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OCTOBER 2013

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Power  
Issue

POWER

50

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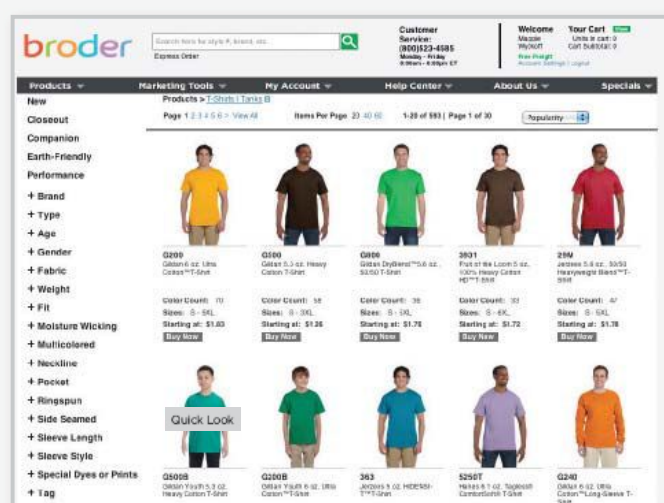
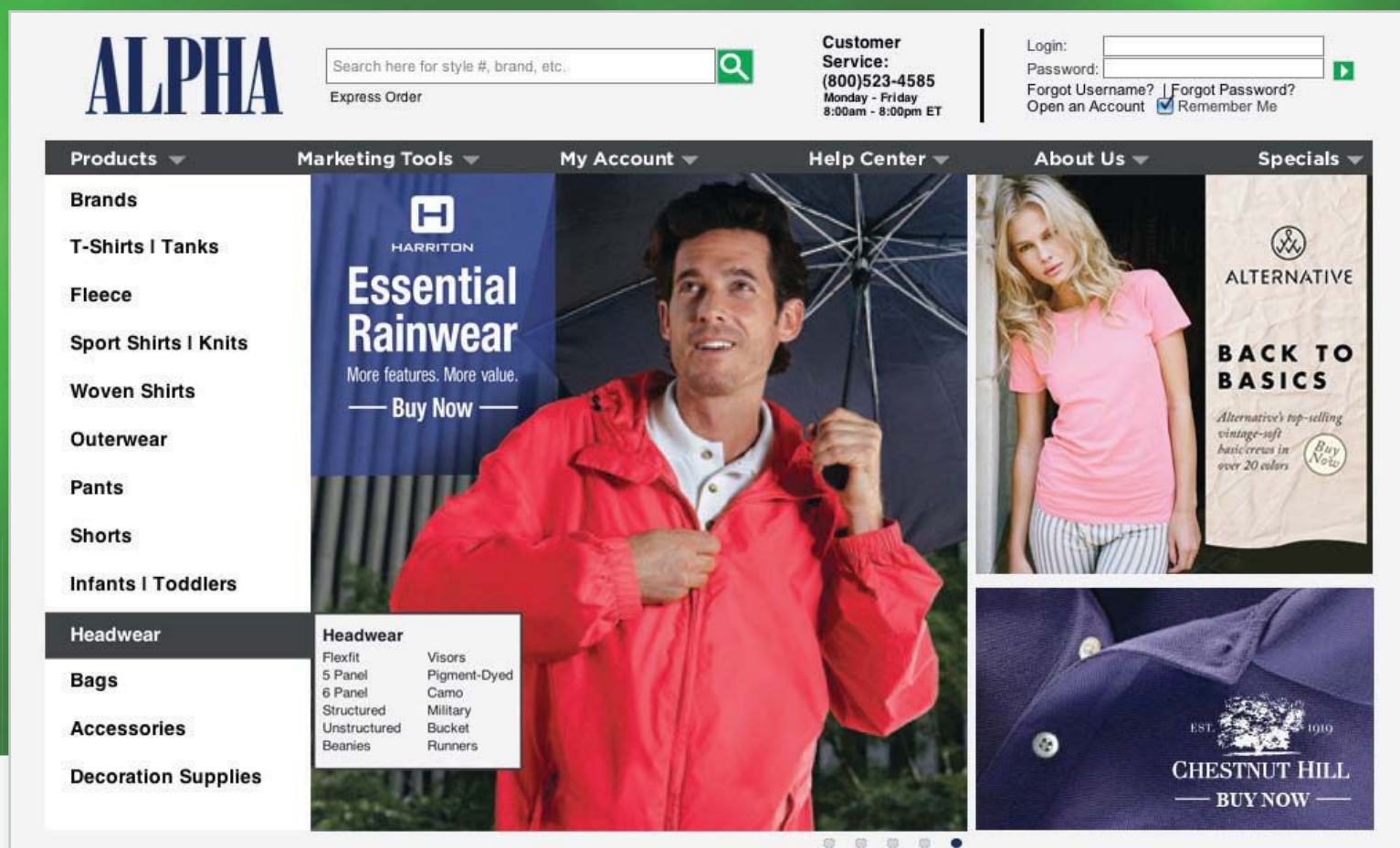
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# Editor's Letter

## Power Play

How can you get more power? Become a leader that people want to follow.

By Andy Cohen

To Apple founder Steve Jobs, there was a very clear path to power: Innovation.

"You can't just ask customers what they want and then try to give that to them. By the time you get it built, they'll want something new," Jobs said. "Innovation distinguishes between a leader and a follower. Sometimes when you innovate, you make mistakes. It is best to admit them quickly, and get on with improving your other innovations."

In other words, what Jobs knew, and others would only come to realize after his wild success with many different products, was that innovation equals power. And even Jobs, ever the egoist and seeker of credit, was smart enough as a leader to know that the people in his organization who were instrumental in creating his innovations were the ones he needed to protect.

"The people who are doing the work are the moving force behind Apple," he said. "My job is to create a space for them, to clear out the rest of the organization and keep it at bay."

Interesting quote from the one person who was so closely linked to the success of Apple. Even Jobs knew that he was nothing without the help of his best people, and that as a leader he had to create enough

room for them to do their jobs well and perform at maximum efficiency. His role? Give birth to the company's innovations and then allow his people to build them.

It's a unique view of power, one based on both internal

leadership qualities specific to their own organizations, much like Jobs.

For our presentation of the Power 50 this month, we asked each member of the list to fill out a questionnaire, and one of the topics was the biggest

and unique approaches to business. Another quality that they have? They're highly involved in the day-to-day machinations of their companies. They're not absent managers who lead from on high, not knowing what their



**Differentiation and innovation are at the core of how many powerful people became that way.**

and external forces when it comes to a company. Jobs knew that if his company created products that consumers would love, then his people would also love working on those products and giving their all for the company. And that was his mastery of power – getting both internal and external constituents to follow him.

For Jobs, innovation was the key. What is it for you? For many powerful people in the ad specialty market – who we honor this month as we unveil the annual *Counselor* Power 50 list – success has brought them a degree of power. But I'd argue that that success actually derives from

mistake they've learned from in their business career. Rick Mouty, the head of supplier organization ProFill Holdings and a new member of the Power 50 this year, provided an interesting response to that question. "Trying to replicate the approach of an industry leading competitor," he said, referring to the biggest mistake in his career that he has learned the most from. "Differentiation is the key to success and longevity."

Indeed, differentiation and innovation are at the core of how many powerful people became that way. They're leaders who have built a good following on the backs of creative ideas, strong vision,

people are doing on a daily basis. To gain power today, top company executives need to be seen and heard all the time, and be involved with their employees as much as possible.

"Leaders on a senior level are on call 24/7. They need to learn to deal with that," says John Baldoni, chair of the leadership development practice at N2growth, a global leadership consultancy in Ann Arbor, MI, and author of *Lead with Purpose: Giving Your Organization A Reason To Believe In Itself*. "The mantra for today's leader should be, 'Be seen, be heard, be there,'" Enjoy the issue!



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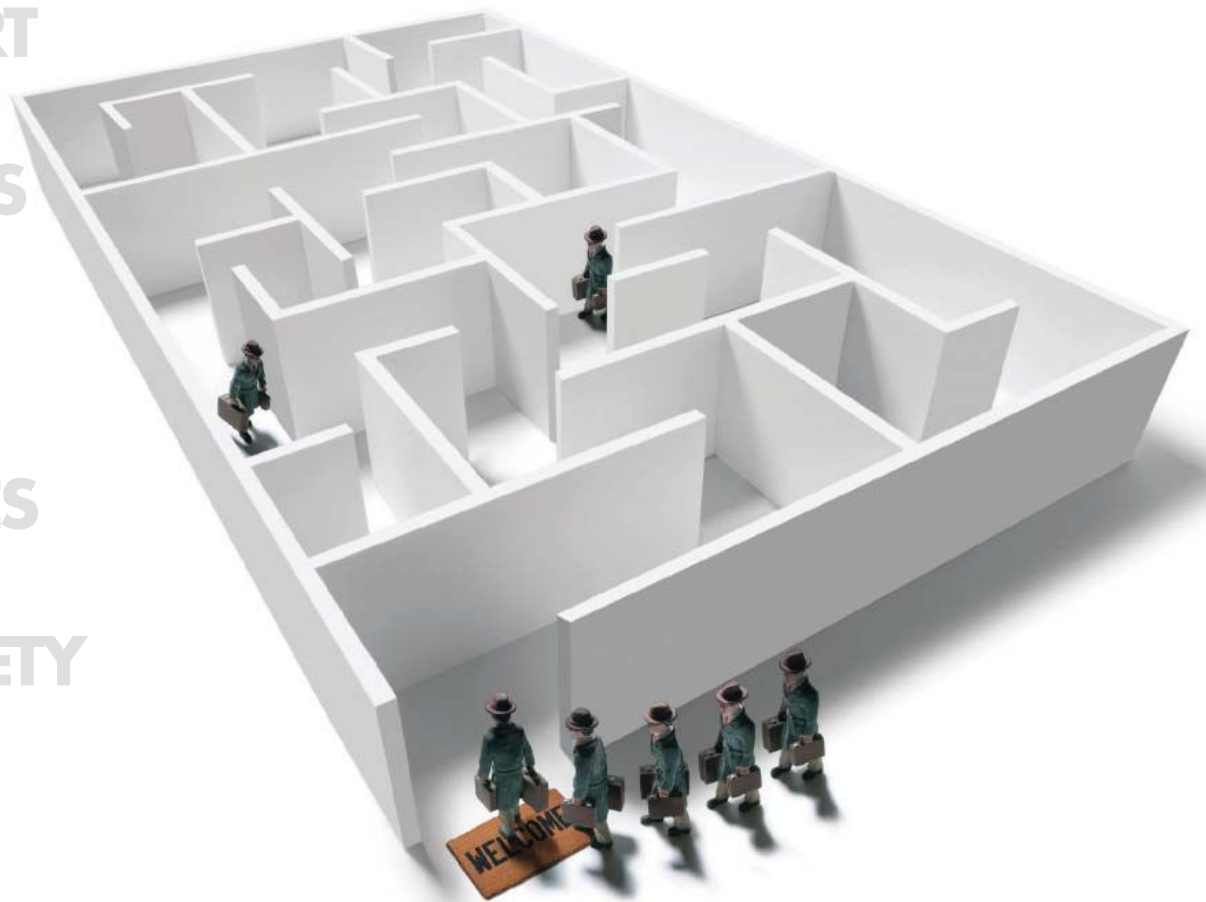
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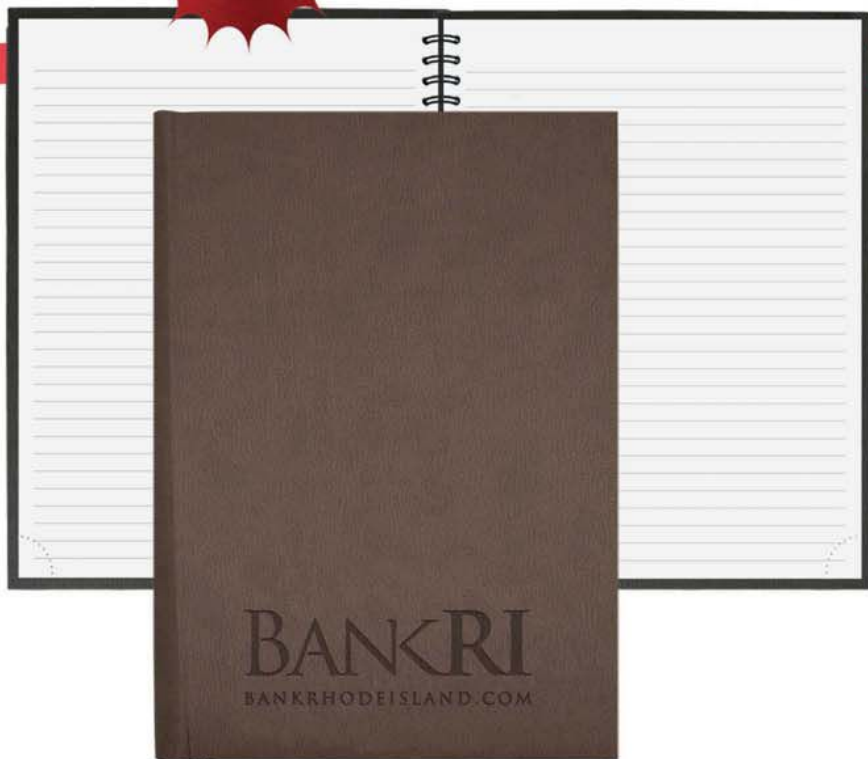
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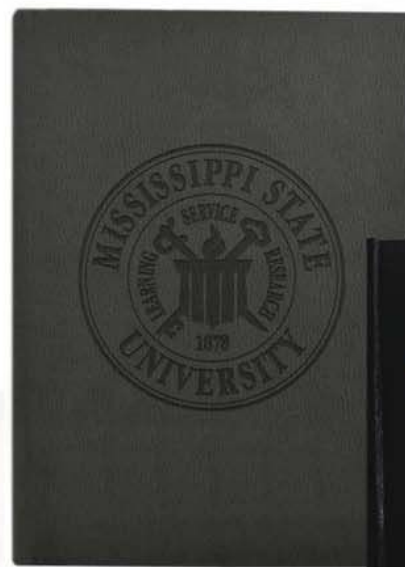
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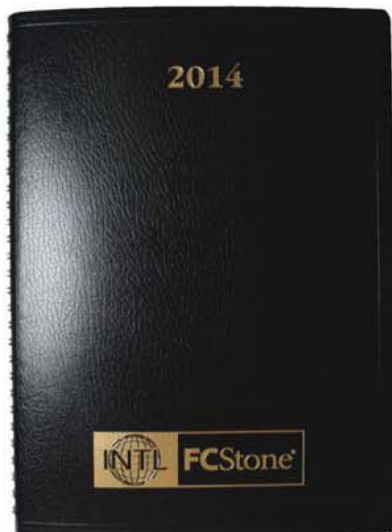
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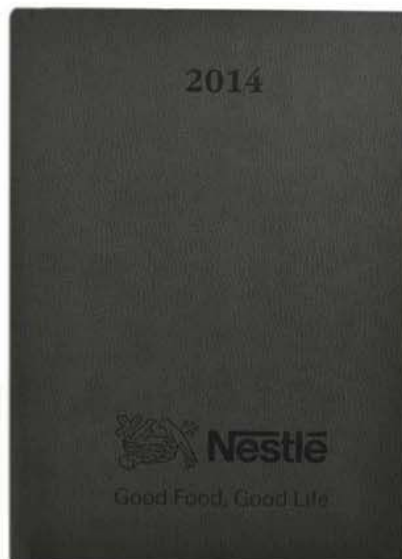


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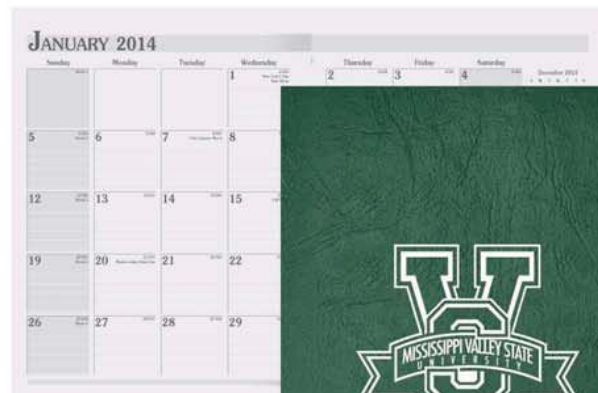
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# News

## DO YOU PLAN TO INCREASE OR DECREASE HEADCOUNT AT YOUR COMPANY NEXT YEAR?



**Derek Block**  
Touchstone (*asi/345631*)  
“While we are implementing a new ERP system that should provide efficiencies, our growth will require additional people.”



**Doug Hayes**  
Ash City (*asi/37127*)  
“We’ll be decreasing headcount. A major ERP system implementation in 2013 must drive efficiencies.”



**Norm Hullinger**  
Broder Bros. (*asi/42090*)  
“Increase. We are investing heavily in the sales management and business development side of our business.”



**Eric Rubin**  
Blue Gen (*asi/40653*)  
“As we invest in upgrading our operating systems, we’re more efficient. So, although business is growing, I don’t foresee hiring additional personnel.”

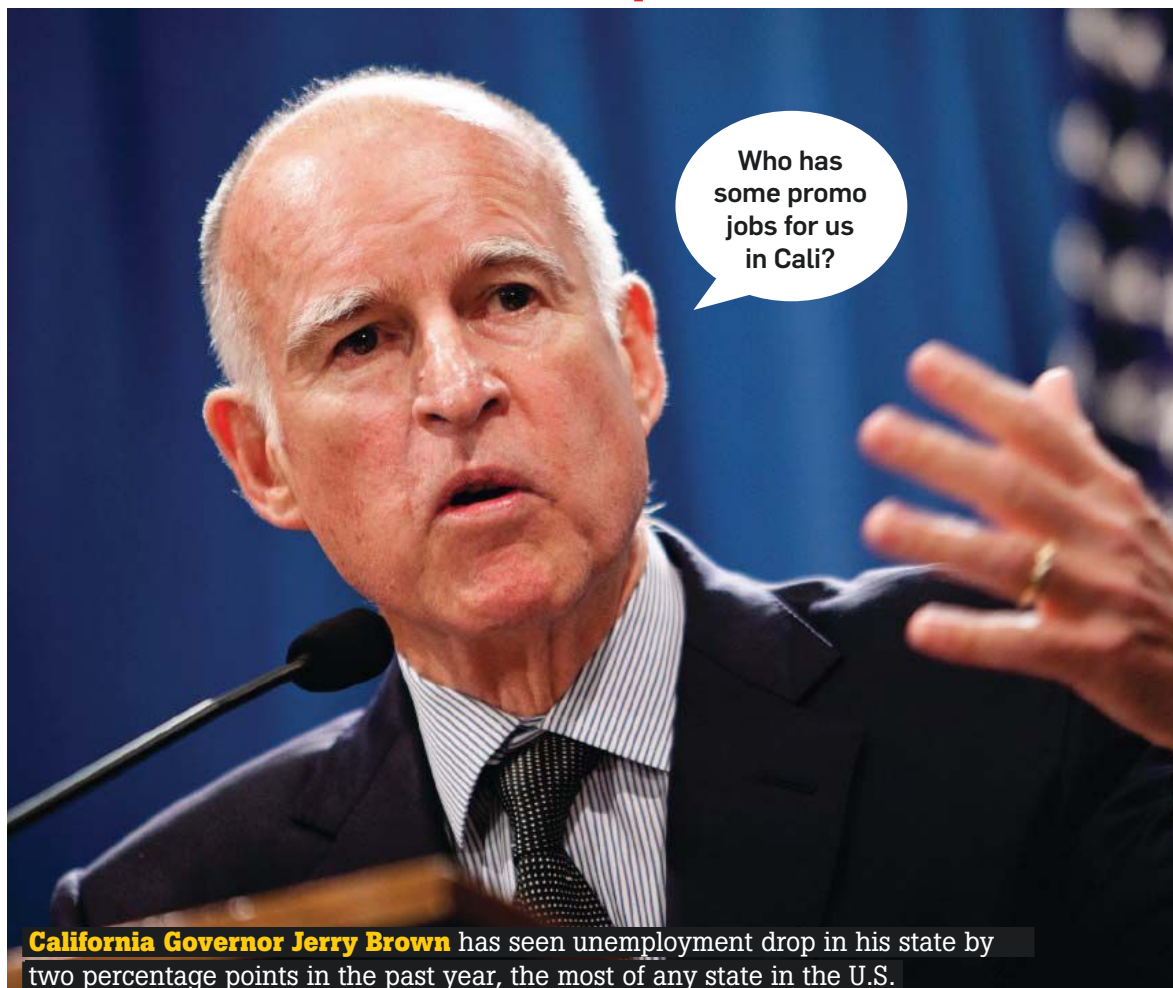


**Larry Zavadil**  
ASB (*asi/120075*)  
“We are aggressively recruiting. Without continued growth, we would be going backwards and dying a slow death.”



**Dave Thompson**  
National Pen (*asi/281040*)  
“We will likely increase our total employment at our company next year by about 3% to 5%.”

