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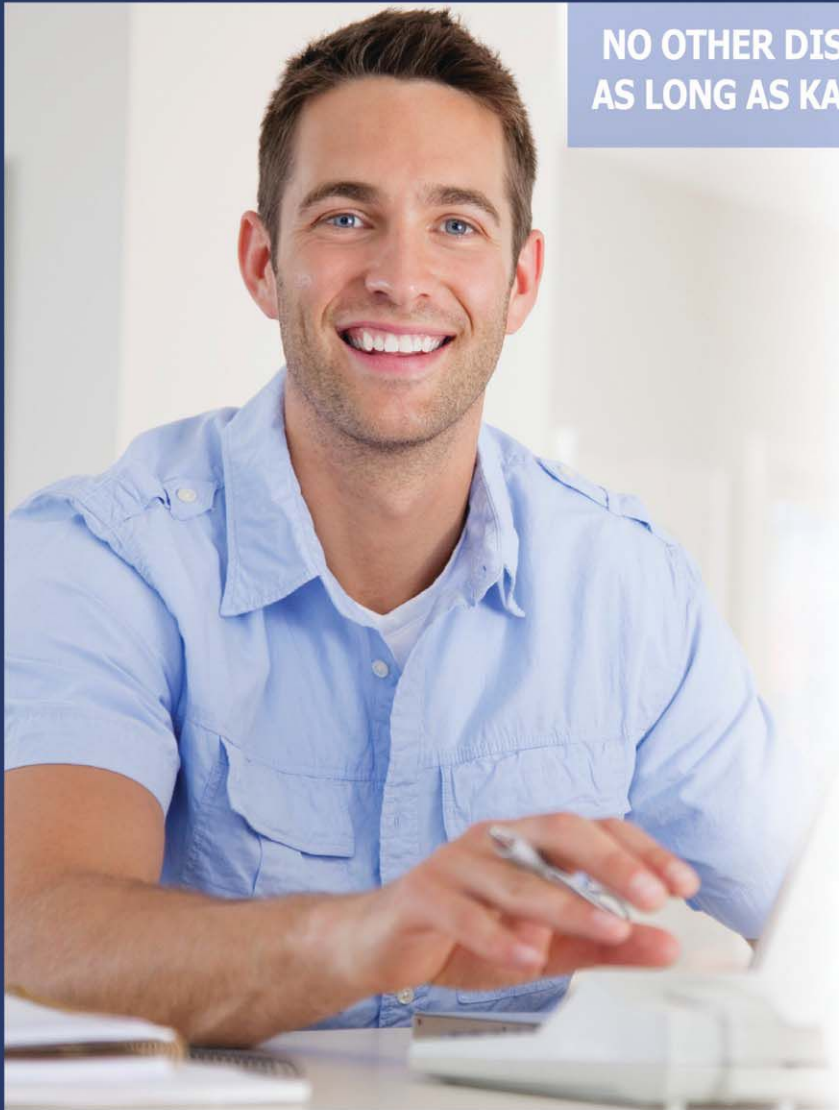
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## Brandit Builds Business With WebJaguar

*Serving clients quickly and efficiently with an extensive selection of imprinted apparel and promotional products requires a solid e-commerce system. Brandit found it with AdvancedEMedia's WebJaguar platform.*

"Think it... Design it... Create it... Brandit." That's the tagline of Brandit Corporation, a full-service apparel and promotional product distributorship with over 20 years experience. Now the firm is selling more of "it" online, thanks to a customized e-commerce solution designed by AdvancedEMedia.

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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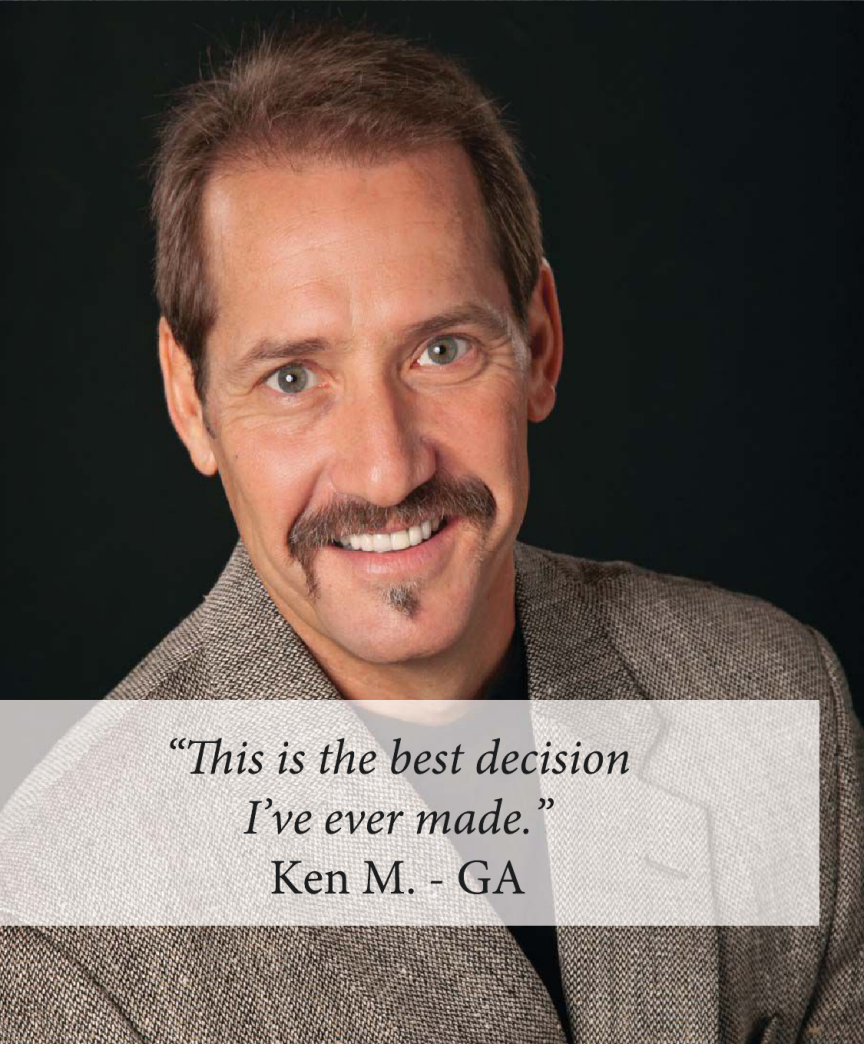




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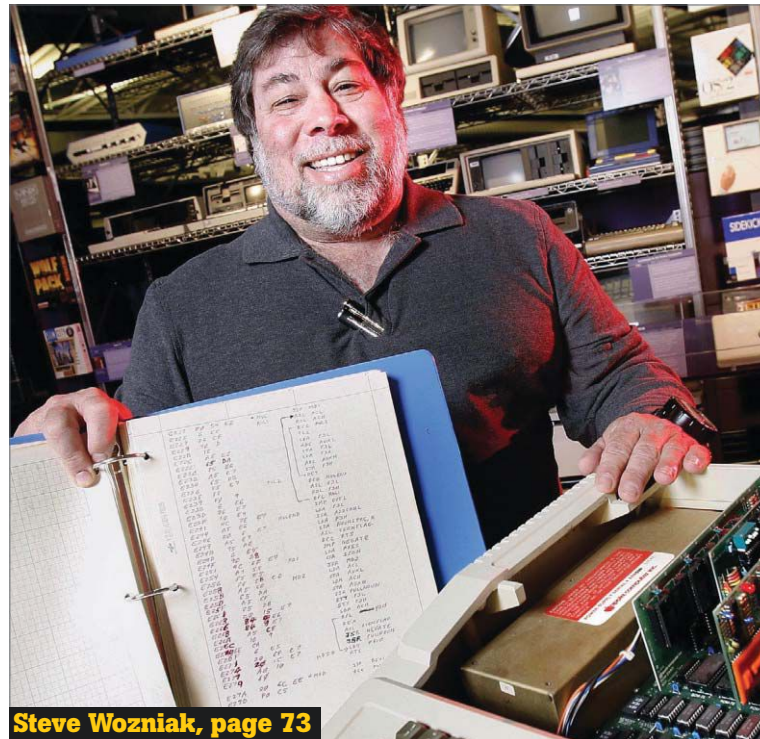
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# Editor's Letter

## Protect Your Digital House

Ad specialty firms need to become more schooled in how to protect their data and that of their clients.

By Andy Cohen

Some sobering studies have been released recently. One from Experian Data Breach Resolution and the Ponemon Institute reported that 43% of all companies have suffered a data breach within the past year. That's a tremendous amount of companies that have left their own data – as well as that of their customers – at risk of being stolen.

Even further, the list of major corporations that have had their information systems hacked into is a who's who of the retail and business world in the past year: Target, J.P. Morgan Chase, Supervalu, Neiman Marcus, Home Depot, ACME Supermarkets, Albertsons, Michael's. The list is sure to grow as the holiday shopping season – a popular time for cyber criminals to do their thing – ramps up this month.

The good news is that many companies are recognizing the threat and are beginning to implement data breach protection plans. The Experian study found that nearly three-quarters of businesses currently have data breach response plans and teams in place, a 12% increase from last year.

The bad news? A full 68% of respondents still said they felt unprepared to respond to a data breach, and 78% admitted they don't regularly update their data breach response plans to deal with changing threats.

"While more organizations

have data breach preparedness on their radar and have developed a response plan, a majority of companies are not putting the support and resources behind having it truly be effective," said Michael Bruemmer, vice president



of Experian Data Breach Resolution. "A checklist response plan alone doesn't mean you're prepared. There should be an incident response team in place that practices the plan, as well as ongoing investment from the C-suite to ensure technologies are up-to-date, external breach experts are secured, and selection of an identity protection product for affected customers is determined prior to an incident to ensure a quick and smooth response."

Ultimately, companies in the ad specialty market need to pay attention and adjust their approaches to a new world in which cyber criminals can lurk around any and every website or cloud-based program.

"I think we should all be concerned about the recent data breaches," says Jim Martin, vice president of supplier firm Numo (asi/74710). "We don't keep any credit card information on our servers locally in our building. All of the information is kept

data breach could be a rapid response and communication plan, say experts.

"What customers want is open communication about what is going on," said software provider and digital consulting firm Customer Expressions,

### Protecting your company's information today is as important as generating new business.

with a third party that encrypts the card numbers. The reality, however, is that we are all vulnerable. As we see more and more customers use credit cards collectively in the industry, we'll see the target get bigger and bigger on our back. Not having physical swipe terminals definitely helps, but black hats are typically one step ahead of the white hats here."

Are you prepared to overcome those proverbial black hats? You should be. Protecting your company's information today is as important as generating new business. After all, if your clients' data is compromised, they could be looking for new vendors pretty quickly. The initial key to overcoming a

in a recent report. "Let them know right away if there has been a data breach, so they can begin to cover themselves and keep tabs on their accounts. This gives them some power to help protect themselves. Waiting months or withholding the information about the breach will have negative consequences. Also, let your customers know what you are doing to help ensure their information is safe in the future."

It's difficult, though, to clearly communicate to customers when you don't have a response plan implemented in advance. Don't have one? It's long past time to get it done.

Enjoy the issue!

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# News

## HOW WILL THE AD SPECIALTY BUSINESS PERFORM IN 2015?



**Jo-an Lantz Geiger** (asi/202900)  
 “The fourth quarter is going to be our strongest quarter. We’re going to be up double digits and our outlook for next year is really good.”



**Joe Fleming**  
 Hub Pen (asi/61966)  
 “I always view the stock market as a leading indicator and with the averages hitting record highs, I feel very positive about the coming year.”



**Alan Tabasky**  
 BEL Promo (asi/39552)  
 “The economy and housing market are improving, which leads to consumer confidence and all trickles down to promotional products and their benefits to the business sector.”



**Alan Vaught Evans** (asi/52840)  
 “I see low growth as an industry, but good companies will take market share from their lesser counterparts. End-users will benefit from healthy competition.”



**Mitch Mounger**  
 Sunrise Identity (asi/339206)  
 “I think we are in good shape for 2015. As the economy continues to stabilize, marketing budgets will increase.”



**Chuck Fandos**  
 Gateway CDI (asi/202515)  
 “I would expect to see growth of 7.5%, which is very good. We have to keep looking to add value and awareness to what we do.”

## American Economy Expected To Shine Next Year



**Penny Pritzker**, U.S. Secretary of Commerce, said in early November that the department is forecasting GDP growth of around 4% for 2015.

▶ The International Monetary Fund predicts that the U.S. economy will expand at a rate of 3.5% in 2015.

▶ In early November the Dow Jones Industrial Average reached an all-time high of more than 17,300, 13% higher than its low point for 2014.

▶ In October, consumer confidence rose to its highest point in seven years, according to the Conference Board.

▶ American Express OPEN reported that 63% of small-business owners have a positive outlook for 2015, the highest number recorded since 2007.

# Chatter Now Trending



“Entrepreneurs: Keep an open mind! Business is a creative endeavor. There are always opportunities and possibilities. And, look at the solution, not the problem. Learn to focus on what will give results.”

**DONALD TRUMP**, VIA TWITTER HANDLE @REALDONALDTRUMP, WITH ADVICE TO ENTREPRENEURS TODAY

“Winning cultures know that everybody contributes to success, so everyone should share in that success.”

**ROSABETH MOSS KANTER**, HARVARD BUSINESS SCHOOL PROFESSOR, VIA TWITTER HANDLE @ROSABETHKANTER, IN RESPONSE TO A QUESTION ABOUT THE KEYS TO A SUCCESSFUL CORPORATE CULTURE



“USA economic performance continues more or less off the charts, while POTUS favorables continue to plummet; defies conventional wisdom.”

**AUTHOR AND CONSULTANT TOM PETERS**, VIA TWITTER HANDLE @TOM\_PETERS, ON THE DAY WHEN THIRD-QUARTER GDP GROWTH WAS ANNOUNCED TO HAVE BEEN 3.5% IN THE U.S.

“Another journey ending at the WORST airport of any my travels take me. #JFK. #LifeInMyShoes.”

**KENNETH COLE**, FOUNDER OF FASHION COMPANY KENNETH COLE, VIA TWITTER HANDLE @KENNETHCOLE, ON THE TRIALS AND TRIBULATIONS OF BUSINESS TRAVEL



What's the best sales tip you've ever received?

