDGE MATCH

Clean annoying fingerprints from tablets and other devices with this elastic microfiber screen cleaner (072) that easily combines with a folio-style tablet cover. Stylish, savvy product that's great for fashion-related media or women's wear retailers. Available from iSlip Lite (asi/62931); [www.cooper-product.com](http://www.cooper-product.com)

### 2. LINK BAIT

Simply push the color-changing LED button on the three-port USB SmartButton hub (1046007) to launch a pre-programmed website. Perfect for online contests, new websites or SEO services. Available from Buzline (asi/42963); [www.buzline.com](http://www.buzline.com)

### 3. TYPE RIGHT

Get high-end appeal with this artificial-leather bluetooth keyboard case (PC-KR78UKEY) for all 7" and 8" devices. The easel-style and 120-degree angle viewing make this a nice recognition gift for employees in sales or customer service. Available from Prima By Colemax Group LLC (asi/45704); [www.colemaxgroup.com](http://www.colemaxgroup.com)

### 4. GOOD ON PAPER

This stone-paper spiral notebook (PL-1217) includes a pen and 60 pages of water-resistant ruled paper. An eco-responsible, 100% tree-free product that's great for students or to promote clean energy suppliers. Available from Prime Line (asi/79530); [www.primeline.com](http://www.primeline.com)

### 5. DEAR HUNTER

The camouflage design on this soft six-pack cooler (DFL600C) adds visual appeal while the removable liner makes cleaning and replacing a breeze. Ideal for campgrounds or as a promotion for any media aimed at outdoor sportsmen.

Available from BagZazz (asi/37966); [www.bagzazz.com](http://www.bagzazz.com)

### 6. SAVING FACE

The Cheeko face mask (FM8244202-1) protects nose, cheeks and ears from both cold and UV rays and is available in many colors and designs. Something unique for winter resorts or all-weather service providers. Available from Beko Xtreme Gear (asi/39559); [www.bekogear.com](http://www.bekogear.com)

### 7. FEEDING TIME

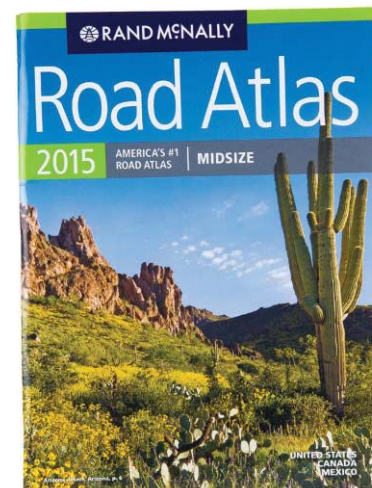
Keep pet food fresh with this can lid (P602) that fits both large and small cans and keeps them sealed. Product contains a large imprint area, and would be great for adoption events, shelters and pet food brands. Available from Bay State (asi/38980); [www.bay-state.com](http://www.bay-state.com)

### 8. GOING PLACES

This popular softcover North American atlas (0528011545) contains maps for every U.S. state and Canadian province, including over 50 North American cities. Choose one of the high-impact customization options for clients in auto sales or insurance. Available from The Book Company (asi/41010); [www.thebookco.com](http://www.thebookco.com)

### 9. DRINKING BUDDY

The fun party cup design and large handle make this 17-oz. stoneware mug (46014) a perfect choice for coffee brands and grocery stores or anyone looking to logo someone's favorite new morning mug. Available from Norwood (asi/74400); [www.norwood.com](http://www.norwood.com)





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# Case Studies

Profile • Management • Promo

## Profile

### How We Grow Through RFPs

A good price is just part of a winning pitch.

By Dave Vagnoni

Responding to requests for proposals – commonly known as RFPs – can be challenging and tedious, but can also offer your firm tremendous revenue potential.

“The moment you receive the RFP documentation from the client, review the document in its entirety with your team – accounting, IT, procurement, and fulfillment,” says Carol de Ville, president of The Branding Company. “It is vital to the success of your submission to clearly understand what a client is requiring.”

Read on to get de Ville’s advice on scoring RFP deals.

#### **Q: What are the benefits of RFPs?**

**A:** You can acquire *Fortune* 500 clients. Then, you can build your customer portfolio with contracted long-term business. Typically, RFP contracts are based on a three-year performance with evergreen renewals. Through these agreements, you can plan your growth and negotiate with suppliers, staff accordingly and set long-term objectives.

#### **Q: Are RFPs always just about price?**

**A:** There are some scenarios where the entire contract is



**Carol de Ville** is the president of The Branding Company.

based on price. A number of years ago, some *Fortune* 500 companies were involved in an online bidding process. Distributors pre-qualified and registered, received a bidding portal and user identification number along with a bidding calendar that quantified the time, the item, and the quantity. Then, the online bid transpired. But, in most cases, it is not all about price.

#### **Q: So what should a firm focus on then?**

**A:** It’s important to identify your firm’s unique positioning statement, what types of awards you have won in the past five years, team members that will be responsible for a project, along with what education,

especially industry education, they’ve earned. Be clear about what makes your firm special in managing large corporate contracts.

#### **Q: RFP answers need to have great detail, too, right?**

**A:** The process is very specific and the distributor must adhere to the submission requirements. For example, each section is submitted in a very specified method and pricing is in a sealed envelope. The evaluation team will review and quantify the distributor responses, then evaluate and grade each category and section. Generally, within the client’s RFP, the customer will share the percentages by category and section. This is important, as you need to understand that if IT requirements are worth 15% of your submission, then your team needs to respond accordingly and not with a short answer.

#### **Q: How long is a typical RFP response?**

**A:** About 20 to 30 pages, which includes a client program overview, specifications, a copy of the contractual agreements and a cost matrix.

#### **Q: What markets are RFPs most common in?**

**A:** We see more formalized RFPs being issued across all industries, but more specifically in the financial sector, oil and gas industry, government services, as well as universities and colleges.

#### **Q: What role can suppliers play in RFPs?**

**A:** One of the most important pieces in responding to RFPs is your supplier partner relationships. You need to provide your supplier partners with the most amount of lead time to develop their pricing matrix, offerings, suggested substitution and new innovative product ideas. They are the experts, so take the time to include them.

#### **Q: When should a distributor pass on RFPs?**

**A:** There are some cases where an RFP is only based on price and there is no opportunity to submit your company’s strengths, capabilities and experiences. These types of bidding RFPs completely undermine our industry and the professionalism that we bring to marketing and promotional solutions.

Read an expanded Q&A at [www.counselormag.com](http://www.counselormag.com) and click on “Case Studies” at top of the page.

# Management

## Be a Better Boss

How to become a more effective employer.

By Shane Dale

If you want to improve your leadership style, Joel Garfinkle believes you should start by being less critical and more positive.

“A really great boss is someone who’s going to motivate you by building your self-confidence and help you grow and develop, instead of beating you down, always looking for the negative,” says Garfinkle, an executive coach and author. “Even though that sounds logical, there are many bosses out there that don’t do this. They don’t know any differently and they’ve never been taught differently.”

Could you benefit from tweaking your approach? Or would you like to train your managers to become better leaders? Here are some specific steps to take.

### Set Expectations For Staff

Cut out the uncertainty. That’s the advice of Robert Wendover, author of *Smart Hiring*. “The problem is bosses don’t necessarily communicate their expectations,” he says. “They just assume that because they’re invested in the business, everybody they hire is going to be invested in the business. That creates some interesting challenges because they’ll get upset if they think a person doesn’t work as hard as they think they should.”

One way Wendover



believes managers can avoid a disconnect with employees is to relay exactly how their business needs to operate to be profitable. “I say to employers all the time, ‘I dare you to walk up to the average person within your business and ask them how the business makes money,’” Wendover says. “The average person will be able to explain the business model, but they won’t know about the cost of goods, how marketing takes place, and what the difference is between marketing and sales.”

Wendover thinks once

employees understand operations better, they’ll be more apt to problem solve and be more efficient. “Just by nature, they might start looking for ways to save money,” he says.

Another good reason to communicate expectations is the generational divide, with less-seasoned staff needing a bit more direction in many cases. “Younger employees coming into the marketplace are more distracted because of digital technology,” Wendover says. “They’re a lot more externally motivated than internally

motivated, which means you have to sit down and say, ‘This is what you’re going to do, and this is how you’re going to do it.’”

### Offer More Praise

Complimenting employees when they meet or exceed expectations is a powerful motivational tactic. “I’ve heard many of my clients who have been managers ask, ‘If the employees are doing the job they’re supposed to do, why should I praise them?’ But even though they’re doing the job they’re supposed to be doing, people thrive



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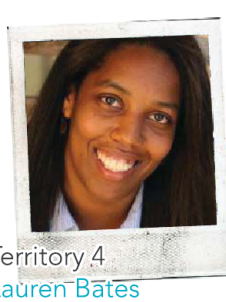
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on praise, recognition and acknowledgement,” Garfinkle says.

Ultimately, good managers look for opportunities to point out excellent work because the approach establishes a sense of loyalty. “People quit their jobs not because of bad pay, but because of bad bosses,” Garfinkle says. “If you want to be a good boss, that managerial relationship is an important one.”

### Take Time to Listen

Along with regularly communicating with employees, Garfinkle thinks it’s equally critical to listen to ideas and concerns that staffers may have, and do so on a consistent basis. “Another important thing is making time for one-on-one meetings,” he says. “Sit down and answer any problems or challenges, and help provide employees with direction.” How often should you hold these meetings? “These should occur weekly or twice a month,” says Garfinkle. “Talk about areas where they might need resources or support that you can help provide.”

Garfinkle suggests another key element to the one-on-one forum is creating specific objectives for each employee. At follow-up meetings, you can then discuss those objectives, in order to foster a sense of accountability.

The key, says Garfinkle, is to give feedback. “You can give negative feedback in a way that generates positive results,” he says. “You don’t want to provide criticism in front of anyone other than the person involved, so when a critique is necessary, encourage self-directed feedback as much as possible.”

Garfinkle believes bosses can phrase their questions in ways that come across as less accusatory and more inquisitive. Also, when employees critique themselves, it can be a confidence builder rather than a threat. If, for example, a major mistake was made during a presentation to a client, Garfinkle suggests you say, “You’re a creative person – what will you do differently next time? Now, you’re giving the person a chance to look at it and create their own solutions,” he says. This will avoid the initial reaction to defend themselves, which “leaves no room for positive action.”