## Job Creation Continues Upward Climb



**California Governor Jerry Brown** has seen unemployment drop in his state by two percentage points in the past year, the most of any state in the U.S.

► North Dakota, South Dakota, and Hawaii lead the nation in low unemployment rates, each one with **less than 4.5%** unemployment.

► The Bureau of Labor Statistics estimates that unemployment will fall to about **6.8% by the end of 2014**.

► Between October 2012 and September 2013, U.S. private sector added more than **2 million new jobs**, according to ADP.

► California leads all states in job creation, with more than **300,000 jobs added** over the past 12 months.



# Chatter

## Readers React



“Strategy is execution, which was a favorite of a former CEO of mine. It’s a loose derivative of General Patton’s philosophy: Execute a good plan now and keep your enemy off balance, instead of being killed waiting for the perfect plan.”

**BILL KOROWITZ**, THE MAGNET GROUP (ASI/68507), IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION: WHAT’S THE BEST BUSINESS ADVICE YOU EVER RECEIVED?

“My best business advice came from my dad. Trust your instincts, be true to yourself and don’t be afraid to ask for what you want.”

**PAULA SHULMAN**, PRIME LINE (ASI/79530)



“Don’t let lack of effort be the reason someone says you’re not good enough. It came from the father of a Boston College football player to his son.”

**ROSS SILVERSTEIN**, IPROMOTEU (ASI/232119)

“The best business advice I’ve heard came from my dad: if it were easy, everyone would do it. That motivates me to work harder than anyone else and not be afraid of the consequences of pushing the envelope.”

**JASON BLACK**, BOUNDLESS NETWORK (ASI/143717)



“Best advice I’ve received: Always step outside your comfort zone and do the things you fear the most, as you might just find you are really good at what you feared.”

**KIM NEWELL**, WORLD WIDE LINES (ASI/98290)

Facebook  
Forum

How do you get PR coverage for your business?

► **Erich Campbell** Through responding to prompts from industry writers to blogging to entering contests, even to answering questions via social media and e-mail lists, I have found that the steady flow of mentions our business receives shows itself as an increase of top-of-mind awareness and searchability. Write, comment, post, and keep visible. In the long run, establishing yourself as a subject matter expert is more than rewarding.

► **David Garthwaite** When it comes to good PR, you have to give before you get. Volunteering and donations go a long way in generating PR. Donating promotional items has a greater effect if you’re a distributor. It shows you care, and demonstrates the service you can provide.

► **Brian Roberts** Support local charitable events and causes. Volunteer to work events. Be a participant. Attend meetings. Join and support local chambers of commerce. Join Toastmasters. Oh, and don’t do it just to get more business - people will see the ‘hungry look’ in your eye and it will repel them. Get involved because you care. You may have the best products, the most amazing insight, and a perfect ‘solution’ to their need, but the old saying goes, “People don’t care how much you know, until they know how much you care.”

Twitter  
Feed

**@MotivatorsPP** Pick of the Day: Love Dilbert comic strips? Hand out promotional Dilbert stress balls & collect the whole set.

**@LoriGreiner** Never let the words of anyone affect & stop you from what you want to do.

**@greglmitchell** When you love what you do, it makes the job so much easier.

**@MarketngTidbits** Do you have an all-day social media presence? Why or why not?

**@TimSomers** What problem did you solve for a client today?

**@redcanoepromo** Red Canoe Promo can show you how to market your company w/o emptying out your pockets...we row through hoops for you!

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## “This service is meant to give distributors the confidence to go chase bigger orders.”

Ross Silverstein, iPROMOTEu (see page 40)

# NFL Toughens Bag Policies In Stadiums

The National Football League has implemented stricter rules for what fans can bring into stadiums, providing a potential opportunity for suppliers and distributors of promotional plastic bags. Specifically, the NFL, citing a desire for improved safety, is not allowing fans to enter games with standard-sized purses, computer or camera bags, backpacks, fanny packs, coolers or seat cushions. What will be permitted, though, are one-gallon plastic freezer bags, as well as pre-approved, clear, vinyl or PVC bags that can be logoed.

“This will enable us to move fans through our security check points much faster,” the NFL said in a statement. “A standard-size bag eliminates the need for bag templates to check

bag sizes. It will make the stadium’s job much easier, allowing staff to be more efficient and effective in checking bags that are brought into the stadium.”

According to the NFL’s website, the bags can only be branded with team or league logos – yet this appears to be an evolving stance regarding allowed logos on the clear bags. *Counselor* has learned some distributors that don’t hold NFL licenses have already placed orders for clear, plastic bags and at least one industry supplier – California-based Bagworld (*asi/37980*) – took the advanced step of having its clear bags reviewed by the NFL and has gotten approval to sell them for game-day use.

“Our phones have been ringing off the hook,” Richard Hen-

nessy, vice president of marketing and sales at Bagworld, told *Counselor*. “Our bags were ready to ship in mid-September and we have custom orders in the works. We’re also developing a few other styles for the NFL to review.”

While the NFL is spearheading the movement toward clear bags for games, it appears likely universities will eventually follow suit. Some schools, like Michigan and Penn State, currently don’t allow fans to bring any types of bags into stadiums, although there are exceptions for medical reasons. Greater opportunities for future sales, suppliers say, may come on the collegiate level, as NFL licensing rules are generally stricter than even those of the NCAA. – *DV*



## IRS Cracks Down On Revenue Under-Reporting

Concerned about under reporting of income, the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) is cracking down on small businesses. Since autumn 2012, the IRS has sent letters to more than 20,000 small businesses notifying them about possible under reporting of revenue.

Tax officials are focusing attention on businesses they believe get an “unusually high portion” of reported sales through credit card transactions, a determination made by comparing a business’ credit card and cash receipts with industry averages. Suspecting that such companies are failing to report sales settled through cash and checks, the IRS letters instruct businesses to review their records and respond with a written explanation. In a statement, the IRS says it is intent on ensuring that “people who are non-compliant don’t get an unfair advantage over those that play by the rules and follow the law.”

Within the advertising specialty industry, reaction to the potential impact of the IRS initiative varied. “I think it will have very little impact on the industry,” says John Resnick, a partner at Boston-based Proforma Printing & Promotion (*asi/300271*). “I can’t say what everyone in the industry is doing, but if you’re operating above board in the right way there’s nothing to worry about.”

Meanwhile Howard Potter, owner of Yorkville, N.Y.-based A&P Master Images (*asi/702505*), said he could see the initiative affecting firms that are sloppy in their bookkeeping. “Some unscrupulous people could get cremated by it,” he says. – *CR*








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# Back-To-School Sales Stagnate

The International Council of Shopping Centers (ICSC) is forecasting that total sales for the back-to-school season will increase to \$42.2 billion in 2013, a year-over-year rise of 3.1%. That predicted figure is approximately the average annual increase over the past decade, although lower than the 3.6% jump from 2012.

“Overall spending will be more tepid this season than the last few years,” said Michael P. Niemira, ICSC chief economist, “but it doesn’t imply that the back-to-school season will be bad.”

Families with school-age children are likely to spend, on average, \$635 on apparel, shoes, electronics and supplies, down

from \$689 last year, according to a survey of shoppers released by the National Retail Federation. Following a subpar earnings season for many retailers, analysts believe major stores will opt to offer more discounts in the final shopping days before the school year begins. That’s largely because revenue at stores open at least a year – a closely-watched metric – edged up just 3.5% in July, the slowest pace since March, according to ICSC data.

In the ad specialty industry this back-to-school season, a sampling of distributors contacted for this article also reports an average year for revenues in the education sector. “Back-to-school sales are

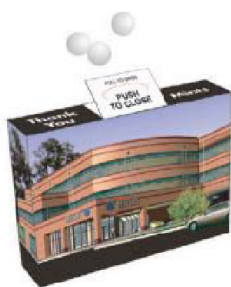
about the same as last year in terms of overall sales volume,” said Robert Fiveash, president of Virginia-based Brand Fuel (*asi/145025*). “One change we’ve seen this year is that many buyers are turning towards hard goods like cups, keychains, flashlights, and other inexpensive giveaways versus the nicer and more expensive apparel of the past. It remains to be seen whether this is a trend or just a blip this year.”

Meanwhile Teresa Moisant, owner of Moisant Promotional Products (*asi/275276*), has seen more opportunities for corporate or business tie-in programs this year. “Most school districts have a meeting or luncheon in mid-August for all teachers and



several corporate accounts do items,” she said. “Often it’s the Chamber of Commerce that works with the school district to ensure there are goodies for the teachers.” – DV

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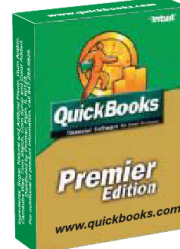
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# Single-Order Financing Program Launched

*Counselor* Top 40 distributor iPROMOTEu (*asi/232119*) has introduced an individual order financing program that is open to any industry distributor, regardless of size. Distributors using the service, called iPROMOTEu Express, will be charged a flat fee of 15% of the invoice amount to the customer, excluding freight and taxes. A distributor may use the service an unlimited number of times.

"This service is meant to give distributors the confidence to go chase bigger orders," Ross Silverstein, president of iPROMOTEu, told *Counselor*. "This also has tremendous support

from suppliers and it fills a void in the marketplace."

Distributors using the service will not be required to use iPROMOTEu preferred vendors and Silverstein says there will be complete confidentiality regarding end-buyer information. In most cases, distributors will receive confirmation regarding their request for financing before the end of the next business day. As part of the Express service, iPROMOTEu will also pay vendor invoices and prepare and send customer invoices.

While the program targets non-affiliates of iPROMOTEu, company affiliates will receive



better pricing and terms, Silverstein said. "Affiliates receive a whole host of other services and benefits," he said. "There are lower fees, extended customer payment terms, access to and control of order entry and management systems, and all sorts of sales and marketing tools."

Smaller distributors in the market are closely monitoring the launch of the new financing program. "I think it's a great service and would be widely used by many. I don't see any red flags," said Ashley Keys, promotional product specialist at Ultra Marketing (*asi/348051*), noting, though, that her firm already provides her strong financing support.

Adds Jeff Schmitt of Cedric Spring and Associates (*asi/332750*): "It's not a bad marketing move by iPROMOTEu, but I think it will only be used by a small number of distributors." – DV



FORWARD THINKING

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The RIP software included with the DTG M series direct to garment printers is now approximately 30% faster, further increasing the shop's productivity. The new application can queue an entire days jobs, leaving the artist free to do other things while an operator simply advances from one job to the next.





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# White House Launches Biz Health Care Website

The Obama administration has launched Business.USA.gov/healthcare, a website that provides educational materials for employers on how the Affordable Care Act may affect them and their businesses. The site will act as a hub that connects employers to informational content on tax credits and other provisions of the law from the Small Business Administration, the Department of Health and Human Services and the Treasury Department.

“The Affordable Care Act helps level the playing field for small businesses, expanding

their bargaining power and their ability to offer the kind of valuable benefit packages that attract and retain top-quality workers,” said Jacob J. Lew, the U.S. treasury secretary.

The release of the new website comes as surveys show many business owners don’t fully understand the Affordable Care Act. Data from the U.S. Chamber of Commerce shows almost half of small-business owners are concerned about how the law will affect their company.

“There are so many pieces to this health care plan that it is almost impossible to keep



Healthy Info

are too many dissenting opinions regarding much of what is being suggested.”

Many parts of the Affordable Care Act, which was signed into law in March 2010, are already in effect, including new consumer protections and modifications to health care coverage. Starting October 1, individuals may be eligible for lower costs on their monthly premiums and self-employed individuals and small businesses may be eligible for tax credits to help with the costs of coverage. – CR

up with all of it,” said Nina Shatz, director of Red Ball Promotions (*asi/346567*). “I do not think we are anywhere near implementation as there

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# Bangladesh Apparel Exports Surge

Despite recent international outcry over factory working conditions in Bangladesh, the Asian nation reported its July exports of readymade apparel increased dramatically by 26.1% year-over-year, according to Bangladeshi government data released in August. Bangladesh, the world's second largest apparel exporter behind China, shipped out \$2.51 billion worth of garments in July, which far eclipsed the \$1.99 billion announced for July of 2012.

In the wake of much-publicized Bangladesh garment factory accidents, including a building collapse that claimed the lives of more than 1,200 workers earlier this year, some analysts questioned if apparel

companies would start pulling work from Bangladesh. This spring, for example, Disney told vendors and licensees to halt production in Bangladesh and four other countries – Belarus, Ecuador, Venezuela and Pakistan – considered to be high-risk. Still, less than 1% of the factories Disney sourced from were in Bangladesh at the time of the exit, and a significant exodus from Bangladesh by other brands has not materialized.

That doesn't surprise David Bebon, the CEO of DBEBZ Apparel, which makes woven and knit shirts in Bangladesh. He believes in a rigorously price-driven commodity segment, like apparel, the fact that manufacturing in Bangladesh is far



more cost-effective than other countries will continue to make it an attractive destination for sourcing companies.

"Over the 12 last months," he told *Counselor*, "Bangladesh has actually gotten more business. There have been real human tragedies – catastrophes – but they're not changing the fact that Bangladesh will continue to be a major source

country for apparel."

Following the November 2012 Tazreen Factory fire that killed 112 people and the April Rana Plaza collapse, Bebon expects that higher wages, safer factories, and a more union-friendly working environment will eventually become realities in Bangladesh. While he speculates this could lead to higher costs for production, and ultimately apparel, he doesn't think the price rise will be steep.

"The worst thing that could happen is if everyone leaves Bangladesh," he said. "You'll have millions of people without jobs. The status of women in society will go backwards. It's not about leaving – it's about improving." – CR

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## Mergers & Acquisitions

# WorkflowOne Acquired By Standard Register

Top 40 distributor WorkflowOne (*asi/333647*) has been acquired by document management firm Standard Register. The transaction is valued at \$218 million, with the majority financed by assuming \$210 million of long-term debt. "This deal is a good one for our merchandise and marketing teams," said Jeff Grippando, vice president of branded merchandise at WorkflowOne, in an interview with *Counselor*. "We now have an opportunity to push our strategies that we developed to new

vertical markets and clients."

WorkflowOne will initially operate as a subsidiary of Standard Register before later being integrated under the Standard Register name. Joseph P. Morgan, Jr., president and CEO of Standard Register, will lead the combined company, and former WorkflowOne president and CEO Timothy A. Tatman will serve as an advisor during the integration. When the integration of the two Dayton, OH-based companies is complete, Standard Register expects to achieve \$1

billion in annual revenue and \$40 million in annual savings, as the acquisition enhances the firm's cost structure and financial flexibility. Standard Register currently serves many large health care, financial services and manufacturing companies.

The combined company is expected to serve more than 12,000 customers and create a \$300 million health-care patient-centric communications business. It will bring together 4,000 employees, including 920 in Dayton. "Standard Register and Work-

flowOne have a combined heritage in printing, document management and communications that is enhanced through this acquisition," Morgan said.

Ranked by *Counselor* as the 13th largest distributor in the industry, WorkflowOne reported 2012 North American ad specialty sales of \$100.6 million. According to Grippando, the firm's first-half 2013 sales increased 5.9% versus last year, mainly on the strength of success in cross-selling print and promotional products. – DV

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## Room For Fun▲

The members of the 2013 Power 50 are, no doubt, focused on business strategy and growing their companies. But they're far from all business. Polyconcept's Michael Bernstein, number three on this year's list, says he can make a mean roast chicken and has a passion for guitars. Geiger's Jo-an Lantz, number seven on the Power 50, says she has taken up long-distance running, and has run four marathons and dozens of half-marathons. And, Broder's Norm Hullinger, says he can "juggle like a circus clown" and uses the Guitar Tuner app on his phone as often as possible. Check out the extracurricular habits of this year's Power 50 online now at [www.CounselorMag.com](http://www.CounselorMag.com).



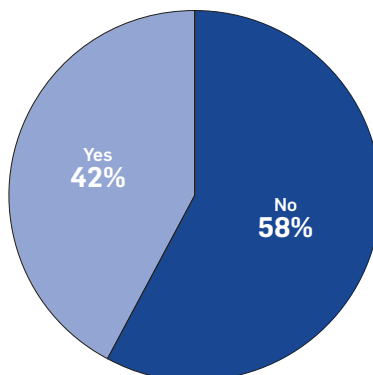
### Pen Preferences

**"Consumers own more pens and pencils than any other promo products. Writing instruments provide a great bang for your client's buck."**

— Counselor's Dave Vagnoni, in a new online video series, Counselor's Product Close-Up, this month focused on writing instruments.

### By The Numbers

**Have recent global apparel factory tragedies become deciding factors in purchasing decisions?**



### Facebook Comments We Loved

**How do you motivate young employees?**

*Judi Brown*

*They need to have a sense of responsibility and ownership in the direction of our business.*

*David Garthwaite*

*Most of the younger generation expects quick results, or they get bored and want to move along.*

*Jennifer Valanski Moyer*

*Incentive programs and recognition for jobs well done are a must. The younger employees have been conditioned to expect recognition.*

**Chat With Us!**

### Build a Better Blog

**Excerpt from a recent live online chat about how distributors use blogs to build their business. For complete transcript, go to [www.asicentral.com/CounselorChat](http://www.asicentral.com/CounselorChat).**

**Greg Linton:** I'm interested in starting a blog on my website. Where should I begin?

**Dave Vagnoni – Counselor:** Go with Wordpress. It's free, there are plenty of themes, as well as plug-ins for easy embedding and cross-marketing with social media. There are also many Wordpress forums where you can get ideas from other users.

**Greg Linton:** How do you suggest I get the word out about my blog? I don't want to have to spend too much time and money on marketing the blog.

**Andy Cohen – Counselor:**

The key is making use of marketing avenues that you may already be using. If you have an electronic newsletter, then that's a perfect place to promote the new blog. Also, put a link to it in your e-mail signature, so everybody you send an e-mail to will see it.

**Delia:** Will tagging posts help my search engine results?

**Andy Cohen – Counselor:**

You definitely want to think of your blog as a way to improve SEO. So, yes, tag everything you can in a blog – popular products, people named, companies named, etc. You want it to be a place that not only generates traffic for your site, but also helps to improve your site in search engine findings. Tagging, along with use of video, definitely helps that.



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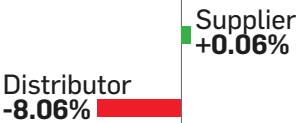
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# Stock Report

## Suppliers Find Gains

Stock market ups and downs

► **Index Watch**  
July 31-September 3



7/31/13-9/3/13								
Company	Stock Exchange	Symbol	52-week high	52-week low	Per-Share Price (9/3/13)	Market Capitalization (in millions)	Per-Share Change	Percent Change
DISTRIBUTORS								
► 4imprint Group	LSE	4IMPRINT	€ 565.00	€ 302.20	€ 542.50	€ 143	(8.50) ↓	-1.54%
► Ace Marketing & Promotions Inc.	OTC	AMKT	0.60	0.20	0.38	17	(0.04) ↓	-9.31%
► Inner Workings Inc.	NASDAQ	INWK	15.80	9.35	10.61	541	(1.07) ↓	-9.16%
► New England Business Services Inc. <i>(Div. Deluxe Corp.)</i>	NYSE	DLX	43.49	28.33	39.38	1,980	(1.63) ↓	-3.97%
► Tic Toc <i>(Div. Omnicom Group Inc.)</i>	NYSE	OMC	70.50	45.11	60.66	15,600	(3.61) ↓	-5.62%
► Staples Promotional Products <i>(Div. Staples Inc.)</i>	NASDAQ	SPLS	17.30	10.79	13.83	9,130	(3.19) ↓	-18.74%
SUPPLIERS								
► 3M Promotional Markets Dept. <i>(Div. 3M Corp.)</i>	NYSE	MMM	119.26	86.74	113.22	77,380	(4.21) ↓	-3.59%
► A.T. Cross Co.	AMEX	ATX	22.62	8.38	20.71	274	2.11 ↑	11.34%
► American Apparel Inc.	AMEX	APP	2.40	0.83	1.38	152	(0.63) ↓	-31.34%
► BIC Corp.	PAR	BIC	101.00	75.06	87.12	4,230	3.72 ↑	4.46%
► Cutter & Buck <i>(Div. New Wave Group)</i>	STO	NEWAB	39.30	18.40	35.70	1,629	(0.50) ↓	-1.38%
► Delta Apparel Inc.	AMEX	DLA	17.84	12.80	16.52	133	0.47 ↑	2.93%
► Ennis Inc. <i>(Parent company of Admore and Alstyle Apparel)</i>	NYSE	EBF	19.42	13.90	17.72	465	(0.81) ↓	-4.37%
► Escalade Sports	NASDAQ	ESCA	8.15	4.67	7.90	107	1.45 ↑	22.48%
► Fossil Special Markets Division	NASDAQ	FOSL	129.25	78.75	114.18	6,450	4.28 ↑	3.89%
► Hanesbrands	NYSE	HBI	65.60	31.17	60.74	6,010	(2.72) ↓	-4.29%
► Hilton Apparel Group <i>(Div. Jarden Corp.)</i>	NYSE	JAH	49.28	32.43	47.43	5,340	1.96 ↑	4.31%
► J.M. Smucker Co.	NYSE	SJM	114.72	81.60	105.39	11,080	(7.13) ↓	-6.34%
► Johnson Worldwide Assoc./JWA	NASDAQ	JOUT	27.00	18.30	25.29	241	(0.18) ↓	-0.71%
► Lancer Label <i>(Div. Mail Well Inc.)</i>	NYSE	CVO	3.13	1.85	2.90	186	0.46 ↑	18.85%
► Lee Printwear <i>(Div. VFCorp. Acquisition Co.)</i>	NYSE	VFC	202.35	142.79	189.05	20,780	(7.95) ↓	-4.04%
► Pfaelzer Brothers <i>(Div. ConAgra)</i>	NYSE	CAG	37.28	25.42	33.90	14,220	(2.31) ↓	-6.38%
► Sanford Business-To-Business <i>(Div. Newell Rubbermaid)</i>	NYSE	NWL	28.47	17.89	25.72	7,410	(1.30) ↓	-4.81%

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

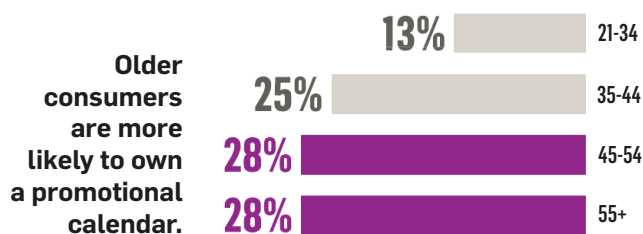


# Number Crunch Perfect Planners

Data shows that calendars appeal most to older consumers.