- ▶ **Ryan Schade** ABP – Always Be Prospecting! You can't ABC (Always be Closing) if your pipeline is empty.
- ▶ **Laurie O'Shea** Don't over promise and under deliver. People would prefer an honest answer over not getting what they anticipated.
- ▶ **Danielle Lum** Listen to the words they're not saying to get to the source of the problem they need assistance with.
- ▶ **Joe Robertson** Ask people about themselves and what they do. They almost always reciprocate and return the question, opening the door for a "mini infomercial," and an opportunity to sow seeds.
- ▶ **Erich Campbell** You have to out-care the other guy. Good salespeople learn early on that you have to be sincere and really take an interest in people to make loyal customers – you have to take the risk to actually care. Invest yourself fully into the conversation and really listen.



- @ValaAfshar Why employees are disengaged? 1. not part of decision-making process 2. not recognized for driving results 3. not able to influence change.
- @ultipromo Happy 20th birthday to the banner ad.
- @LocalSwagKC Give new #contacts a firm handshake & look them in the eye. Sincere eagerness to meet them will be reciprocated. #SalesTips
- @staplespromo Give booth visitors a light, hands-free cinch bag instead of a traditional tote. On sale all week!
- @TKCupsSorgs Happy #NationalBossDay thanks to all of our bosses and employees who make #tkcupssorgs a great place to work!
- @brandivatemtktg Without trust, you will never turn a customer into a client. #brandivate
- @GoogleforWork 90% of consumers want seamless buying, regardless of channel. Stand out by easing the purchase process.
- @BadRhinoINC Get personal. The younger crowd is more attracted to connections with brands than you think.
- @Logobrander Promotional products, gifts and incentives help increase customer loyalty #ROI



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## “Ultimately that price savings will be passed on to the customer.”

Dan McMackin, UPS (see page 37)

Business  
for Sale

# Q3 Distributor Revenues Increase 4.6%

Data released by ASI at the end of October shows that distributor sales rose by 4.6% in the third quarter of 2014, continuing a stretch of 19 consecutive quarterly gains. Meanwhile, the *Counselor* Confidence Index, a measure of distributor health, was 112 in Q3 – identical to the six-month rolling average and a dozen points above the baseline that indicates industry growth.

“I believe the general economic indicators, especially

the unemployment report, are the reason why sales numbers are high and companies feel bullish,” said Memo Kahan, president of Top 40 distributor PromoShop (asi/300446). “It makes sense and I am optimistic this can last for a few more quarters.”

About 54% of distributors reported a year-over-year rise in third-quarter sales, while 27% reported their sales were unchanged and 19% reported a decline in revenues. Small firms

(less than \$250,000) averaged 2.4% growth, while mid-sized distributors (\$250,000 to \$1 million) averaged 1.5% growth, data showed. Large distributor firms (more than \$1 million in annual revenues) had an average sales increase of 5.7%.

“In our third quarter, we were up 21% over the previous year,” said David Woods, president of Top 40 distributor AIA Corporation (asi/109480). “We have been particularly successful in attracting new distributors to AIA. We’ve also had an outstanding year – our sales are up 14% over 2013 through the end of October.”

Most distributors are optimistic about their total sales in 2014 with nearly two-thirds (61%) expecting an increase in revenues over 2013. Just fewer than 60% of small and mid-sized distributors now expect their sales to rise this year. Larger revenue distributors are more bullish, with 70% forecasting a sales increase in 2014.

“Our future outlook is generally higher,” said Jason Robbins, CEO of ePromos Promotional Products (asi/188515). “I do think Web distributors like us are taking share away from the traditional distributors. Many buyers know what they want, have a few questions and don’t like too much human interaction. We like this part of the promo business.” – DV

## M&A Activity Heats Up in 2014

Sales of small businesses are poised to hit record levels in 2014, a new analysis shows. BizBuySell.com, an online marketplace for buying or selling a small business, has revealed that 1,987 business sale transactions closed in the third quarter this year. That’s a nearly 18% increase from last year and the most sales recorded in a third quarter since BizBuySell started monitoring transactions in 2007.

Specifically in the ad specialty market, a *Counselor* analysis shows that mergers and acquisitions in the industry have increased by 14% through the first 10 months of 2014.

In the economy overall, total numbers of small-business transactions in the third quarter edged down just 2.1% from the second quarter of 2014, which remains the most active quarter for small-business sales since before the end of 2008. The third quarter performance keeps 2014 on pace to experience the highest number of small-business acquisitions since the report’s inception.

Another indication that 2014 sales could reach a new high watermark is that total listings were up 2.2% from the same time last year. There was notable growth in the number of manufacturing businesses (4.1%), service-industry businesses (3.9%) and restaurants (3.5%) on offer.

“After seeing a return to robust transaction activity during 2013, it’s good to see that we have not plateaued and both buyers and sellers are still eager to make deals happen,” says Bob House, group general manager of BizBuySell.com and BizQuest.com. “There remains a strong supply of quality small businesses on the market. As the economy and financing options continue to improve, buyers remain very interested in acquiring small businesses.”

That interest is driving an apparent shift in the marketplace, with sellers now receiving higher prices for their businesses. – CR



# Meijer Recalls Halloween Flashlights



Midwest supermarket chain Meijer recalled roughly 8,600 Chinese-made novelty flashlights in late October, due to a burn risk, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission.

The Halloween projector flashlights were sold for about \$3 at Meijer stores in September and October of this year. The Grand Rapids, MI-based retailer has received one report of a flashlight overheating and the plastic handle melting, but no reports of injuries from the product. No ad specialty suppliers or distributors were named in this flashlight recall.

The recall involves a Sig-

nature Designs Halloween image projector that includes a flashlight with a cap that holds special lenses to project messages and images onto a wall or other surfaces. The 7-inch-long flashlight handle is black with the word "Halloween" and has pictures of a skull and jack-o'-lantern in white.

The 3-inch orange cap came with three lenses: an orange one featuring a black jack-o'-lantern, a yellow lens with a black bat and a purple lens with the words "Trick or Treat" in black. The flashlight holds two C batteries and the item has a clear label with white printing opposite the orange on/off



switch that reads: "Signature Designs (HK) Ltd, Ningbo,

China, 14-121-02, 05/2014."

Consumers who purchased one of the flashlights should stop using the product immediately and remove the batteries. The flashlight can be returned to the customer service desk at any Meijer store for a full refund.

This continues a string of children's products sold at retail that have been recalled this year. The CPSC has put a renewed focus on the safety of products geared for kids, and while outerwear with drawstrings has been the main offender over the past year, the organization has also taken a hard look at any electronics that could overheat and cause burns.— DV

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# Lower Gas Prices Could Cut Shipping Costs

Price Drops?

Thanks to lower costs of crude oil, gas prices fell to a 45-month low in October, a shift that economic experts predict will continue over the next few months. According to GasBuddy.com, about 40% of U.S. gas stations were selling gas for less than \$3 per gallon in late October.

At the end of October, the national average for a regular gallon of gas was \$3.03, a drop of 29 cents in one month alone and more than 75 cents from peak prices this year at the end of April. Ultimately, experts say, the drop in prices could benefit businesses by cutting shipping costs.

The decreased prices can be

attributed to a dramatic drop in the value of oil, which closed October at \$80 a barrel. However, while oil futures typically decrease in the fall, “this is not your garden-variety autumn swoon in gasoline prices,” said Tom Kloza, chief oil analyst for GasBuddy. “Clearly, there is a risk that crude oil prices could be \$10 or even \$25 per barrel below crude oil costs in 2011-2013. For some grades of crude, we are seeing the lowest pricing points since December 2010.”

The drop is being fueled by the refusal of OPEC countries to curtail their oil production to maintain prices. In addition, the U.S. government is project-

ing a record output of shale oil in November, boosting the country’s crude supply to its highest levels since 1986. The International Energy Agency is also predicting a reduction in global oil consumption for the rest of the year by as much as 250,000 barrels per day.

Because of those circumstances, the glut of crude oil in global markets will maintain decreases in gas prices throughout autumn and most likely into the winter. Most significant for businesses, including ad specialty firms, is that the decreases will be applied to shipping costs as well.

“Ultimately that price savings will be passed on to the

customer,” Dan McMackin, a spokesperson for UPS, told *Counselor*. “It’s a direct relationship.”

UPS, like all shipping companies, has a fuel surcharge that is built into the price of a shipment. McMackin says UPS bases its surcharge rates not on the price at the pump, but what the oil industry charges for bulk fuel. The savings won’t be instantaneous, he notes. Usually price swings based on fuel won’t affect the frequency of shipments.

“Consumer demand for shipping is something that stays fairly constant,” he said. “It’s like people putting gas in their car.” – DV

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asi/232119

# BIC Graphic Reports Q3 Revenue Rise, Profit Drop

BIC Graphic (asi/40480), which includes the company's North American and global promotional products businesses, recently reported that it experienced net sales growth of 1.9% in the third quarter of 2014 and 1.1% over the first nine months of the year.

"Our nine-month results were good and in line with our full year expectations," said Mario Guevara, CEO of BIC Group, in a statement. "Benefiting from restored customer service and enhanced marketing programs, BIC Graphic has started to recover momentum with low-single digit growth, mainly in North America and

particularly in hard goods. Net cash position remains very strong and we firmly believe we will achieve our full year objectives in both the Consumer and Advertising and Promotional businesses."

In its public filing (BIC Graphic's parent company is traded publicly on Euronext Paris) the company said that net sales from its BIC Graphic division increased from 69.4 million euros (\$87.7 million) in the same time period in 2013 to 70.8 million euros (\$89.5 million) in 2014's third quarter. While BIC Graphic's sales in Europe were negatively impacted by the company's

performance in Southern Europe, its North American business "grew low-single digits driven by the Hard Goods segment thanks to the 'Good Value' proposition, new product launches and BritePix imprinted technology."

The company also said, however, that profits at its BIC Graphic unit fell by 7.4% in the period, from 3.8 million euros (\$4.8 million) in 2013 to 3.6 million euros (\$4.6 million) this year, impacted by "continued investments in marketing and trade support."

BIC Graphic ranks as the fourth-largest supplier in the industry, after reporting 2013



North American ad specialty sales of \$313 million, a 3.4% decrease from 2012. In its third-quarter filing, the company said it expects sales at BIC Graphic to grow by "low single digits" for full-year 2014. – AC

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22-1002501261-014



# Online Display Ad Spending Set To Double



A new survey from Forrester Research reports that spending on Internet display advertising is expected to nearly double over the next five years. New forecasts from Forrester show that total U.S. online display ad spending will reach \$37.6 billion in 2019, a jump from the \$19.8 billion that's expected to be spent this year. That growth would represent a 90% increase.

The Forrester report said that the extreme growth in online advertising will be driven largely by increased spending on video ads. For example, video advertising on desktop devices alone is expected to grow 21% annually until 2019,



when it will contribute 55% of total desktop display ad revenue across the Internet.

Mobile is also expected to be a driver of online ad growth.

Display ads targeted at smartphones and tablets will account for nearly 40% of all online display ad spending by 2019, Forrester said, up from a predicted

24.4% share in 2014.

That growth is expected to severely outshine ad spending in traditional media, according to Forrester's expectations. The research organization reported that it is expecting growth in offline advertising media to be about 1% a year for the next five years.

And, the fastest growth in those traditional outlets is expected to come from cable television, according to Forrester, which should expand by 5% annually. While spending from other outlets such as radio, newspapers, magazines and network television are expected to decline. – CR

asi/88984



Full Color Digital Logos



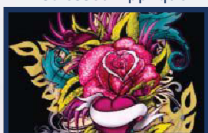
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# World Business Forum: Workplace Creativity is Vital



Creativity guru Sir Ken Robinson keyed the World Business Forum in New York City in October, urging business leaders to create workplaces that foster innovation. “Talent is hidden within organizations,” Robinson told the audience of more than 1,000, so leaders must work hard to uncover it.

The first step, he said, is to provide conditions in which people can think creatively. Educational institutions historically have done a poor job at sparking creativity or identifying creative people, he said. Paul McCartney and George Harrison were in the same music classes, but were



not viewed as having any talent. And Elvis Presley was banned from joining his high school’s choir. “Quite an oversight,” Robinson said. Leaders can either limit or drive creativity through

the questions they ask, he said, and open-ended questions help develop creative thought.

The next step is to value diversity and seek ideas from everyone within a corporate culture – not just top leaders. “Ideas need to move up and down and sideways in organizations,” he said. “Different teams create different ideas.”

Look at the ways ideas are developed in your organization, and change them, Robinson said. “Develop new routines and you will develop new creative thought and new ideas.”

Companies that do not embrace creativity might go

the way of Kodak, Robinson warned. The company is now bankrupt, he said, because its executives did not believe that digital was the future of picture-taking. Had the company’s leadership been more imaginative, he said, Kodak might still be in business today.

“Everyone in the organization has deep creative capabilities,” he said, and it’s a business leader’s job to tap into them.

The two-day event included a host of other business-focused speakers, including former Federal Reserve Chair Ben Bernanke and writer Malcolm Gladwell. – *ML*

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# DMA Releases Data Breach Guide



The Direct Marketing Association (DMA) has released a new guide to state laws on data breach notifications. With a variety of laws that marketers and their clients' companies need to follow if they've suffered a data breach (as far as when and how customers need to be notified following a data breach), the DMA is now distributing guidelines.

"We hear nearly every week about the occurrence of data breaches," said Peggy Hudson, DMA's senior vice president for government affairs. "Data security and consumer trust are inextricably linked, and it's up to all marketers to act as stewards of consumer information. With this

guide and our extensive advocacy efforts, DMA is making the task of data stewardship more manageable for responsible actors across the data-driven marketing economy."

With major retailers such as Target, Home Depot, Neiman Marcus, and Michael's reporting hacks into their systems in recent months, consumers and marketers alike have been on high alert for potential data breaches and they are recognizing the business implications. The average cost to a company to investigate and respond to a data breach is \$5.9 million, according to the 2014 Cost of Data Breach Study. Published



by the Ponemon Institute and sponsored by IBM, the study also reported a 15% increase in these costs over the previous year.

"Until Congress passes a national data breach notification law, companies will be required

to navigate this complex patchwork of 47 state requirements," said Hudson. "This book gives marketers a guide to prepare and respond to a breach."

For more information on the DMA guide, go to [www.thedma.org](http://www.thedma.org). – AC

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Mergers & Acquisitions

# Proforma Signs Multi-Million Dollar Distributor

Top 40 distributor Proforma (asi/300094) announced that Ryan Andrews, president of Richmond, VA-based Venture Marketing, has joined its member network. Andrews, who previously was affiliated with Boundless Network (asi/143717), will now operate his company as The Branding Agency powered by Proforma. “We needed a partner that would help us grow now,” said Andrews. “I’m confident with Proforma’s support we will double our sales by 2016 and we will soon surpass our \$10 million goal.”