Managers should also ask employees to name any colleagues who are doing an exceptional job and may be deserving of additional recognition. “It’s a nice little thing I’ve done over the years for my clients, and they really enjoy it,” Garfinkle says.

### Encourage Feedback

Good bosses make employees feel comfortable enough to critique their leadership performance, Garfinkle says. A useful, one-on-one conversation might begin with a straightforward statement like this: “I want to know what things are going well, what I can improve upon, what things I need to stop doing and continue doing, what ways I’m helping you grow and develop, and what ways I’m limiting your growth,” Garfinkle says.

In particular, Garfinkle thinks small-business owners often struggle in the area of micromanaging their employees. “You’ll notice you’re so in the details and in the weeds that you’re actually doing

## Motivating Subpar Employees

In dealing with underperforming staffers, Robert Wendover, author of *Smart Hiring*, says there’s a phrase that managers can use to confront these employees without sounding accusatory.

“One of the phrases that I use all the time is, ‘Help me understand. Help me understand why you’re doing this. Help me understand why you didn’t do this,’ and so on,” he says. “It’s a nicer way of calling them on the carpet to answer for their actions, whatever those actions happen to be.”

By using this phrase, Wendover believes employees will be encouraged to provide a satisfactory answer. “If you don’t get an adequate response, then you say, ‘OK, help me understand what’s causing that based on what you just said,’” he says.

The goal, according to Wendover, is to take time to really listen to what your employee has to say. “You want to place the onus on them, but at the same time, you want to be focused on them and really be focused in the moment,” he says. “If I’m looking past you while I’m talking to you, they can detect that, and they’ll think, ‘This guy’s not engaged.’”

On the flip side, Wendover says managers should avoid using a particular phrase that employees dread. “I caution employers about saying, ‘Will you come into my office?’ That is the universal fear of every employee, regardless of level and talent,” he says. “If somebody in the presence of others says, ‘Come into my office,’ everyone goes, ‘Oooh, I wonder what’s going to happen to them.’”

A much better approach is to pull a person aside and handle situations privately. “Talk outside, or take the person for coffee, and find a way to do it in a less threatening way,” Wendover says.

the work for the person. You’re not letting people develop and learn,” he says.

That’s why giving employees permission to speak up when they believe their boss is micromanaging them is another element of a healthy employer-employee relationship. Get feedback from employees by providing details, specifics and support to be successful, and admit if you have a tendency to micromanage. What you’re doing by putting that flaw out in the open, Garfinkle says, is giving employees permission to respond with honesty, not fear.

### Find a Mentor

Besides feedback from employees, Wendover advises seeking an impartial viewpoint, too. This can come from outside

of the business. “It should typically be somebody outside the organization who you can meet with for coffee once a month and talk things through,” Wendover says.

Wendover thinks these kinds of mentors can be useful in pinpointing and diagnosing problems at your office, and help you understand whether the issue lies with you, your employees, or both. “If you complain about your employees too much, they might push back and say, ‘Why is it that all your employees are so horrible?’” he says. “That gives the boss a chance to reflect and realize that they’re not horrible. They’ll say, ‘Well, then why are you complaining about them so much?’ It’s those types of conversations that are valuable.”





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# Promo Close-Up Running On Dunkin’

A promotional beanie wins big on race day.

By Jean Erickson

Dunkin’ Donuts set out to prove that America really does run on Dunkin’, as it served up coffee, comfort and cheer to runners and spectators at the New York City Marathon. For the seventh year, Dunkin’ Donuts was an official, and highly visible, race sponsor, setting up cheering hubs and refueling stations at locations along the course.

Beginning at 1:00 a.m. on race day, Dunkin’ started brewing 12,000 gallons of hot coffee in the marathon’s Start Village to energize the runners. In addition to providing a caffeine jolt, a key component of Dunkin’s presence was the branded fleece beanies distributed to runners at the start of the race, a prized souvenir of the marathon. Some 17,000 runners received and wore the hats in the 26.2-mile, cold-weather race. The colors of the hat – pink and orange – left no doubt what the sponsoring brand was.

“This is the fifth year we’ve distributed our fleece hats at the ING New York City Marathon,” says Cathy Chavenet, Dunkin’ Brands’ senior field marketing manager, Metro New York. While the design has varied slightly over the years, the brand’s signature colors never change.

Given the chilly temperatures during the race, the hats proved to be practical and stylish accessories. “It’s a wonderful takeaway for those attending



**Dunkin’ Donuts distributed 17,000 of these branded fleece hats at the most recent New York City Marathon.**

the event, and you see people during the winter months wearing the hats all throughout the New York tri-state area,” Chavenet says.

Dunkin’ Donuts considers the coffee and hats it distributes to be a significant part of the marathon – and a great opportunity to connect with customers. “Our presence at the starting line with the complimentary coffee for runners and volunteers, as well as the fleece hats, drives brand awareness among a key audience,” Chavenet says.

The hats are exclusive to the New York City Marathon and were only available on race day, making them a sought-after commodity. Some lucky race spectators were also able to receive the free caps to keep them warm on the sidelines at 14 Dunkin’ “refuel” stations along the route, while supplies lasted.

Dunkin’ also set up a station where tens of thousands of fans could create special signs to cheer on runners as they crossed into Manhattan. In addition, Dunkin’ partnered with the New York Mets to bring their brand



**The mascots for the New York Mets and Dunkin’ Donuts partnered to ramp up brand exposure and cheer on runners at the New York City Marathon.**

mascots to this location to join in the festivities. A long line of fans waited to have pictures taken with the mascots, creating even more brand loyalty. The cheer station was designed to be a fun way to engage with fans as they made signs for family and friends.

“I can’t think of a more appropriate slogan for the New York City Marathon than ‘America Runs on Dunkin’,” says Chavenet, adding, “Dunkin’ coffee and baked goods keeps our guests running every day, and the marathon is the premier running event in the United States.”

Team Dunkin’ – a running group consisting of several franchisees and employees – participated in the race for a seventh year as well, sporting the branded gear, of course. The team represented “everyday, hardworking people doing something extraordinary,” Chavenet says.



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A man and a woman are running towards the camera on a paved surface. The woman on the left has long blonde hair and is wearing a grey knit beanie, a bright red zip-up jacket, and black gloves. The man on the right is wearing a grey zip-up jacket with a 'COOPERSTOWN RUNNING CLUB' logo on the chest and black gloves. The background is a dark, textured wall.

# **LIGHT ON WEIGHT HEAVY ON WARMTH**

CHAMPION PERFORMANCE FLEECE

PLAY LIKE A  
**Champion**



# Apparel

Trends • Strategies • Showcase

## Trends

### Checked Off

Check patterns are gaining in popularity – both at retail and in the corporate promotional market.

By Rachel Abraham

Check styles are a trendy print in fashion, offering a versatile, dynamic and abstract design that creates a cool visual effect. High-end fashion labels like Louis Vuitton (with its Damier collection) and Burberry (with its Heritage Check pattern) love them, as do casual trendsetters like Ralph Lauren and J. Crew with their gingham shirts and tops. The classic print can either make a bold or simple statement, while adding depth to a fashion piece.

The check print is making waves in the promotional market as well, as companies and organizations look for ways to separate their apparel from the traditional offerings. “The days of printing over solid colors only is long gone, in my opinion,” says Andrea Engel, vice president of supplier and portfolio management for alphabroder (asi/34063). “Thanks to extreme popularity in fashion for pattern and print, we are seeing our industry embrace the trend and delivering great-looking decoration on patterned apparel.”

There are a variety of popular check styles, all of them incredibly versatile: bold checks,

houndstooth, windowpane, plaid, gingham, weaves and more. They vary in style and size and also come in a variety of color schemes that provide pieces with personality and character. There are feminine prints, large all-over prints, quilted looks, print blocking and simple checks, and they can be featured on jackets, woven shirts and polos.

“Check prints are timeless, versatile and add a bit of nostalgia,” says Jennifer Tsai, vice president of operations for Lilac Bloom and designer for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125). “The checkered pattern can add various amounts of design and interest depending on the size and colors of the checks,”

Nancy Robitaille, head designer for Fersten Worldwide Inc./Fila Golf (asi/53974), cites a check base with a floral overlay as an especially exciting pattern option right now. “The check trend is popular because it creates depth in the fabric,” she says. “It gives the garment a higher perceived value due to the classic aesthetic of the design.”

Checks can be bold or subtle. For example, Fersten offers



Ginghams are one of many popular check patterns in the market. This Alternative Apparel patterned hoodie features a full zipper and contemporary fit. Available from alphabroder.

a heavyweight jacket with a checked patterned front. “The plaid fabric design hints at subtle texture,” says Robitaille, “yet the jacket can be decorated using most of our decoration techniques and the pattern does not interfere with a logo.”

Tsai suggests industries like hospitality, resort and corporate clients for these patterns. “Checked patterns can also be very sporty and would work well in the car/racing industry,” she says. Casual or sophisticated, you can “check” the box for either.

# Strategies Workout Partner

Athletic apparel is gaining traction in many sectors. Here's how to capitalize on its popularity.

By Corrie Purvis

In recent years, workout apparel has flourished as a fashion trend. According to Global Industry Analysts, the world's sports apparel industry is expected to exceed \$126 billion by 2015. Top designers, including Calvin Klein, Stella McCartney and Alexander Wang, have created their own collections of athletic attire, blurring the lines between what one can wear to the gym and to the office.

While the general public's demand for athletic attire is growing quite consistently, schools and nonprofit organizations are two of the top markets for promotional clients, according to Ashley Nielsen, marketing manager for S&S Activewear (asi/84358). "Performance apparel can be used for athletic uniforms as well as race day giveaways," she says.

Women are also a major demographic in the workout apparel industry. Fashionable lines of yoga and athletic gear from companies like Lululemon and SweatyBetty have combined the desire to stay fit and stay trendy.

The classic polyester workout T-shirt remains a popular item due to its light, breathable qualities (ideal for any athlete), but new products are emerging. "The trends for workout apparel can go either way – fashion or comfort. Quarter-zip athletic sweatshirts and pullovers have increased in

popularity recently due to their versatility," says Nielsen. "Wearers have the ability to dress these products up or dress them down. They have a fashion-forward look and are comfortable for daily wear."

Performance attributes are a major reason that workout apparel has sold so well and is increasing in popularity. Products like the Champion Vapor tees and Hanes Cool DRI shirts from Hanes Branded Printwear (asi/59528) feature fast drying times, helping to cool athletes down after a workout. These garments are also versatile enough for a number of uses, including team uniforms, corporate events and schools.