## Go Older

Have clients targeting older demographics?  
Calendars could be the solution.

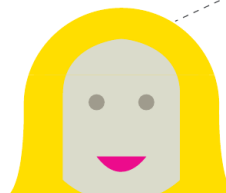


**21%**  
OF U.S. CONSUMERS  
OWN A PROMOTIONAL  
CALENDAR

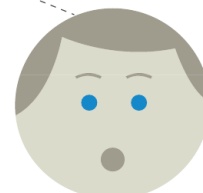


## It's a Date

By a slight margin, women are more likely to own a logoed calendar.



**23%**



**20%**



## Northern Exposure

Consumers in Montreal are most likely to own a logoed calendar.

**37%**

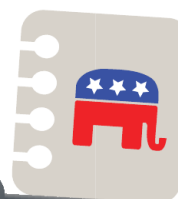
of them say they have at least one at home or in the office.



## To the Right

**23%**

of Republicans own a branded calendar, compared to 21% of both Democrats and Independents.



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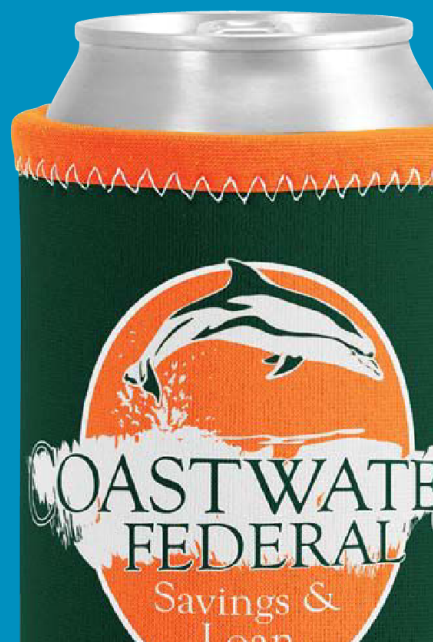


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# Product Picks

## A collection of unique products

By Chuck Zak



2

### 1. GRAB 'N GRILL

Grill-A-Tongs are heavy-duty stainless steel utensils ideal for any type of grilling. With unique laser-cut designs, these are great for hard-core sports fans or as a gift for new homeowners. Available from Sportula ([asi/88882](http://asi/88882)); [www.sportula.com](http://www.sportula.com)



1

### 2. LEAN IN

Innovative 45-degree tea mug (TD45) features its own diffuser and tilts to adjust for either deep or mild infusion. Use thematically to promote "new angles" or for the discriminating tea-drinker on staff. Available from Ad-N-Art ([asi/31518](http://asi/31518)); [www.adnart.com](http://www.adnart.com)



3

### 3. PICK-UP ARTIST

Keep purses, briefcases or shopping bags off the floor with this blinged-out bag hanger (PUR-KLB), a fun practical way to promote high-end auto makers or fashion-focused media. Available from EMT ([asi/52263](http://asi/52263)); [www.emteasy.com](http://www.emteasy.com)

### 4. WASTE AWAY

Fire hydrant shaped pet waste bag dispenser (608-2124) comes with ten biodegradable white bags. A fun and affordable way to announce new dog parks or community clean-up events. Available from PromoPet ([asi/79698](http://asi/79698)); [www.promopet.com](http://www.promopet.com)



4

### 5. SNOWED IN

Create a personalized polyresin snow globe (Snow Globe 32) by adding your own unique decoration. Custom sizes are available, too. An ideal gift to personalize for employee incentive programs. Available from ZZ PROMOS ([asi/99555](http://asi/99555)); [www.zzpromos.com](http://www.zzpromos.com)



5

### 6. WIPED OUT

Keep track of big ideas with this generous 8" x 9" dry erase board (S61017X) that includes a marker and eraser. A great idea for schools, libraries or hospitals. Available from The WOW Line ([asi/98360](http://asi/98360)); [www.wowline.com](http://www.wowline.com)



6

### 7. CASH & CARRY

Secure essentials with this mini purse (HK5000) that clips to a waistband and features a large phone pocket and a zipper pocket for cards or cash. A perfect casino promo or travel giveaway. Available from Corry Enterprises ([asi/46509](http://asi/46509)); [corryscoolstuff@hotmail.com](mailto:corryscoolstuff@hotmail.com)



7

### 8. CALLING PLAN

The sturdy brushed aluminum phone holder (APF) also functions as a photo frame when not in use. A nice idea for credit unions or photography studios. Available from Benjamin Martin ([asi/68920](http://asi/68920)); [www.benjaminmartinframes.com](http://www.benjaminmartinframes.com)



8

### 9. LIGHT READING

This flexible, super-bright USB book light (PAL7011) brightens up a keyboard or e-reader with five LED bulbs. Handy way to advertise computer repair services or wi-fi cafes. Available from Bay State ([asi/38980](http://asi/38980)); [www.baystate.com](http://www.baystate.com)



9



2



1

## 1. CITRICAL THINKING

The double-walled Fruit Infusion Tumbler (45918) makes fresh, naturally flavored water from any fruits added to the infusion basket. Promote healthy living for spas, natural food stores and organic markets. Available from Norwood ([asi/74400](mailto:asi/74400)); [www.norwood.com](http://www.norwood.com)

## 2. SPILL STOPPER

Earth-toned (SL204SS) 16 oz. vacuum tumbler features a newly designed leak-proof lid with a push-button locking closure. Great for welcoming incoming freshmen or new employees. Available from Starline ([asi/89320](mailto:asi/89320)); [www.starline.com](http://www.starline.com)

## 3. WHO ELSE?

Ultra-soft stuffed brown owl (3836) is designed with an impressive level of realistic detail. A real hoot for nature preserves, zoos or wildlife programs. Available from Douglas ([asi/50708](mailto:asi/50708)); [www.douglaspromoplush.com](http://www.douglaspromoplush.com)

## 4. FINER WINE

This decanting funnel (1038-LED) features seven colored lights that flash as wine pours through to become more subtle and complex. A thoughtful gift for a dependable client or a tasteful employee. Available from Wine Appreciation Guild LTD ([asi/97292](mailto:asi/97292)); [www.wineappreciation.com](http://www.wineappreciation.com)

## 5. DIAL DOWN

The Wedge (W -- Ash) is USA-made, holds a phone and keeps the screen clean with an antimicrobial microfiber plush panel on the bottom. Smart promo for phone service or SEO providers. Available from Toddy Gear ([asi/91411](mailto:asi/91411)); [www.brandyourtoddy.com](http://www.brandyourtoddy.com)

3



4



5

## 6. OPEN SEASON

This made-in-the-USA bottle opener key ring (11862) features a full-color laminated insert with a split ring attachment. Simple, handy giveaway for important local services like electricians or plumbers. Available from LarLu ([asi/66390](mailto:asi/66390)); [www.larlu.com](http://www.larlu.com)

## 7. CLOTHES CALL

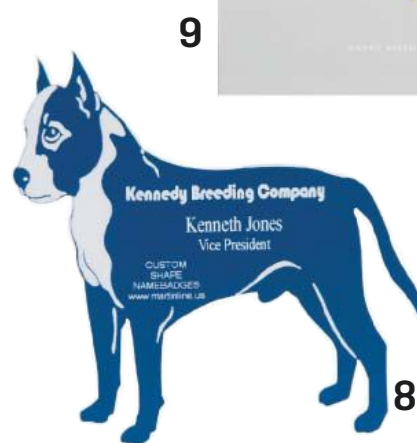
Print boldly on this 22" x 27" fully sublimated polyester laundry bag (SP2-7004) with drawstring and lock closure. Brilliant promo for products with a home-y appeal like snacks or household cleaners. Available from LBU ([asi/65952](mailto:asi/65952)); [www.lbuinc.com](http://www.lbuinc.com)

## 8. NAME BRAND

Create a more individual presence for front desk or sales floor staff with custom-shaped name badges (ML421). Great for clients working with distinctive items like vintage autos or exotic animals. Available from Martin Line ([asi/68924](mailto:asi/68924)); [www.martinline.us](http://www.martinline.us)

## 9. JUST A NUMBER

Stay on top of clients' birthdays with this attractively designed card (XW3BBC23546134) featuring happy birthday text and envelope. Also great for sending between doctors and patients. Available from Carlson Craft ([asi/43920](mailto:asi/43920)); [www.carlsoncraft.com](http://www.carlsoncraft.com)



8



7



6



9



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# Case Studies

Profile • Management • Promo

## Profile

### How We Build Personal Brands

Becoming trusted led to credibility.

By Dave Vagnoni

Developing a strong reputation can make all the difference in business, but successfully building a personal brand doesn't happen overnight. So how exactly is it done? Longtime industry executives Roni Wright and Missy Kilpatrick – both vice presidents at The Book Company (*asi/41010*) – say consistency, not flashiness, is key.

“Giving great service and communicating all the time, every time, has worked for me,” Kilpatrick says. Wright adds: “Do what you say you are going to do.”

Want more brand-building advice? Wright and Kilpatrick share lessons they've learned below.

**Counselor: What's something specific you've done to improve your industry profile?**

**RW:** I continually volunteer as a speaker and I've created a weekly e-mail program that is not about sales, but lifestyle.

**C: What role does social media play in personal brand-building?**

**MK:** Like it or not, your personal brand often plays out on Facebook, Instagram, Vine and other everyday applications. A picture is taken and seconds



**Roni Wright and Missy Kilpatrick** are vice presidents at The Book Company.

later it's up on the Internet. If you are concerned about how you come across to your peers – and in business, we all should be – then take heed not to deviate from your core values when engaging on social platforms.

**C: Do you think women have to work harder to be considered an expert in this industry?**

**RW:** Yes. If you look at the management profiles of most of our industry's leading companies, you won't see many women at the top. Although we represent the lion's share of the workforce, many women choose a personal life over a more public industry career. I feel a responsibility to help encourage and seek out our next round of strong women leaders.



**C: What are effective ways to ask for feedback, endorsements or testimonials?**

**MK:** One of the best ways I've found to get feedback, good or bad, is by inviting a diverse group of distributors to join a roundtable discussion. It gets them involved in the process by critiquing my business model as it relates to their own needs. I've never been afraid to talk to my customers to learn how I'm doing because that's the only way to find out.

**C: How have you networked to polish your image?**

**RW:** I've always believed that if you position yourself as a leader, people will perceive you to be one. Honing my networking skills has taken time and practice, but it's definitely worth it. When I meet somebody in

person, I always maintain good eye contact, I'm the first to smile and I start off a conversation with something pleasant. I often attend educational sessions that are relevant to my clients so I can better understand what they do and support their needs. Finally, I'm not afraid to talk to others to learn what has worked for them in the past.

**C: What brand-building advice do you have for people new to the industry?**

**MK:** Find something that works and stick with it. This is a crowded field, so find a unique way to stand out – maybe it's your company name or maybe you've picked a unique product niche, like environmental products. No matter what you do, be consistent by providing great service and communication 100% of the time.

**C: How do you avoid damage to your reputation when an order goes wrong?**

**RW:** Some of our strongest, longest-lasting relationships have been built out of how we handled a difficult situation. We do everything in our power to make it right.

*Note: Read an expanded Q&A at [www.counselormag.com](http://www.counselormag.com).*



# Management

## Improve Customer Retention

Steps to building better loyalty.

By Shane Dale

Every distributor owner – especially those running smaller firms – has to decide where to put resources. Should companies go after new business or focus more on maximizing retention?

Janelle Barlow, author of *Branded Customer Service: The New Competitive Edge*, believes business owners that emphasize retention can reap significant rewards. “Retention means people are willing to come back and do business with you as long as they can,” she says. “It also means that they’re saying positive things about you – what some people call positive promoters. And to me, it means that customers who are loyal will pay more.”

As a specific example of loyalty, Barlow offers up her personal allegiance to Apple. “I could buy a less expensive PC, but my loyalty to Apple and the brand is very strong, and I say a lot of positive things about them. It’s the loyalty factor, the positive word of mouth, and of course, the repeat business and the willingness to pay.”

How can you earn lasting loyalty from your customers? Here are four ideas to help you get results.

### Create Community

While it may be unrealistic for customers to come to you every time they need a promotional item, building a sense of com-



munity will encourage clients to think of you first.

Barlow, for instance, continues to do yoga at a certain studio because of the positive atmosphere and the friendliness of the instructors. “I have so many alternatives for exercise – I can swim, I can run, I can go to a gym – but I go almost every day to this studio, and part of the reason I do that is they have a real sense of community there,” she says.

The key to creating that community – whether you have a physical storefront or an online-only shop – is to provide some

sort of personalization with each purchase, says Barlow.

“Zappos.com is a large company, but they have a very good connection with their customers,” she says. “Every day, they send out personal cards to customers that they write, stamp and address, and they make some comments on them about how they enjoy doing business with them. I’ve gotten these cards from Zappos.”

By taking the time to add this kind of personalized touch, Barlow says Zappos provides its customers with more than a transaction – it provides them

with an experience.

“That’s where the whole soft side of service has to come in – how do you deliver, but on top of that, do you remember their name?” she says. “So, if small businesses can create an experience that leads to connectedness – in terms of how they lay out their stores or how they interact with customers – they can create a sense of community with the people who work in the store and also the shoppers who go there.”

### Ask How You’re Doing

Justin Sachs, author of *Cus-*

*tomor Loyalty: Top Strategies for Increasing Your Company's Bottom Line*, says distributors must get in the habit of asking for feedback from customers.

"You never know how you're doing until you ask," he says. "The more information you have, the better you can adjust your marketing and your fulfillment. You need to ask your customers about how they're feeling about the work that you're doing, and then ask a very simple question: 'What can I do to better serve you and make it more worth the investment you made in my company?'"

Asking that question won't do much unless it leads to action – actually taking and implementing the advice of customers shows you care about what they think. "Do what they suggest," he says.

Sachs offers proof from his own company that feedback can boost the bottom line. After hearing from customers, he found out that his clients needed more web-based help. "Now, we offer website services and we're making more money that way," Sachs says. "We were actually able to increase the lifetime value of our customers simply by offering a service that was the answer to one of those survey questions."

## Give Something Back

But with many companies now in the habit of handing out survey forms to customers, either in person or via e-mail, how can you make your feedback request stand out? "What we recommend doing is giving them something," Sachs says.

One easy way to do that, Sachs suggests, is by taking advantage of offers through restaurant.com. "It allows business owners to buy restaurant gift certificates for \$3-\$4 per certificate, and the customer gets a \$25 certificate," he says. "So, for \$3-\$4 per client, you should be willing to spend that to figure out what they want. You can use that information to dive deep into how you can better leverage your customer loyalty efforts and how you can use it to increase your overall revenue over time."

Barlow agrees that giving away a little something for free – even if it's only worth a few bucks – is a great way to build brand loyalty and retention. "Many, many restaurants will send a special coupon that says, 'It's your birthday, come on in and

have a cup of coffee on us.' It creates that sense of friendliness, that sense of, 'They gave me something, I need to give them something back.'"

Barlow says distributors can help themselves enormously in the area of customer loyalty by asking themselves this question: What are you doing for your customers beyond what they pay for? "Do things that don't necessarily cost you a lot of money but mean something to the customer," she

says. "It really is important."

## Be Smart About Online Engagement

Whether it's a simple thank-you or a reply to a post or tweet, Barlow says interacting with potential customers through social media can be a powerful retention strategy. "Once again, you're creating that relationship with the customer," she says. "You've got to build something that builds past

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the transaction. You want to deliver that transaction effectively, but at the same time, you have to add something else on top of it.”

Sachs notes, however, that using social media can’t be a casual tactic. “Social media can bite you the first time that you don’t fulfill over the top for a client, because that’s the first place they’re going to go to tell people about how terrible a job you did,” he says.

Sachs believes it’s crucial to remember the customers you interact with on social media and make sure that your service to them is exceptional. “When you use social media, I think it’s critical that you over-deliver in every way possible, because if you don’t, you run the risk of having a lot of negative public communication,” he says.

Case Study

## Understanding Long-Term Retention

While business owners should always try to get repeat business, Justin Sachs, author of *Customer Loyalty: Top Strategies for Increasing Your Company's Bottom Line*, recognizes that some clients become much more valuable than others over a five- or 10-year span. That’s why, he says, it’s fine to make a very small profit on initial orders if you suspect that there’s a real chance for more business at higher profit margins going forward.

“For a company that’s only making, say, a dollar on that first sale, that may be OK because they know that they’re building that loyalty with that customer when they over-deliver,” he says. “They’re going to have a customer that’s going to buy \$5,000-\$10,000 in products from them over a span of five to 10 years.”

Unless you have the advantage of clairvoyance, though, Sachs admits it may be difficult to forecast which clients will be the most profitable over a long-term period. That’s where customer relationship management (CRM) technology comes in. “You need to be able to determine what they’re spending with you, on average, over a one-year term,” he says. “Your goal is to be able to look at your CRM, track it, and really be able to see how much those clients are worth to you.”

Doing this kind of research can also help distributors determine whether offering customers a discount or freebies on their initial order tends to pay off in the future. Watching customer trends, conducting some market analysis and having confidence in what you’re delivering will also make a difference.

“I know guys that are losing money on their first sale with a client, and they don’t care,” Sachs says. “When they say on TV, ‘Free trial - just pay shipping and handling,’ they’re losing money, but if they know that 56% of those customers are going to sign up for a subscription at \$99 a month, they know they’re making money, so it’s worth offering that trial run.”



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# Promo Close-Up All Aboard

A distributor puts on a one-of-a-kind trade show.

By Jennifer Vishnevsky

At the start of 2013, the executive team of Premier & Companies Inc. (*asi/298491*) met to discuss new ways to grow its business. The company's leaders wanted to do something that would get customers talking, so they brainstormed marketing and sales approaches that were completely outside the box.

"The idea was presented about having a trade show aboard the USS Intrepid, which is a living museum here on the west side of Manhattan," says Ed Sanders of Premier. The ship certainly has a wow-effect, offering a 17,000-square-foot room, a flight deck and the USS Enterprise space shuttle.

"We had to attract marketing professionals, facility managers, and procurement and purchasing coordinators and show them why they should interrupt their day, look at our video and attend our event," Sanders says.

Premier decided to create a "Mission: Possible" theme in which attendees could take part in a game. Event guests would use spy glasses to decode personalized mission cards, which directed them to visit key manufacturers. Attendees could also later drop their cards into a bin and be registered to win prizes.

Andrew Schrage, co-owner of the personal finance website Money Crashers, believes Premier's idea was both creative, eye-catching and light-years better than a typical trade show presentation. "Premier & Companies demonstrated to its clients



**Premiere's** trade show on the USS Intrepid wowed attendees.

that it was willing to go the extra mile in order to earn their business," he says. "What Premier & Companies showed other companies is that it's not afraid to go out and grab new customers and do so with savvy."

Adding to the entertainment experience, Premier showed clients and prospects a full array of its services before and during the event. In its trade show package, Premier incorporated the latest in stamping, papers from Neenah and offset lithography, along with mounting and fulfillment, direct mail, e-mail, video and personalized URLs.

"We welcomed guests with a package for the front end and provided management with an easy-to-use, real-time, back-end reporting module, which is

all part of our online technology," says Sanders. "We then added another dimension utilizing red lenses within glasses, which optically allow for hidden messages to be part of the custom mission cards. They're also part of the invitation package and digitally printed."