Andrews and his business partners, Sam Bendheim and Andy Harmatz, have mostly provided promotional products to their clients, but with this

deal, they are looking to expand their offerings to include custom printing solutions, e-commerce and mobile marketing. Their company had primarily serviced clients in the insurance, financial services and IT sectors.

This was the second addition of a multi-million dollar distributor to Proforma’s network in October. The company had previously signed up Petty Marketing.

► **Ennis Acquires Hoosier Data Forms** Top 40 supplier Ennis Inc. (asi/52493) has acquired print company Hoosier Data Forms. Financial terms of the deal were not released, but as part of the transaction, John Cornelius, previous owner of Hoosier, will remain with the

company in a sales and management capacity. “We are pleased to add John Cornelius, Hoosier Data Forms and their loyal customers to the Ennis family,” said Keith Walters, chairman, president and CEO of Ennis. “Hoosier Data Forms has been serving the region for almost 40 years and the Cornelius family’s printing roots go back more than 100 years serving distributors.”

Ennis said it will now consolidate Hoosier and its Printegra Indianapolis operation into one facility. The transition to the single facility will take place over the next six months, but following the consolidation, both companies and their employees will continue to operate under their respective brand names.

► **Sanford Parent To Acquire Drinkware Maker**

Newell Rubbermaid, parent company of Top 40 supplier Sanford Business-To-Business (asi/84833), has signed an agreement to acquire the assets of drinkware maker bubba brands inc. Newell is buying bubba from In Zone Holdings, although no purchase price was disclosed. “The acquisition of bubba further strengthens our position as a leader in one of the fastest-growing consumer durables categories in North America,” said Michael Polk, president and CEO of Newell Rubbermaid. “We are excited to add this innovative brand to the portfolio.”

The deal is expected to generate \$50 million in sales this year.

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Jeff Meyer, John Schimmoller & Jamie Watson

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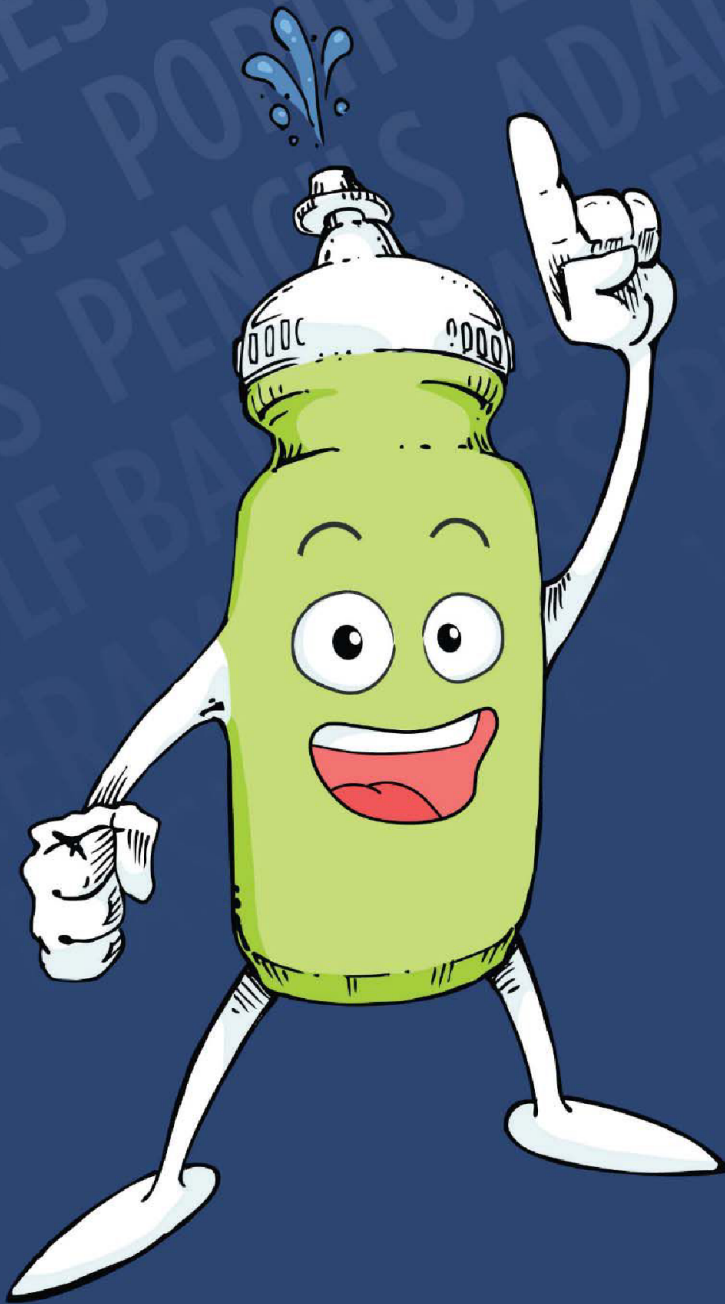
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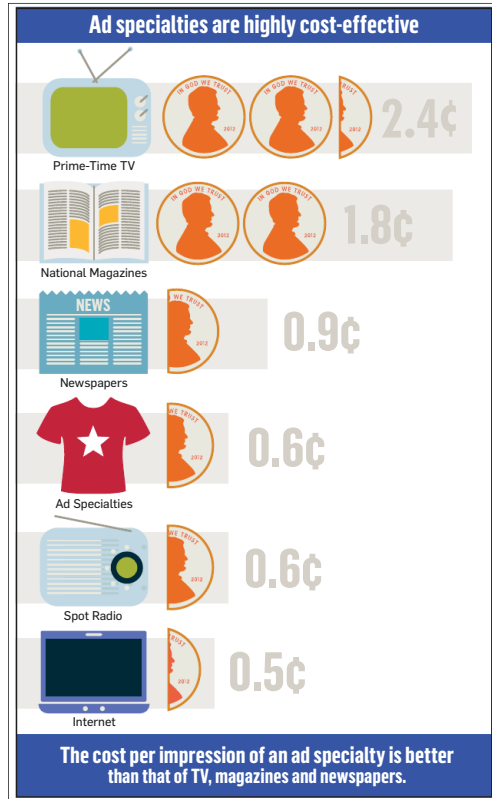
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When clients challenge you on the viability of promotional products, when they question the true marketing impact they can have, what do you say? Next time, try this: At nearly half of a cent, promotional products have a lower cost per impression than nearly every other form of media that marketers could advertise in. Primetime TV? Each impression there costs 2.4 cents, and the impact isn't nearly as great as with promo items. In fact, the ASI Ad Specialties Impressions Study shows that 85% of people who receive a promo product remember the advertiser on it. That's hard-core data to refute any objections prospects can throw at you. There's more online now at [www.asicentral.com/study](http://www.asicentral.com/study).

## Marketing Landscape Shift

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

Online video is about to become so much more powerful. Sure, YouTube is already the third-most-popular site on the Web (behind Google and Facebook) and most major media outlets already have video elements on their websites. But, after a little-covered recent announcement, you can expect online video to gather even more momentum.

Tom Wheeler, the chairman of the Federal Communications Commission (FCC), announced a proposal that would effectively turn personal computers, tablets, and mobile phones into televisions. The proposal includes a measure that would give online companies equal access to cable and broadcast television stations. Think Amazon wants to rule the retail world as it is now? Just wait until you go to [www.amazon.com](http://www.amazon.com) at 8p.m. every night to watch your favorite shows.

Think of how this would change consumer impressions overall of online video. People who may have been skeptical about it before would quickly be converted the first time they glimpsed a live episode of *Modern Family* while they were on the train home from work. And, ultimately, the impact will be a changing landscape for marketers, who simply will need to be testing out online video as a means of connecting with a fast-growing web-based audience.



## 2015 Product Forecast

**"Think about tech accessories that can appeal to multiple audiences right now. Things like chargers, mobile speakers and cases."**

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

## By The Numbers

# 68%

The percentage of companies who say the gifts they give out this holiday season will have their logos on them.

## Facebook Comments We Loved

**What's your favorite movie of all time?**

*Magnet Group-Brett Long*  
***Shawshank Redemption***

*Bay State*  
***Willy Wonka and the Chocolate Factory***

*Mark A. Bearth*  
***Back to the Future II. Even better, I dubbed all three back to back and watch it as a six hour movie.***

*Ryan Schade*  
***The Goonies! #80sKid***





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# Stock Report

## Gains on Both Sides

Industry stocks rebound in October.

### Index Watch

October 2 - October 31

Distributor

+4.69%

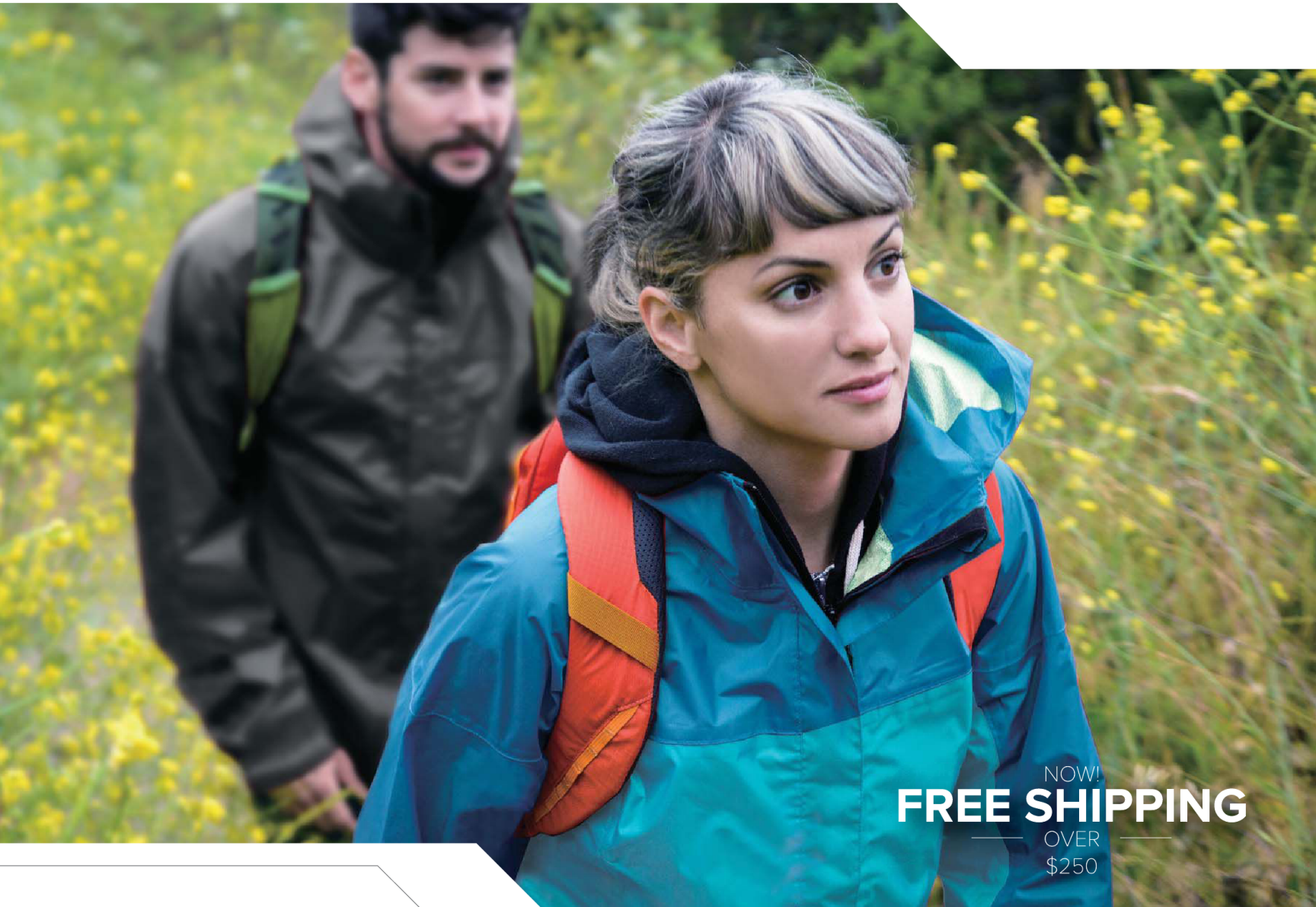
Supplier

+4.63%

Company	Stock Exchange	Symbol	52-week high	52-week low	Per-Share Price (10/31/14)	Market Capitalization (in millions)	10/2/14-10/31/14	
							Per-Share Change	Percent Change
<b>DISTRIBUTORS</b>								
▶ 4imprint Group	LSE	FOURL	£ 7.92	£ 6.11	£ 7.87	£ 210	£ 0.47 ↑	<b>6.35%</b>
▶ Ace Marketing & Promotions Inc.	OTC	AMKT	0.78	0.23	0.32	20	(0.04) ↓	<b>-11.11%</b>
▶ Inner Workings Inc.	NASDAQ	INWK	9.75	5.54	8.87	470	1.00 ↑	<b>12.71%</b>
▶ New England Business Services Inc. <i>(Div. Deluxe Corp.)</i>	NYSE	DLX	61.18	44.64	60	3,020	5.15 ↑	<b>9.39%</b>
▶ Tic Toc <i>(Div. Omnicon Group Inc.)</i>	NYSE	OMC	76.87	64.03	70.76	17,830	3.32 ↑	<b>4.92%</b>
▶ Staples Promotional Products <i>(Div. Staples Inc.)</i>	NASDAQ	SPLS	16.67	10.70	12.56	8,170	0.70 ↑	<b>5.90%</b>
<b>SUPPLIERS</b>								
▶ 3M Promotional Markets Dept. <i>(Div. 3M Corp.)</i>	NYSE	MMM	154.44	123.61	152.1	98,540	12.92 ↑	<b>9.28%</b>
▶ American Apparel Inc.	AMEX	APP	1.45	0.46	0.701	125	(0.08) ↓	<b>-10.13%</b>
▶ BIC Corp.	PAR	BIC	€ 109.30	€ 83.05	€ 99.47	€ 4,665	€ (2.73) ↓	<b>-2.67%</b>
▶ Cutter & Buck <i>(Div. New Wave Group)</i>	STO	NEWAB	€ 47.30	€ 26.80	€ 33.90	€ 1,581	€ 1.20 ↑	<b>3.67%</b>
▶ Delta Apparel Inc.	AMEX	DLA	18.88	8.21	10.23	83	1.21 ↑	<b>13.41%</b>
▶ Ennis Inc. <i>(Parent company of Admore and Alstyle Apparel)</i>	NYSE	EBF	18.77	12.53	14.76	386	1.68 ↑	<b>12.84%</b>
▶ Fossil Special Markets Division	NASDAQ	FOSL	134.99	91.84	100.14	5,380	7.38 ↑	<b>7.96%</b>
▶ Hanesbrands	NYSE	HBI	112.40	63.56	106.65	10,620	0.74 ↑	<b>0.70%</b>
▶ Hilton Apparel Group <i>(Div. Jarden Corp.)</i>	NYSE	JAH	66.04	53.35	65.30	8,000	5.74 ↑	<b>9.64%</b>
▶ Johnson Worldwide Assoc./JWA	NASDAQ	JOUT	30.10	19.61	29.59	290	4.02 ↑	<b>15.72%</b>
▶ Lancer Label <i>(Div. Mail Well Inc.)</i>	NYSE	CVO	3.92	2.13	2.31	154	(0.07) ↓	<b>-2.94%</b>
▶ Lee Printwear <i>(Div. VFCorp. Acquisition Co.)</i>	NYSE	VFC	68.29	53.70	67.27	29,150	1.38 ↑	<b>2.09%</b>
▶ Pfaelzer Brothers <i>(Div. ConAgra)</i>	NYSE	CAG	34.64	28.09	33.93	14,590	0.85 ↑	<b>2.57%</b>
▶ Sanford Business-To-Business <i>(Div. Newell Rubbermaid)</i>	NYSE	NWL	35.43	28.27	34.95	9,130	0.92 ↑	<b>2.70%</b>

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■ <b>LONG BEACH</b>	EDUCATION: March 24   Exhibits: March 25-26 Long Beach Convention Center, Halls A&B
■ <b>NEW YORK</b>	EDUCATION & EXHIBITS: May 5-6 Javits Convention Center, North Hall
■ <b>CHICAGO</b>	EDUCATION: July 14   EXHIBITS: July 15-16 McCormick Place, West Building, Halls F1 & F2

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# Number Crunch

## Dated Delight

Data shows that calendars are most appreciated by older consumers.