But performance features benefit more than just athletes, and these attributes have become the real reason that this category of the apparel sector has become so popular in the promotional market. Hanes Director of Marketing Rachel Newman says that nine out of 10 consumers wear their athletic apparel for activities other than exercise. "More and more, consumers look for performance features such as wicking, quick drying and UV protection, which are ideal for any number of end-uses," she says.

For this reason, promotional products distributors are able to tout the long-lasting benefits of athletic apparel to clients. The items will be worn not only while working out,



S&S Activewear offers consumers the Adidas ¼ zip pullover. This shirt is not only appropriate for a jog on a cool day, but also perfect for layering to complete a casual look.

but also on weekend at parties, during the week in the office and even at night for casual events. It's this expanded opportunity for impressions outside of the home that make

the athletic apparel category so versatile and appealing to marketers today. And, it's those factors, experts say, that should consistently be explained and promoted to buyers.



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9

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# *The Fastest-Growing*

# FIRMS

With astonishing sales gains over the last three years, these are the companies surging ahead in the ad specialty market.

*By Betsy Cummings*

**I**t's not just their remarkable growth that makes them different – it's how they operate, the way they identify trends and their blending of service and style. This year's list of the industry's fastest-growing companies – measured by revenues from 2011-2013 – showcases distributors and suppliers that don't settle

for anything ordinary.

The special group includes newer firms, long-lasting family businesses, and Top 40 affiliates. It's a collection of companies run by entrepreneurs willing to take risks and unwilling to give up when times are tough. What's maybe most clear about these fast growers is they've been successful at find-

ing their niche – whether it's a product offering, a tech advantage or a unique sales approach. No doubt, these strengths are helping these firms dominate their target audiences.

So the build-up is now over. Here's a look at the fast-growing ad specialty firms, with profiles of the top distributor and supplier on this year's list.

#1 Brandito

# A Passion for SUCCESS

A 145% growth rate and spirited approach push the firm ahead of the rest.

It's not a good thing when prospects hang up on you. But that's exactly what happened to Michael Lovern – over and over again. “Our two biggest customers basically hung up on us the first two months,” says Lovern, managing partner of Brandito (asi/325944), a distributor in Richmond, VA. “Literally hung up the phone.”

It wasn't a pleasant experience, but it taught an important lesson: To make it in the promotional products marketplace, where competition can be intense and prospects flat-out rude, Lovern would need a fresh approach. Since those early struggling days, you bet he found one.

Over the past five years, in fact, the fledgling distributorship has managed to win over those two once-surly prospects and many more, reaching a growth rate as high as 168% at one point. With sales skyrocketing from \$518,000 its first year to more than \$1.2 million two years later, it's little wonder why Brandito tops the fastest-growing distributor list.

These days, the firm's annual growth rate stands at 40%, boosted by an ever-expanding client base. This year, Lovern expects sales will hit nearly \$2 million. With that, Lovern is closer to making good on his promise to shake up an industry that he says was “viewed as stale and could use a nice change.”

Lovern, 33, has never pretended to be an expert, but he's always had a plan. “When I

started this company, I knew very little about the industry outside of what I'd heard from other folks that had been in it,” he says. What he did know is that he wanted a diverse client base. That meant small, medium and large customers. It also meant local, regional and national companies. “We didn't want to just go after one specific client,” says Lovern, who previously worked in sales for staffing and recruiting companies.

Using that experience, he formulated a sales strategy that pinpointed companies by geography, regardless of size. “We said, ‘let's identify folks in the immediate area that we

**“We didn't want to just go after one specific client.”**

Michael Lovern, Brandito

feel would be good targets,” Lovern says. Those “good targets” included everything from startups with 10 employees to *Fortune* 100 corporations.

Meeting with prospects was often drudgery, Lovern recalls. Too often he and his two-man sales team heard a multitude of rejections: “Hey, we already have a vendor. We're happy with who we're using,” or just plain “no.” “People are going to tell you everything

under the sun to get rid of you,” he says. “A lot of distributors will find the low-hanging fruit, and that's how they're going to build their book.” But not Brandito.

Perhaps it was his sales background, but Lovern believed that persistence would crack even the toughest multi-million dollar clients. He understood his company, which has since grown to five employees, wouldn't find success overnight; he used that knowledge to actually prop up his team, setting expectations about the potential length of sales cycles, particularly with bigger prospects.

“Because the *Fortune* 500s are a longer sales cycle,” it involves a tremendous amount of work to land an order, but Lovern remembers telling his staff that it would be a consistent client. In other words, it might take longer to get there, but the effort would be worth it. “It's not as simple as saying, ‘here's what we do,’” Lovern says.

To beat out and, more importantly, steal business away from other distributors, Lovern says, the company developed a consultative sales approach. “Everybody in the industry says the same thing,” Lovern acknowledges, that “we're all about relationships and being a solution provider.”

But Lovern thinks Brandito offers something others don't: passion. Sounds hokey, but he insists it's a genuine part of the company's philosophy. And when he's talking about passion he doesn't mean for the industry.



In fact, when Lovern interviews applicants – something he’s done a lot of lately, as Brandito expands – he rarely asks them what they know about ad specialties or even the firm. In fact, he couldn’t care less if they’re even interested.

“To be honest, when people come in and interview, I don’t even look at the resume,” Lovern says. Instead, Lovern wants to know what they’re driven by. If applicants have no passions in life, then they won’t get a job offer. Simply put, “passion creates drive,” Lovern says. “It’s like pulling teeth if they don’t have it.” And without it, they can’t be good at sales.

That approach to selling has paid off. Prior to working with Brandito three years ago, CARFAX was “bouncing around to whoever was giving us the best price,” says Rachel McMann, special events coordinator for the Centerville, VA-based vehicle history website. Brandito, she says, won over CARFAX marketers with a sales strategy that is more consultative in nature.

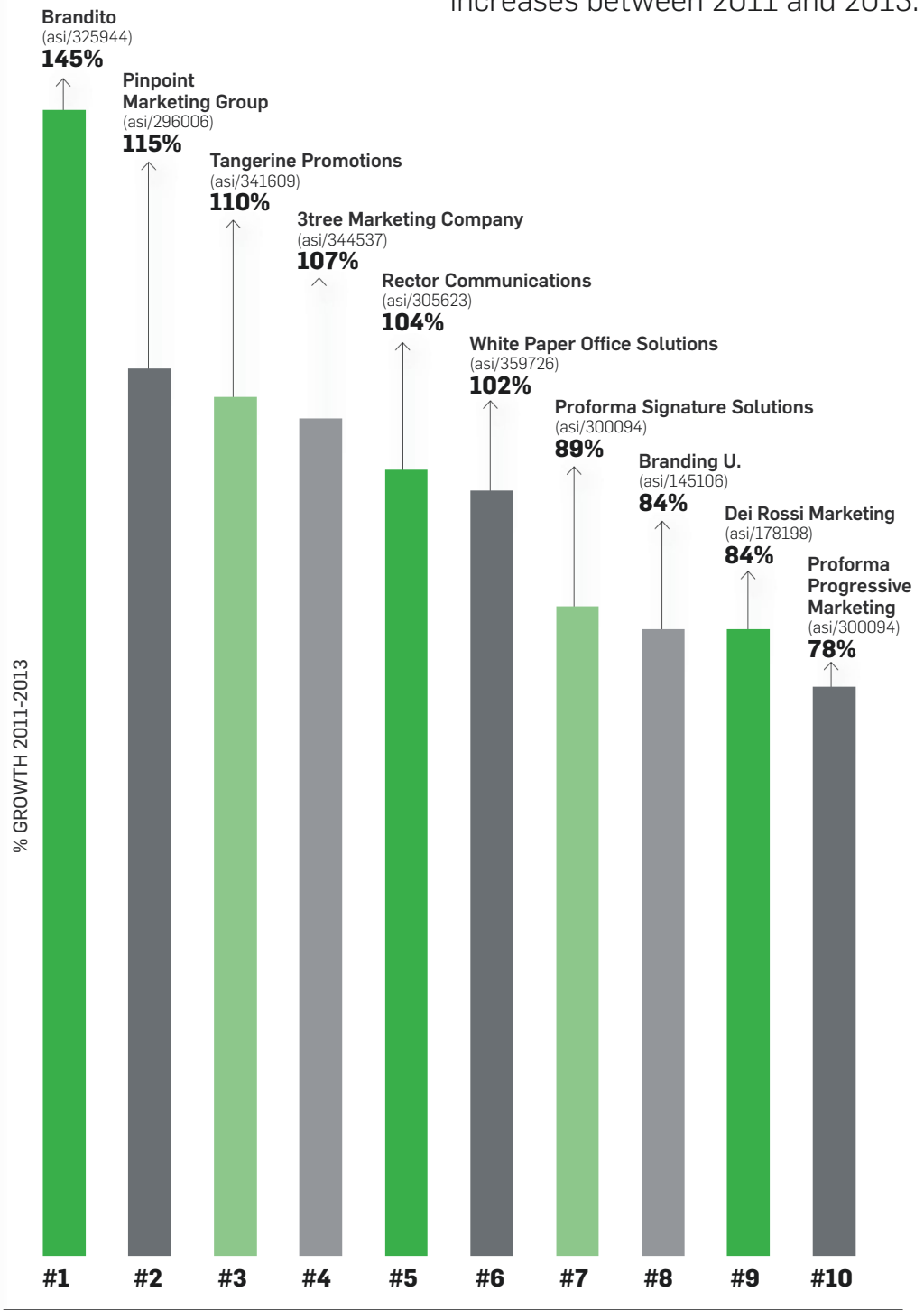
For example, Lovern, according to McMann, often initiates better branding tactics through the use of updated logos applied to specific CARFAX events, or new products that he scours trade shows for with the company in mind. “It’s great, and we trust him 100%,” McMann says, adding that Lovern’s in-person meetings with the company about every four months help to solidify their partnership.

Lovern says acquiring and keeping valuable client relationships has often been accomplished through the smallest of details. “It could be changing your voicemail just to say, ‘hey, I’m in the office all day long,’ or ‘hey, I’m traveling today,’” Lovern says. Or maybe it could involve nudging a client towards laser-ing a logo on a jacket instead of using typical embroidery, just to freshen the look. Really, it’s about whatever it takes to be a cut above, to help clients know Brandito will always be uncommon and interesting.