Not to be forgotten are the detailed lengths Premier went to in marketing the USS Intrepid event. The distributor launched a cross-media print campaign for 2,000 people and an e-mail campaign for 1,300 people. The cross-media effort alone successfully reached about 60% of invitees, resulting in RSVPs from more than 25% of invited guests within two weeks of the campaign's kickoff. The personal URLs sent via

e-mail, meanwhile, were viewed by 50% of recipients. "We had 870 registered people for the event, and on a rainy Wednesday, we had almost 700 attend," says Sanders.

Premier & Companies also kept detailed analytics on which aspects of the event were most visited. "This allowed for our clients to see what other services we can provide, making our relationship more valuable," says Sanders.

Schrage, who applauds Premier's use of tracking metrics, isn't surprised the event was a hit. "Any company that can put that much of a creative spin on something that's usually rather mundane – such as a trade show – is sure to have positive, long-term results," he says.

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# Apparel

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## Trends

### The Gingham Comeback

A color and pattern staple of days gone by is shining again in the promotional market.

By Samantha Phillips

When it comes to fashion, today's looks can definitely be described as "throwbacks." High fashion lines and runways are crowded with vintage trends that have been adapted and improved for modern style.

A favorite blast-from-the-past over recent seasons is gingham. The checkered two-tone pattern was the go-to look for housewives in the mid 1950s and is now being reborn as a chic, sophisticated, and fun pattern that's adorning everything from formal wear to sleepwear.

"I think there is just a big revival of the retro look in fashion," says Cindy Sims, PR & promotions manager at Heritage Sportswear (*asi/60582*).

While gingham appears as a print for summer dresses or tank tops, it's also being used on winter jackets, men's dress shirts and children's clothing. According to Ashley Adams, marketing coordinator at S&S Activewear (*asi/84358*), this versatility is largely the cause for its popularity.

"We offer the gingham pattern in a variety of colors which allows the customer to wear the gar-

ments year-round," says Adams. This makes gingham an ideal pattern for promotional apparel.

Due to the popular retail demand for the pattern, Heritage Sportswear now includes gingham Van Heusen men's dress shirts in its product lineup. "Businesses everywhere are becoming more relaxed about their dress codes," says Sims, "so I think that's a great target market for the pattern. If need be, it can look very professional paired with a solid color tie but it can also be casual if worn with a pair of jeans."

In addition, Adams attributes gingham's success to the pizzazz it can add to a garment. "It's a consistent pattern that gives the product a trendier look than just a solid color would," she says.

However, it is important to be cautious when decorating gingham for promotional apparel. "For decorators, sometimes any kind of pattern is a deterrent," Sims warns. "It can be a challenge to add decoration to any pattern that has a horizontal stripe. If you have a long logo that has a definite horizontal Y, you run the risk of it looking crooked against the



Heritage Sportswear (*asi/60582*) offers this line of Van Heusen dress shirts that feature the gingham pattern. They're available in green, amethyst, and periwinkle gingham.

pattern. But with a round logo or emblem, it's not an issue."

Branding issues aside, there's no denying the pattern's rising popularity. "Wholesale mimics

retail but lags about a year and a half," says Sims. "The pattern has been huge in retail so the promotional apparel industry is now picking it up."



# Opportunities Uniform Look

School uniforms present a growing and ripe market for distributors.

By Tonia Kimbrough

The use of school uniforms in many districts – including public schools – is growing in the United States. In fact, the Education Administration Association reports that uniform adoption has grown by 21% in the U.S. in the past five years. This is a trend that distributors can capitalize on.

First, you have to know what matters to three audiences: the school administrators, the parents and the kids. Maurina Billere, account executive at uniform provider Executive Apparel (*asi/53418*), counts continuity, comfort, easy care and school identity among the key components for a school uniform program.

“Our ‘decider’ is Mom, so we have to be careful to give the product a long life for big families and make them easy-care,” Billere explains.

She also encourages salespeople to think broadly about the scope of a uniform. “Sell the full package,” she says. Consider all the pieces such as blazers, pants, shirts, ties and more that make up an entire outfit.

Another tip is to research the many special clubs and activities a school may offer. Each may need a distinctive uniform. This could be a sports team or physical education program in need of athletic uniforms or an academic club such as a debate team with a need to look sharp. Dressing each audience requires very different garments. You



This debate club school uniform from Edwards Garment features a blazer (3500 or 6500) made of a textured woven polyester to look sharp with a performance cotton/poly blend for the shirt (1975 or 5975). A tie or neckerchief (SW00 and HB60) adds the perfect accent of school colors.



Consider seasonality of student uniforms – offering options that go from the heat of summer to the cold of winter will bring more sales. A good option is this children's polyester school blazer (1099) from Executive Apparel (*asi/53418*).

must weigh the demands that will be placed on the uniform, observe school color standards and keep style in mind.

Though it can be very rewarding to land a school uniform program, it is not without challenges. One of the trickiest aspects is size. “Always use a fit line (samples that ensure proper fit) of the product you are going to supply,” Billere advises. “Promotional products people will have to plan fitting days, as they won’t be able to service schools otherwise. Take names and sizes!”

A final prudent measure is to double-check sizes and fit before you do the embroidery or add emblematic patches. A decorated garment is not likely to be an exchangeable one.

Timing is another aspect that requires careful planning. “Promotional apparel sales reps need to discuss school uniform programs well in advance of the school year in order to give everyone enough time for input on the styles selected, and to insure that it fits into their budget and timelines for

delivery,” says Taraynn Lloyd, spokesperson for Edwards Garment (*asi/51752*).

Then, discuss future program needs. Ideally these garments will be the official school uniform for years to come, and therefore what you’ve chosen needs to remain readily available for new students and as replacement pieces.

“Once garments are selected for the uniform program,” Lloyd says, “work closely with the supplier to ensure that these styles and colors are in stock.”

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# Decoration

## Make it Shine

Appliques and embellishments can make an apparel program stand out.

By Allissa Tallman

'Tis the season to embellish, as high-end designers such as Chloe, Valentino, Moschino and Louis Vuitton have so graciously done in their summer and fall 2013 collections. Whether it's adding metal accents to high-heeled boots, colorful gemstones to handbags or fancy embroidery to skirts and dresses, today's top fashion gurus are implementing this style with inspired zest.

Lori Janke, art director for Art Unlimited Sportswear (*asi/36978*), states that embellished apparel within the promotional arena continues to enjoy consistent success, especially in the wake of its popularity within high fashion and the retail industry.

"Customers are always looking for something different," she says. "Trying new types of fabrics, colors and unusual textures is always a great idea."

One attractive feature of appliquéd and embellished apparel is that it adds a three-dimensional, tactile aspect to a product.

"Appliqué and embellishments make people want to touch and feel the decoration and determine how it was created," Janke says. The result? Promotional recipients spending more time with an item and increasingly wanting to share it, all of which creates more impressions for the garment and logo on it.

Janke mentions a few embellishment trends she's been witnessing within the promotional



▲ Matias Imports (*asi/69571*) carries this personalized leather pet collar (MTI101880) embellished with rhinestones.



▲ Art Unlimited Sportswear (*asi/36978*) embellished this color-blocked vintage hoodie, made of 80% cotton and 20% polyester, with distressed appliqué and embroidery.



▲ Assertive Creativity (*asi/37166*) carries these rubber flip-flops (P-1201-WSLB) with embedded glitter, decorative flower and treaded sole.

market. "Appliquéd apparel is still a hot item for decorators," she says, "and distressed appliqué is very popular for customers looking for fashion-forward designs. Multimedia designs are also appealing."

She suggests incorporating

more than one embellishment technique as a way to differentiate your client's company or brand from another. "Mixing appliqué, embroidery, print and even rhinestones can distinguish your design and logo from the ordinary," she says.

Because appliqué and embellishment types range so widely, they can be applied to several types of industries. Depending on the price point, such products make excellent giveaways and employee gifts for either men or women.



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Brandit's mission is to make the purchasing and procurement process easy for its clients, bringing them peace of mind. The distributor works from an extensive network of deeply seeded supplier relationships throughout the U.S. and abroad so that orders move quickly from start to finish for a rapid delivery. Part of that process relies heavily on the firm's ability to take and process orders online, then manage the back-end operations.

When Brandit executives began to look for an e-commerce solution, there were two key requirements: integration to ESP (ASI's product research system) and ease of use. The team looked to AdvancedEMedia for an answer. It replied with a custom solution perfect for Brandit's needs, which also required the development of customized Company Store Solutions.

AdvancedEMedia, the developer of the WebJaguar e-commerce platform, provides small- to mid-sized promotional product 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 e-commerce solution."

It has been two years since the transition. Brandit's Product Specialist Lisa Schraw couldn't be happier with the results. "Brandit serves clients in many geographical areas and with many different needs," she says. "The use of technology, namely the WebJaguar platform, is the way to distinguish Brandit and provide a true solution to all of our clients' needs. AdvancedEMedia 'gets it' when it comes to the ASI distributor's needs."



**"AdvancedEMedia  
'gets it' when  
it comes to the  
ASI distributor's  
needs."**

Lisa Schraw, Brandit

With WebJaguar, Brandit enjoys the same sensitivity to pricing and supplier information that distributors receive from any ASI-related vendor. The WebJaguar e-commerce solution allows distributors to retain control over margins (even on a customer-by-customer basis) and to protect wholesale pricing. Furthermore, WebJaguar makes it easier for search engines to index a site effectively, which improves online visibility and draws more buyers to the company. The powerful search functions of WebJaguar, which is integrated with ASI Smart Link Search, make it simple for buyers to find products that fit their search criteria. Beyond those benefits, distributors find functions to target prospects and reach out to clients.

From an administrative standpoint, the customized e-commerce solution has streamlined Brandit's operation. "It has integrated the ordering production and accounting processes, saves time and improves accuracy," Schraw explains. This makes the organization more nimble and responsive, benefits that affect the whole organization from sales to fulfillment to customer service and beyond. It has broadened the scope of Brandit's abilities. Schraw attributes growth in no small part to the e-commerce solution, explaining:

"The WebJaguar system has increased our market value to new prospects and resulted in bigger and better opportunities for Brandit."

Along the way, AdvancedEMedia's support staff also has played an important role in Brandit's e-commerce success. "Customer Service, Support and Development teams are all top notch," Schraw says. "They listen and come up with solutions on a daily basis. AdvancedEMedia is a great organization and Bachir's team has developed a great product. Brandit looks forward to working together for many years to come."

All that's needed for other distributors to get started on their own e-commerce 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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2013

# POWER

# Meet the most influential executives in today's ad specialty market.

*By Andy Cohen  
& Dave Vagnoni  
Research by  
Karen Akers*

**P**ower can be defined in many ways. Success. Growth. Influence. That rare, unmistakable yet hard-to-pinpoint, quality that motivates people.

The members of the *Counselor* Power 50 have all of the above – and then some. They're the movers and shakers of the ad specialty market, helping to set the industry's agenda at the same time as being influential and successful players. They not only inspire their own employees, they make others in the market – competitors, clients and vendors alike – change the way they do business.

On the following pages, you'll find the 50 rankings along with reasons for why they place where they do on the list. Indicated along with each profile is where they placed on last year's list, to reflect their changing influence on the market. Rankings are often based on a survey *Counselor* conducts, which asks the industry and the Power 50 themselves to rate whether each person on last year's list has gained or lost influence over the past 12 months.

Turn the page to see the 2013 Power 50, as well as how the influential executives view the outlook for the market, what they think the biggest challenges will be to overcome and what their top goals are in the coming year for their own companies. Plus, for some fun – check out their favorite vacation spots, preferred apps, and who each believes will be the next President of the United States.



**1 Marc Simon**

HALO Branded Solutions (*asi/356000*)  
2012 Rank: 6

Simon takes over the top spot this year after leading impressive growth (17% in 2012) at Halo and receiving very high influence scores from his fellow Power 50 members. Simon also grew his industry profile this year as the chairman of PPAI.

**2 Marty Lott & Jeremy Lott**

SanMar (*asi/84863*)  
2012 Rank: 1

Son Jeremy joins his father, Marty, on the list this year after being named president of apparel supplier SanMar. The influential duo receive high power ratings from both the Power 50 members and the industry at large.

**3 Michael Bernstein & David Nicholson**

Polyconcept  
2012 Rank: 3

The duo in charge of supplier organization Polyconcept North America keep their top-three spot after garnering high influence ratings from the industry and leading their company to 5% growth last year. Nicholson also was honored with *Counselor's* Person of the Year award in July.

**4 Kevin Lyons-Tarr**

4Imprint (*asi/197045*)  
2012 Rank: 2

The head of the largest online distributor in the industry falls two spots after the industry at large gave him lower influence ratings this year. However, his top-five power standing remains, with his company continuing an impressive run of growth – 14% in 2012 alone.

**5 Greg Muzzillo & Vera Muzzillo**

Proforma (*asi/300094*)  
2012 Rank: 5

The husband-and-wife team in charge of Proforma received high influence ratings from Power 50 members this year, helping them to maintain their top-five standing on the rankings. Proforma's growth of nearly 10% last year solidifies their industry authority.

**6 Jay Deutsch & Eric Bensussen**

BDA (*asi/137616*)  
2012 Rank: 4

The B and the D in BDA together maintain their top-10 power position in the industry thanks to positive survey scores from their fellow Power 50 members. The company duo drops two spots, though, after BDA's revenues fell by double digits last year.

## What's your outlook for the industry for the next 12 months?

*"Small-business owners remain the number-one buyers of promotional products and confidence among small businesses, in general, is strengthening. Certain industries (such as construction, mortgage lending and insurance) were hit hard by the recession and are starting to recover, and recovery in these industries drives revenue in our industry. For these reasons, I am optimistic about business prospects for our industry in 2014."*

– Bill Smith Jr., Brown & Bigelow

*"I believe industry revenues will grow, but slowly. I think the economy will remain fragile, as consumers and businesses remain cautious. We may hit a bump this fall as Congress battles over the debt ceiling and the budget; however, I'm optimistic 2014 will be better than 2013."*

– Lori Kates, Vitronic Promotional Group

*"I think North America will see slow growth but lower risk of decline than we've seen in the more recent past. Europe will continue to be very challenging with a lot of disruption for the foreseeable future."*

– Michael Bernstein, Polyconcept

*"I continue to be concerned about the fundamentals of the U.S. (and global) economy. I believe there will be some dark clouds coming with the rising insurance cost for business and increase in taxes. This could*

*have a negative impact on spend related to promotional products."*

– Jason Black, Boundless Network

*"I believe the industry will continue its current trend of steady but moderate growth."*

– Jeremy Lott, SanMar

*"The economy continues to be spotty throughout the country, but it does appear that attitudes and budgets will continue to improve and grow through 2014."* – Larry Zavadil, American Solutions for Business

*"The promotional industry is enjoying consistent demand and will see 5%-6% growth year over year in 2013. This will likely continue into 2014 as long as there is no macro-economic event to frighten buyers into withholding budgets."*

– Rick Brenner, Prime Line

*"We believe the apparel side of the industry is finally picking up speed. Unit volume has steadily grown over the summer, and the momentum appears sustainable."*

– Norm Hullinger, Broder Bros.

*"Results will be channel-specific. I expect that manufacturing, oil and gas and retail will be OK, while financial will be soft. Distributors with a diversified client base will be OK."*

– Dan Craig, Accolade Promotion Group

**7 Gene Geiger & Jo-an Lantz**

Geiger (*asi/202900*)  
2012 Rank: 7

With the sale of Geiger's manufacturing business this year, Geiger and Lantz focused the company solely on its main growth area: distribution of promo products. The decision and clarified go-to-market strategy help to sustain the duo's ranking on the Power 50.

**8 Rich Witaszak**

Staples Promotional Products  
(*asi/120601*)

2012 Rank: 8

*Counselor* estimates show revenue at Staples

Promotional Products to have surpassed the \$400 million mark in 2012, making it the largest distributor in the industry. With that heft comes power for Witaszak, the head of the promo products division of office retail giant Staples.

**9 Jonathan Isaacson**

Gemline (*asi/56070*)  
2012 Rank: 13

Isaacson jumps four spots into the top 10 this year after receiving high influence ratings from both the Power 50 and the industry at large. Gemline distribution deals with big brands like

Igloo and Brookstone have helped to expand the company's industry profile.

**10 David Woods**  
AIA Corporation (*asi/109480*)  
2012 Rank: 9  
Industry veteran Woods solidified his position in the market with the recent engineering of a recapitalization of AIA Corporation. Owned by Riverside Company since 2005, AIA is now capitalized by McNally Capital, and Woods has signed a deal to remain with the growing distributor firm for at least five more years.

**11 Norm Hullinger**  
Broder Bros. (*asi/42090*)  
2012 Rank: N/A  
The highest-ranking newcomer to this year's list, Hullinger was named CEO of the largest supplier firm in the industry at the end of last year. He is now tasked with continuing the impressive turnaround underway at the apparel supplier firm.

**12 Bill Schmidt Sr., CJ Schmidt & Bill Schmidt Jr.**  
Hit Promotional Products (*asi/61125*)  
2012 Rank: 19  
If growth is power, the family in charge of Hit Promotional Products has it in spades. The Schmidts have overseen more than 150% revenue growth in the past five years, including 28% last year. The seventh-largest supplier now does nearly \$200 million in annual sales, helping the Schmidts to jump seven spots on the 2013 Power 50.

**13 Ross Silverstein**  
iPROMOTEu (*asi/232119*)  
2012 Rank: 14  
Jumping one spot from last year, Silverstein recently introduced single-order financing to industry distributors, helping to raise his company's influence in the market. The distributor firm has also grown its revenues by 81% in the past five years.

**14 Bob Lederer, Jeff Lederer, Rick Brenner & Paula Shulman**  
Prime Line (*asi/79530*)  
2012 Rank: 11  
Joining the Lederers and Shulman on the list this year is Prime Line CEO Rick Brenner, known in the industry for his product safety expertise and acumen. The Prime group also oversaw sales growth of 8% in 2012, as it introduced new products and expanded its partnerships with Leeman Designs and Built NY.

**15 Trevor Gnesin**  
Logomark (*asi/67866*)  
2012 Rank: 12  
Gnesin falls three spots on this year's Power 50 list after garnering lower influence ratings from Power 50 members. Also, while sales at his company grew by 8% last year, Gnesin said profit fell as it dealt with increased expenses related to the launch of its Valumark line.

**16 Glenn Chamandy**  
Gildan Activewear  
2012 Rank: 18  
With Gildan's acquisition of New Buffalo Shirt Factory in June, the company is making a concerted effort to expand its decoration business

through its Anvil unit. The move only increases the power of Chamandy and the \$2 billion-in-anual-sales Gildan, as it looks to add decoration to its apparel offerings.

**17 Eric Belcher**  
InnerWorkings (*asi/168860*)  
2012 Rank: 21  
Increasing both its international and domestic business by more than 20% this year, InnerWorkings has been on a roll of late. In the ad specialty market, the company is also expanding quickly, having increased its revenues by 34% in the past five years, making it the 12th-largest distributor.

## What do you think will be the industry's biggest challenge in 2014?

*"On the supplier side, we are seeing a steady increase in the cost to serve. This includes increasing customer requirements, product safety, and supply chain challenges. I see that continuing into the foreseeable future."*

– Jonathan Isaacson, Gemline

*"Internet marketing and advertising dollars flowing in that direction."* – Jo-an Lantz, Geiger

*"Change – change with new online models and the pressure to drive cost and prices down. Those suppliers who have invested millions of dollars in infrastructure, automation and inventory management will continue to thrive."*

– Jeff Lederer, Prime Line

*"One of the biggest issues I see our industry facing is competing with websites and companies that are outside our industry going directly to the end-buyer. These companies are selling at lower margins and are cutting out the suppliers and distributors of our industry."*

– Kim Newell, World Wide Lines

*"To improve large clients' views of our promotional marketing medium's effectiveness and R.O.I."*

– Alan Chippindale, BrandAlliance

*"For suppliers, I think inventory still seems to be a challenge. As suppliers continue to add more and more categories and colors to their lines, forecasting becomes much more difficult than it has ever been. Also, in general, the access for end-buyers to search products so readily on the Internet and direct in China continues to make it difficult for suppliers to keep their profit margins where they would like them to be."* – Paula Shulman, Prime Line

*"There's no doubt that quality and compliance issues loom large for our industry."*

– Greg Muzzillo, Proforma

*"With increased emphasis on compliance and social responsibility, it will be increasingly difficult for most of the industry to monitor and maintain these standards due to global sourcing and cultural differences."*

– Eric Rubin, Blue Generation

*"Quality of new distributors entering the market and low barriers to entry on the distributor side is an ongoing concern. The industry spends too much time looking to the past, not to the future."*

– Doug Hayes, Ash City



## 18 **Ira Neaman** Vantage Apparel (*asi/93390*) 2012 Rank: 16

The head of Vantage Apparel, the perennial *Counselor* Distributor Choice Award winner in the Decorated Apparel category, falls two spots on this year's list after receiving lower influence ratings from Power 50 members.

## 19 **Jack Ma & Jonathan Lu** Alibaba Group 2012 Rank: 15

With Ma stepping down from his CEO post at Asian e-commerce company Alibaba Group, new CEO Lu joins him on the Power 50 this year. Ma remains as chairman of this fast-

growing international company that connects buyers across the globe with manufacturers of thousands of goods, including promotional products.