### When in Rome...

In Rome, calendars generate the second-greatest number of impressions, behind writing instruments.

**2,125 Impressions**



### A Year's Worth of Branding

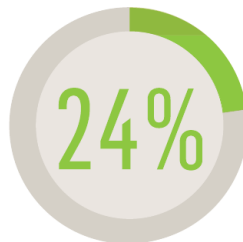
On average, consumers report keeping promotional calendars for about 12 months.



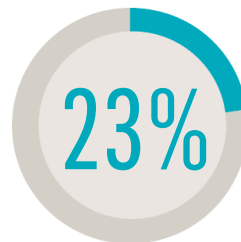
**40% of African Americans own a promotional calendar, the highest percentage of any racial demographic.**



Black



White



Hispanic



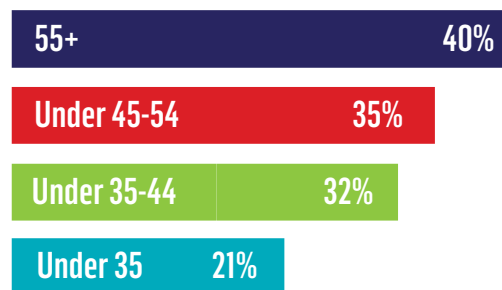
Asian



### Easy Reference

15% of consumers keep a calendar to refer to information like phone numbers.

### Older and Wiser



Older Americans are more likely to own promotional calendars.

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# Product Picks

A collection of unique products

By Chuck Zak



1

### 1. WIPED OUT

Each pre-moistened single-use cotton refreshment towel (R08) contains lemon and lavender essential oils and can be used cold or hot. Microwave safe. Great giveaway for airlines, vacation spots or yoga studios. Available from White Towel Services (asi/97040); [www.wtowel.com](http://www.wtowel.com)

### 2. STAND & DELIVER

Simple ABS plastic phone and tablet stand (IT105) snaps flat for storage and features a textured rubber panel to hold device in place. Ideal mailer for mobile application developers or phone service providers. Available from Jetline (asi/63344); [www.jetlinepromo.com](http://www.jetlinepromo.com)

### 3. PERSONALITY TYPING

This microfiber wrist support (TOY-K05) includes vibrant full-color graphics and contains antimicrobial protection. Colorful, practical item for computer hardware manufacturers or ISP providers. Available from Toddy Gear (asi/91411); [www.brandyourtoddy.com](http://www.brandyourtoddy.com)

### 4. TIME FOR CHANGE

The large-faced Hip to be Square watch (31775) comes with interchangeable faces and a flexible band, great for assorted color orders. Use to promote awareness events or as a fun employee incentive. Available from Norwood (asi/74400); [www.norwood.com](http://www.norwood.com)

### 5. FULL FUNCTION

USB utility charge tool (EM-UC028) features a variety of fold-out connectors for electronic devices. Lots of pop for clients promoting travel or new tech ventures. Available from Emperor (asi/52371); [www.emperormktg.com](http://www.emperormktg.com)

### 6. USE YOUR NOODLE

Freezer- and microwave-safe soup bowl (CPP-3459) features a locking lid and an open-and-close vent to release steam. Holds four cups. Great for food service companies, appliance makers or cooking-related media. Available from AP Specialties (asi/30208); [www.apspecialties.com](http://www.apspecialties.com)

### 7. YOU'RE COVERED

Three floaters and glitter in a liquid-motion front cover animate this notebook (LT-NOTES) that also features 80 ruled pages. Creative promo for health care, education or entertainment clients. Available from ColorStrike/Liquid Technologies (asi/45820); [www.colorstrike.com](http://www.colorstrike.com)

### 8. SIGN HERE

Mini teardrop banners (PTBM-300) are digitally printed on knitted polyester and perfect for grabbing attention. Designed for stationary use only, these flags are perfect for car dealerships and fundraising events. Available from Quinn Flags (asi/80228); [www.promoflagmaker.com](http://www.promoflagmaker.com)

### 9. PLUG WARS

Charge phones quickly with a compact USB wall charger (51074) featuring 5 volts/1 amp output. Perfect for hotels and resorts or any utility providers. Available from Innovation Line (asi/62660); [www.innovation-line.com](http://www.innovation-line.com)



2



3



4



5



6



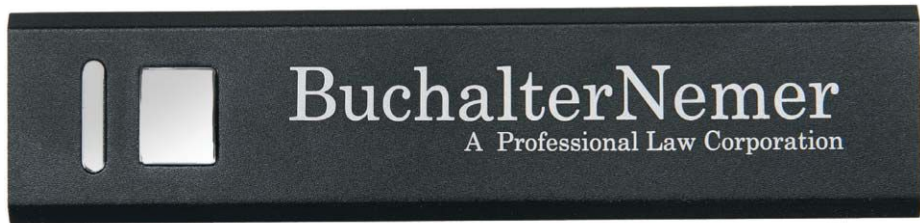
9



8



7



1

### 1. BATTERY LIFER

Compact rectangular power bank (V-PB1) comes in an aluminum case and includes adapters for all of today's most popular devices. Try this for clients in travel, hospitality or education. Available from Vialfa Industries (asi/93758); [www.vialfaline.com](http://www.vialfaline.com)

### 2. PORTA PARTY

Hold six bottles or cans in a six-pack tote (VB0430) made of insulated neoprene and featuring soft-grip handles. Perfect for beverage makers and retailers or for sports promotions. Available from Sportsman Cap Network (asi/88877); [www.sportsmancaps.com](http://www.sportsmancaps.com)

### 3. FIND WINE

Wine is even better when it comes in hand-etched bottles (E-130PL) available with optional hand-painted color fills. A striking presentation for weddings, birthday parties and retirement celebrations. Available from A Plus Wine Designs (asi/30223); [www.apluswinedesigns.com](http://www.apluswinedesigns.com)

### 4. MOBILE TECH

Keep your brand in plain sight with this polyester two-tone computer messenger bag (TB8003) with removable padded computer sleeve. Nice item for college and company stores or real estate developers. Available from Sweda (asi/90305); [www.swedausa.com](http://www.swedausa.com)

### 5. KEEP COOL

Keep your wine at the perfect temperature in this 10 oz. cup (IV2G) with triple-wall ice chilling system. Great backyard item for patio or pool installers or for promoting local wineries. Available from Ad-N-Art (asi/31518); [www.adnart.com](http://www.adnart.com)

### 6. NOW SERVING

Made from sustainable bamboo, this football cutting board (ZIP1420) is an eco-friendly way to serve snacks at any gridiron gala. Makes a great gift for clients in real estate, grocery or even sports-package cable subscribers. Available from Zipline (asi/99030); [www.ziplinepromo.com](http://www.ziplinepromo.com)

### 7. ROAD RESCUE

This 48-piece nylon auto safety kit (AS0305) gives motorists peace of mind and includes 8' booster cables, flashlight, 19-piece first-aid kit and much more. The ideal add-on for dealers or incentive for garages and car washes. Available from Justin Case (asi/63698); [www.justincasepromo.com](http://www.justincasepromo.com)

### 8. POINT COUNTERPOINT

Featuring a touch stylus and button-activated LED flashlight, this multi-function ballpoint pen (LZB-L) is perfect to take wherever you go. Attractive product for clients in finance, insurance or the legal profession. Available from Goldstar (asi/73295); [www.goldstarasi.com](http://www.goldstarasi.com)

### 9. WARMING TREND

Union-made in the USA, this polyester polar fleece 1/4-zip pullover (5301) features side-entry pockets, hemmed open bottom and elastic cuffs. Practical uniform piece for delivery drivers or maintenance crews. Available from King Louie (asi/64860); [www.kinglouie.com](http://www.kinglouie.com)



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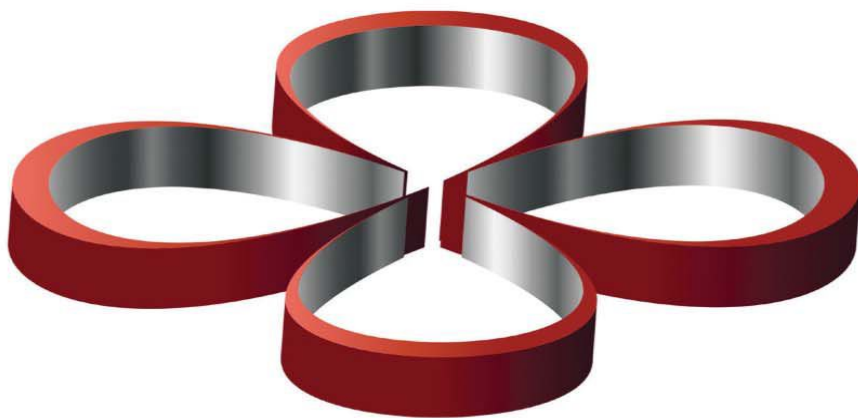


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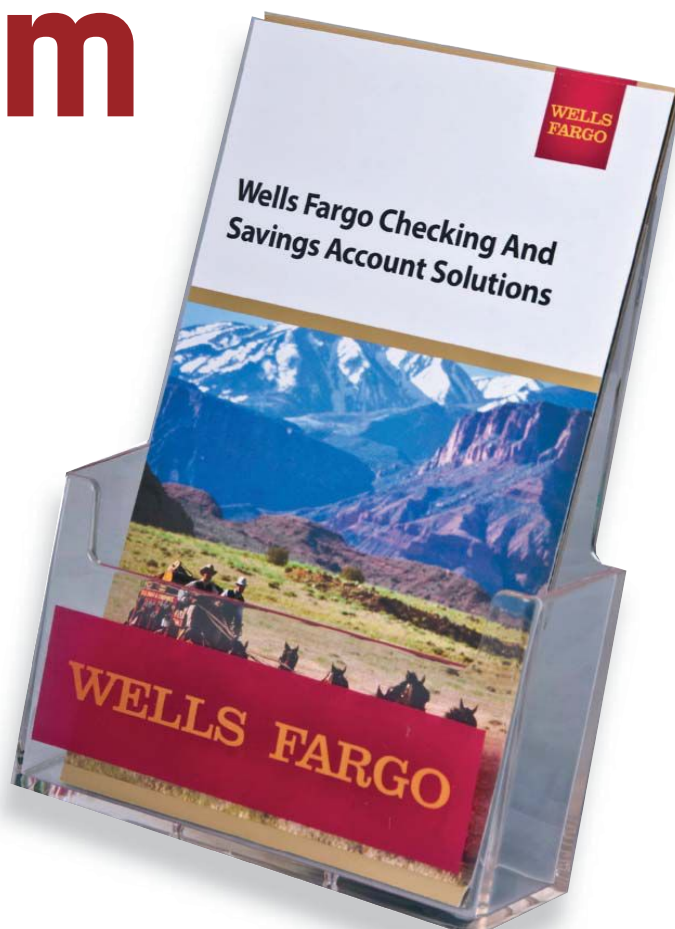


# The Display Source

A Clear-Ad Company

## Where Great Ideas Come From

- **Are You Leaving Sales On The Table?**
- **Step by Step – Guide To Custom Display Orders**



Dear Valued Distributor,

Imagine for a moment that you just wrote up an order for 100 imprinted pens while standing at your client's retail counter. Feels good, right? What if I told you that the very same counter on which you wrote that order held a secret to selling thousands of dollars more worth of additional promotional products?

I'm talking about point-of-purchase and point-of-sales display products. For example, most every retail sales counter has some sort of brochure holder to display product information, credit card applications, etc. Look around at your next appointment, whether it's a boutique, restaurant or bank. Count up the business card holders, brochure displays, table tents that you see, and then consider how every franchise requires multiples of any given display item. The sales potential adds up quickly.



John Diaz, Manager of The Display Source

Those 100 pens, for example, sold at \$2 per piece come to a \$200 order. If you were to sell the same client on a \$50 literature display, multiplied by 25 regional franchise locations, you've also secured a \$1,250 order.

That's why we've created this special supplement for Counselor readers. The experts at The Display Source have more than 50 years combined experience manufacturing and sourcing acrylic, cardboard, wire and wood literature holders and product glorifiers. In fact, The Display Source is the only true manufacturer that creates its own molds in the United States. From concept to creation to delivery, we're on top of your order. Everything has to be done 100% correct; we don't believe 99% is good enough.

Let our team of specialists help you tap the potential of this lucrative market. Read on to learn more about the segment and the products its buyers seek. We'll break the ordering process down into simple steps and provide you with compelling program ideas.

We're ready to prove that The Display Source is indeed where great ideas come from.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in black ink, appearing to read 'John Diaz', written over a light gray rectangular background.



# DID YOU KNOW?

- Each year businesses purchase approximately \$70 billion worth of point-of-purchase and point-of-sale displays.
- The average display order is over \$700.
- Of more than 100,000 salespeople in the promotional products industry, only around 3,000 actively sell display products leaving the door open for you to fill the void with one-stop service.
- The Display Source stocks half a million display products ready for immediate fulfillment.
- Over 200 Display Source employees in the United States and China stand ready to design, produce, imprint and distribute your order.
- Over 50,000 square feet of manufacturing space in the United States plus another 150,000 square feet of factory space abroad means The Display Source can quickly and economically meet your clients' need on time and on budget.