Certainly, mastering time management has been another key to keeping up with Brandito’s growth, Lovern says. His team repeatedly asks itself the same questions week after week: How can we best manage time in the office? What should be done first? How can we successfully juggle what’s in front of us? When you’re “growing like gang-busters,” Lovern says, these are extremely important questions. By asking them and improving processes, the company is better able to focus on what it can do for its clients and, ultimately, for its rapidly advancing top line.

# Fastest-Growing Distributors

Top 10 largest growers, as measured by sales increases between 2011 and 2013.



## #1 T-Shirt Tycoon

# Quality Comes FIRST

The company is committed to offering a better product. Its nearly 2,000% growth proves customers like what they see.

**F**or T-Shirt Tycoon Solutions Inc., success seems to hinge on this one goal: Make the closet, not the drawer. Translation? The company aims to produce a garment so appealing that its tees will become the ultimate must-have item. With revenue growth approaching 2,000% over the past three years, T-shirt Tycoon might have accomplished just that.

“We’re not your traditional screen printer with a \$1.99 promotional T-shirt,” says Mima Cavan, marketing manager for the Garland, TX-based company. “What we focus on is a more retail-quality garment, which we manufacture in the USA.”

Rather than be a go-to source for low-cost apparel, despite the industry’s constant pull to offer more for less, the young company is banking on an alternate strategy. It hopes resisting price-pressured market demand will actually be its ticket to market domination. “There’s a study out there that shows that the typical promotional T-shirt might get worn once or twice and then gets used for a dust rag,” Cavan says, “whereas if you go with a retail-quality garment, it’s going to stay in the closet six to 10 times,” if not longer.

This idea of offering a markedly better garment has been the focus of T-shirt Tycoon since it was started by the supplier’s president and CEO Adam Walterscheid, an industry veteran, in 2010. Walterscheid, who began his career screen-printing many of his college’s Greek life T-shirts, split with partners from a previous firm when they wanted to broaden their product line, says Cavan.

It seems Walterscheid’s T-shirt-centric vision has paid off. Sales at T-shirt Tycoon jumped from \$220,000 to \$2.2 million in a single year and will top \$4.6 million this year, according to Cavan.

But the company isn’t banking on quality garments alone to ensure its success.

**“We’re not your traditional screen printer with a \$1.99 promotional T-shirt.”**

Mima Cavan, T-Shirt Tycoon

The firm’s approach to the marketplace has been to partner with trusted distributors whenever possible. Walterscheid himself goes on sales calls with distributors who do regular business with T-shirt Tycoon.

In addition, the supplier offers factory tours that include detailed tutorials on the company’s domestic manufacturing and decorating processes. Attend one of these tours and a distributor might learn, for example, that “we don’t use standard plastisol inks,” Cavan says. “There are not too many T-shirt suppliers doing water-based discharge decorations, which gives you a soft vintage feel.”

Educating distributors – through live events like webinars – is another component of T-shirt Tycoon’s plan. “A lot of people don’t know much about screen-printing,” says Cavan. Education makes those distributors that much more informed, helpful and impressive to their own clients and, ultimately, an extension of T-shirt Tycoon’s own sales force. “It’s really simple,” Cavan says, “once you get the hang of T-shirt Tycoon’s processes, the easier it will be for you to sell it.”

To that end, the company is also big on



sending out sample kits to authorized distributors, which include T-shirts, details about production processes and information about the latest retail and industry trends. In fact, the company seems to drive a lot of its success based on proactively reaching out to clients. Sure, every supplier has an active sales team that builds relationships with key distributors, but T-shirt Tycoon is mindful of what happens beyond the initial sale. Its staff works hard to spur and stay ahead of reorders to keep garments flowing in a way that's beneficial to both customer and vendor alike.

When July 4th rolled around this year, for instance, the company, like many in the industry, braced for last-minute holiday T-shirt orders. But its ramp-up wasn't a behind-the-scenes production. Instead, T-shirt Tycoon sought to get ahead of its rivals, sending out e-mails in May that reminded top customers about the holiday. It might sound like a small effort, but "nine times out of 10" those reminders "help alleviate the rush," Cavan says.

Constantly keeping ahead of the curve has been challenging, Cavan admits. To remain competitive and agile despite such tremendous growth, T-shirt Tycoon has espoused precision within its 30-member team to be able to offer its one-stop-shop approach. Clients can order tees, have them custom-designed, packaged and sent all from one location, domestically.

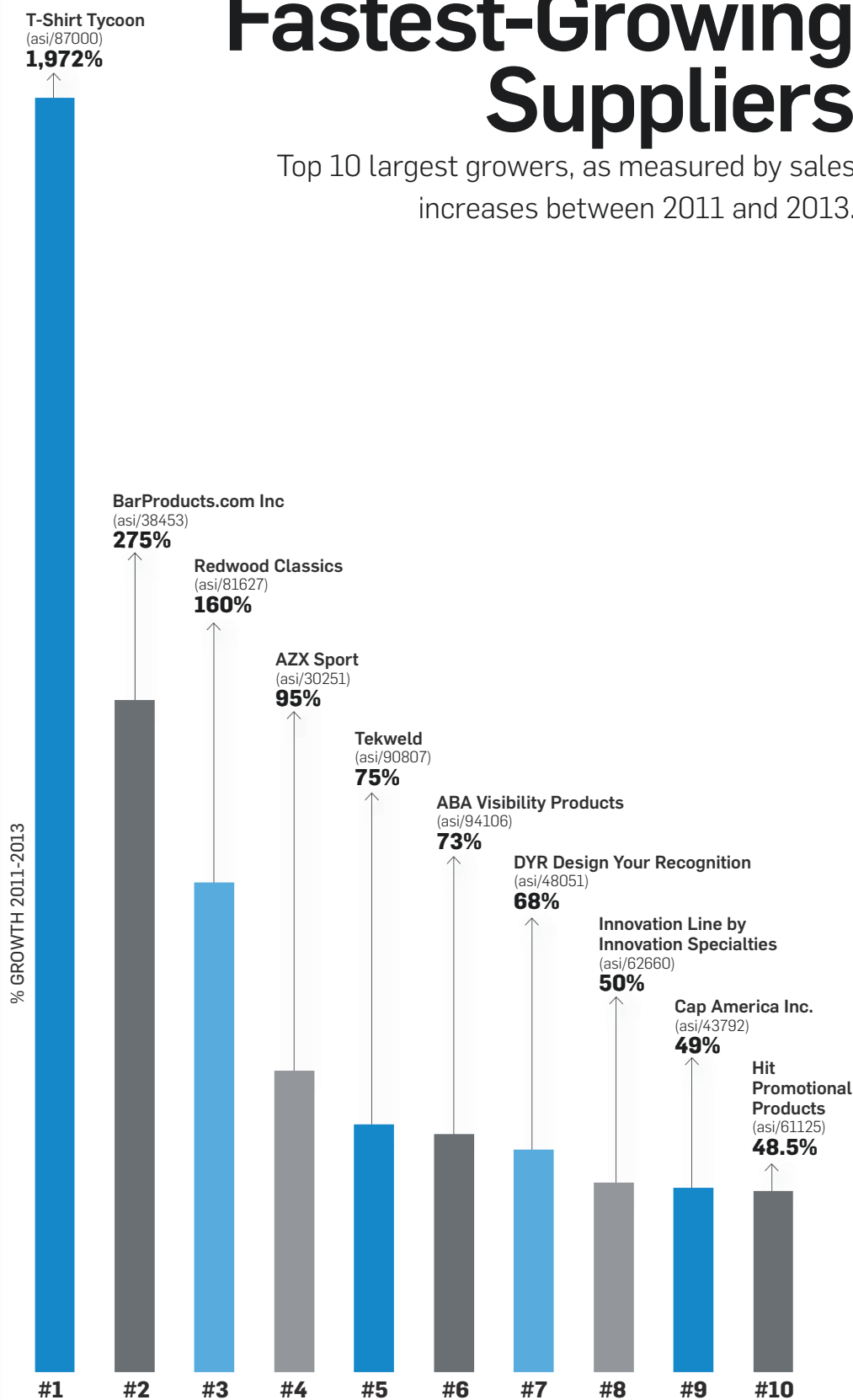
"Honestly, I would say there's just not enough time in the day," Cavan says. To keep pace, the company, which offers a multitude of screen-printing options, including lenticular and gloss prints, has adopted a "very, very precise production schedule that keeps us on track," Cavan says, "down to the minutes it takes to mix ink."

The approach, she adds, is strikingly unique. "I've worked at a few different apparel companies that have done screen-printing and I've never seen it done this way," Cavan says. Tracking processes that assiduously "not only affects our time but the budget as well. Most people aren't accounting for the time it takes to mix ink or the time it takes to slide a shirt onto the palette."

Knowing exactly how long each process takes – from front-end office tasks to production floor functions – saves both time and money, something the company ranks as a top priority as it grows so swiftly. And a leaner, more efficient T-shirt supplier is exactly the kind of apparel company that will thrive in the years to come.

# Fastest-Growing Suppliers

Top 10 largest growers, as measured by sales increases between 2011 and 2013.



# Product Design Awards

The winners in 13 categories.