## 20 **Mike Rhodes** Bodek and Rhodes (*asi/40788*) 2012 Rank: 30

Rhodes jumps 10 spots on the 2013 Power 50 after receiving high influence ratings from both the Power 50 and the industry at large. Bodek and Rhodes has become a much bigger player in the industry as well, noting revenue increases of nearly 50% over the past five years to become the sixth-largest supplier in the market.

## 21 **Sharon, Taly & Ely Eyal** ETS Express (*asi/51197*) 2012 Rank: 24

Newcomers to last year's list, the family in charge of Top 40 supplier ETS Express oversees a continuously growing and influential supplier of drinkware. A leader in providing product safety information to the market, ETS has also grown its sales by 177% in the past five years.

## 22 **Edgar Hernandez & Emmanuel Bruno** Norwood & BIC Graphic North America 2012 Rank: 20

Hernandez, general manager of BIC APP, the parent division of Norwood & BIC Graphic North America, joins Bruno, GM and VP of Norwood & BIC Graphic North America, on this year's list. The duo are tasked with turning around the falling revenues of the North American division.

## 23 **Jason Black** Boundless Network (*asi/143717*) 2012 Rank: 22

While Black's influence took a small dip in ratings from the Power 50 and the industry at large, he oversees a growing Top 40 distributor firm – Boundless Network grew its revenues by 20% last year and by 120% over the past five years.

## 24 **Craig Callaway** eCompanyStore (*asi/185782*) 2012 Rank: 26

While Callaway's eCompanyStore unit's revenues have fallen in recent years due to some lost business to the financial sector, he also oversees Instawares Holding Company. That business owns a diverse group of tech companies that is growing at 30% a year and will attain revenues of \$130 million this year.

## 25 **Alan Vaught** Evans Manufacturing (*asi/52840*) 2012 Rank: 28

Vaught's influence in the market continues to rise, as Power 50 people rated him as increasing in authority over the past year. The survey result moves him up three spots in the ranking.

## 26 **Jack So** Hong Kong Trade Development Council 2012 Rank: 25

The HKTDC runs multiple trade shows that

# What will be the biggest change in the industry 10 years from now?

*"The experience gap caused by the accelerating retirement of the seniors in our industry and the corresponding lack of youth entering the business as we speak."*

– Bill Korowitz, The Magnet Group

*"As more people realize that it is possible to customize just about anything – from computer and phone skins to watchbands and shoes – the demand for custom items will have no boundaries. Consumers will demand customization on items of all shapes and sizes, items that they would have never dreamed of personalizing in the past."*

– Ted Stahl, GroupeSTAHL

*"Safety and compliance. The industry can't hide from the fact that a lot of products are borderline in terms of compliance. We know the amount of money a company like ours spends every year in testing and audits – we are talking about millions of dollars – and we know that not everybody will be able to afford these expenses without jeopardizing their profitability. The ones who will take the risks will jeopardize the whole industry."*

– Emmanuel Bruno, Norwood & BIC Graphic

*"We won't rely on catalogs as our primary marketing tools. Product introductions and pricing will change immediately based on*

*market conditions, and we will be printing most products in a digital format."*

– Paul Lage, Gill Studios

*"Continued innovation. What the norm is today in service levels may become yesterday's news based on service and technology advancements. The companies that react to the trends and continue to innovate will captivate the customer."*

– Mike Rhodes, Bodek and Rhodes

*"Innovation will drive brand interaction to be more experiential than tangible."*

– Derek Block, Touchstone

*"I envision less demarcation between 'supplier' and 'distributor,' especially for fulfilling commodity products."*

– Rick Mouty, ProFill Holdings

*"The dramatic impact that social media has had on traditional media has opened the door for our industry to demonstrate how we can deliver greater ROI to clients, create greater loyalty and build brand awareness more cost-effectively. This will result in our industry becoming more critical in our clients' marketing strategies and budgets by connecting with consumers one by one."*

– Marc Roy, BrandAlliance

## What's your number-one goal for your company next year?

*"The company has gone through various changes both in the U.S. and in Europe, so I would say we need to get back to normal and back to the basic business of attending to our distributors and their customer needs.*

*Trying to lead the way and not follow – that means watching trends in the markets and with our distributors, listening, listening, and did I mention listening, to their needs?"*

– Edgar Hernandez, Norwood & BIC Graphic North America

*"Continue to grow top-line revenue and bottom-line profits."* – Ross Silverstein, iPROMOTEu

*"To migrate to a new operating system without pain."* – Fred Parker, A Brand Company

*"Learn more about who our customers are, what they expect and want from us, and how well we are pleasing them."*

– Gene Geiger, Geiger

*"We're laser-focused on what we can do to add value to our customers. It's never one thing – it's compelling new styles, inventory, customer service, etc. When our customers grow and thrive, we do too."* – Marty Lott, SanMar

*"Win a global account."* – Craig Callaway, eCompanyStore

*"Driving profitable growth by expanding into new countries and enhancing our overall web channel. We will accomplish this by relentlessly improving our strategic processes and supporting our employee development."*

– Dave Thompson, National Pen

impact and service the ad specialty market, including the Hong Kong Gifts & Premium Fair. Recognizing its impact for suppliers, Power 50 members rated So with increasing influence this year, but the industry at large gave him lower ratings this year.

**27 Joe Fleming**  
Hub Pen (asi/61966)  
2012 Rank: 32

Fleming jumps five spots in the ranking after debuting on the Power 50 last year. As the head of a Top 40 supplier firm that has grown its revenues by more than 80% in the past

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five years, Fleming is consistently showing his influence on the market.

## 28 Kurt Kaeser & Gregg Emmer

Kaeser & Blair (*asi/238600*)  
2012 Rank: 29

After receiving positive influence ratings from their fellow Power 50 members, Kaeser and Emmer jump one spot on this year's list. The company grew its revenues by 6% last year, and is now the 15th-largest distributor in the industry.

## 29 Doug Hayes

Ash City (*asi/37127*)  
2012 Rank: N/A

Hayes, who took over as CEO of Top 40 supplier Ash City earlier this year, replaces Garry Hurvitz on the 2013 Power 50. Hayes now runs the ninth-largest supplier firm in the industry, an organization with more than \$140 million in annual revenues.

## 30 Ted Stahl

GroupeSTAHL  
2012 Rank: N/A

A newcomer to the 2013 Power 50, Stahl is the head of GroupeSTAHL, the largest international manufacturer of heat-printing products and services that complement embroidery and screen printing. A decorating technology pioneer with more than 75,000 worldwide customers, GroupeSTAHL has led the way with new printing processes and technologies. Stahl was inducted into the Sporting Goods Industry Hall of Fame in 2011.

## 31 David Thompson

National Pen (*asi/281040*)  
2012 Rank: 31

Thompson maintains his spot on the list after leading his company to 5.5% sales growth last year and receiving good influence ratings from the Power 50. The industry at large, though, isn't as familiar with this relative newcomer to the ad specialty market.

## 32 Billy Dolan & Vivian Lo

Camsing Global (*asi/43668*)  
2012 Rank: 23

Falling sales for Camsing Global (17% drop in 2012) and low influence ratings from the Power 50 and industry at large lead to this duo dropping nine spots on the 2013 Power 50. The international pair, though, lead Top 40 supplier Camsing and have shown a proclivity for big deals.

## 33 Marc Roy & Alan Chippindale

BrandAlliance (*asi/145177*)  
2012 Rank: 33

Roy, who took over as CEO of BrandAlliance in May, joins Chippindale on the 2013 Power 50 list. Together, they help to lead the second-largest distributor firm in Canada (as measured by industry revenue). Roy had previously been on the Power 50 three years ago when he was CEO of Accolade Promotion Group (*asi/102905*).

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## 34 **Bill Korowitz** The Magnet Group (*asi/68507*) 2012 Rank: 38

Korowitz, an economist that's often available to share his forecasts for the industry, jumps four spots this year after garnering high influence ratings from his fellow Power 50 members.

## 35 **Paul Lage** Gill Studios (*asi/56950*) 2012 Rank: 40

Lage moves up five spots on this year's Power 50 after overseeing 23% election-year sales growth at Gill. He also received highly positive influence ratings from the industry on the *Counselor* survey.

## 36 **Paul Bellantone** PPAI 2012 Rank: 43

As the CEO of industry association PPAI, Bellantone received high influence ratings from both the industry and the members of the Power 50. That is reflected in his seven-spot jump in the rankings this year.

## 37 **Lori Kates** Vitronic Promotional Group (*asi/93990*) 2012 Rank: N/A

A newcomer to the Power 50 this year, Kates won *Counselor's* Supplier Woman of Distinction award in July thanks to her long-term stewardship of supplier firm Vitronic. The company increased its sales in 2012 by 4% to reach more than \$32 million in revenues.

## 38 **Dan Craig** Accolade Promotion Group (*asi/102905*) 2012 Rank: 37

The head of Accolade Promotion Group, the largest revenue-generating distributor in Canada, drops just one spot on the list after leading his company to 3% sales growth in 2012.

## 39 **Jim Hagan** Sweda (*asi/90305*) 2012 Rank: 36

The head of Top 40 supplier Sweda has overseen a growing company (4% last year) in recent years, one that has continuously introduced new and unique products to the industry.

## 40 **Rick Mouty** Profill Holdings 2012 Rank: N/A

Profill Holdings, the parent company of wearables suppliers such as TSC Apparel, Wear-Magic, and LightHouse Apparel, has increased its business so dramatically over the past five years (40% revenue growth) that it is now the 15th-largest supplier in the market. Mouty, who has been with the company since 2001, is in charge of the operation.

## 41 **Fred Parker** A Brand Company 2012 Rank: 46

Parker, whose A Brand Company is the parent to Activate! Marketing + Promotions, has overseen explosive growth for his distributor firm in recent years. Activate increased its revenues by 15% last year alone, and is now a more-than-\$30-million firm, a result that has helped increase Parker's profile in the market.

## 42 **Kim Newell** World Wide Lines (*asi/98290*) 2012 Rank: 39

Newell maintains her spot in the latter half of the Power 50 after continuing to speak at industry events. As she has become an outspoken proponent for the increase of product safety measures in the industry, more people are certainly recognizing her expertise.

## 43 **Chris Vernon** The Vernon Company (*asi/351700*) 2012 Rank: 45

Vernon, who runs the 111-year-old Top 40 distributor firm, jumps two spots on this year's list after receiving positive influence ratings from both the Power 50 and the industry at large.

## 44 **Derek Block** Touchstone (*asi/345631*) 2012 Rank: 41

Block, who engineered a deal with Top 40 firm Cintas last year to take over much of the uniform company's enterprise promotional business, falls a few spots on the list this year after receiving lower influence ratings from the industry at large.

## 45 **Eric Rubin** Blue Generation (*asi/40653*) 2012 Rank: 44

As a major player in the uniform sector of the industry, Rubin oversees Blue Generation, which grew its revenues by 3% last year and by 12% over the past five years.

# There are 10 new members of the *Counselor* Power 50 for 2013.

## 46 **Dov Charney** American Apparel (*asi/35297*) 2012 Rank: 47

Charney, who has successfully turned around the revenues of NYSE-listed American Apparel (APP) in recent years, jumps one spot on the list thanks to the recent success he's had at American Apparel.

## 47 **Maribeth Sandford** Bag Makers (*asi/37940*) 2012 Rank: 48

Sandford jumps one spot on the list, following her winning of *Counselor's* Marvin Spike Lifetime Achievement Award in July. She also received positive industry influence ratings from the market overall.

## 48 **Daniel Tsai & Jennifer Tsai** Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*) 2012 Rank: 50

The Tsais jump two spots on this year's list following the company's launch of more than 200 new items into the marketplace over the past couple of years. The family duo also received positive influence ratings from the Power 50 members.

## 49 **Larry Zavadil** American Solutions For Business (*asi/120075*) 2012 Rank: 49

As the head of the 14th-largest distributor company in the industry, Zavadil maintains his place on the Power 50 this year. His company, with annual promo product revenues of about \$100 million, grew its sales by 2% last year.

## 50 **Bill Smith Jr.** Brown & Bigelow (*asi/148500*) 2012 Rank: N/A

Another newcomer to the Power 50 this year, Smith has taken over Brown & Bigelow and has infused the organization with new partnerships, including purchasing distributor firms The Brandmarket, The AdCaptive Group, and Best Promotions in recent years.



**ST-37**  
"Infinity"  
All-Purpose Duffel



**ST-35**  
"Fusion"  
Sport Duffel



**ST-36**  
"Cross" Sport Duffel



**ST-622**  
Convertible  
Sport Pack/Bag



"MIN" to "MAX" on road  
From 5" expand to 32"

**ST-322**  
32" Expandable  
wheeled duffel



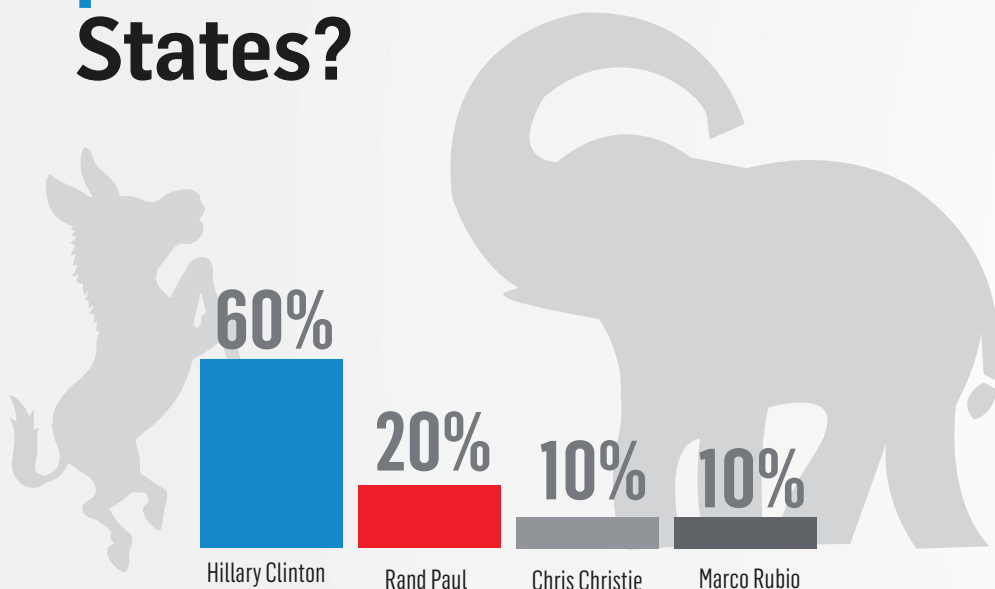


# Power 50

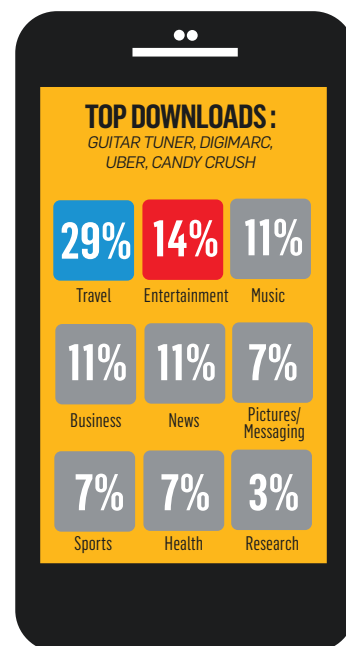
# AND THE SUR

Power 50 members share predictions, interests and opinions.

## Who will be the **next president** of the United States?

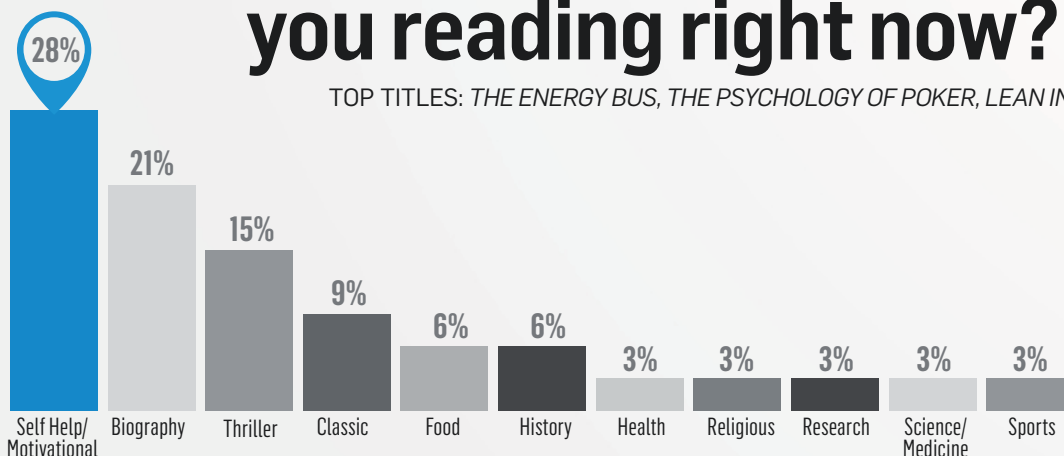


## What do you use **your favorite** mobile app for?

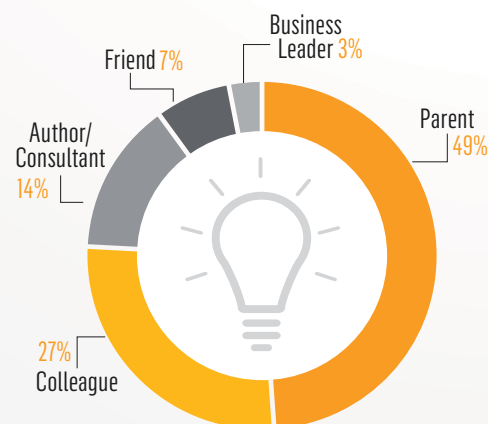


## What **genre of book** are you reading right now?

TOP TITLES: *THE ENERGY BUS*, *THE PSYCHOLOGY OF POKER*, *LEAN IN*



## Who gave you the best business advice **of your life**?



# VEY SAYS...

## On Holiday: Where Power 50 members recently took vacation

★ **Maribeth Sanford**  
*Australia*

★ **Derek Block**  
*Michigan*

★ **Dan Craig**  
*Turkey*

★ **Jonathan Isaacson**  
*The Amazon*

★ **Fred Parker**  
*Oregon*

★ **Jeff Lederer**  
*The Adirondacks*

★ **Alan Chippindale**  
*Mexico*

★ **William Smith Jr.**  
*Washington D.C.*

★ **Rich Witaszak**  
*The Bahamas*

★ **Jeremy Lott**  
*Portugal*

★ **Dave Thompson**  
*Hawaii*

★ **Eric Rubin**  
*Thailand*

★ **Greg Muzzillo**  
*Italy*

★ **Norm Hullinger**  
*Vermont*

## Talent Show

Skills of Power 50 members that might surprise you.



**Norm Hullinger**  
*juggling*



**Eric Rubin**  
*painting*



**Larry Zavadil**  
*gardening*



**Ted Stahl**  
*fixing things*



**Michael Bernstein**  
*chef*



**Marty Lott**  
*baby whisperer*



**Paul Lage**  
*riding a unicycle*



**Emmanuel Bruno**  
*racing cars*



**Rick Brenner**  
*photography*



**Ricky Mouty**  
*home decorating*

## What's left to accomplish on your Bucket List?

★ **Golfing at St. Andrews**  
*Marc Roy*

★ **Riding with the Blue Angels**  
*Craig Callaway*

★ **Visiting the Grand Canyon**  
*Doug Hayes*

★ **Going on an African safari**  
*Marty Lott*

★ **Taking cooking classes in France**  
*Rick Brenner*

★ **Becoming fluent in Japanese**  
*Gene Geiger*

★ **Traveling to Italy**  
*Kim Newell*

★ **Seeing migration of polar bears in Manitoba**  
*Ross Silverstein*

★ **Installing Wurlitzer theater organ in house**  
*Ted Stahl*

★ **Winning a poker tournament bracelet**  
*Greg Muzzillo*

★ **Going skydiving**  
*Jeff Lederer*



# WHAT IS POWER?

Enterprising executives today want to know: How do you define power and how can it be attained? Here, business experts and consultants provide the answers.

*By Betsy Cummings*





In a quest to define power, one thing is clear: Effective leadership is the best place to start. Without good leadership, no people will follow you. And, without followers, well, you're powerless.

Successful leadership strategies, though, can be fleeting. With all the business world's uncertainty in recent years (think recession, political stressors, factory disasters abroad) it's tougher than ever for executives to figure out just what skills, tactics and personality traits they need to adopt or exhibit to become effective leaders. What stabilized a sales team nine months ago might be a useless management tool today. And what empowered office staff to rise up and take on additional jobs in a recessed economy when companies were operating with skeletal crews may not be enough to motivate workers in a rebounding marketplace.

In fact, those managers who weathered the economic downturn and are still standing are likely natural leaders. But that doesn't mean there aren't others within today's distributorships waiting to become tomorrow's great power players.

Today's corporate leaders are nothing if not flexible, forever responding not just to market shifts but to clients and staff with equal measure, ensuring a leadership balance inside and outside the company.