## A Compelling Comparison

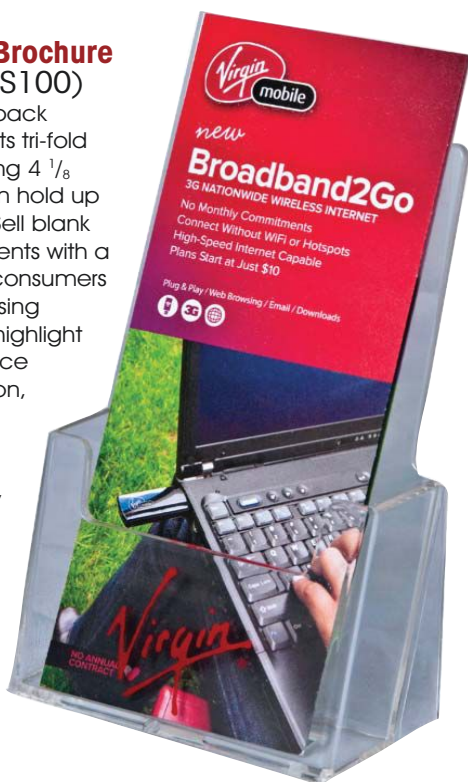
Item	Per-piece Price	Quantity	Order Value
Imprinted Pen	\$2.00	100	\$200.00
Custom Brochure Display	\$50.00	25	\$1,250.00

# DISPLAY PRODUCT SHOWCASE

As an American manufacturer with an ability to make its own custom molds, The Display Source supplies you the largest range of display product options in the industry. In addition, it stocks thousands of popular standard displays in a variety of materials. Here are five popular styles that work for most any retail or service business.

## Clear Acrylic Brochure Holder (#LHF-S100)

This acrylic, slant-back brochure holder fits tri-fold literature measuring 4 1/8 inches wide. It can hold up to 75 brochures. Sell blank or imprinted to clients with a need to provide consumers important purchasing information or to highlight new product/service benefits. In addition, a new two-tiered acrylic brochure holder doubles your clients' ability with twice the slots to showcase materials up to 6 inches wide.



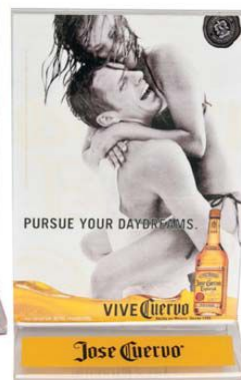
## Business Card Holders (#CHF-S23)

Regardless of how many staff/sales members your client has, there is a Business Card Holder ready to present their business cards. Choose acrylic options with single or multiple pockets.



## Combo Ad Frame With Pockets

Choose a deluxe combination ad frame to showcase product or service information while holding up to 75 informational brochures and/or applications per pocket.



## Table Tents (#LHB-45)

Table tents come in a variety of sizes and styles, e.g. horizontal vs. vertical formats. This acrylic top-load series allows for promotional flyers to slide in from the top to be seen from the front or back. It's perfect for restaurants to place on tables highlighting specialty drinks or desserts.



# TOP MARKETS

Take a look at the markets most likely to need display solutions. You'll find many represent clients already on your account list. Here's a rundown and a few examples of the display products they probably use but purchase from someone else. Now you can offer one-stop service for all their promotional product and display needs.

- ▶ **RESTAURANTS/BARS** use display products to hold take-out menus or to announce upcoming events. They place table tents at every station to feature specialty drinks or desserts, as well as to indicate reserved seating. Some may also place a ballot box at the register to collect business cards or suggestions. Wall-mounted acrylic frames showcase positive food critic reviews and awards.
- ▶ **BANKS/FINANCIAL/INSURANCE COMPANIES** promote their service programs, policies and products such as lending, credit cards, car/home/life protection plans, etc.
- ▶ **AUTOMOTIVE DEALERS/MECHANICS** place brochures highlighting maintenance schedules and requirements at their service counter. Dealers often put model or extended warranty information at each salesperson's desk to lay the groundwork for closing a more profitable sale.
- ▶ **REALTORS** use outdoor display boxes to keep home-sale flyers neat and dry in front of their listed properties. At the real estate office, you'll find business card holders for each realtor and wall-mounted literature displays that present additional property flyers and information on preferred lenders, home inspectors and insurance agents.
- ▶ **RETAILERS** from department stores to convenience stops to supermarkets, position point-of-purchase (POP) displays near check-out counters to encourage last-minute sales. In addition, they frequently display credit card brochures, lottery tickets or new product information.
- ▶ **TRAVEL/HOSPITALITY PROVIDERS** need literature display racks to hold destination brochures, attraction/event announcements and local restaurants' take-out menus.
- ▶ **SALONS/SPAS** display nail and beauty products on acrylic risers. Brochure holders present lists of services and rates.
- ▶ **HEALTHCARE** providers from physicians' offices to hospitals use wall-mounted and stand-alone literature racks to display pamphlets regarding medication, common ailments and tips for healthy lifestyles.

## Tips For Selling Display Products

Once you identify clients in need of display products, the sales process should begin. The Display Source makes it easy with a step-by-step web site that guides the purchasing process. In addition to a handy glossary of terms and inspiring portfolio of custom display solutions, you'll find a list of display-unit types, including brochure holders, table tents, frame combinations, ballot boxes, rotating displays, slat wall displays and business card holders.

Ask about the type of literature your client wishes to showcase. What dimensions are the brochures or flyers? Where will they be distributed, e.g. at a retail checkout counter, on a salesperson's desk or hanging from a wall? How much surface area is available for the display holder's footprint? With the answers to these questions in mind, you can narrow the choices.

After you select a type, you'll be prompted to choose a material. For example, brochure holders are available in acrylic, cardboard, wire and

wood. It's important to know where your client intends to display the brochure holder. A cardboard version, for example, would not hold up at an outdoor venue whereas an acrylic holder would be fine. A full-color brochure would be featured better in a clear acrylic holder than in a cardboard selection. For temporary displays, however, a cardboard version is budget-friendly and gets the job done.

Once you've selected a type and material, you'll be presented a choice between countertop and wall-mounted display units, as well as a variety of sizes. It helps to have a sample of your client's literature or to know the exact measurements of the materials to be displayed. Also ask where and how the holders will be presented. A display unit designed to hang on a slat wall only works if there's a slat wall in place.

Of course, the experienced team at The Display Source can guide your selection. Simply contact (800) 545-5432 and a display specialist will help.

# SALES SUPPORT FROM DESIGN TO DELIVERY

When you choose The Display Source as your display solutions provider, rest assured that you've chosen an active partner that will guide you through the ordering, production and fulfillment process. It can all begin with a sample kit. The Display Source provides the tools you need to impress clients, showing them professional display options that will build their business. It's the kind of service you don't find frequently in today's fast-paced, cookie-cutter business.

The goal is to make the sales process easy and the back-end of production and fulfillment even easier. Whether you need a product display designed from scratch to showcase your client's unique new line of gadgets or help simply hand-packing displays with literature for distribution, The Display Source provides the services and staff to make it happen.

With over 50,000 square feet of manufacturing space in the United States plus another 150,000 square feet of factory space in China, The Display Source is prepared to produce any display your client needs. Its equipment handles many materials including acrylic, wood, metal and PVC. Raw goods are purchased in bulk direct from the factories so that your costs are kept in check. That's one advantage to buying from The Display Source.

The extensive production capabilities also make it easier for you to achieve the vision of your client, regardless of how unique it might be. The Display Source is the only company left in the United States that makes its own molds in-house. As a result, it holds a complete line of more than 75 molds in a variety of shapes, sizes and tiers. If you don't see what your client needs, The Display Source can customize a mold to fit their requirements faster and more economically than the competition. Its prototyping services mean that you'll have a full-color rendering of the display to approve with your client before production. Thanks to its state-of-the-art technology, including robotics and automation, orders are fabricated quickly and efficiently.

Another perk is streamlined delivery. Because The Display Source is a manufacturer with the volume to fill shipping containers every day from overseas, it has tighter control over transit time than brokers do. Furthermore, Display Source experts handle order oversight and tracking for you, with daily updates. You do not have to worry about paperwork, wire transfers or deposits. The Display Source does it all.

Also exclusive to The Display Source is an option to split fulfillment. For example, if a distributor needs to fill an order for 20,000 display units but needs only 500 pieces next week, The Display Source can do that. The first 500 pieces will be manufactured domestically for the purpose of speed; The balance of the order (19,500 pieces) will then be produced at the China facility. This dilutes the cost of the total program significantly. No other display supplier in the United States offers this option.

Though many displays are bought blank, The Display Source does offer printing techniques to imprint most any item with a logo. It has advanced screen-printing and digital-printing technologies to reproduce artwork as simple as a one-color logo to more complex multicolor designs or those in need of a PMS match.

From start to finish, expect ease and perfection from this ASI-rated 5-star supplier. With The Display Source in your corner, you'll quickly add "display expert" to your promotional product credentials.





# THE DISPLAY SOURCE OFFERS:

- DESIGN
- PROTOTYPING
- MOLDING
- MANUFACTURING
- PRINTING
- FULFILLMENT/DISTRIBUTION

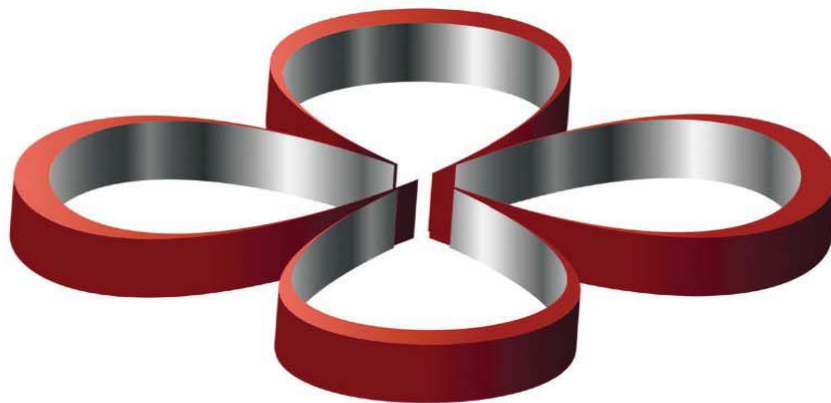
## Take Your Pick: Made in the USA or Customized Overseas



The Display Source can deliver either option or a combination of the two depending on your needs. If your client has a long lead time, consider ordering your product to be made at The Display Source's Chinese factory. This route gives you the lowest possible cost and a competitive advantage that comes with unique product design. When time is short and price is also a concern, The Display Source can split an order. For example, if 100 of 1,000 pieces are needed immediately, The Display Source can make that portion of your order domestically, leaving the rest to be produced more economically overseas. When timing is your only concern, The Display Source offers two more options. It can either manufacture and decorate a product at its U.S. factory in California or pull stock items for a quick turn that's as tight as five days. Either way, you'll still enjoy a cost benefit by going straight to the source of the industry's premier display solutions.

# 5 REASONS TO SELL DISPLAY PRODUCTS

- 1** Your customer likely already buys display products from another source. Why not simplify their tasks by offering to streamline purchasing by providing for their every need?
- 2** Display units are frequently bought in multiples, either for every "table in a restaurant" or every "franchisee in the region."
- 3** The average price of a display order is \$700, making it a significant sale. B2B buyers purchase as much as \$70 billion per year in display pieces.
- 4** Displays can enhance the effectiveness of your client's other promotional programs such as incentive plans or trade show promotions.
- 5** You look like a hero without lifting a finger. The Display Source handles every step of the production process, keeping you up to date on progress. Whether you have a simple need for a couple dozen blank table tents or a large fulfillment program where hundreds of display units must be manufactured, imprinted, stuffed with literature and shipped – The Display Source has you covered.



**The Display Source**  
A Clear-Ad Company



**NEW FOR 2015**



# Strategy, growth, revenue, the works: It's all about leadership.



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**COMING 2015**



# Case Studies

Profile • Management • Promo

## Profile

### How To Network Smartly

Refuse to ever blend in.

By Dave Vagnoni

Don Sanders knows how to win attention – wearing red, blue and orange shoes tends to get you noticed. But Sanders is much more than just a showman. Over his 30-year industry career he's sold more than \$24 million in promotional products at a 43% profit rate. "I think the only way to be able to sell and make money is to make yourself look totally different," says Sanders, the owner of Don Sanders Marketing (asi/318050).

Beyond his wardrobe, Sanders prides himself on his networking skills. He'll attend cocktail parties, sporting events, nonprofit dinners – anything to get face time with potential customers. Sanders suggests other distributors take the same aggressive approach. "The easiest way to expand your client base is through networking," he says. "Not only does it keep the pipeline open for new leads, but it provides insurance for those occasional times when you lose a steady client."

Check out Sanders' tips on becoming a better networker.

**Q: What are the best places to meet prospects?**

**A:** I'd say at Chamber of Commerce networking events and by doing volunteer work. These are places to meet like-minded

people, especially when you volunteer for nonprofits. I also garnered many new customers while being a docent at the Dallas Zoo. I've met many new clients while working on political campaigns, too.

**Q: Do you set specific goals for each networking event you attend?**

**A:** Yes, I do. At Chamber after-hours events, for example, my goal is to speak to 30 different people.

**Q: How do you start a conversation with someone you've never met?**

**A:** I introduce myself and ask people how they're doing. After that, I ask them how long they have been members of a group, like the Chamber of Commerce.

**Q: How do you get people to like you?**

**A:** Try mirroring the other person's body language by smiling, making comfortable eye contact and by asking open-ended questions. Most people will approve of you instantly if you can mimic their body movements. If you meet someone who is loud, raise your voice to the same level. If your new contact has a meek personality, try not to overpower him or her.



**Don Sanders** is the owner of Don Sanders Marketing.

**Q: How do you politely excuse yourself from a conversation that's not going anywhere?**

**A:** I say that it was nice visiting with them and mention that I am meeting another person.

**Q: How do you make your business card stand out?**

**A:** I don't carry paper business cards. I haven't for 25 years. I make sure that my cards are products that I sell, such as lens-cleaning cloths or mini-jotters that are imprinted with our logo and contact information. I've also used calling coins.

**Q: What networking tips do you have for shy people or those new to the industry?**

**A:** Stop being shy or you will not be successful. While you are conquering shyness, take someone along when you attend events.