1



2



3



4



## 1. DRINKWARE

Mixer Shaker has a dual-action mixing feature to blend liquids and ingredients efficiently. It has measurement markings, a non-spill lid, carry handle and more. Available from VisionUSA (asi/80060); [www.vision1usa.com](http://www.vision1usa.com)

## 2. CALENDARS

Rectangular chalkboard magnet lets you write in the dates for any month of the year. Sticks to any metal surface. Two pieces of chalk and magnetic chalk holder are included. Available from The Magnet Group (asi/68507); [www.themagnetgroup.com](http://www.themagnetgroup.com)

## 3. APPAREL

North End performance melange interlok jacket is a lightweight zip-up with moisture-wicking properties, and is offered in men's and ladies' styles in two crossover colors. Available from Ash City USA (asi/37127); [www.ashcity.com](http://www.ashcity.com)

## 4. AWARDS & RECOGNITION

Magnum Cabernet handpainted bottle is personalized on the front for a golf tournament champion, with previous winners listed on the back. It's hand sand-blasted for a deep etch. Available from A+ Wine Designs (asi/30223); [www.apluswinedesigns.com](http://www.apluswinedesigns.com)

## 5. WRITING INSTRUMENTS

Case Logic dual ballpoint stylus has a sleek matte black brass barrel paired with a rubberized stylus that works on all touchscreens. Available from Leed's (asi/66887); [www.leedsworld.com](http://www.leedsworld.com)

## 6. DESK ACCESSORIES

Coaster Etc. is made from acrylic and has a convenient tray for snacks, vitamins, tea bags, etc., with a coaster for a mug. It's offered with and without matching mug. Available from VisionUSA (asi/80060); [www.vision1usa.com](http://www.vision1usa.com)

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6





13



12



11



### 7. SPORTS & OUTDOORS

Foldable event table provides lightweight carrying and full-sized function in a durable, foldable table. Made of 300D polyester with steel piping. Available from Starline USA Inc. (asi/89320); [www.us.starline.com](http://www.us.starline.com)

### 8. MEETING PRODUCTS

Rotating Case Tech padfolio for tablet offers six different hands-free viewing positions for a tablet and a notepad. There are two imprint areas that can be used. Available from Norwood (asi/74400); [www.norwood.com](http://www.norwood.com)

### 9. HOUSEWARES

Food jar with microwavable container has Thermos vacuum insulation for temperature retention and removable

clear plastic insert that allows the contents to be microwaved. Available from Thermos LLC (asi/91110); [www.thermospromo.com](http://www.thermospromo.com)

### 10. CAPS & ACCESSORIES

Sport-Tek spectator tech-friendly gloves with conductive thread in the thumb, forefinger and middle finger on each hand enables user to keep gloves on while using tech device. Available from SanMar (asi/84863); [www.sanmar.com](http://www.sanmar.com)

### 11. BAGS

Pack & Hang duffel has a portable shelving system that lets the user hang the bag from any appropriate-height surface and have instant access to shelves for clothing, shoes and more.

Available from Leed's (asi/66887); [www.leedsworld.com](http://www.leedsworld.com)

### 12. WATCHES & JEWELRY

BrandBand bracelet is a lightweight alternative to silicone bracelet. Made of high-quality flexible plastic so it won't break or warp over time. Available from Innovation Line by Innovation Specialties (asi/62660); [www.innovation-line.com](http://www.innovation-line.com)

### 13. TECH ACCESSORIES

Wave Bluetooth speaker has a compact shape in a metallic body that plays music from any Bluetooth-enabled device. It can connect via cord, too. Includes USB charging cord. Available from The Magnet Group (asi/68507); [www.themagnetgroup.com](http://www.themagnetgroup.com)



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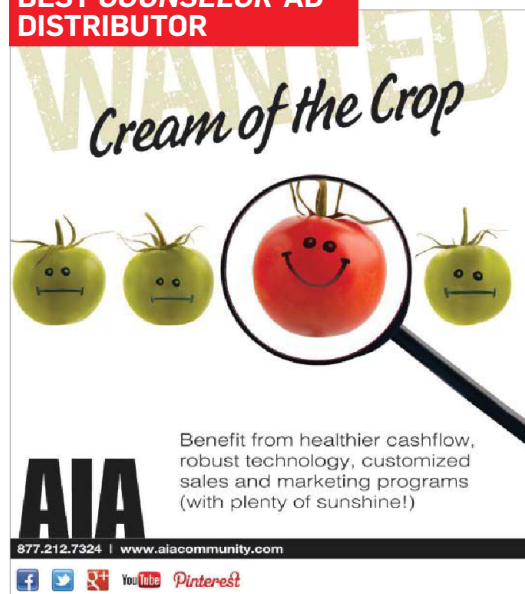
Gildan (asi/56842)

## BEST COUNSELOR AD – GENERAL



BIC Graphic (asi/40480)

## BEST COUNSELOR AD – DISTRIBUTOR



AIA Corporation (asi/109480)

## BEST CUSTOM PUBLICATION



Hanes (asi/59528)

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The Patent Magic Plant Co. (asi/76421)



# D Awards

nine categories – in both print and digital media.

## BEST COUNSELOR AD – INSERT

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Sound too good to be true? Well, we planned it that way. Our development team partners with the best brands to bring you exclusive products packed full of features and modified to show off your logo.

So, don't struggle with 'average' – give them **BAG ENVY** with Leed's.

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## BEST ADS – ESP

Chocolate Chocolate (asi/44897)

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Chocolate Chocolate (asi/44897)

## BEST ADVANTAGES AD – GENERAL

Gel-Skin for iPhones

Openers Plus (asi/63073)

Gel-Skin

Openers

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See us at The ABE Show/Dallas, booth 528



*Oh,*  
**CANADA!**





Set in an idyllic location, ASI's second annual Canadian Power Summit attracted the promo market's top talent, brought together to discuss the health of their industry, issues facing them in the near future and hot markets throughout the great, white North primed for growth.

*By Michele Bell*



**T**here are jaw-droppingly beautiful settings and then there's Canada's Niagara-on-the-Lake, with its quaint shops, water-front views and nearly 30 vineyards within a 10-mile drive.

This was the postcard-perfect locale chosen for ASI's second annual Canadian Power Summit, which attracted Canada's best and brightest in the promotional industry for two and a half days this past June.

Covered in the event agenda were topics ranging from the current state of Canada's economy, a preview of *Counselor's* exclusive State of the Industry report for Canada, a fashion-focused trend report, ramped-up customer service expectations in an age of rapid-fire turnaround, strategies for winning business from the *Fortune* 500, emerging markets in Canada, and ways to use social media as a business strategy.

Canadian economist Brian Lee Crowley, managing director of the Macdonald-Laurier Institute think tank, kicked off the ASI Power Summit Canada at the Queen's Landing resort on a bullish note. "Canada has this tremendous opportunity," Crowley told the audience, explaining that the country is one of the few in the world "that has an abundance of natural resources and knows how to manage them."

As a result of the continued boom in the natural resources sector, including oil, gas and agriculture, Crowley says "every part of the Canadian population has had income growth. Even the people at the bottom are doing quite well."

Still, the country is not without its challenges. Crowley said personal tax rates in Canada "are still too high," and that the relationship between the Canadian and U.S. governments has become strained, stifling business opportunities. "The current U.S. administration seems indifferent about Canada, and that's hurting business," he said. "I cannot remember the relationship between the two countries ever being this bad."

Another highlight of the education schedule during the conference was the presentation of *Counselor's* Canadian State of the Industry report. The session tabbed the manufacturing, financial and construction sectors as the strongest for ad specialty sales in Canada; revealed that 65% of Canadian distributors made sales gains last year; and identified e-commerce companies as the greatest threat to businesses going forward. Other key findings included: 83% of distribu-



ASI's CEO and President Tim Andrews (left) speaks with Canadian economist Brian Lee Crowley following Crowley's keynote.



(From left) Teri Reidt, ESP Promotions; Greg Livings, Bravo Awards; Melanie Sibbitt, Two Crazy Ladies Inc. discuss topics during a panel moderated by Senior Editor Michele Bell.

tors identify referrals as their top source for new business; 25% of suppliers believe their most difficult challenge for 2014 will be remaining profitable under pressure to cut prices; and 53% of suppliers expect to increase their marketing spend in 2014.

During the "Secrets from *Counselor's* Best Places to Work Companies in Canada" panel discussion, Danny Braunstein, Talbot Marketing's (asi/341500) vice president of sales and business development and Laura Hansen, president/owner of The Image Group Inc. (asi/230059) – both of whom were named as Best Places to Work companies in 2013 – shared strategies for attracting and retaining top talent, and keeping employees engaged and performing at their peak.

Hansen said that four employees bring their dogs to the office every day, which helps

de-stress staffers, and that she'll periodically hire a masseuse to come to the company to provide neck and shoulder massages. "The fact of the matter is that oftentimes, we spend more time with the people we work with than our families, so it's important to show them we care about them, we respect them and that they're appreciated."

Braunstein, whose company – helmed by Steve Levschuk, this year's PPPC Hall of Fame inductee – treated more than 50 top staffers to a five-day Caribbean cruise as a thank-you for a job well done and sales goals achieved, revealed that Talbot's management operates with full transparency, sharing 100% of the company's financials with its team. "It's made a huge difference," Braunstein said. "They're all completely aware of how we're doing each month – the good, bad



and ugly. It gives them a sense of involvement and they come together to do better because they all have skin in the game.”

And in a session that analyzed the financial sector in Canada – which ranked as the second-largest market for ad specialty sales in Canada last year, generating 11% of total revenues – David Lewenberg, current chair of PPPC and the COO of Top 40 distributor Genumark Promotional Merchandise (asi/204588), noted that the financial sector continues to represent a prime opportunity for distributors.

The discussion touched on topics like sales and retention strategies, client metrics, awareness of product safety trends and the most common customer objections. Lewenberg believes key relationships still drive sector sales, even in an age of increasing e-commerce – but there remains price pressure. “The margins in the financial sector are tight,” Lewenberg said, “but the business is consistent.”