Sound hard? Before ad specialty executives get the idea that they have to be management superheroes, it's important to remember that today's work environment often provides a panoply of opportunities for managers to assert their leadership skills every day. It's simply a matter of seizing those opportunities – and knowing what works today.

"The traits of powerful business leaders are different in the 21st century than they were just a few years and decades ago," says Leslie Ungar, a communications and leadership coach in Akron, OH, and president of Pragmatic Coaching for Dramatic Results.

### Keep Your Cool

For starters, today's leaders, even the industry's biggest power players, are inherently consistent and even-tempered, says Ungar, who is also the author of *100 Tips to Communicate Your Value*.

The caricatured boss from the '70s who

was temperamental, prone to tantrums and frequently yelling at staff is ineffective – if not intolerable – in today's fast-paced, always changing marketplace. Consistency, Ungar insists, is one of the most important (and stabilizing) traits a leader possesses in today's business environment. Why? It's that consistency, she says, that helps workers feel empowered, relaxed and trusted in the office. It also helps build trust and rapport among clients and vendors.

But consistency isn't always a management style that can be picked up and put on like a new pair of shoes, Ungar adds. For many managers it's a conscious leadership choice. "People want to change tactics like how they shake hands or what they say, but first it's a mindset," Ungar says. "You have to acquire a mindset that being consistent has a value and that it's what you want to aspire to."

## "The mantra for today's leader should be, 'Be seen, be heard, be there.'"

In addition, for those leaders who have struggled to gain the respect of their subordinates in the past, suddenly becoming a power player within a company can be difficult. Managers in that position, Ungar says, might have to address teams of workers or even individuals one-on-one to state directly that their leadership vision for the company is changing. Getting buy-in from staff is crucial for leaders making those pronouncements.

Easier said than done? Perhaps. But most consultants contend that leadership – even becoming a preeminent power player in your field after years of ineffective influence – can be learned. A 2013 review of effective leaders, conducted by Zenger/Folkman, a leadership development consultancy, found that 75% of them were able to improve their leadership skills with feedback from peers, staff and bosses.

In general, experts point to several key

traits that not only make someone a leader but also a power player. Not the least of which is the "intelligence and competency to do the job," says John Baldoni, chair of the leadership development practice at N2growth, a global leadership consultancy in Ann Arbor, MI, and author of *Lead with Purpose: Giving Your Organization A Reason To Believe In Itself*, and *The "Leaders" Pocket Guide: 101 Indispensable Tools, Tips, and Techniques for Any Situation*.

That seems obvious, but too often companies don't recognize team members who are more likely to become better leaders. Intelligence in leadership, Baldoni adds, is as much about being "street smart" as it is about understanding fundamental business strategies.

Other key traits, he adds, include being resilient, relentlessly optimistic, confident, ruthlessly persistent and, most importantly, he says, humble. "I have met so many good leaders," Baldoni says, "and almost the first thing out of their mouth is, 'I've got a great team around me.'"

### Do You Want It?

True power in business, many experts say, can be attained by those who aspire to it – and it's not for everybody. It's important to recognize if whether becoming a leader, much less a power player, is really your true ambition.

"I had a CEO as a client," Ungar recalls. "His right hand guy was his right hand guy for 24 years. If you're happy being the right hand guy for 24 years, then that's probably not the skill set of a CEO. He was a great right hand guy and was a tactical guy, and the CEO was the strategic guy. In America, we grow up thinking everybody wants to be a leader and not everybody does."

Still, for those who do aspire to be leaders, Ungar and other experts are convinced that the vast majority of them can learn the traits they need to develop to become industry power players. "I think they're all learned," Ungar says.

Yes, there are natural-born leaders. But most of today's business executives who command respect and push their companies forward do so because they've adopted management techniques and philosophies that almost anyone could use. Often, especially in today's world, that means playing

a multitude of roles among employees, says Baldoni. Today's leaders are "very much in the servant-leader category," says Baldoni.

By that, he means leaders lead through actions as much as through words. "We have come through a vicious financial downturn which pushed people to the limit," Baldoni says. "Those leaders who survived and are now still leading organizations, are much tougher and much more savvy."

## The Power of Presence

Combine those monumental market shifts with the weight of increasing pressure to show profitability and revenue gains, and suddenly leaders who are running companies today need to be able to overcome difficult situations. One thing that separates mid-rung managers from power players, experts say, is the ability to be more agile and decisive in a crisis.

"We used to live in isolated pods, but now a trend in India could affect business in Peoria," Baldoni says. "Leaders on a senior level are on call 24/7. They need to learn to deal with that."

Often that means being extremely accessible in tough times. "The mantra for today's leader should be, 'Be seen, be heard, be there,'" Baldoni says.

Being seen more by traveling to see staff or accompanying salespeople on sales calls, for instance, helps deliver a power player's message. Sometimes that's done by walking the halls of an office daily and taking the temperature of workers. Other times it's done by becoming a part of the process. "If you need heavy boxes moved, a leader needs to pitch in," Baldoni says.

Becoming a truly powerful leader is often built from an undeniable vision a corporate leader has. What if "Steve Jobs said, 'I want to develop an iPhone,' and he said this to key team members and they said, 'nah, that sounds like a horrible idea'? What, should he not do it?," asks Mark Stevens, CEO of global marketing firm MSCO, in Rye Brook, NY, and bestselling author of *Your Marketing Sucks*.

More to the point, "The best business leaders are not motivated by 'power.' Instead, they are influenced by a high need to create value for their business," says Charley Polachi, partner at Polachi Access Executive

## What Makes a Power Player?

Four steps for gaining power and influence.

**In a highly competitive marketplace, where new and even unknown companies are consistently trying to steal business away from traditional distributors, firms need powerful and influential leaders. Power players aren't just born that way. Many of them achieve industry significance by employing a few tactics that anyone can use.**

### 1. Speak Up

One of the fastest ways to become an industry leader is to become its voice. That can include giving presentations at conferences, becoming an expert blogger, or becoming more consultative among current clients and prospects, giving them specific, strategic tips about products and marketing, for example, that they can't glean for themselves.

### 2. Stay the Course

What's the best way to gain respect among staff? Be consistent – in decision making, company policies, customer service and just about everything you approach or touch. Leaders who start wavering in any of those areas risk alienating clients and employees, or worse, losing their respect.

### 3. Look Ahead

And definitely develop a strong vision when doing so. Nobody's asking you to be Bill Gates and forever change how we operate in our daily lives, but recognizing a market disrupter when you see one and having the fortitude to see it through can go a long way in boosting your status as a power player. Today, influence can be determined by innovation. Never stop innovating in your business.

### 4. Know Your Place

Exhibiting confidence is crucial for any power player, but being arrogant is the fastest way to kill your leadership potential. Often the most effective leaders are those who are the most humble. Have the vision to lead, but also have the confidence to listen to other people's ideas and to implement them. – BC

Search, an executive search firm in Framingham, MA. "A Steve Jobs type does not go out and become great simply for his own ego. Instead, he does it because he wants to make a difference. Great leaders ask themselves at the end of the day, 'what am I doing that is meaningful or impactful?'"

And, while it's important to accept when an idea is bad, Stevens says, it's also a true trait of leaders to stand behind product ideas and management decisions that they believe will better their company, even if they are the only ones who think so. "Anything that's weak, wishy-washy and rudderless detracts from leadership," Stevens says. "Anything that's strong, decisive and strategic enhances leadership. So you have a balance sheet."

Keeping that equation balanced, and even tilted toward decisiveness, is the key to becoming a power player.

That's not to be confused with becoming domineering or authoritarian. Those kinds of leaders are obsolete in today's business world, says Mark Faust, principal at Echelon Management International, a business consultancy based in Cincinnati. "I don't

think the power people are the Donald Trumps of the world" anymore, Faust says.

Instead, building power in today's business environment is done through innovative ideas and exceptional insights. Today's "true power brokers aren't typical," Faust says. "They're quiet and humble. The Donald Trump style is dying. The new kids want to be embraced, respected and part of a team."

Collaborative management with a power player leading the charge, but in a collective way, is a more effective approach in today's marketplace, experts insist. In fact, leaders who look to their staff for growth goals and corporate vision can find greater success than even they imagined. Faust recalls one executive he worked with who predicted growth of 24% for the year within a new company division he was leading.

"I said, 'Why so small? Why don't you ask your team what they think?' And the sales team said 33%," Faust says.

That year, that division of the company grew 34%. "People tend to support that which they create."

– E-Mail: [betsycummings23@gmail.com](mailto:betsycummings23@gmail.com)



# *Save the Date*

## **ASI Power Summit Canada 2014**

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# POWER OF PROMO PRODUCTS

Groundbreaking research from ASI proves the ROI of every product category and the global reach of ad specialties.

*Research by Larry Basinait*

***Need to prove to clients that promotional items work as an advertising vehicle? Try this stat: 86% of U.S. consumers say they remember an advertiser that gave them a promotional product.***

Think Super Bowl and Oscar Award marketers can say they get the same recall? In fact, studies have shown that television ads garner a recall of less than 50% of the people who even saw an ad – and that’s not counting the many people who simply changed the channel, hit fast-forward on a DVR, or took a trip to the

fridge while commercials were running.

That 86% recall number is a powerful statistic among hundreds of important data points uncovered in this year’s version of ASI’s Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study. On the following pages, you’ll find information about how consumers in various parts of the world

view promotional products, the cost-per-impression of ad specialties, and a wealth of data to prove to clients and prospects exactly why promo items can successfully help them to market their companies and connect with their customers.

Go to [www.asicentral.com/study](http://www.asicentral.com/study) for more on this year’s survey.



## The Cost-Effectiveness of Ad Specialties

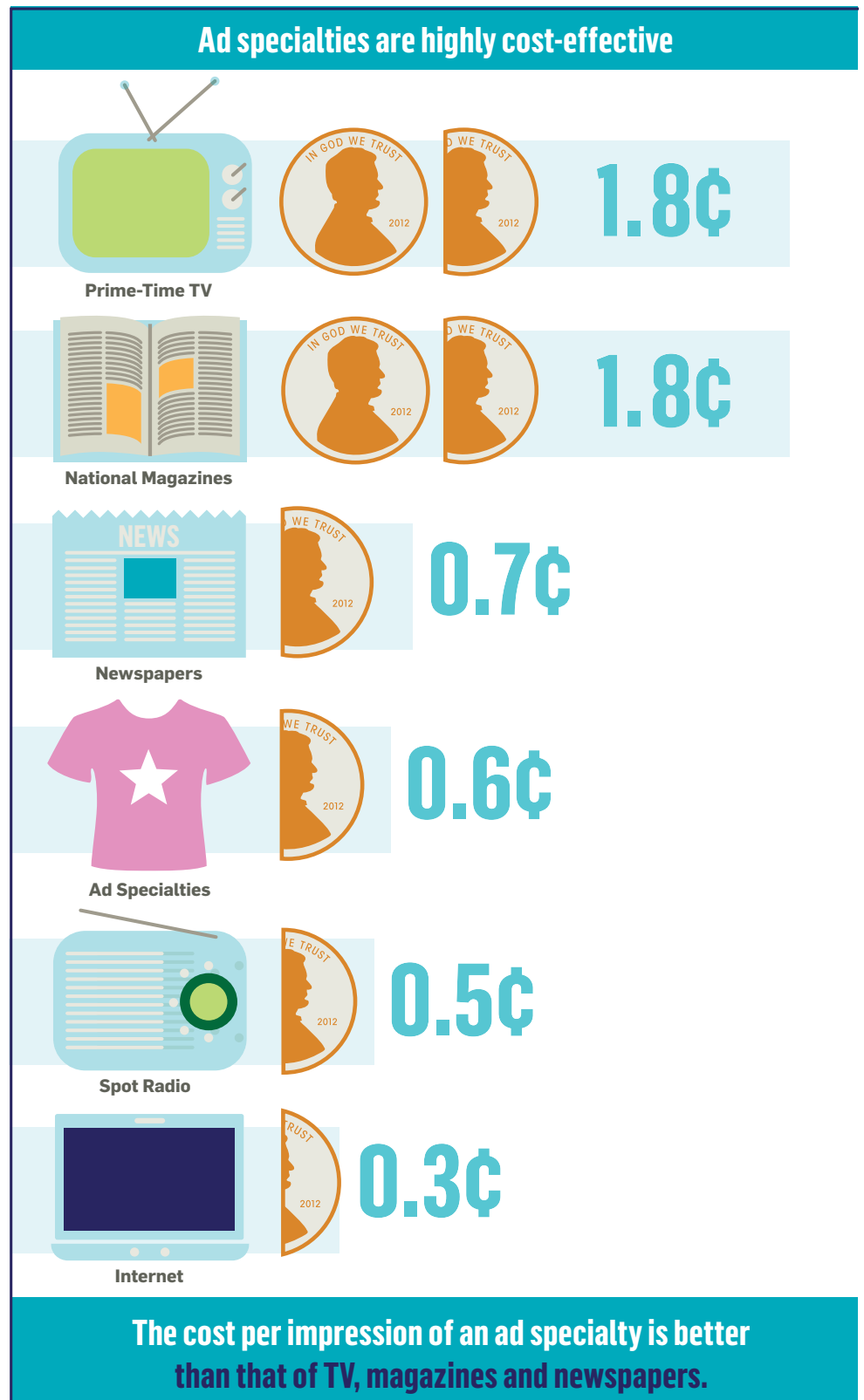
Advertising specialties are less expensive per impression than most other forms of media. The investment in advertising specialties is modest, more targeted and more achievable for smaller businesses than other forms of advertising.

As the chart to the right illustrates, promotional products have a lower cost-per-impression in the United States than prime-time television advertising, national magazine advertising and newspaper ads, and a similar CPI to spot radio and Internet advertising.

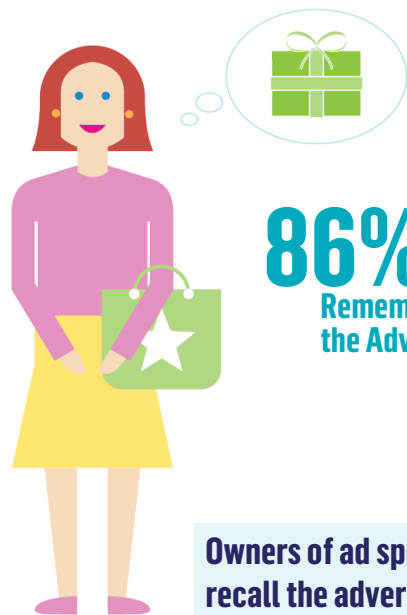
However a report published in October 2012 by Forrester Research, “U.S. Online Display Ad Spend \$12.7B in 2012,” sheds some light on Internet advertising. It points out that CPMs are actually on the rise. The average CPM — cost per thousand impressions — for 2012 was \$3.17, but by 2017 that will rise to \$6.64, largely because of the shift to real-time bidding and away from portal buys where placement is not guaranteed. The rise, the analysts note, is also a supply and demand issue: marketers are competing for similar audience segments and bid density is continuing to increase.

The cost of advertising specialties are not expected to increase markedly in the next four years, making them an even better comparison to other forms of media advertising such as the Internet.

The key, though, is for distributors to actually position promotional products against these other forms of media in their conversations with marketers. Many of these clients often view promo items as add-ons to current marketing campaigns like outdoor events and trade shows, but savvy distributors today are making the point that ad specialties can actually be the driving force for – and most effective aspect of – marketing success.



### On Average



**86%**  
Remember  
the Advertiser

**Owners of ad specialties  
recall the advertiser 86%  
of the time.**

## Recipients' Views on Advertisers

For this section, we asked respondents whether they could identify the advertisers on the promotional items they currently owned. The result: Nearly nine in 10 (86%) U.S. recipients of promotional merchandise can identify the advertiser on the item, the highest of any country in the study.

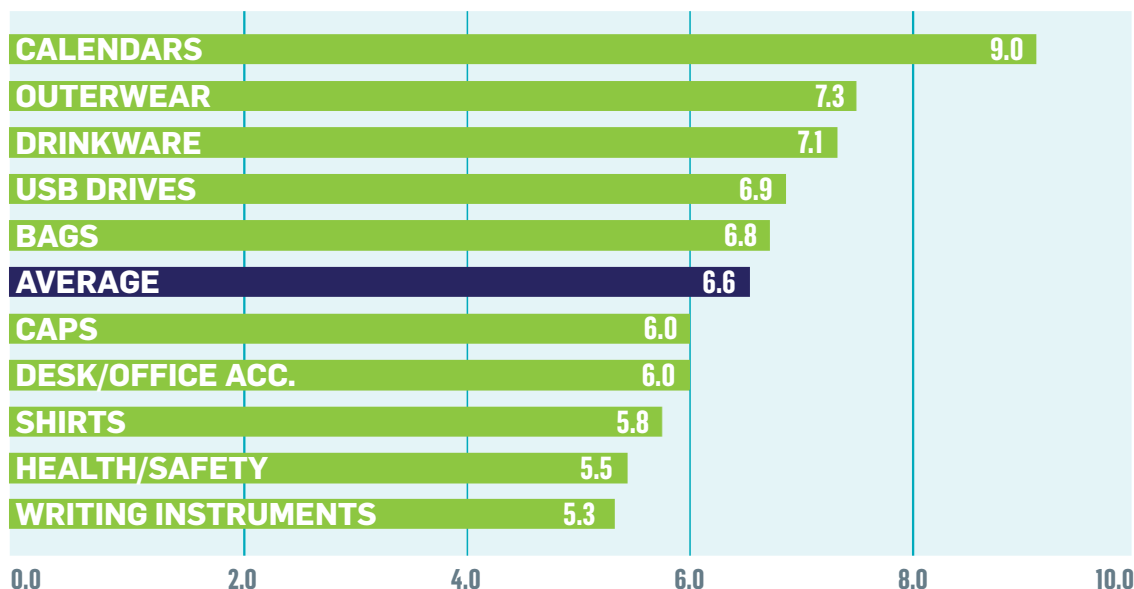
The research also reveals, of all major product categories, outerwear has the highest recognition of all promotional items: 95% of respondents who have logoed outerwear can name the advertiser on the items. Overall, wearables as a whole maintain a very high advertiser awareness rate, taking the top three spots.

These statistics are among the most powerful to be found in the 2013 version of the Global Advertising Specialties Impressions Study. After all, what do advertisers most want from their marketing campaigns? They want to get consumers (or, their intended target audience) to remember them and their marketing message. Indeed, the power of this data is that it shows that 86% of consumers recall the advertiser named on a promotional item they recently received. Compare that to television or radio or online ads, and it's not even a fair game. Those media would only hope to garner 50% recall for their advertisers. Meanwhile, promotional products can achieve nearly double that rate, at a cost that's significantly less.

## Staying Power

In addition to identifying the logoed items they had kept, respondents were asked how long they had kept the most recently-obtained item of each product type. On average, ad specialty items are kept for nearly seven months in the U.S. Overall, calendars are typically held the longest, on average for about nine months. Writing instruments are held the shortest amount of time, at just over five months.

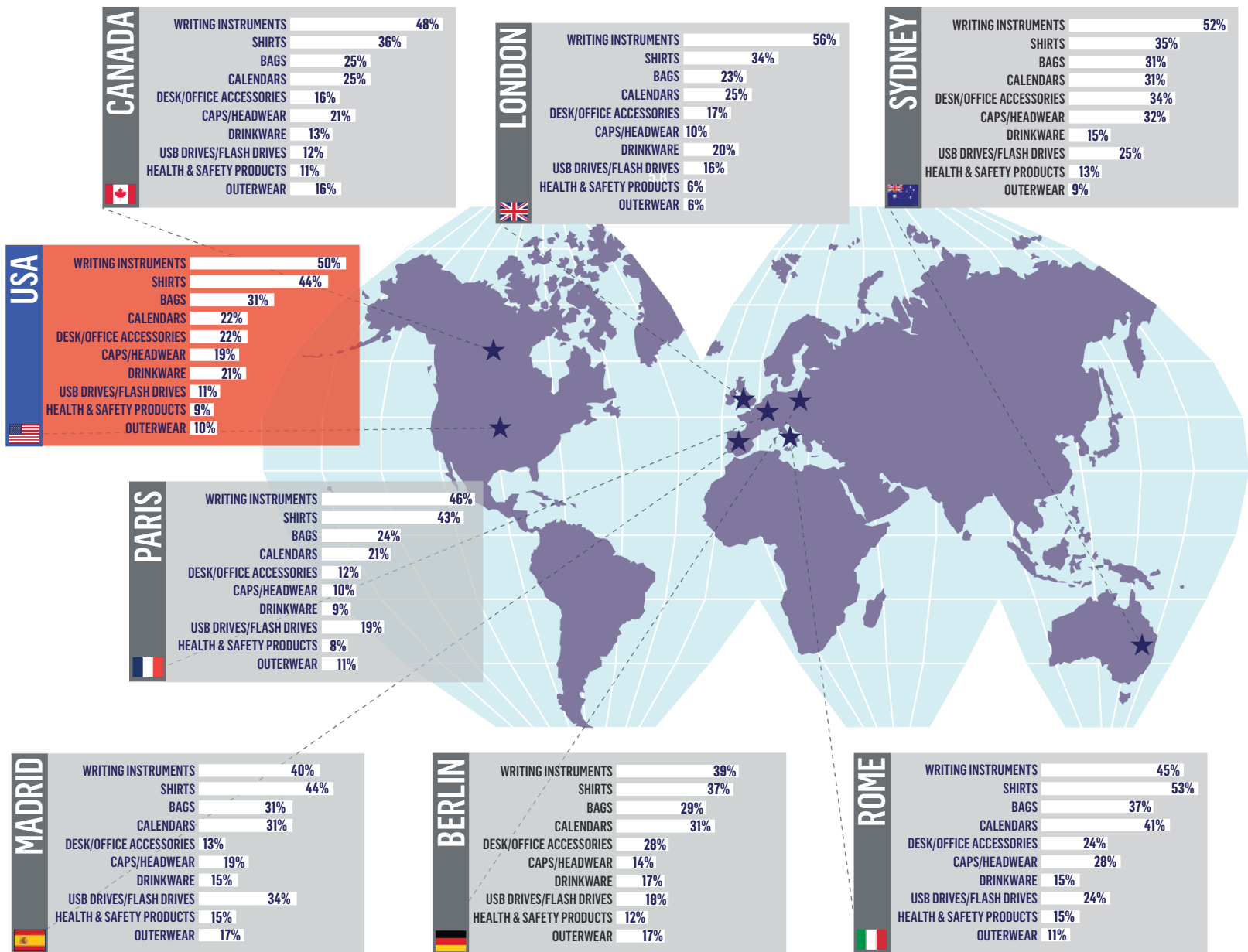
### Number of Months Promotional Items are Kept





# Global Product Popularity

Now in eight countries, the survey shows a breakdown by country of the most popular products. Percentages shown below indicate number of people that own each product.