**Q: Do you believe in digital networking, like connecting through social media?**

**A:** I do. I read people's profiles and find common bonds between us, like love of history or animals. I picked up a very large account because I noticed a man had posted pictures of castles from a trip to Ireland. I emailed him and mentioned that I loved castles, too, and that started the relationship. People love to talk about themselves, so let them do that.

**Q: What's your most successful networking experience?**

**A:** Meeting my neighbor. After moving to my current home, I became close friends with one of my neighbors, since we both loved working in our yards. After two months, the person who was doing his orders messed up and he asked me if I could help correct the situation. I did and have sold him over \$100,000 worth of products since.

**Q: How do you hope to improve your networking in 2015?**

**A:** Do more of it. I've met many prospects while being a member of the TCU Frog Club. I plan on attending more of these events since I meet many like-minded people there.

# Management

## Improve Processing & Delivery Speed

Cutting down errors is key.

By Shane Dale

With companies like Amazon processing and even shipping orders in just minutes, distributors have come to expect sped-up services from suppliers. But the reality is it takes time to customize and deliver quality promotional items. So how can distributors and suppliers work together to make the order process more efficient? Read on for six ideas.

### Local Advantage

MSNBC's Mike Michalowicz, author of *Profit First*, believes distributors can benefit from working with suppliers that are close by. In turn, suppliers should target distributors in their area for sales. "A vendor that is in driving distance allows you to get on site and see samples without the extra time for shipping," he says.

Another advantage of close proximity is the ability to order in smaller quantities without having to pay exorbitant shipping costs. "If you submit a big order and it's wrong, you get a thousand pieces of wrong units," Michalowicz says. "If you can make a smaller quantity, you can identify problems early on and not get overrun."

### Inventory Check

Before placing an order, Jennifer Tsai, vice president of operations for Tri-Mountain (asi/92125), recommends distributors make sure the items they want are in stock.



"There are times where one SKU or size may be sold out," she says. "If distributors know that information from the start, they can potentially find a different product that is in stock if they know their client is not able to wait."

Understanding inventory is also helpful for program business and can reduce guesswork. "We have many distributors that purchase

apparel for ongoing programs and are able to have us ship in stock goods and backorder the goods that are sold out," Tsai says. "If this is the case, having it notated on the purchase order will let us know not to hold the order and to go ahead and ship without delay."

### Be Specific

Tsai encourages distributors to be as descriptive as possible

in their order forms, instead of relying on suppliers to decipher ambiguous info. "The most common mistake distributors make on their order forms is forgetting critical information about the product required, such as style number, color or color combination," she says.

Lack of clarity especially creeps in with apparel orders. "We can run into issues where size and quantity are not notated



clearly,” Tsai says. “For example, if the purchase order reads ‘2-XLT,’ this could mean two units of size XL tall, or it can mean one unit of size 2XL tall.”

Along with the SKU, Michalowicz highly recommends distributors include a detailed description of each item requested in order to avoid confusion. “A lot of orders are automated, so your order will go directly into their system – perhaps directly on their site or some other mechanism,” he says. “The system will kick it out if it doesn’t recognize it, if it’s a bad number or something like that. Then, a person will look at the order and try to bring clarity to it. That’s why descriptions are so important.”

### Clarify Address and Terms

Distributors need to make certain their shipping address is correct, “because we will not ship product out unless we are able to confirm the ship-to address is correct via the USPS database,” Tsai says. If an error with the ship-to address is found and not quickly correctable, Tsai says Tri-Mountain has to place the order on hold and possibly delay shipment for a full day.

An “in-hand” date for the order is also crucial to include on the purchase order so the supplier knows how to ship items. “For example, if today is Tuesday and the distributor needs the product on Friday, then the distributor can choose a three-day service, as long as they place their purchase order by the supplier’s cutoff time,” Tsai says. “If they require the order by Thursday, then they will need to select a two-day

expedited service.”

Likewise, Tsai reminds distributors to be clear on how they intend to pay for their order, and ensure that their account is in good standing. If a distributor has a history of paying late, an order could be red-flagged and held back.

“It is surprising how often we come across distributors who will kick and scream to have their order shipped, but that are not able to give us any guarantee that they will pay their accounts down,” Tsai says. “As a supplier, we want to ship your order as much as you need it – but only if you promise to pay your bills.”

### Avoid Embellishment Assumptions

According to Tsai, submitting artwork with the desired size and logo in vector format will save significant time. But what happens if no vector art is available and the distributor doesn’t know the exact decoration size that’s required?

If this is the case, Tsai suggests providing “artwork file on hand, product and style desired, decoration technique desired, logo placement area and logo colors,” if they’re different from the artwork file. “With this information, our decoration department can create vector art and determine if the desired decoration technique is possible and select the best logo size,” Tsai says.

Distributors also need to remember that different decoration techniques require different types of setups. “The most common misconception with artwork is that any logo can be decorated with any size,” Tsai says. “There are size limitations with all techniques.”

## Common Pitfalls

### Avoid These Order Mistakes

Joe DiComo, senior customer service operations manager for Prime Line (asi/79530), notes seven common mistakes distributors make on their purchase order forms.

- 1. Price Assumptions.** “They will either get pricing off the Web or somewhere else, and when they send in their purchase it doesn’t match what’s in the system. If they’re making a change from a one-color imprint to a two-, three- or four-color process, it’s obviously going to affect the pricing, and they may not capture that.”
- 2. Packaging Confusion.** “If they need something packaged a certain way, they may not provide the detail up front.”
- 3. Turnaround Turmoil.** “On the Web, we post our production times for each process and item, but we will have distributors that send in orders thinking that they can get it in a day or two, when it really requires additional time. They don’t realize how long it takes to produce something – not only the item, but also how many pieces.”
- 4. Shipping Silliness.** “When we have drop-ships, they may not put in the right zip code or the address is wrong – those types of things.”
- 5. Vague Coloring.** “They’re expecting a particular red, but they didn’t say, ‘I want this particular red,’ and they just think it’s going to be that red.”
- 6. Inventory/Art Conflicts.** “They send in art and they send in an order and the information on the order conflicts with the information that’s in the art. That creates questions.”
- 7. Art File Frustration.** “They don’t provide the right file type in order for the artwork to be worked, or sometimes they’ll cut and paste something off the Web and send it in. That artwork has to be redone because it’s not useful art. Or, they may take the customer’s art and modify it, and then it’s not usable, either. The raw file would be the best.”

In addition, some distributors incorrectly assume that every item in a given product line can be decorated with any available decoration technique. “This, unfortunately, is not the case, and understanding which techniques work best for which garments will save the distributor a lot of time and headache,” Tsai says.

### Communication is King

Tsai recommends always ensuring that a real, live person has received and is processing your order. “If you are a distributor that prefers emailing, faxing or calling your orders in, it might be beneficial to contact a specific CSR or decoration rep that is familiar

with your account,” she says. That way, “you can easily track down your order if you have any questions or concerns.”

Even if you live across the country from a supplier, Michalowicz thinks Skype can help give distributors peace of mind in knowing that their order is being processed properly.

“There’s a manufacturer in St. Louis, for example, and we’re always back and forth on Skype,” says Michalowicz, who is based in New York City. “The guy picks up his laptop and walks around the manufacturing plant, and we go to the exact machine and review it. When you can get the visual while you’re talking, that definitely helps.”

# Promo Close-Up

## Gameplan For Growth

Promo piece drives NFL campaign.

By Andraya Vantrease

The National Football League has not been coy about its pursuit of Hispanic fans. The Latino population is growing by about 2% annually in the U.S., making the group a prime target for league officials.

“We have spent a lot of time really working with and asking Hispanic fans how they want to consume the NFL,” said Peter O’Reilly, the NFL’s vice president of fan strategy, in a recent *Forbes* interview. “For us, it’s about making sure that we are delivering the game in customized and unique ways to serve the Hispanic population’s needs.”

The NFL’s first big Latino marketing push came in 2010 when it launched a Hispanic Heritage Month program and began simulcasting Spanish-language commentary during every English-language broadcast. The effort worked. Super Bowls XLVI and XLVII became the most-watched TV programs on record among U.S. Hispanics. A recent ESPN poll found that 25 million Hispanics in the U.S. now identify themselves as NFL fans. Still, the NFL realized its work wasn’t done – it still had to convince skeptical advertisers.

Many marketers – some with considerable advertising budgets – have always associated Hispanics as soccer fans first and foremost. The NFL needed a way to change the perception, so it turned to a promotional



The Trojan Ball marketing piece, a limited-edition football, got the attention the NFL was looking for.

campaign that centered on – of course – a football. The NFL tapped New York ad agency The Vidal Partnership to create the “Trojan Ball” – a promotional piece that aimed to break viewership stereotypes.

“The numbers and statistics were always there, but cultural perception seemed to be a much stronger factor. We were tasked with reversing that trend,” said project art director Oleg Sarkissov. “Early on we understood that to be successful, whatever the form of the communication would be, it had to be disruptive and memorable. Hence, the idea of a Trojan Ball was born.”

At the heart of the marketing piece was a box containing what appeared to be a soccer ball with the accompanying messaging:

“Here’s the ball 28.5 million Hispanics really identify with.” But, when the recipient opened the package, it contained a limited-edition NFL football. The ball contained messaging that included “73% of U.S. Hispanics are NFL fans” and “28.5 million Hispanics watched the NFL in 2008.”

The NFL sent the Trojan Ball to 50 key decision-makers, influencers and potential partners who were senior level executives with authority to invest their companies’ marketing budgets. Eight of the mailings yielded follow-up responses in the form of a conversation or meeting with the NFL.

“It was targeted at key deal-makers, influencers and potential partners, so the

volume of mail was small, but one conversion would represent a significant amount of revenue for the client,” said Alberto Ferrer, Vidal’s managing partner.

In the end, the mailer surpassed the projected response rate and generated a great amount of potential business opportunities between the NFL and key brands within the Hispanic audience. And, it seems, the league’s efforts to reach Latinos will only expand in the future. “Without overstating our role, there is a role the NFL can serve in terms of being a bridge to American culture,” O’Reilly told *Forbes*. “In a lot of American communities, football is a glue. Hispanic fans tell us it’s a connection point.”



# 2015 New Product Preview

- Unique, rustic glazed styling.
- Ceramic mug comes in four gorgeous earth tone colors.
- Features a flared lip and decorative linear top banding.



3310  
Sky Blue

**NEW**  
Baristi  
Collection  
**\$3.29(c)**  
min. 144  
14 oz. capacity



3310  
Coral



3310  
Sand



3310  
Seafoam

- Double walled plastic construction.
- Clear exterior and colorful interior.
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B645  
Purple

B645  
Smoke

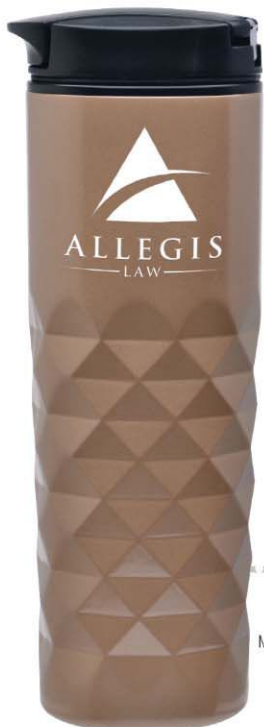
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B645  
Blue

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# Apparel

Trends • Colors • Fabrics • Showcase

## Trends

### Vested Interest

The versatile vest is popular for corporate campaigns.

By Sara Lavenduski

With the cold weather in full swing in many parts of the U.S., layering options could be in style for many promotional programs. One style that has proved consistently popular is the lightweight vest. Many are made of soft fleece or quilted polyester, fitted for warmth without the bulk, and chock-full of performance features. They're ideal for evening football games and campfires, and early mornings on the golf course or out on the lake.

Lightweight soft-shell and fleece vests are among the most popular styles this season, says Elson Yeung, director of private label design and merchandising at Ash City/alphabroder (asi/34063).

"Fleece vests in particular are very versatile and an easy addition to any outfit," he explains. "Nothing feels cozier than fleece when the weather gets a little chillier, or even when the air conditioning is set too high in the office. A vest layer adds warmth and comfort to any look. It offers a layer of protection while maintaining a level of comfort with its breathability."

Quilted vests are also in high demand for the fall, says Jackie

Whitfield, vice president of merchandising at Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/92122). One of this supplier's best-selling items is the Whistler Light Down Vest (TM19898) with an 80% down and 20% feather fill, and a water-repellent and down-proof shell.

"We're finding that the most popular quilted vests are lightweight, very soft and can be packed easily for versatility during travel," Whitfield says. "Designers prefer a high down content and lightweight fabrics with a high stitch count for the shell, ones that are down-proof and provide a superior wind- and water-resistant finish." High-count fabric is also an optimal canvas for embroidery and heat transfers, she adds.

Vests have consistently been a popular choice for corporate applications and incentive programs, most notably because cost is often relatively low. "They're typically sold at reasonable price points," adds Yeung. "From working in an office to traveling, they're strongly versatile and come in an array of colors to match company branding."

While their functionality and wide appeal make them a good



Trimark Sportswear Group (asi/66888) offers the Whistler vest with a lightweight 80% down and 20% feather fill. The 100% polyester shell is water repellent, and the vest comes in five colors.

option for almost any industry, "they've been in particularly high demand for product launches with outdoor themes, personnel managing outdoor venues and off-site company events for which wearers prefer a versatile garment," says Whitfield.

As an added bonus, their affordability "leaves more bud-

get for decorating options," says Yeung. "Fleece is best served by embroidery, because it can handle fine text and designs, while the compression of the lofty fibers gives the decoration a 3-D feel. Other options include laser etching and mixed media, a leading-edge trend that results in clean styling."

# Colors Bright Blast

Neon-colored apparel can make any promotion pop.

By Tonia Kimbrough

Forget somber colors of fall and winter. This year's coolest season will be full of hot color, and nothing says "hot" like neon. But take care: These shades must be applied carefully.

A reliable way to sell the trend is to suggest brightly colored accessories. A belt, tie or scarf works well when paired with a lower-key color on the base garment. Khaki is an effective companion to anchor the neon pop. White also works, though it's livelier. Take care with black; the contrast of a neon against a dark

color like black can be jarring.

A neon infinity scarf from Assertive Creativity (asi/37166) works well for female audiences. The fashionable accessory definitely grabs attention but does so in a more sophisticated way. At trade shows, pair scarves for female salespeople with ties for male salespeople and they become a beacon for an exhibitor's booth.

Another tip is to choose a neon garment that is small, such as a tank top or pair of running shorts. You want something that

covers less of the body so that the neon doesn't overwhelm a person. S&S Activewear (asi/84358) hits the right note with a Boxercraft Novelty Velocity running short. Its neon lime and neon orange choices are blocked off with either white or striped side panels with black trim. The look is fresh and fun.