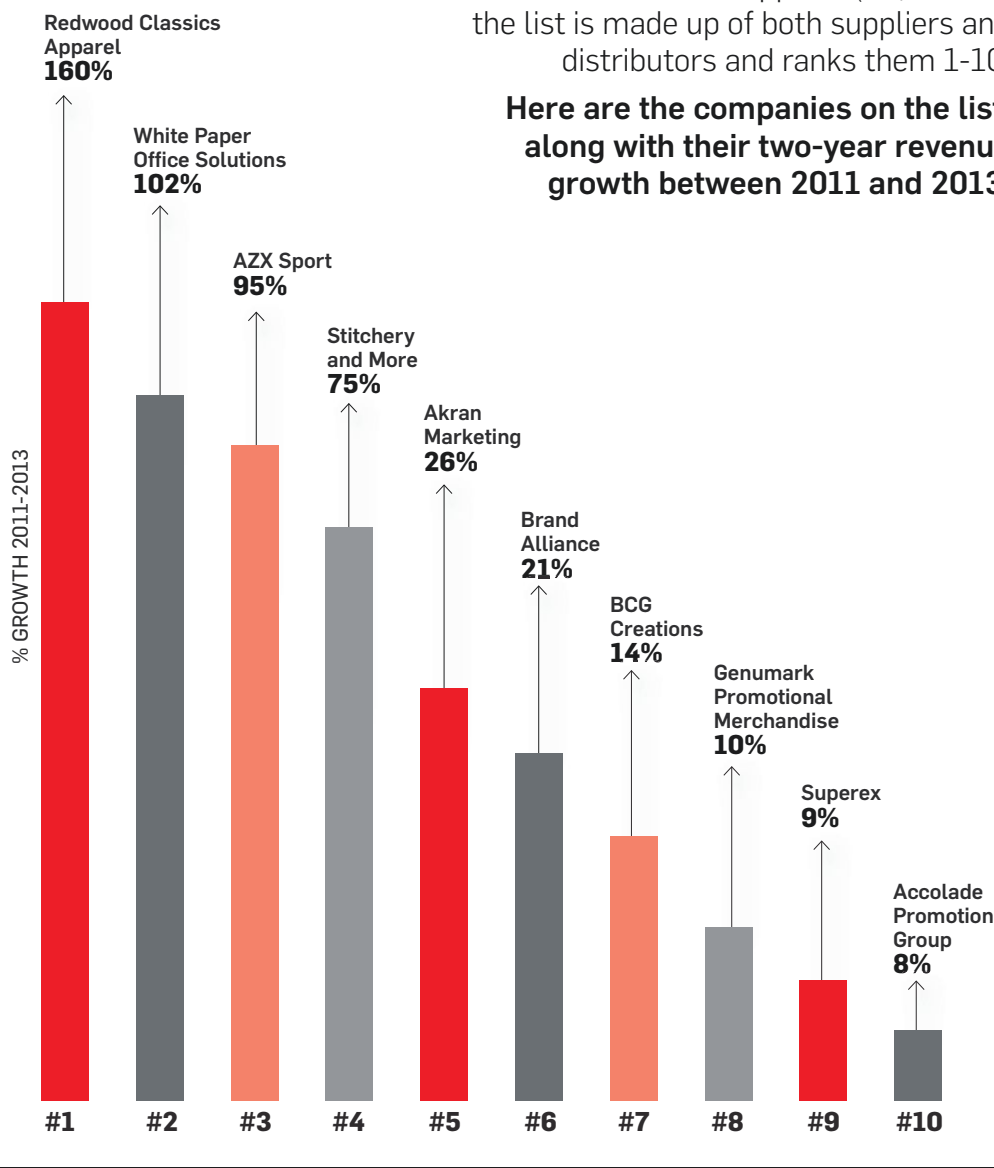
Attendee Brian Starke, co-owner of Peterborough, ON-based supplier Bravo Awards (asi/41638), was impressed with the event’s content and networking opportunities, which included cocktail receptions, golf, a team-building scavenger hunt, a wine tasting event and dinner at the famed Château des Charmes winery. “ASI’s Power Summit was an extremely well-organized event that gave us the opportunity to meet with industry leaders from both the supply and distribution sectors of the industry,” Starke said. “Having the occasion to hear many opinions and to discuss the current state of the industry and its future was invaluable.” Greg Livings, Starke’s partner, concurred. “It was the perfect blend of formal and informal activities that gave us the chance to get to know people on a personal level that doesn’t exist through any other industry event.”

Carol DeVille, president of The Branding Company and a past PPPC Chairperson of the Board, said the Canadian Power Summit was a fantastic opportunity to learn, spend time with industry leaders, exchange best business practices, explore impacts and trends that are transpiring and network with extremely powerful and bright people from our industry. “It was very well-organized and an incredible blend of business, networking, culinary and social experiences,” DeVille added. “It was truly a valued forum and time well spent – hats off to ASI for executing a wonderful Power Summit.”

# Fastest-Growing Canadian Companies

At a dinner during the ASI Power Summit Canada conference held this past June at the Queen’s Landing resort in Niagara-on-the-Lake, ON, *Counselor* unveiled its list of Fastest-Growing Canadian Companies in the ad specialty market. Led by supplier firm Redwood Classics Apparel (asi/81627), the list is made up of both suppliers and distributors and ranks them 1-10.


**Here are the companies on the list, along with their two-year revenue growth between 2011 and 2013:**



# *Health* PLAN







## Wellness programs can help to reduce rising health-care costs. Here, a doctor and management expert provides five low-cost ways to implement corporate wellness initiatives.

*By Carmella Sebastian*

**C**orporate America is getting healthy. According to the 2012 Deloitte Survey of U.S. Employers, 62% reported that they planned to increase their use of wellness and preventive health programs.

These companies are embracing the healthy trend for a variety of reasons. First, the atmosphere of wellness tends to motivate employees and improve worker loyalty. Second, and even more important to the financial well-being of these organizations, companies are finding that they can lower their rapidly rising health-care costs by reducing the amount of claims their employees make in a given year. Indeed, fewer doctor and hospital visits translate into lower premiums.

The organizations that are motivated to initiate wellness programs among their staffs – no matter how large or how small the company is – are the ones that end up being successful with it. All it takes is an ability to be creative with the resources in your area and finding alternatives to pricey initiatives.

Best of all, “bargain” wellness programs don’t only save you money on the front end – they can help a company’s bottom line in the future, too. A recent study published in *Health Affairs* that followed the costs and returns of several companies’ wellness programs revealed that medical costs fell \$3.27

for every \$1 spent on wellness. Furthermore, absenteeism costs fell \$2.73 for every \$1 spent.

That is precisely the kind of ROI that’s leading so many companies to adopt wellness strategies – both formal plans and informal tactics. Here are five inexpensive – and in some cases, free – workplace wellness ideas that are working for companies and professional organizations today.

### **Ask for Support from Your Insurance Provider**

If you provide health insurance for your employees, you need to tap into the resources available from your carrier. Insurers are all about health and wellness these days. After all, it’s in their best interests to keep you happy and your employees healthy, because that translates into year-after-year renewals and low claim costs.

Don’t be afraid to ask for and take advantage of what’s available. At the very least, your insurer should be able to provide a health risk assessment, and beyond that, most will cover the cost of having a health fair with biometrics. The labs can run through the medical claims so that should not be an extra charge.

If your insurer isn’t willing to help with a health fair, or if you are a small employer who doesn’t offer insurance, health risk assessments are available free of charge online – and you can collate the information

yourself. Another great source is Welcoa.org. The Wellness Council of America provides all kinds of free stuff for the asking.

You should be able to check with other vendors, too, to see what kind of assistance and expertise can be provided. If you have an EAP vendor (Employee Assistance Program), this organization can and should assist with any behavioral health education or support. After all, that is what you pay them for.

In the same way, your worker's compensation provider can do a worksite ergonomics assessment and instruct your employees about lifting and twisting properly to decrease injury on the job. And some payroll processors today are beginning to get into the business of health and wellness administration.

### Partner with Local Medical Organizations

Especially if you do not provide insurance, get in touch with local medical organizations and ask for assistance. Keep in mind

that a health fair is nothing more than offering a health risk appraisal or questionnaire for your employees, some biometric testing (like blood pressure and height and weight), and some free educational materials.

Specifically, it would be valuable to ask a local county medical society for the names of new doctors who have recently joined. They will be building their practice and would be happy to spend some of their free time taking blood pressures and getting exposure to the community in hopes of attracting new patients. Your local hospital might even be interested in providing a glucose screening to increase exposure to their diabetes program.

### Approach Specialized Groups For Help

It may be the case that your organization is facing specific challenges. For instance, perhaps a significant percentage of your employees smoke or are overweight. Go after this low-hanging fruit by partnering with groups that specialize in addressing those issues.

Often, their help can make a difference at little to no cost. Or, you can even barter some promotional products and promotional services that they use in their operations.

So, you'll gain some workplace wellness help, as well as a new client. They may not be paying full price for your services, but having the names as customers on your client roster can only help in the local community.

Talk to organizations like the American Lung Association for smoking cessation programs, the American Diabetes Association, or your state's smoking quit line (just about every state in the U.S. has one). They all offer free educational material you can use. Some will even come into your workplace and provide a lunch-and-learn program. Likewise, if you have 15 people to participate, Weight Watchers will come to your office and do a lunch program, too.

### Rethink Incentives

We all know that people tend to participate most enthusiastically in any type of program when they're working toward a reward. But if you're like many small-business leaders, you probably assume that incentives are only for big organizations, and that you'll have to forgo them. After all, you just don't have the budget to provide lavish perks.

That's simply not the case. Everybody reacts to a reward, no matter how large or significant the prize is. Incentives for "good behavior" do not have to be huge TVs or trips abroad. Employees will jump at the opportunity to do remarkable things for the right to win a water bottle, T-shirt, special parking spot, or a few hours off. Provide incentives that are health-focused if at all possible, like three free visits to a local gym or a healthy lunch on the company.

These kinds of incentives should be built into your company culture, so that each time somebody chooses a healthy alternative, they're rewarded for their actions. Even a points-based system with escalating rewards the more points an employee accrues, can change the wellness culture of an organization. The prizes don't have to be terribly expensive, they only need to be meaningful to your audience. If you know employees would appreciate a Summer Hours program, for example, then maybe give all of them a goal to shoot for as far as health and wellness is concerned. If every-

### Case Study

## Getting Well With Wellness

How one industry company keeps health care costs low with an employee wellness program.

Supplier firm Numo (asi/74710) goes the distance when it comes to taking care of its employees. The company takes the health of its employees so seriously that it hires a fitness trainer to come in three times a week to work out staffers in the company's 200,000-square-foot production facility. There's even a dedicated gym and fitness room built into the warehouse that screams more Flashdance than promotional products production.

It's all done in the name of keeping employees fit and healthy. "We're not a rah-rah kind of place here, but we want to take care of our people for the long haul," says Jim Martin, vice president of Numo, which manufactures koozies and drinkware, among other items.

To do that, that company recently instituted an in-depth and formal wellness program for its workers. Besides bringing in the trainer three times per week (about 50 of the facility's 100 employees typically participate in a class), the employees play volleyball or basketball during scheduled break times. And twice a week, Numo brings in a nurse who holds a free clinic to diagnose medical issues (like strep throat), and monitor employees' blood pressure, Body Mass Index, weight, and blood sugar levels – all for free.

"We had people who were pre-diabetic or had other health issues they didn't know about before they started going to the clinic," Martin says. "This has been great, because we can help them before they really get sick."

In an effort to attract top employees to work and remain with Numo, the company gives the extremely rare benefit of 100% paid-for health care coverage. But with that expense, Martin says, he's tried to do everything possible to keep health care premiums – and the yearly increases – to a minimum. Martin says the fitness and wellness initiatives have done that, precisely by reducing the amount of health insurance claims that the company's employees initially make.