## Written Proof

Want to sell clients on writing instruments? Use this stat: 50% of all consumers own promo pens.

**50%** OF U.S.  
**CONSUMERS**  
**OWN LOGOED**  
**WRITING**  
**INSTRUMENTS**

*Imprint Your Logo Here*


**1/10<sup>th</sup>**  
of a cent



Logoed pens and pencils tie bags for the lowest cost-per-impression in the United States.

**66%**

**LOVE**

Philadelphians continue to  writing instruments the most. 66% say they own a branded pen or pencil, vs. 50% in the U.S. overall.

**56%**

of Caucasian consumers own branded writing instruments – the highest percentage of any racial demographic.

**5,788**



Rome generates the most product impressions of any European city.

## DOWN UNDER

Writing instruments are more popular in Australia than in the U.S. 52% of Aussies own a branded writing instrument.

**52%**



**More Women than Men Own Promo Pens & Pencils**



**53%**

**47%**







# PEAK OF P





# POWER

The ASI Power Summit brought together influential industry minds to brainstorm, share successes and discuss challenges.

*By Michele Bell, Andy Cohen, Melinda Ligos & Dave Vagnoni*

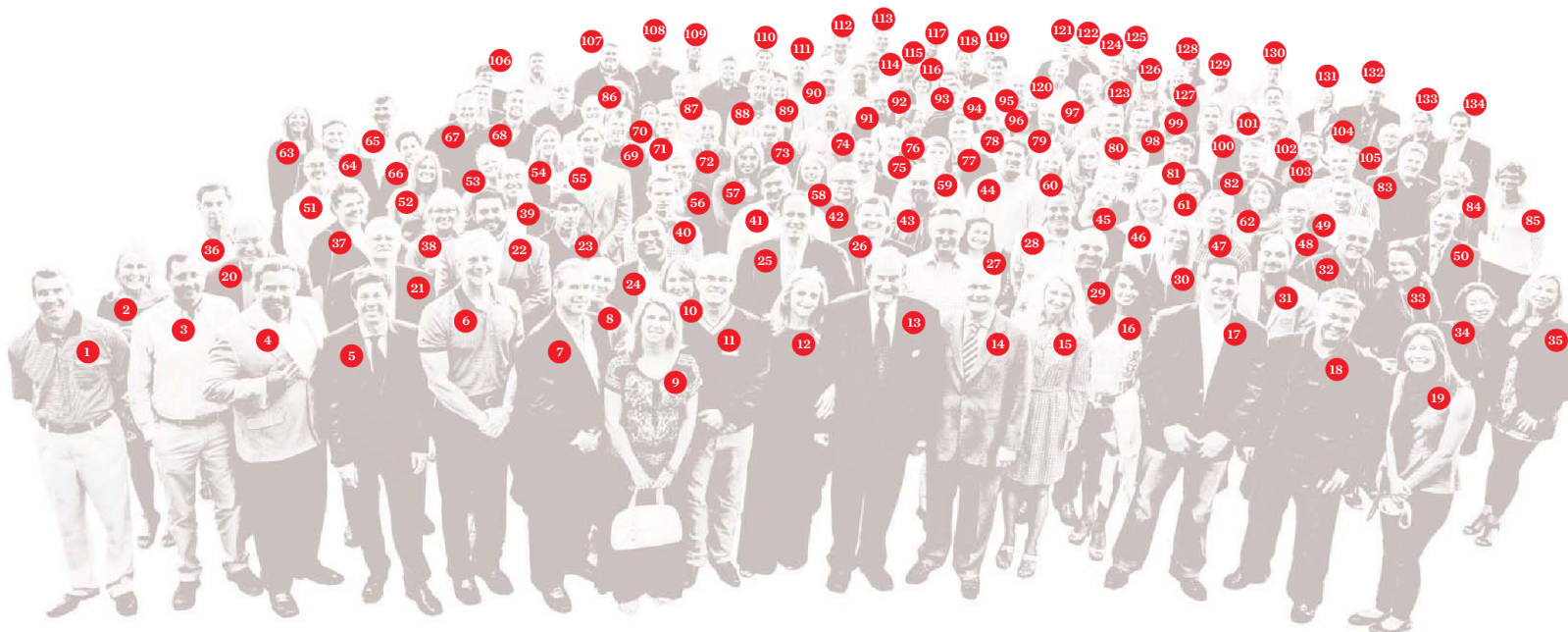


**E**mployee engagement. Video marketing. Changing demographics. What do these three things have in common? They were among the hot topics of discussion at the seventh annual ASI Power Summit, held last month at the Montage Deer Valley Resort in Park City, UT. Indeed, between keynote speakers and industry panelists, it's clear that companies in the promotional products market are

trying to tackle multiple challenges at once: how to appeal to shifting buyer habits, how to get staffers more motivated than ever, and how to create new marketing programs that excite audiences.

"It's a new market out there," said BYU Professor Gary Rhoads, one of the keynoters at the conference. "Companies need to find ways to appeal to a new set of employees and a new set of customers."

With that sentiment as a backdrop, some of the most influential and successful executives in the ad specialty industry met for three days last month at the Power Summit to network and learn from each other, as well as plot industry and individual company strategies for the next year. Read on to check out the scenes, as well as the advice, insights, and tactics offered during the 2013 ASI Power Summit.



## 2013 Power Summit Attendees

- |                       |                       |                        |                         |                      |                         |
|-----------------------|-----------------------|------------------------|-------------------------|----------------------|-------------------------|
| 1. Dan Pantano        | 24. Raman Agarwal     | 47. Sean Roark         | 70. Kippie Helzel       | 93. Brandon Bell     | 116. Holly Kirkner      |
| 2. Melinda Ligos      | 25. Matthew Cohn      | 48. Rob Watson         | 71. John Bruellman      | 94. Joe DeVault      | 117. C.J. Schmidt       |
| 3. David Clifton      | 26. Jerry McLaughlin  | 49. Sal DeSpirito      | 72. David Saatzler      | 95. Mike Williams    | 118. Dave Grobisen      |
| 4. Ken Seidl          | 27. Sydra Newell      | 50. Andy Cohen         | 73. Stephen Weissman    | 96. Ira Neaman       | 119. Terry McGuire      |
| 5. Rich Fairfield     | 28. Brandon Mackay    | 51. Jan Reid           | 74. Alistair Mylchreest | 97. Scott Pearson    | 120. Jim Hagan          |
| 6. Norm Hullinger     | 29. Pranav Dalal      | 52. Brittany David     | 75. Eric Johnson        | 98. Tobias Roesch    | 121. Jeff Hall          |
| 7. Scott Somerville   | 30. Lori Bauer        | 53. Roseanne Riddle    | 76. Miles Wadsworth     | 99. Barry Lipsett    | 122. David Walker       |
| 8. Matt Kaspari       | 31. Edgar Hernandez   | 54. Cindy Jorgenson    | 77. Matt Bertam         | 100. Marcus Sperber  | 123. Janet Korowitz     |
| 9. Shelley Paul       | 32. Dave Saracino     | 55. Zachary Tyler      | 78. Jeff Lederer        | 101. Glenna Fulks    | 124. David Nicholson    |
| 10. Jennifer LaGrange | 33. Tonia Allen Gould | 56. Jeanna Abercrombie | 79. Rick Rayl           | 102. Michael Freter  | 125. Pierre Martichoux  |
| 11. Jim Franklyn      | 34. Jisun Kim         | 57. Sarah Brown        | 80. Chuck Dahlgren      | 103. Kailish Sippy   | 126. Jill Albers        |
| 12. Suzanne Cohn      | 35. Jill Stirnkorb    | 58. Arikka Hall        | 81. Marc Held           | 104. LeAnn Rankin    | 127. Fran Ford          |
| 13. Norman Cohn       | 36. Ed Koehler        | 59. Miles Wadsworth    | 82. Gary Semrow         | 105. Howard Headen   | 128. Jennifer Grigorian |
| 14. Tim Andrews       | 37. Heather DiPrato   | 60. Paula Shulman      | 83. Joe Fleming         | 106. Tom Augeri      | 129. Paul Lage          |
| 15. Grethe Adams      | 38. Cindy Smith       | 61. Barb Wells         | 84. Chris Lovell        | 107. Eric Hyde       | 130. Ross Silverstein   |
| 16. Caroline Dalal    | 39. Bill Smith        | 62. Erin Gallagher     | 85. Jane Wasden         | 108. Dan Dienna      | 131. Mary Sells         |
| 17. Glen Hersh        | 40. Benjamin Bartley  | 63. Krista Taylor      | 86. Kris Fredericks     | 109. Don Martin      | 132. Bill Korowitz      |
| 18. Tommy Lewis       | 41. Ross Fraser       | 64. Dan Taylor         | 87. Tom Leahy           | 110. Rich Carollo    | 133. Dan Jellinek       |
| 19. Nicole McNamee    | 42. Paul Kory         | 65. Andrew Gaugler     | 88. Reagan Holm         | 111. Kevin Walsh     | 134. Dave Vagnoni       |
| 20. Larry Zavadil     | 43. Mitch Mounger     | 66. Miles Bocknek      | 89. Suzanne Izzo        | 112. Jim Habzda      |                         |
| 21. Bobby Wasden      | 44. Adam Decker       | 67. Craig Reese        | 90. Adrian Ferrand      | 113. Steve Hettrich  |                         |
| 22. Andrew Verga      | 45. Michael Legel     | 68. Josh Ebrahemi      | 91. Don Sanders         | 114. Jeff Brown      |                         |
| 23. Emmanuel Bruno    | 46. Leslie Roark      | 69. Joe Durand         | 92. Christine Hess      | 115. Samantha Gotlib |                         |

# “The culture you create is the absolute key to building a high-performance workforce.”

Adrian Gostick, author and Power Summit keynote speaker

## The Link Between Culture And Performance

Sixty-seven percent of workers say their moms could run their businesses better than their bosses, Adrian Gostick, best-selling author of *The Carrot Principal* told a packed room at the ASI Power Summit's keynote session. Want to have a more productive workforce? The key is to embrace the three E's: engage, enable and energize them, he said.

Most managers know how to engage people by giving them opportunities to grow, Gostick said. But few understand the link between enabling them and actually creating a more positive culture. “You need to give them the right tools, support and empowerment, and they'll work much harder for you,” Gostick said.

A company also needs to make sure it energizes its workforce by constantly delivering praise and positive reinforcement. He cited a *Harvard Business Review* study showing that in high-performing teams, a manager would give five positive comments for every negative one. By contrast, managers who give three negative comments for each positive one historically have very low performance among team members.

The bottom line? “Get employees excited about coming to work,” he said. “The culture you create is the absolute key to building a high-performance workforce.”

## Motivating Young Sales Reps

In the “What Motivates Me: Young Industry Sales Reps Speak Out” panel discussion, keynote speaker Adrian Gostick joined the stage with *Supplier Global Resource* Editor Michele Bell and the following industry sales reps, all of whom are in the Gen Y Generation: Jill Albers, business development director at Shumsky; Josh Ebrahemi, partner/sales exec with Jack Nadel International; Brittany David, national sales manager with SnugZ/USA; and Krista Taylor, supplier digital sales rep with ASI. Collectively, the four industry panelists were responsible for more than \$15 million in sales in 2012.

Noting that with Gen Y in particular, while not just one strategy for motivating,

retaining and rewarding successful young reps is the right one, it's critical to custom tailor incentive programs around each rep's needs. “It would be incorrect to assume that it's all about the money for everyone,” Gostick said.

SnugZ's David concurred. “I actually find money to be a little bit of a demotivator. I expect to get paid for a job I do well, but it's recognition and accolades that really motivate me to perform.”

JNI's Ebrahemi and ASI's Taylor both noted that while the thrill of getting sales bonuses was initially an effective and exciting incentive to keep succeeding, for Ebrahemi, maintaining a good quality of life with a healthy work/leisure balance is key. “I love the lifestyle that I have now because of selling promo products,” he said.

Taylor pointed out that garnering accolades like being named ASI's Employee of the Year in 2011 gave her the confidence and momentum to grow her sales 111% over four years. “Getting that was really a turn-

ing point for me and my sales career insofar as I realized what I was able to accomplish.”

## The Changing Face Of Today's Buyer

Changing demographics in the United States are leading to a sea-change for buyers of promotional products, according to Gary Rhoads, professor of marketing and entrepreneurship at Brigham Young University. “There's a new face of buyers in America – not just consumers but business-to-business buyers as well,” Rhoads said during his Power Summit session. “African Americans, Hispanics and Asian-Americans represent all of the population growth that the United States will experience in the foreseeable future. Those are demographics that marketers will need to appeal to.”

Noting that Hispanic-Americans are the fastest-growing demographic in the country, Rhoads told his Power Summit audience that they should be devising ways today – in both who they hire and the companies they target – to capitalize on this sector. “There's a huge opportunity for marketers here, but you need to be able to communicate effectively with buyers in this market,” Rhoads said. “You need to hire right to be able to do it.”

Rhoads also focused his talk on buyer shifts as the Millennial Generation gains in influence. To target this group, Rhoads said, companies need marketing efforts that are compelling, fun and community-driven. “If you're just using traditional media with this group, you can't be successful,” he said. “Buyers today are tired of the ordinary; they want an experience and to be entertained,” he said. “And, you have to appeal to them quickly, because they're making purchasing decisions in seconds, not hours or days or weeks.”

It's something industry companies know that they need to focus on. “As an industry, we need to better match the needs of buyers today,” said BIC Group's Edgar Hernandez during another Power Summit session. “We need to position our offerings better, so we increase the visibility of the market and really sell against other media.”



Adrian Gostick, best-selling author, made the business case for improving corporate culture.



### Graham Captivates Power Summit Audience

YouTube filmmaker Devin Graham – whose original work consistently generates millions of online views – showcased his video talents during a highly energetic session. Playing several video clips, Graham explained to attendees how he approaches each project. “I’m always looking for things the world hasn’t seen before,” he said. “Or, I’m looking to show things in a new way.”

Graham’s latest videos are short, each no more than a couple of minutes long, but are known for fast-paced action, unusual backdrops and subtle product placements. From shooting high-flying water jet packs to violins playing in front of ice castles, Graham has produced spots for Ford, Mountain Dew and video game company Ubisoft. Smaller companies have benefited as well from Graham’s work, including Utah apparel maker Vooray, which quickly doubled its sales after its items appeared in a human slingshot video Graham produced. “They were able to take their products to 20 countries and had a 300% higher brand awareness after we did the video,” Graham said.

Graham, 30, gave attendees several tips for creating compelling YouTube videos. “Length of videos is important,” he said. “Originally, I would do videos that were three to six minutes, but I found looking at Google Analytics that people wouldn’t always watch until the end.”

Another key point Graham made is that simple equipment can have a powerful impact. “I started shooting videos with my phone and then I went to better gear like a Canon T2i,” he said. “I thought I needed to get even better equipment, but I found when I used better gear, my views went down. People want to relate to what you’re doing on YouTube. They want to be able to do what you do.”

Graham also spoke about linking You-

**“It’s about being timely. If you can take a product and add comedy, that’s working right now.”**

Devin Graham, filmmaker



1. ASI's Tim Andrews, right, interviewed Polyconcept CEO Michael Bernstein on the future of the industry as a global marketplace.
2. Mountain golf: Broder's Dan Pantano, BamBams' Dan Taylor, and Staples' Barb Wells.
3. Video pioneer Devin Graham shared his YouTube success secrets with the Power Summit audience.
4. ASI's Michele Bell, left, with a panel of young sales reps: Jill Albers, Krista Taylor, Josh Ebrahemi, Brittany David, and keynoter Adrian Gostick.

Tube videos to other social media platforms. “I put just about everything on Facebook, Twitter and Instagram,” he said. “I post everywhere. At the end of YouTube videos, you can link to whatever you want.” Finally, when asked how to get videos to go viral, Graham told attendees to look to current events and what’s popular. “It’s about being timely,” he said. “I go on Google Trends to see what people are watching. Lately, cats and humor are big. If you can take a product and add comedy, that’s working right now.”

### The Interconnected Promotional Products Marketplace

In a keynote interview on the final day of the ASI Power Summit, Polyconcept CEO Michael Bernstein described how industry companies operate in an interconnected, global economy today. And, as the head of one of the largest suppliers in the world, Bernstein said the economies of other countries definitively impact business operations in North America. “We’re looking to be a globally-oriented supply chain expert,” Bernstein said about his company. “There are lots of shared services across different countries because they can all work well together.”

The wide-ranging interview, conducted by ASI President and CEO Tim Andrews, touched on Polyconcept’s North American business, the company’s expansion into decorated apparel, his plans – still in the infancy stage – to become a supplier in Asia to local consumers of promotional products, and the significant decline in European business for industry companies. “It’s far more challenging in Europe than what I would have expected,” Bernstein told the audience. “While some areas have stabilized, we’ve seen 24 consecutive months of double-digit declines. The hard-goods business in Europe has solidified, but apparel has been very challenging and the economies in Southern Europe have made business there quite difficult.”

Ultimately, though, Bernstein said that his company is focused on global expansion and growing his company both in North America and overseas. “Every day, we try to determine how we can allocate and expand our investments so that we can grow globally,” he said. “There are many different ways to do that. In North America, acquisitions can have a place but they’re not a big part of our strategy moving forward.”

– E-Mail: [acohen@asicentral.com](mailto:acohen@asicentral.com)

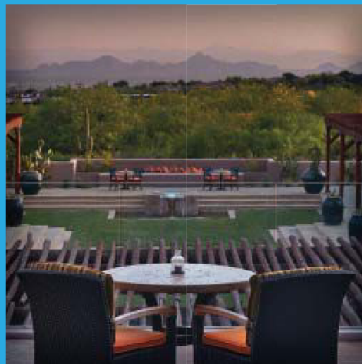
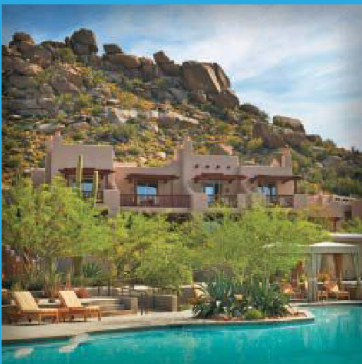
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# Social

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## Bess Cohn Humanitarian Award Nominee Tell It on the Mountain

Andy Krupp has plans to climb a famous peak to benefit Diabetes research.

Sara Lavenduski

In August 2012, Katy McGregor, a young girl from Illinois, came home from summer camp ready to start the new school year. But something wasn't right. In the short time she had been away, she lost 20 pounds. Her parents immediately took her to see a doctor, and, after rounds of testing, received difficult news: Katy had Juvenile, or Type 1, Diabetes. Her life would never be the same.

"It's a constant struggle – every meal and activity has to be regulated and analyzed to keep her blood sugar in a certain range," says her uncle Andy Krupp, managing director of FlagMaster (*asi/82590*), a family-owned supplier of flags, banners, and indoor/outdoor displays. "For example, before she gets in the pool and when she gets out, she has to test her blood. She has to account for every cracker, every lollipop she consumes. Every moment of her life has been taken over."

Katy recently went on a school trip and her mother accompanied the group solely to take care of her. "She has to be woken up several times each night to check

her blood sugar," says Krupp. "And we're told this is one of the most rudimentary cases. There's nothing she could have done differently. Her pancreas simply doesn't produce insulin."