You can also punch-up a garment with a neon embellishment. Transfer Express (asi/91804) offers custom neon transfers ready to customize and apply with a heat press. Madeira

USA recently added five bright fluorescent and neon colors to its inventory of 100% polyester Polyneon brand of embroidery threads.

"For those nervous about the volume at which these colors 'speak,'" says Alice Wolf, marketing communications director with Madeira USA, "fashion bloggers recommend jumping into neon with small items, taking up small spaces or using a print that incorporates a fluorescent color or two with other, more subdued colors."



▲ The Boxercraft Velocity short (P62), available from S&S Activewear brings a burst of neon to performance wear.



▲ Just a touch of neon of the new fluorescent polyester colors from Madeira USA adds life to a black yoga ensemble.



▶ Use accessories like scarves to accent an outfit in neon. This neon orange infinity scarf (SU-YSW-B2-1) is available from Assertive Creativity.



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# Fabrics

## Crisp in Corduroy

Spice up client campaigns with this unique fabric choice.

By Rachel Abraham

With its unique texture and vintage-inspired appearance, corduroy is a great option for corporate clients. It is relatively inexpensive and is versatile enough to be coordinated with different styles of shirts, sweaters and shoes. While typically used for pants, skirts, jackets and caps, the fabric also makes a sharp suiting fabric for men, according to *GQ*. Top fashion names like Faconnable and Band of Outsiders are featuring the fabric.

One of corduroy's best assets is that it's comfortable and stylish without being showy. "We are headed into an era of people searching for the 'everyday

**"Corduroy is a versatile fabric and is easy to decorate. It can be embroidered, debossed, embossed and even lasered."**

Nancy Robitaille,  
Fersten Worldwide

man' look – non-branded or logoed apparel, headwear and outerwear that offers function with anonymity," says Nancy Robitaille, principal designer/import manager at Fersten Worldwide (asi/53974). "It's a throwback to a time when life was less stressful and the look was more casual."

Corduroy also works wonderfully on trimmings and as an accent. "We have a very successful jacket line that combines a microfleece chest with soft, supple corduroy on the shoulders and arms and also bonded to the inside layer," says Steve Pinzon, spokesman for AKWA (asi/33280). "The interior layer of corduroy is very soft against the skin, traps heat very effectively and provides a wonderful, cozy feel."

There are multiple varieties of corduroy, particularly with different-sized wales, or ridges in common parlance. Depending on the wale count, the wales can look thicker or thinner. Corduroy varies from 100% cotton to blends, like the polyester-nylon mixes used in Fersten Worldwide's 2015 collection, according to Robitaille. She adds that the technical fabric blends have moisture-wicking and breathable capabilities.

AKWA's line of corduroy includes a full-zip crewneck, a quarter-zip crewneck and full-zip hoodies. In addition, there will be a full-zip vest for 2015. Fersten Worldwide has cordu-



The technical corduroy jacket from Fersten Worldwide is made of 90% polyester, 10% nylon technical corduroy and bonded three-layer performance softshell with 100% polyester fleece lining.

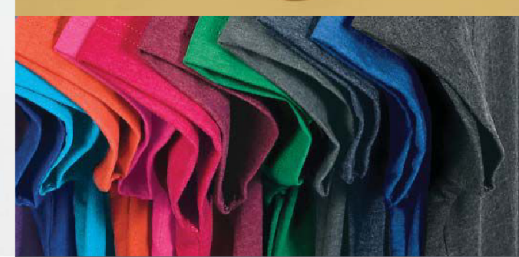


Fersten also carries this unstructured corduroy cap made from organic cotton that has a contrasting plaid underpeak and taping.

roy in outerwear (FW3161 and Women's FW3165). "They are mid-weight with an inner soft-shell fabric vest detail, critically seam sealed, moisture wicking and breathable, with an anti-RFID security pocket on the inside to keep valuable information safe," Robitaille says.

When it comes to decorating corduroy, there are many options that distributors can choose from. "Corduroy is a versatile fabric and is easy to decorate," says Robitaille. "It can be embroidered, debossed, embossed and even lasered."





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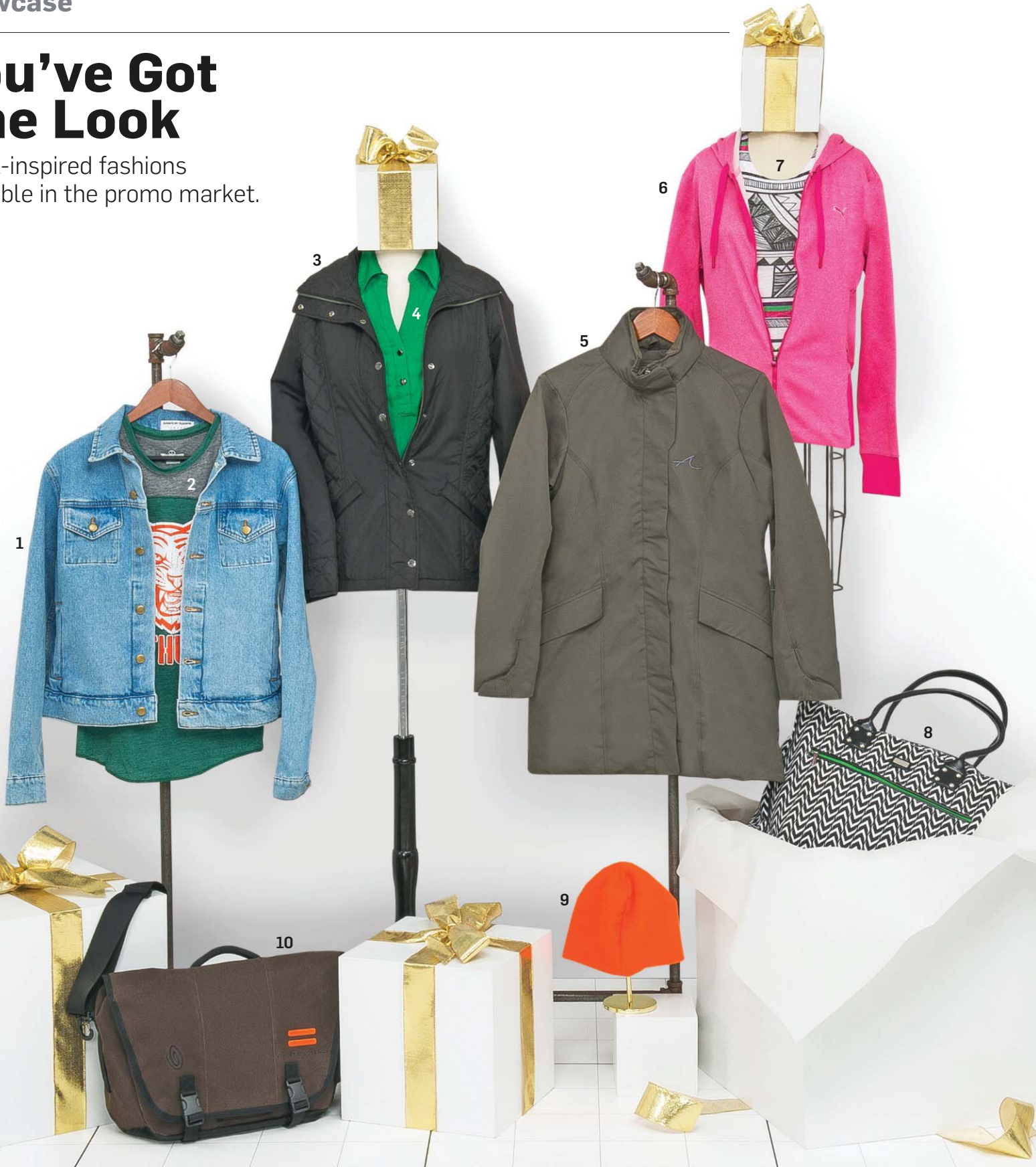


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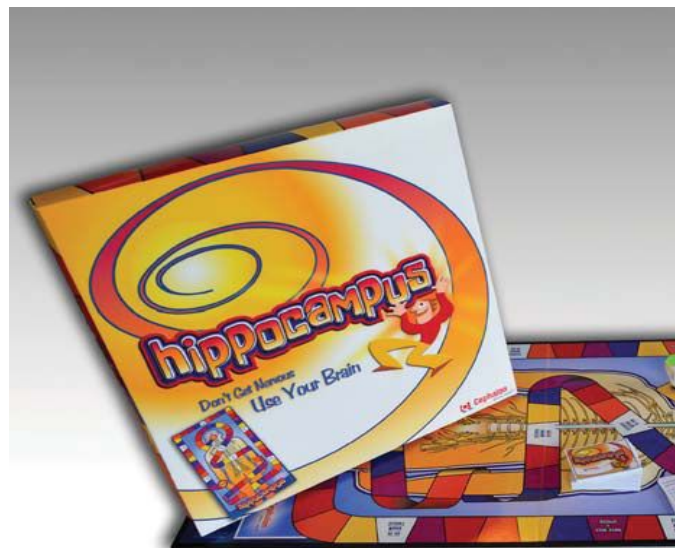
– *Nina Long, Director of Library Services and Archivist, The Wistar Institute*

Marketing is a continuous process and Gravity Design Works has allowed our image and message to

continuously evolve as our business does. From launching new services to public education our relationship continues to grow. If you are looking to grow an existing business or launch a new business try their fresh and current approaches that work and generate results time and time again. Gravity always gets it done and the end product is always spot on; we have never been disappointed. – *Dr. Kevin Shaw and Arti Shaw, Newton Health and Wellness.*



Janssen Pharmaceutica, a division of Johnson & Johnson, wanted to develop an award to be given to doctors, scientists and anyone in the medical field who have made significant contributions to science and medicine. Gravity took on the challenge. The custom award consisted of a bronze and crystal statue that represented breakthroughs in science and medicine. There was an inset to the statue for a 3" fine silver medallion also produced by Gravity.



Cephalon, a division of Teva Pharmaceutical Industries, needed a sales learning aid for an upcoming conference. Gravity DesignWorks was requested to come up with ideas for a "game" to be used to find out just how much knowledge salespeople had in selling their drugs. Gravity designed an entire board game including: how it was to be played; built all of the graphic elements and name; found the perfect game pieces; produced the question and answer cards; then finally produced and delivered 21 individual, hand-built game boxes.

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**B**usiness changes fast. Think about what you can do today that you couldn't do five or 10 years ago. Twitter was founded in 2006. The first iPhone was released in the middle of 2007, and the iPad was introduced in 2010. Square, the electronic payment service that has made it so easy for any small business to accept credit cards, came along in 2009. New credit cards that rid the world of the security-challenged black swipe are just now being introduced, although they've been available in Europe for years.

Yes, the way companies operate and how they transact business with clients is a forever-changing landscape, one that usually becomes more efficient over time, even if it's more complicated for those entrenched in the past.

So, with this issue, *Counselor* is highlighting what's on the horizon for businesses in the ad specialty industry. Broken into four parts, you'll find insights on trends to expect for the coming year, a look at investments that companies should make over the next three years to ensure their continued success and predictions about what business will look

like 10 years from now.

Plus, we turned to Steve Wozniak, the co-founder of Apple, along with Steve Jobs, to find out what technologies and advancements he thinks will impact business the most in the coming years. Hint: Speak-to-do-just-about-anything is on his radar, as he thinks the technology will make everything easier for users moving forward. In other words, very soon you should expect to speak those purchase orders directly into suppliers, rather than emailing or even faxing them.

It's time to look forward and find out what's NEXT.





*Counselor* unveils the biggest trends that will impact the ad specialty business in 2015 – and beyond.

## **INSIDE**

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- 78** 4 Business Trends for 2015
- 82** The 6 Investments Every Ad Specialty Company Should Make by 2017
- 86** 24 for 2024: Predictions 10 Years in the Making

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An exclusive interview with  
Apple co-founder **Steve Wozniak**  
reveals his views on the future of  
technology and what will impact  
business the most.

*Interviewed by Andy Cohen*



**A**s the man who single-handedly designed the first two computers sold by Apple – way back in the late 1970s and early 1980s – Steve Wozniak is uniquely equipped to predict how new technologies in the future will impact everyday life and how business is conducted. Right now, he's drawn to speak-to-operate technologies that he believes will begin to rule how we function as a society.

“Once we get to the point where any technology can be fired up by the use of somebody's voice, then we'll really see tech take off,” said Wozniak, in an exclusive interview that *Counselor* conducted with the inventor and engineer in October. “But we're not there yet.”

Of course not. Because somebody like

one of the first truly successful mass-produced personal computers in the early 1980s. But after more personal computer successes with Jobs at Apple, Wozniak decided to break away from the company so he could continue his lifelong passion for inventing and creating new things. By 1987, 12 years after he helped found one of the most successful technology companies of all time, Wozniak left to start new ventures.

What followed from Wozniak was a string of inventions – new GPS technology, the first universal remote control, and various new functions related to telecommunications. “I search for things that can be done better and easier, and then try to figure out how we can make it happen,” Wozniak says. “I'm forever searching for new things.”

And, sometimes that has even led him to film and television. He has been the star and

in the show's eighth season in 2009 (he was voted out after four episodes). “I like trying new things,” Wozniak says. “The newer the better.”

In this Q&A, Wozniak opens up about his time at Apple and provides his views on what technologies will be most impactful in the years to come.

**Counselor:** What are some lessons you can share about innovation and creativity?

**Wozniak:** Innovation and creativity are words that have wide meaning and there's a great difference...one of the things is computers cannot be innovative. Sometimes, people need to realize that it's not the product that's innovative, but the way it's used or applied.

**Counselor:** Is that how you viewed the computer when you first started Apple?



Wozniak, who is always tinkering and inventing new products and new ways to operate various technologies, is constantly searching for the next big thing. And mostly what Wozniak focuses on are technologies that make life and business easier. It's why he first created the Apple I, which he and Steve Jobs started selling in April 1976 when they formed Apple Computer.

“We just felt like computing should be so much easier than it was at the time,” says Wozniak, who often goes by the nickname The Woz. “You practically needed an engineering degree at the time to just turn on and operate a computer. We wanted to make the whole process of using computers so much easier.”

And that they certainly did. The company soon launched the Apple II, which became

subject of various documentaries related to his time at Apple, and he even made an appearance on *The Big Bang Theory* in 2010 and competed on *Dancing With The Stars*

**“Sometimes, people need to realize that it's not the product that's innovative, but the way it's used.”**

Steve Wozniak

**Wozniak:** Precisely. It's not a thing that can really think on its own or innovate on its own, but we asked ourselves this: Is there a formula that makes this incredible tool that only the huge, large, powerful industries have, to make it available to all people? The computer itself wasn't the innovation, but how it got booting up and how it could be used was the key. Other key items for us in the early stages of Apple were ways to build a useful device at the right price because there were a lot of people building worthless devices at the right price.