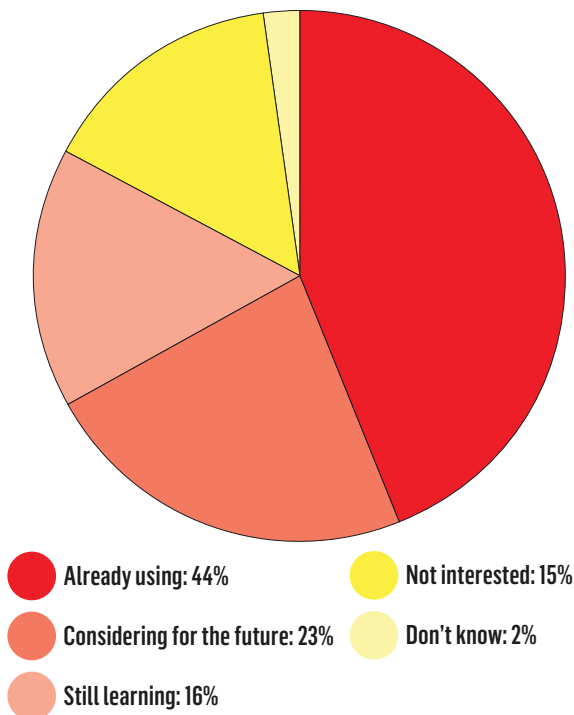
"We see the costs of that going down, because we're being able to treat people before they would normally go to a doctor," says Martin, adding that the company has been able to reduce claims by at least 20% a year since the start of the program four years ago. "That can have a noticeable impact on the overall costs."



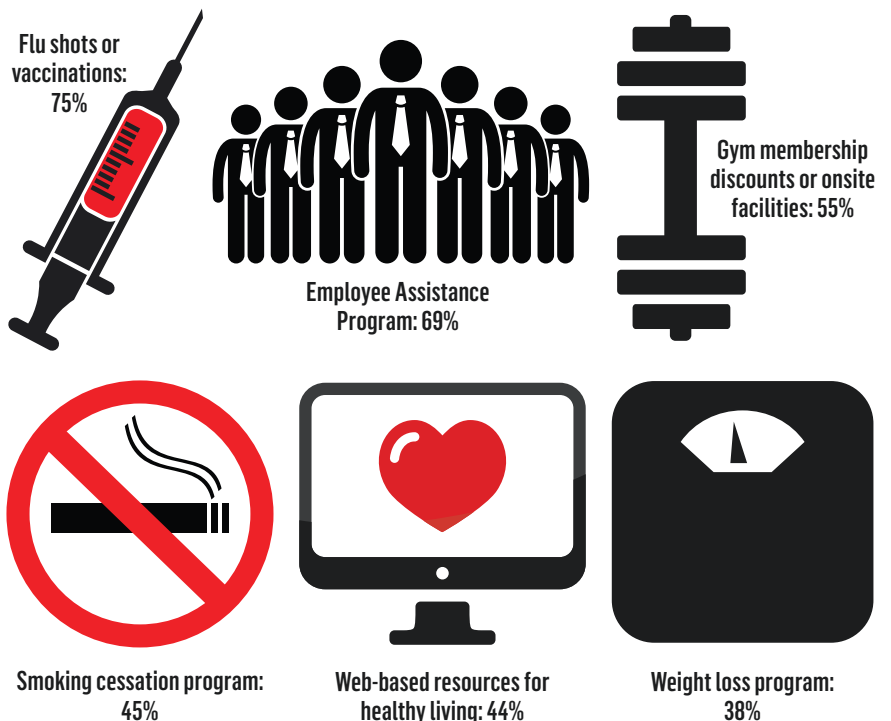
## Rise of Corporate Wellness

The Healthcare Trends Institute conducted a national survey late last year regarding trends in employee health-care benefits, including wellness programs. Polling more than 300 human resources executives, the study explored the current state of health and wellness among employers as well as where companies are in the process of adopting wellness programs. Some findings:

### Where are companies in the process of implementing a wellness program?



### What specific wellness programs/services are companies currently offering?



Source: 2013 Healthcare Trends Benchmark Study, Healthcare Trends Institute

body achieves it, then the company can close at 3 p.m. on summer Fridays.

That's just one example, but getting at the root of the motivation of employees is the key. Find out what would motivate them to change their behaviors, and you'll begin to create an effective wellness program.

### Create Health Committees

In some circles the word "committee" has a dubious reputation. But when it comes to staffing wellness programs in small companies, sharing the wealth by creating a wellness committee is the way to go. It is much better for a group of 10 to share responsibility for implementation, instead of dumping the entire task on one employee who already has a full plate.

Make one person in charge of the health fair. One can seek out educational material

and programming. Another can make calls to get freebies for the incentives. Let each committee member choose which jobs he or she would prefer. A person who is tech-savvy may volunteer to do the fliers and promotional material, for instance.

Not only does this approach spread the work around so the program doesn't become too onerous for one or two people to administer, but this also makes employees own it. If they're responsible for certain aspects of the program, then they're more likely to take part themselves and to promote it to others.

Peer pressure works when it comes to health. Wellness programs are best done as a group, because individuals left to their own devices often fall off the healthy wagon. By forming committees and putting more people in charge of as many aspects of the

program as possible, you're building in buy-in and participation.

Finally, once your "bargain" workplace wellness initiatives start to pay off, there's one thing you shouldn't skimp on: celebration. Whenever you achieve a goal, make a big deal about the achievement in order to maintain and increase morale. Recognize and publicly congratulate employees who pass milestones. Over time, you'll create an affordable culture of wellness that's good for your entire organization.

*Dr. Carmella Sebastian was chief medical officer for Blue Cross and Blue Shield of Northeastern Pennsylvania. She is also a nationally known wellness educator with a special interest in women at mid-life and women's wellness. For more information, visit [www.drcarm.com](http://www.drcarm.com).*

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## Profile

### You Can Go Home Again

Kathy Cheng joined her family's garment manufacturing company at her father's behest. Today, their in-stock apparel line is one of the fastest-growing promotional suppliers in Canada.

By Sara Lavenduski

Kathy Cheng is on a mission. Since 2009, she has served as president of WS & Co., Ltd., her family's Canada-made garment factory in Toronto, and is the founder of Redwood Classics Apparel (asi/81627), an in-stock garment line recently named by *Counselor* as the fastest-growing ad specialty company in Canada. Business is booming, awards keep rolling in and reporters can't get enough of Cheng's sales and marketing acumen. And it all started with one objective: to fulfill demand for quality garments made in Canada, by Canadians.

As the daughter of Chinese immigrants, Cheng watched her parents strive for years in Toronto garment factories to fulfill their dreams in their adopted country. Her father continued honing his skills as a cutter, and decided to take the next step in 1988, when he opened Wing Son Garments Ltd., a small-scale sewing contracting company.

In the meantime, Cheng had moved away from manufacturing to a position at a global intelligence firm, where she worked 14-hour days. As her

father watched her toiling away, he asked a pivotal question: "If you're going to work so hard," he inquired, "why not work for our family and all the families we provide for?" Cheng acquiesced, and joined Wing Son in a business development role.

As Cheng grew into her new position, the company faced significant industry-wide challenges, including aging craftspeople and offshore competition. By 2008, these hindrances, coupled with a worldwide recession, made a significant hit on Wing Son. The following year, when Cheng became president, she took on the unfortunate but necessary responsibility of slimming down the workforce to just 40 people.

"We considered shutting down completely," says Cheng, "but our staff motivated us to continue on. We couldn't just walk away from those who helped us make it in Canada. So we moved forward to preserve our Canadian-owned and -operated environment." During this seismic shift in the company's operations, Cheng found a clear opportunity for growth in



**Kathy Cheng**, Redwood Classics Apparel

the renewed demand for Canadian-made apparel.

As the company started back up with a smaller workforce, Cheng led Wing Son's rebranding as WS & Co., offering high-quality, Canada-made products, and founded Redwood Classics Apparel as its in-stock garment line. The strategy worked. Today, upscale brands such as Coach, HBC, Holt Renfrew and Roots Canada turn to WS & Co.'s retail-quality Canadian garments and options in custom fabrication, colors, specialty washes, decoration and more.

"We focus on relationships with clients who share our value proposition," says Cheng. "They understand that people and planet come before price."

The decision to shift the company's strategic focus to Canada-made has certainly struck a chord with consumers. In June 2014, *Counselor* named Redwood Classics the fastest-growing ad specialty company in Canada, after it increased its revenues by 160% between 2011 and 2013. In January 2014, WS & Co. received gold in the Made in Canada and Best Embroidery categories at the PPPC Image Awards Gala. Plus, Cheng was recently named a Change Agent by *Canadian Business* magazine, and earned a coveted spot on the Women Executive Network's list of the Top 100 Most Powerful Women in Canada.

"I believe that if you will it, it will happen," says Cheng. "Stay the course and don't let anyone tell you that your idea isn't worthwhile. If we can inspire immigrants to achieve their dreams, then WS & Co. is a success story."

# Appointments & Promotions

This month's people on the move in the ad specialty industry.

Compiled by Sara Lavenduski

## ► Ash City/alphabroder

(asi/34063) announced that it hired Tom Alavi as a dedicated sales representative, responsible for the Greater Toronto Area west territory.

## ► Bag Makers (asi/37940)

announced that it promoted Pete Gleason to director of sales strategy.

## ► Beemak Displays

(asi/39425) announced that it hired Bruce Kelly as sales and marketing manager.

## ► Chocolate Inn/Taylor & Grant

(asi/44900) hired Jaclyn Claude as customer service/inside sales representative for the Midwest.

## ► Clegg Promo (asi/45450)

welcomed Pat Kiddoo to its outside sales team as a multi-line representative.

## ► Competitive Edge LLC

(asi/166085) hired Jay Fettig as CMO. The move was effective July 1.

## ► Goldner Associates

(asi/209800) has hired Bill Petrie as director of business development.

## ► Hub Pen Company

(asi/61966) has hired Joe Cadigan as IT support analyst and Madelyn Voong as Human Resources coordinator.

► **Jetline** (asi/63344) hired Brett Schaffer as senior vice president of operations and Kathy Lynch as vice president of customer service operations.



**Pete Gleason**  
Bag Makers



**Pat Kiddoo**  
Clegg Promo



**Jay Fettig**  
Competitive Edge LLC



**Brett Schaffer**  
Jetline



**Tom Guitard**  
Prime Line



**Tom Rizzi**  
Proforma



**Chris Vernon**  
The Vernon Company



**Jeff Kranz**  
Vantage Apparel



**Alicia Hughes**  
World Emblem

## ► Leprechaun Promotions

(asi/67075) announces that Cliff Leach has joined the company as general manager.

## ► Penn Emblem Company

(asi/77120) appointed Keith Hoover as e-commerce web developer.