Now that this childhood disease has hit close to home, Krupp has decided to raise money for the Juvenile Diabetes Research Foundation (JDRF) with an individual climb up Mount Kilimanjaro in late November. About 10,000 people attempt to reach the summit at 19,341 feet each year, and only about half succeed. "I'd like to reach the summit, but I'm not willing to die!" Krupp laughs. "Actually, 30 to 50 people die doing this each year, mostly from altitude sickness. Your lungs fill with fluid and the only thing you can do is turn around and run straight back down the mountain."

The challenge with altitude sickness is that climbers can't predict with accuracy if it will affect them or not. "You either get it or you don't," Krupp explains. "You can't train it out of yourself. Actually, they say people in the worst shape are

less prone to it because they walk more slowly. If you walk fast, your body doesn't acclimate."

Krupp can expect five days of climbing on foot to reach the summit, and a series of makeshift huts along the way to rest. He'll bring along a guide, porter and gear. "We'll actually be hiking through four climate zones, from the equator all the way to -20 degrees," he says. "So I have to bring gear for all the climates. The last day is the hardest – you have to wake up at midnight to reach the summit by daylight."

Exotic locales aren't new to Krupp. When traveling, he prefers taking the not-so-beaten track during what he calls "personal challenge trips." He has hiked Peru's Inca Trail to Macchu Pichu at 14,000 feet and has gone on several "voluntours," which combine sightseeing with volunteer work in far-flung locales. "About five or six years ago I went to Cambodia with GlobeAware," he says. "During the day we built wheelchairs out of bike tires and lawn chairs for landmine victims, and in the evenings we taught English at a local school. Last



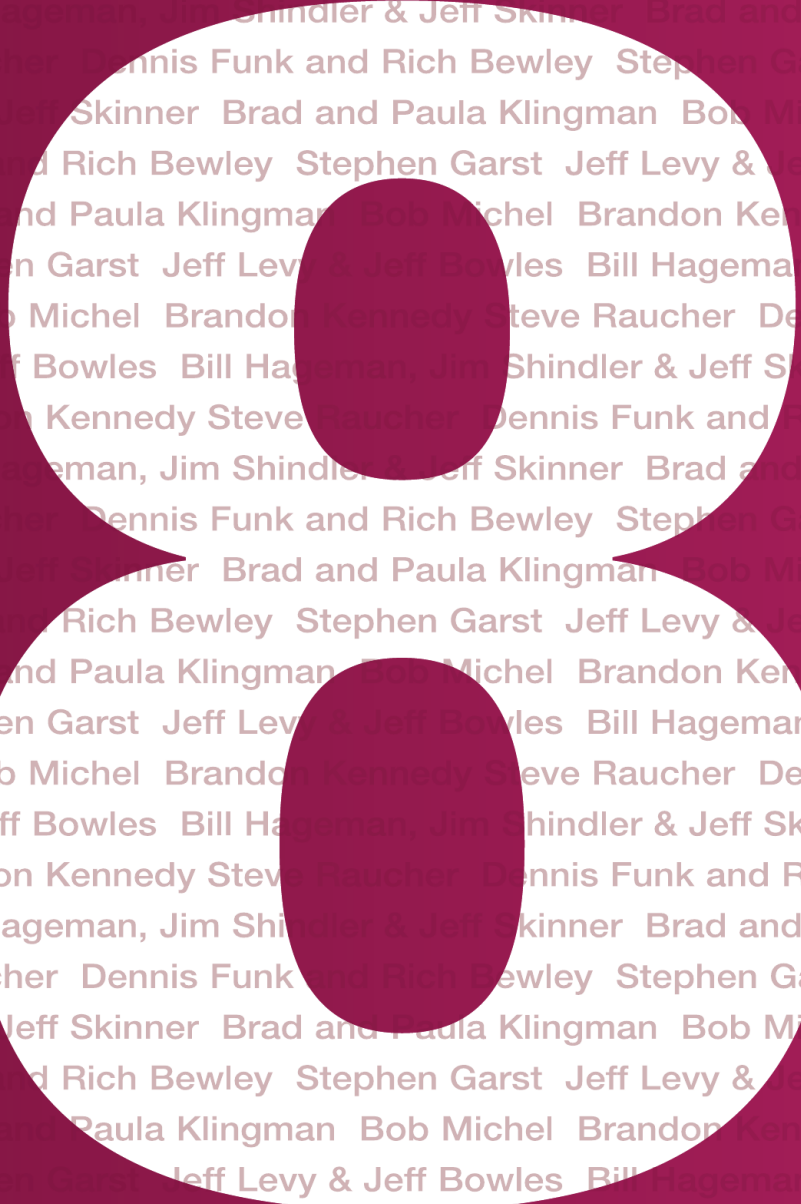
**Andy Krupp**, in the Nepalese Himalayas in 2012.

year, I hiked the Himalayas in Nepal, close to Poon Hill. It took us a week, and we just kept climbing from one little mountain town to the next."

For now, Krupp has two main goals: to raise money for JDRF and to focus on making it to the Kilimanjaro summit, just once. "No one does this twice," he laughs. "Believe me, no one pays to torture themselves again. From now until November, the only training I'll be doing is some biking or kayaking, which I do anyway. I don't want to run up the mountain."

*To donate to the JDRF Kili for Katy cause through December 1, visit [jdrfevents.donordrive.com](http://jdrfevents.donordrive.com).*

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# **Distributors Made the *Inc. 5000* List of America's Fastest-Growing, Private Companies**

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# 5 KEYS TO FAST GROWTH

## 1

### PROVEN BUSINESS MODEL

With over 30 years' experience and more than \$430 million in sales, Proforma has perfected the art of distributor success. The network of independent business owners enjoys the advantage of controlling their own company combined with Proforma's clout.

The fact that among distributor groups Proforma is the only network led by an experienced distributor owner, Greg Muzzillo, makes a significant statement. Muzzillo founded Proforma in 1978, then quickly grew the firm into a \$25 million distributorship through hard work and successful selling. Proforma has made the *Inc. 500* list for three years in a row.

The ascent began in the mid-1980s, when Muzzillo wanted to find a better way to create real wealth and a better lifestyle in this industry. That's why he developed the Proforma system. The platform brought together distributors to share in resources, technology services and purchasing clout, while maintaining ownership of their own business. Today, Muzzillo leads with first-hand knowledge to guide its member owners every step of the way to their own goals.

Does the Proforma model work?

Consider its record. Proforma has consistently demonstrated strong growth on *Inc.* magazine's list of the 5,000 fastest-growing, private companies in America. It represents the most franchise locations on the list, as well as the greatest presence in the printing and promotional products industry.

- Over 120 Proforma owners currently sell more than \$1 million per year, more than any other industry network.
- Over 30 multi-million dollar owners sell from \$2 million to \$25 million annually.
- Eight Proforma owners made the 2013 *Inc. 5000* list. Proforma is the only distributor network with owners on the *Inc. 5000* list.

## 2

### UNMATCHED SALES & MARKETING SUPPORT

Behind this exclusive business model is an impressive infrastructure that supports member growth. Proforma serves approximately 60,000 clients through more than 750 member offices across the globe, backed by more than 150 Team Members in the Proforma Worldwide Support Center located in Cleveland, Ohio.

Proforma owners can tap a \$4-million-per-year sales and marketing fund to stoke business. This provides members the tools to identify prospects; to warm them up and set a first appointment; and to follow through, closing the sale. Proforma's support staff also helps with the RFP process, designs PowerPoint presentations, develops prototypes, creates company-store templates and provides sample kits.

These resources have helped owners win hundreds of orders each year ranging from \$1 million to \$10 million in sales. From the development of forms and brochures to the execution of marketing campaigns and online stores.

## 3

### ADMINISTRATIVE EASE

With all this selling, who is handling administrative matters? Proforma manages all administrative distractions including cash flow, computer systems, collections, accounting and more. It recently invested \$10 million in a new technology platform to empower members to communicate seamlessly with their clients, suppliers and back-office staff. Proforma owners also have access to a dedicated appointment setting department and B2B sales lead generation system.

For those owners who want to expand, Proforma provides recruitment, acquisition and management tools. With this support, Proforma owners hired over 100 sales reps and acquired 80 businesses in the last year. Proforma then trained and equipped new hires with whatever tools they needed to quickly show a return on investment.

Only Proforma has award-winning systems designed to help owners grow their business their own way with administrative ease.

## 300% GROWTH!

Bob Michel, owner of Proforma Marketing Agency in Danville, CA, just landed his company on the *Inc. 5000* list of fastest-growing companies in America ... for the fourth year (2008, 2011, 2012, 2013). It's not a lucky streak that fuels such growth; it's a decision Bob made 11 years ago to join the Proforma network of distributors. At first, he kept his operations small at \$1 million a year in sales that he booked himself, with the support of just one staffer.

Then, five years ago, he decided to turn up the volume. With Proforma's back-office support and order financing, Michel was able to go after bigger programs in his niche markets (spirits/wine and financial) that pumped his sales to an astonishing degree. Last year, with the help of three other salespeople; an in-house support staff of seven; and the more than 150 team members at the Proforma Worldwide Support Center, Michel's distributorship hit \$5.6 million, representing a 300% rise over the last three years.

Michel's vision to grow sales mirrors Proforma's desire to facilitate his journey. Greg Muzzillo's background as a distributor-owner has proved helpful. "It's important to have somebody who has moved in your shoes at the helm," Michel says. "We have a sales organization first and foremost and that's because of Greg. Together, we are focused on sales, growth and revenue."



# WITH AT PROFORMA

4

## PURCHASING POWER, DEPENDABLE PARTNER

The combined sales of Proforma's owner network represents \$430 million, which positions them for better supplier support. Such purchasing clout opens doors to preferred pricing, special vendor programs and proprietary product introductions. Being a Proforma owner automatically lowers product costs by 5% to 15% with a proven vendor network. Other perks include:

- Letters of guarantee and prepayment
  - Credit insurance, a Proforma exclusive.
- Even if a customer doesn't pay, the owner still gets paid and makes a profit.
- Order entry and reporting to make sure all sales go smoothly after they're booked
  - Complete transparency. Proforma has the power to back its member owners. It is the only distributor network to provide prospective members with its last three years of audited financial statements.

5

## FREEDOM – IT'S STILL YOUR OWN COMPANY

Amazingly, even with all the benefits, it is easy and risk-free to join the network. Proforma presents a simple contract that lets owners out with their clients after 60 days should they decide Proforma isn't for them. There is no non-compete clause, no upfront costs and no risk. Owners may choose to keep their company name; use the Proforma name; or combine their company name with Proforma, i.e. XYZ Powered By Proforma. Owners also decide how or if they want to grow their business or whether they seek an exit strategy for down the road. It all starts with a free weeklong training and orientation program in Cleveland, where they'll develop a detailed business plan. By the second week owners are back home and ready to put Proforma tools to work for their business.

**"The people power of Proforma far exceeds what any other industry company has to offer."**

Fred Albrecht,

Proforma Albrecht & Co.

## RAPID RISE TO \$25 MILLION

Fred Albrecht, owner of Proforma Albrecht & Co. in Cincinnati, OH, has viewed the promotional products industry from all angles. He worked his way up to CEO of a large distributorship after beginning his career in 1979 at the bottom of the corporate ladder. Then, in 1999, he and his wife Suzette decided to open their own distributorship with the goal of becoming a national sales organization of professional salespeople. They began small with only four internal employees for infrastructure. Today, they have 100 sales reps, 28 employees and \$25 million in annual sales making them a veteran of the *Inc. 5000* list.

The turning point came after they reached \$1.5 million and joined Proforma. "I quickly realized that we had to have a partner," Albrecht says. "I had to have exclusive marketing tools and e-commerce solutions to be unique in the industry. ... Ultimately, that's what drew us. Proforma's number one resource is an all-encompassing marketing department that offers us proprietary tools and business development functions such as appointment setting, lead generation and sales automation."

Just last year, Proforma arranged 750 appointments for Albrecht's sales force that resulted in \$2 million in sales from brand new customers. "Subsequently, as our sales reps developed relationships with these customers, we grew another \$2.5 million in sales," Albrecht says. "The appointment setting function is vitally important because it allows me to focus my management energies elsewhere."

Albrecht has also benefited from Proforma's recruitment support, helping him develop a strong national sales force. "Our sales reps are individuals, each as diverse as the 27 states they represent," Albrecht says. "Thanks to the extensive menu of tools and resources Proforma offers, every sales rep can customize support to meet their unique needs. ... I can't stress enough how much more than an e-commerce solution and technology partner Proforma is. We are all about people."





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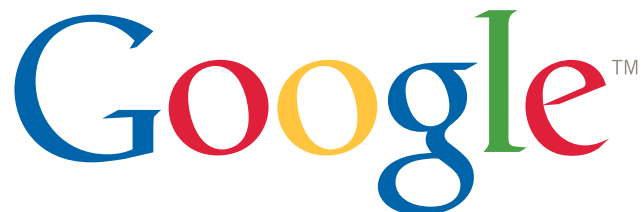
- Spend a day, all-expenses paid, with Proforma at its worldwide support center in Cleveland, Ohio. No obligation. No pressure. (Online meetings are available for those who cannot travel.)
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# Appointments & Promotions

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

Compiled By Sara Lavenduski

► **Admatch Corporation** (*asi/31490*) hired Phil Sharkey as director of sales & marketing.

► **AIA Corporation** (*asi/109480*) welcomed Jill Wieser as a field sales specialist.

► **Americraft Products** (*asi/86464*) added the following multi-line rep groups: Sinatra Enterprises (serving WI, IL), Select Lines Marketing, LLC (MO, KS, IA, NE), M.H. Michalson Inc. (WA, OR, ID, AK), Pete Rosica Promotions (NY, NJ, PA, DE, MD, DC).

► **Ash City** (*asi/37127*) appointed Brent Neal as a dedicated sales representative for the southern Alberta and south eastern British Columbia territory and welcomed Nick Chipchase as an independent sales representative for MD, DE, DC and northern VA.

► **Boxercraft** (*asi/41325*) promoted Shelley Foland to the role of chief executive officer.

► **CleggPromo** (*asi/45450*) hired Felishea Davis and Michael Bruckner as inside sales representatives. Davis' territory will include PA, NJ, VA, WV, DC, DE MO and NE. Bruckner's territory will include OH, MI, IN and KY.

► **CPS/Keystone** (*asi/43051*) appointed Rhonda Reilly as eastern regional sales manager.

► **Garyline** (*asi/55990*) hired David Goldfarb as its Northeast regional sales manager. He will be responsible for New England



Jill Wieser  
AIA



Rhonda Reilly  
CPS/Keystone



Liza Sachs  
HALO



George Matchak  
Jornik



Sharon Willochell  
Polyconcept



Kevin Schardt  
Vantage



Sandy Martinelli  
Vantage



Isaac Roberts  
Visstun

and New York, as well as key national accounts.

► **Gemline** (*asi/56070*) hired two new regional sales managers. Dave Andrews represents the company in the Northeast region, including CT, MA, RI, NH, ME and VT. Additionally, Katie Bauer is responsible for NY.

► **HALO Branded Solutions** (*asi/35600*) hired Liza Sachs as vice president of sales for the Southeastern Region. She will be responsible for FL, GA, AL and SC.

► **Jornik** (*asi/63549*) hired George Matchak as its multi-line sales manager in Florida, Georgia and Puerto Rico.

► **Mastercraft** welcomed Stan Breckenridge as chief marketing & sales officer.

► **Paperclip Promotions** (*asi/290142*) hired Shannon Bowyer as an office administrator and Lyssa Roberts as an account coordinator.

► **Picnic Time Inc.** (*asi/78065*) promoted Michael Lum to the position of promotional products supervisor.

► **Polyconcept North America** promoted Sharon Willochell to the position of president of its Trimark Powered by Leed's division and Michael Snyder to vice president of merchandising and national accounts for its Trimark Powered by Leed's division.

► **Proforma** (*asi/300094*) welcomed 10 new offices to its network: Chris Smith, Phix Activate, Roswell, GA; Terry & Teresa Waters, NVUS Design, Farmington, UT; Doug Boyer, Proforma Innovative Services, Stow, OH; Kasey Rhodes, Proforma GRO Marketing, Austin, TX; John & Sheena Payne, Global Payne Solutions, Allen, TX; Ramon Espinoza, Proforma Lone Star Marketing Concepts, San Antonio, TX; Scott Nelms, Proforma Press On, Louisville, KY; Phil Allemang, and Chris & Wendy Nelson, Proforma US

Marketing, Shawnee, KS; Steve & Stephen Viglione, Proforma S & B Marketing Solutions, Plainville, CT; David Lower, Brand Circle, Eagle, ID.

► **Rymax Marketing Services** announced that Eric Tinn returned to the company as senior director of corporate solutions sales.

► **Seville Gear** (*asi/86565*) welcomed Dennis Sherman as vice president of sales and marketing.

► **Stromberg Brand Umbrellas** (*asi/89955*) appointed Paul Suyetsugu, president of PS Sales and Marketing, and Ron Smith as the new sales representatives for CA, AZ, HI, and NV.

► **Sweda Company** (*asi/90305*) welcomed Tina Jameson-Brown as an independent regional sales representative for NC, SC and VA.

► **The Magnet Group** (*asi/68507*) hired Andy Stilts as regional sales manager for the OK and TX territory.

► **Vantage Apparel** (*asi/93390*) promoted Kevin Schardt to the position of vice president, operations and customer experience, and hired Sandy Martinelli as its new director of customer experience.

► **Visstun** (*asi/93975*) and **Digispec** (*asi/49716*) named Isaac Roberts and Lindsay Conti as sales counselors.

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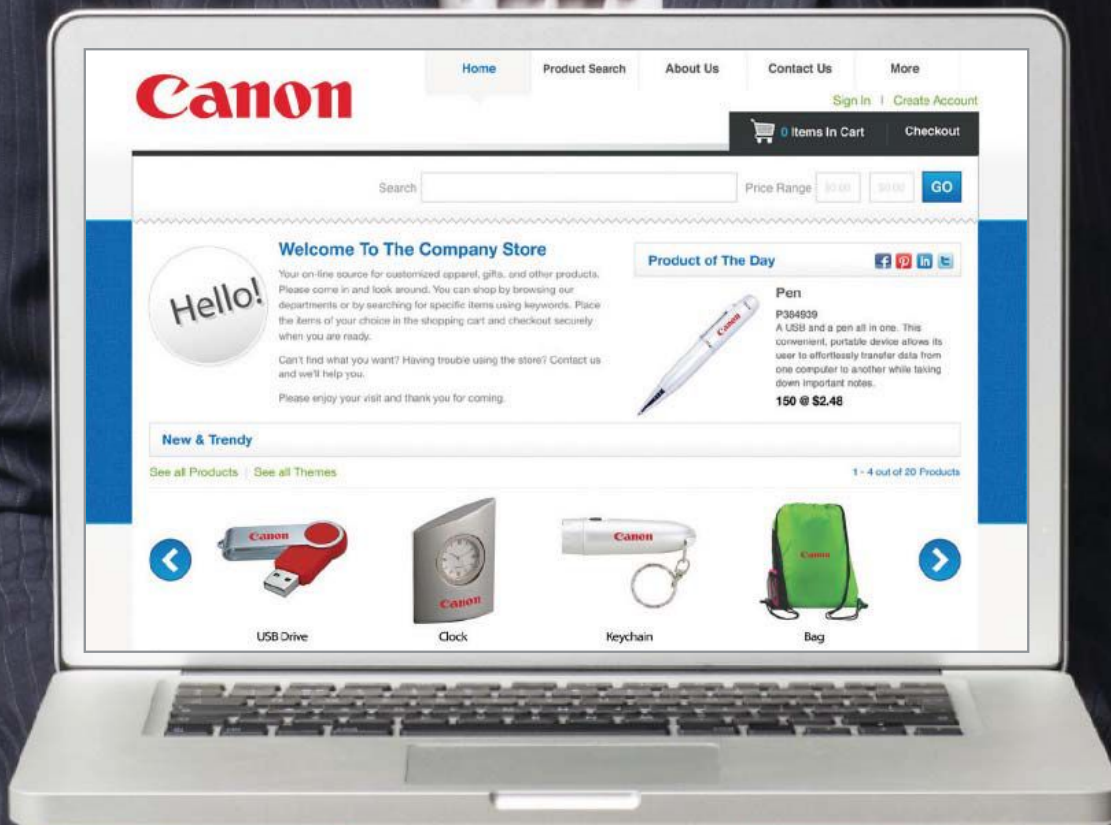
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# Best Places to Work On The Road Again

Third annual Best Places to Work Road Tour sets off this month.



**Counselor editors Melinda Ligos, Andy Cohen and Joe Haley** are gluttons for punishment – and fun. This month, we begin our third Best Places to Work Road Tour. Last year's took us across the northern part of the U.S., into Canada two separate times, and down the west coast to visit 16 companies in the span of a week. Where will the 2013 trip take us? Check out [www.CounselorMag.com/roadtour](http://www.CounselorMag.com/roadtour) from October 14–22 to see our blogs, videos and pics, and follow us on Twitter with #CounselorTour.



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