## ► Prime Line (asi/79530)

welcomed Tom Guitard as Canadian sales manager.

## ► Proforma (asi/300094)

hired Tom Rizzi as senior vice president of business development. Rizzi, formerly the chief sales officer at Top 40 firm WorkflowOne (asi/333647), will focus on major accounts at Proforma, and help lead recruiting efforts.

## ► River's End Trading Com-

pany (asi/82588) hired Bret Slane as senior vice president and chief merchandising officer of River's End Trading Company and Page and Tuttle.

► **Selco** (asi/86230) named Renee Nordholm as its accounts payable and marketing coordinator.

► **Spector & Co.** (asi/88660) promoted Josie Di Staola to team lead for the customer service department.

► **Standard Register, parent company of WorkflowOne** (asi/333647), named Michael Giachetti as vice president and general manager of its promotional marketing division. The

company also named the following three people as strategic promotional marketing leaders for different geographies: Chandra Geschwill in the South, Brad White in the West, and Joe Whitman in the Midwest.

► **Tekweld** (asi/90807) added three new regional sales managers: Steven Klein (West), Kevin Barkalow (Midwest) and Marc Rizzi (Northeast).

► **Selco** (asi/86230) hired John Gonring as a sales representative for WI, IL, MO, KS, ND, SD and MN.

## ► The Vernon Company

(asi/351700) announced that Chris Vernon, the firm's president & COO, has been promoted to president & co-CEO. Bill Vernon will continue as the company's chairman and serve as co-CEO.

## ► Vantage Apparel

(asi/93390) hired Jeff Kranz as sales representative for MO, KS, NE and southern IL.

## ► Vitronic Promotional

**Group** (asi/93990) welcomes Daniel Pendleton as its regional sales manager for FL and GA. Kevin Sephton, previously responsible for FL and GA, will now cover TN, NC and SC.

► **World Emblem** (asi/98264) hired Alicia Hughes as human resources director.



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**Gannett Line**  
asi/55775

# Quotables

A selection of this month's sources.

Compiled By Chuck Zak

**Ahrendts, Angela**, Apple Retail; on how optimism balances out fear for business owners, 36

**Barreca Sherman, Gina**, Vantage Apparel; with a Wonderful pick for her favorite summer song, 46

**Barton Nelson's outgoing voicemail**; on the bad news for both their company and their customers, 42

**Braunstein, Danny**, Talbot Marketing; on how transparency keeps his employees motivated, 82

**Callaway, Craig**, eCompany Store; on the enlightened idea behind his company's three-week sabbaticals, 96

**Casper, Dave**, BMO Harris Bank; on his expectation for employers' acceptance of flexible work hours, 40

**Cavan, Mima**, T-Shirt Tycoon Solutions Inc.; on why cut-rate promo T-shirts are doomed to a short life, 74

**Chavenet, Cathy**, Dunkin' Brands; on her company's success promoting at the NYC Marathon, 62

**Cheng, Kathy**, WS & Co., Ltd.; on the values she looks for in a client, 89

**Crowley, Brian Lee**, Macdonald-Laurier Institute; on why business relations between Canada and the U.S. could use a little boost, 82

**Davey, Ed**, British Parliament; on where the money raised by Britain's levy on plastic bags will go, 40

**Dell, Michael**, Dell; on the new attitude toward sustainability that corporations need to adopt, 36

**de Ville, Carol**, The Branding Company; on the first step to take when responding to an RFP, 57

**Engel, Andrea**, alphabroder; on why solid color backgrounds for imprints are so yesterday, 65

**Friend, David**, Carbonite; on why concern over data protection should extend beyond your IT department, 38

**Garfinkle, Joel**, executive coach; on the tendency of small-business owners to micromanage, 60

**Garst, Kim**, Boom Social; on how to live an unencumbered life, 36

**Glaser, Patricia**, Dov Charney's attorney; on why she feels her client was fired illegally, 38

**Gnesin, Trevor**, Logomark; on what will change the way brand managers view promotional products, 41

**Goltz, Jay**, New York Times; on why passion isn't an antidote for incompetent management, 36

**Hansen, Laura**, The Image Group Inc.; on how to value the people with whom you spend most of your day, 82

**Kahan, Memo**, PromoShop; on how low interest rates have helped businesses of all sizes, 35

**Letang, Vincent**, Magna Global; on who gets left behind by a predicted rise in advertising spending, 43

**Limes, Dale**, Halo; on who will help his company expand its footprint, 45

**Living's, Greg**, Bravo Awards; on the unique opportunities available at ASI's Canadian Power Summit, 83

**Lovern, Michael**, Brandito; on his unorthodox approach to hiring salespeople, 73

**Mayer, Allan**, American Apparel; on how the decision to fire Dov Charney was for the greater good of the company, 38

**Mounger, Mitch**, Sunrise Identity; on why a small raise in the interest rates won't hurt employment, 35

**Neaman, Ira**, Vantage; on why higher interest rates won't do the government much good, 35

**Newman, Rachel**, Hanes; on why athletic apparel is perfect for more than just working out, 66

**Nielsen, Ashley**, S&S Active-wear; on where trends for workout apparel are headed, 66

**Queen Elizabeth II**, Queen of England; on her resolve to decrease Britain's dependence on plastic bags, 40

**Rajaram, Gokul**, Square; on how his financial products are all about helping new businesses, 44

**Robitaille, Nancy**, Fersten Worldwide Inc./Fila Golf; on how a checked pattern can add value to a garment, 65

**Roney, Jennifer**, Accolade Promotion Group; on how providing value is key to navigating Canada's new anti-spam legislation, 41

**Schade, Ryan**, Big Impression LLC; on how a good sense of trends can keep your company relevant, 36

**Talbot, Geoff**, Seven Sentence Blog; on why you shouldn't be afraid to open new doors, 36

**Tsai, Jennifer**, Tri-Mountain; on how varying a checkered pattern can create new possibilities, 65

**Weiner, Jeff**, LinkedIn; on the delicate calibrations necessary to manage a rapidly growing company, 36

**Wendover, Robert**, author; on the phrase that will send shivers down your employees' spines, 60



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Michael Lovern, Brandito (asi/325944)  
See page 72



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# Advertiser Index

A/4 Moshay Inc asi/30121 .....	12, 13	Bullet asi/42424 .....	52	Indigo asi 62560 .....	93
AAA Stuart Group asi/30019 .....	91	Certified Marketing Consultants asi/44526.....	42	Jerzees asi/6682525 .....	47
ADCAPITOL Aprons, Bags, Banners, Flags & Wearables asi/31260.....	91	Certified Marketing Consultants asi/44526.....	44	Kaeser & Blair Inc asi/238600 .....	10, 11
Admints & Zagabor asi/31516 .....	33	Clothpromotions Plus asi/45513.....	22	Landway asi/66238 .....	27
Advanced E Media, Inc. asi/6255416.....	21	Continental Mkting Svc Inc asi/46420.....	70	Otto Intl Inc asi/75350.....	93
Africa Safari Outdoor Importers Inc asi/33176....	91	CredentialExpress asi/47204 .....	91	Outdoor Cap Co asi/75420 .....	43
Alexa Springs Inc asi/34037.....	19	Crown Products asi/47700 .....	39	Pacific Sportswear & Emblems asi/6000296.....	93
alphabroder asi/34063.....	34	Display Source asi/45447 .....	CV5	Post-Up Stand Inc asi/79052 .....	26
American Ad Bag Co asi/35290.....	91	Evans Manufacturing asi/52840 .....	CV6	Pro Golf Premiums Inc asi 79680.....	93
American Apparel asi/35297 .....	56	Flexible Innovations Ltd asi/54596.....	63	Proforma asi/300094.....	16, 17
AMG APPAREL INC asi/30192 .....	50	Fridgedoor Inc asi/55469 .....	91	PWS asi/75731.....	59
AnaJet Inc asi/16000 .....	24	Game Parts asi/55750.....	91	SanMar asi/84863 .....	55
Anthony & Company Inc asi/36280.....	91	Games People Play asi/91079.....	91	Spirit Industries Inc asi/88740.....	95
Apothecary Products LLC asi/36545 .....	91	Gannett Graphics asi/55775.....	93	Staton Corporate and Casual asi/89380 .....	1
Aprons, Etc. asi/36558 .....	91	Gemini Ind Inc asi/56100 .....	93	STORMTECH Performance Apparel asi/89864 ....	67
Ariel Premium Supply Inc asi/36730 .....	8, 9	Gildan Activewear SRL asi/56842 .....	5	Stouse Inc asi/89910 .....	93
ASI Computer Systems Inc asi/30238 .....	88	Gildan Activewear SRL asi/56842 .....	7	Stouse Inc asi/89910 .....	93
AutoTran, Inc. asi/12555.....	48	Golf Tee Printers asi/57672 .....	95	The Magnet Group asi/68507 .....	48A-48B
Banaka Inc asi/38243 .....	28	Halls & Company asi/59080.....	93	Tri-Mountain asi/92125.....	37
BAW Athletic Wear LP asi/37689 .....	69	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	25	Ventura Inc asi/93520 .....	93
Bic Graphic USA asi/40480 .....	14, 15	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	29	Zenith Promotions asi/98980 .....	93
Bic Graphic USA asi/0480.....	CV2, CV3, CV4	Hanes/Champion asi/59528.....	64		
Biz-Mag Industries asi/40592 .....	91	Harstan Ties and Accessories asi/60080 .....	93		
Blue Generation asi/40653.....	31	Hit Promotional Products asi/61125 .....	2, 3		
Bodek and Rhodes asi/40788 .....	61	IC Group asi/170276 .....	95		
		iClick, Inc. asi/62124.....	BB1		

COUNSELOR August 2014; Vol. 61, No. 9 (asi/ISSN 0011-0027) (asi/USPS 134640) is published monthly, except semi-monthly in July. Subscription rates \$75 per year in the United States and Canada; \$90 per year in all other foreign countries. Publication offices are located at 4800 Street Road • Trevose PA 19053-6698. Periodical Postage Paid at Langhorne, PA and additional offices.

POSTMASTER: Send address changes to: Counselor, 4800 Street Road, Trevose PA 19053-6698.

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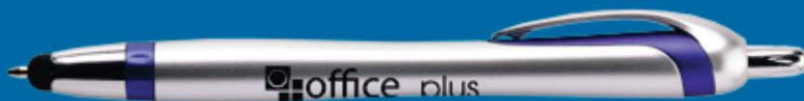
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