**Counselor:** How can others find the impetus for innovation like that?

**Wozniak:** There has to be a drive toward innovation. I knew I always wanted to create new things that made life easier for



### The Woz – Live!

Head to The ASI Show in Orlando next month to hear Steve Wozniak present a keynote session titled “Building the World’s Most Iconic Brand.” The speech will take place on January 6 at 8:30 a.m. in the Orange County Convention Center. Go to [www.asishow.com](http://www.asishow.com) for more information.

people. It was just intrinsic. But if you have the motivation for something then it starts to permeate all of your thought processes. I wanted to help a social revolution that was being spoken of where people would communicate and educate better than ever before. That was me, and it became part of everything I did. So, you have to have a drive behind innovation. You have to have some kind of end goal for what that innovation and creativity will ultimately look like.

**Counselor:** How do you think technology in general will change our lives within the next five years or so?

**Wozniak:** The trend in personal computers has been getting more and more personal, meaning working in human ways that we don’t have to think about steps to get the technology done. My favorite thing along

and almost anything you think of in your head you don’t have to then think “what is the process on my machine to get it done”? You can just speak it, and I think that’s one of those one-way doors you don’t go back through again. Once we really have technology that can truly understand us and anticipate our needs – we’re close to that but we’re not there yet – then you’ll see the use of personal devices really explode to the point that they’re never out of our hands.

**Counselor:** What do you think companies need to do in the future to get better use out of technology?

**Wozniak:** They’re going to need to reduce the amount of rules they have. I’m just down on the rigid structure that many companies have in place today as it relates to technology.

with them to work – laptops, phones, tablets. Most people have them today and they prefer to use their own stuff. So, let them bring their own devices and hook up to the network while they’re at the office.

**Counselor:** Isn’t security a problem with that approach?

**Wozniak:** It doesn’t have to be if it’s done correctly. You can always put protocols in place to ensure the safety of your network, but it doesn’t have to impact the physical device that people use. That should be their own choice. Technology is meant to be personal. Most companies don’t pay enough credence to that idea. They need to ask themselves: How would normal human beings want to use these items? Sometimes, they make it so difficult for employees that the employees end up just hating what



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those lines right now is speaking into the phone. You just speak into the phone to get directions or get questions answered, and I don’t have to think of a bunch of technological steps or procedures to get it done.

**Counselor:** Is this essentially where technology is going?

**Wozniak:** Absolutely. It’s all about ease of use when it comes to technology. The easier it is to use, the better it will be for our lives. This was a big step that even the mouse-based Macintosh gave to us. You didn’t have to memorize anything because it was all there with a click of the mouse.

**Counselor:** How will voice recognition play into this?

**Wozniak:** It’s all about understanding us

**Counselor:** How should they change?

**Wozniak:** Here’s one example: They should allow employees to bring their own devices

**“I know Google and also Tesla are trying to create cars that can drive by themselves. Think of how that’ll change life.”**

Steve Wozniak

they’re using. That’s anti-technology. Technology is supposed to make things easier.

**Counselor:** This is something you’re rather passionate about.

**Wozniak:** YES! Technology should make us masters of life, but for that to happen, it has to work and we have to want to use it. It has to work seamlessly in the way we want it to work. So, if anything gets in the way of that, then it defeats the whole purpose of technology being there in the first place.

**Counselor:** What other technologies do you think will have the most impact on companies moving forward?

**Wozniak:** The cloud will probably be the biggest immediately. There are too many powerful economic benefits for companies and



Steve Wozniak (bottom, right), co-founder of Apple, shows off a 150-page notebook with his handwritten code for the Apple II computer at the Computer History Museum. Bottom left, Wozniak and Apple co-founder Steve Jobs display the Apple I, the product that launched one of the most famous brands in the world. Top left, along with Apple co-founder Steve Jobs, and top right, John Sculley (middle), the CEO of Apple who ultimately fired Jobs from the company.

organizations not to move their operations to the cloud. It's efficient and easy to access from anywhere, so the virtual nature of business will become that much more important. But there are some major issues with it too.

**Counselor:** What are those?

**Wozniak:** Well, security for one. The hacking is out of control. When you put all of your company's vital information and data on the cloud, you're not in charge of the

protection of it anymore. Some cloud-based service provider is. So, your valuables are out there for anybody to see and you have no control over them. That's not good. Now, hackers can get into any database they want these days, but it's easier for them to have access on the cloud.

**Counselor:** Anything else to worry about with the cloud?

**Wozniak:** Oh, there are always things to be

concerned about when it comes to technology. Let's say employees couldn't get onto the Internet for a period of time – this, unfortunately, still happens. It will continue to get better, but we do indeed struggle with something this basic today. So, if they can't get on the Internet, then they can't access information on the cloud that they need. If everything is stored there, then productivity is completely shot. It's something to think about for companies that are moving



in a virtual direction.

**Counselor:** Apple has upended industries such as personal computers and music. What markets do you think are ripe to be upended by technology in the future?

**Wozniak:** Wow, it could be just about anything. Everything major in life can be improved or made easier by technology. That's what's happening now with payments. You can literally go around now and buy just about whatever you want without any cash. That's a huge change that will continue to be improved by new technologies and services like Apple Pay. It's actually not even really a technology, but more of a new service that's made possible by technology.

**Counselor:** Anything else?

**Wozniak:** It could almost be anything that's an everyday part of our lives. Coffee makers. They could be made better by being able to virtually program them to prepare coffee, and have it hot whenever you want it, without really having to think about it in advance. Another one is lighting and energy in people's homes. This will all be controlled by technology very soon. It's the Internet

## “Everything major in life can be improved or made easier by technology.”

Steve Wozniak

of things. The home is the frontier for it right now, but it will be expanded to offices and schools and corporate environments very soon too.

**Counselor:** What about something that will truly change the way our lives work?

**Wozniak:** Automated cars. It will happen, and I know Google and also Tesla are trying to create cars that can drive by themselves. Think of how that'll change life. It would be so different than anything we currently know, but the capabilities are coming.

**Counselor:** Are we ready for that?

**Wozniak:** No, probably not. But the next generation definitely will be.

**Counselor:** What's your view of the wearables technology market?

**Wozniak:** I like it because I like to experiment with new things. I'm not really a fan of the smart watches, though. The Bluetooth aspect of it just kind of gets in the way. It goes back to my point earlier about technology making things easier. Does a smart watch actually do anything

that the phone that's already in my hand can't do? Not really. Same with the fit bands. They're functional, but you can have an app on your phone that tracks the same things. If I'm going to use a new technology, I want it to make a part of my life easier that isn't already being made easier by something else. I'll stick with my phone for those things.

**Counselor:** How about the Google Glass-type products that are out there?

**Wozniak:** Now that's cool. I've tested those kinds of things a few times, and there is definitely a cool factor to it. But I doubt it will get mass adoption because there's just nothing there to justify the \$1,500 price point. It's cool, but it's kind of odd to use. You can record video and take pictures with it and store things on it, but I just don't think there are enough applications to everyday life to make it something that most consumers would want. Cool? Yes. But it's not essential to everyday life. Phones do all those things too.

**Counselor:** What do leaders need to do to inspire innovation and creativity?

**Wozniak:** First, hire creative and interested people. When you're interviewing, have them talk about projects they created and saw through to completion. You need people who are interested in trying new things, so make them show you how they've done that in previous jobs or roles. They don't need to have the exact experience you're looking for, but they really should prove that they can create and complete projects.

**Counselor:** And then, how about once they're hired?

**Wozniak:** Give them a good and rewarding work environment. Let people work on their own ideas. Give them extra education. And, don't just force your way onto them. Let them breathe.

**Counselor:** Finally, what did you learn from your *Dancing With the Stars* experience?

**Wozniak:** When you work hard at a completely new thing, and you find some level of success, it's the most rewarding and happiest thing you can do in life. Getting forced out of your comfort zone makes you work really hard at something to succeed at all at it. It was a great experience.



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# TREND

# WATCH

## Four trends that are sure to impact your business next year.

*By Betsy Cummings*

**W**ant to know the industry's hottest business trends for 2015? They may surprise you. Get ready for crowd-funding projects and dialing up doctors. Here, we highlight some of the biggest challenges distributors are facing and the solutions they're dreaming up to remain top players within the marketplace.

### **Curing Health-Care Ills**

"Outside of payroll, health care is the highest expense I have as a business owner," says Dan Crandall, owner of Fine Print Commercial Printers Inc. (asi/194109), based in Meadville, PA. The Affordable Care Act (ACA) has been promising relief for Crandall and others struggling to foot their firm's health-care bill. But "the jury is still very much out on whether anything in the legislation has had a positive effect on the downward pressure on pricing," says Jim O'Connor, president of CBIZ, a business services firm in Manasquan, NJ.

Starting this January, the government's

Small Business Health Options Program (SHOP), which helps companies with 50 or fewer employees shop for coverage, says shopping and comparing plans will be easier for businesses and their employees. Essentially, SHOP takes the idea of insurance exchanges, in which consumers can shop for various insurance options in one place, to the business-to-business market, says Mark Greutman, a financial expert and blogger based in Syracuse, NY.

But O'Connor and others insist that even after the ACA launch, SHOP and the benefit of health-care exchanges, the only way to reduce company health-care expenses is to raise co-pays and deductibles and ask employees to carry a larger share of health-care costs. Not that it helps, says Crandall, who adds that his insurance renewal rates have climbed as much as 40% year over year, an increase that seems unconscionable when compared to other markets. "If I went to the grocery store and bread or milk went up 40% I'd be flipping out," Crandall says.

Those kinds of price increases have sent small-business owners scrambling for other strategies to reduce health-care

costs, often with little success. One option, says O'Connor, is for executives to lean on services such as medical hotlines where, for a nominal fee, doctors and nurses are available 24/7 to diagnose employee ailments and prescribe medicines so that staffers don't have to waste time and money in urgent care or a doctor's office.

One service, MeMD, charges businesses less than \$35 per month per employee to provide around-the-clock access to medical professionals, says John Shufeldt, founder and CEO of Scottsdale-based MeMD. The company, he says, has been growing more than 300% a year since it was founded in 2010. The idea is one that many companies are embracing – save money on health-care expenses and lost productivity by having employee medical concerns answered in the office. That can save employers as much as \$700 per emergency room visit or 90 minutes lost in a doctor's office, Shufeldt says.

### **Nix the Paper Invoice**

Now that Apple and Google are making it easier to pay for just about any retail transaction through your phone, it stands to rea-



son that business-to-business deals could be settled in the same way. For some distributors, it's already happening. Take Rector Communications LLC (asi/305623), a distributorship in Indianapolis, for example.

Two years ago, Tom Rector, the company's CEO, found himself standing in the middle of a cornfield, a few feet from a swamp. The closest outlet was hundreds of yards away. Still, Rector, whose company was on hand to sell promotional products (T-shirts, coins, belt buckles, water bottles and toy muskets) to commemorate a nearby civil war reenactment, had no problem completing credit card transactions without a power cord in site.

Rector used Square, a bottle-cap sized electronic device with a slot at one end that plugs into smartphones and allows vendors to swipe credit cards for instant transactions anywhere by using cell and wi-fi signals. For four days, Rector and his team stood in sweltering 110-degree heat, running one credit card after another in the middle of the field. But Rector was fine with that, since his company netted thousands of dollars at that event and similar ones.

Describing his distributorship as "light years ahead of our competition," Rector feels as though the industry needs to embrace evolving technologies like remote retail capabilities and e-payments, if for no other reason than to keep customers happy. "The trend is that our customers want things fast, and at the same quality and same competitive price," Rector says.

Practices like electronic payments actually help Rector Communications do that, since e-payments get money in the door at twice the rate of paper invoices. "If we can collect the money faster, we can turn that money around for bigger projects," such as capital improvements and expanded staff, says Rector, who says his firm offers "five or six gateways" through which they accept customer payments. More to the point, "if we don't collect the money fast enough, then we'll grow ourselves out of business," he says. The company also accepts reorders via text message.

And while other industry firms might not collect payments through mobile apps or iPhones just yet, others see the writing on the wall. "I really do think the industry will go the way of e-payments," says Fine Print's Crandall. He has noticed a shift from paper to email invoices in recent years, and

he guesses that payment apps aren't far off. He's wise to think that. According to Statista, an online statistics portal, mobile payment transactions topped \$235 billion worldwide in 2013 and are projected to top more than \$721 billion by 2017.

### **Alternative Access to Capital**

Like so many creative projects funded by Kickstarter, small businesses are realizing the power of crowd funding as a new source of capital for business ventures. In 2012, \$2.7 billion was raised by small businesses through crowd funding, according to Masolution, a crowd-sourcing research and consulting firm based in Los Angeles.

That's certainly been the case for Rector Communications. Recently the company launched Ink the Cause, a charitable arm of Rector Communications that was itself

**"The trend is that our customers want things fast, and at the same quality and same competitive price."**

Tom Rector, Rector Communications

funded through Kickstarter, Rector says. Through Ink the Cause, individuals or companies contact Rector's firm, have shirts designed for their cause and then launch social media campaigns to raise money and awareness for their philanthropy.

The company also used crowd funding to raise money for its new Simply Touch Technology, which allows Rector Communications to offer shirts with NFC (near field communication) technology, which allows a person to hold a phone to their NFC-embedded promotional product for real-time updates and messaging on a company's cause, marketing message, event or other item they may be promoting, in a similar way to how QR codes can be read via smartphones.

The beauty of crowd funding, experts say, is that it not only raises money for a company, but also builds mass loyalty by

way of an investment model that requires a multitude of sponsors to make it work.

"Crowd funding is really about engaging community involvement," says Kim Kaselionis, managing partner and founder of Breakaway Funding LLC, a consultancy based in Sausalito, CA. In the distributor's case, building a sense of community among existing clients is a smart way to solidify rapport and loyalty. "Any time you can find a grassroots way of raising money," says Fine Print's Crandall, "that's a great alternative."

### **Playing With Price**

Not surprisingly, pricing pressures and margin dips are a continuing problem for many distributors. These days, distributors say they're feeling the pinch from both sides. Web-based companies offering premiums at rock-bottom prices are an ongoing competitive headache for distributors trying to maintain robust margins. But now they're also squeezed by tiny mom-and-pop shops with no overhead and minimal margins. Because many "work out of their garage and don't have any employees, they don't pay the same expenses I pay with a staff of six," says Michelle Taylor, owner of Logo Wearhaus (asi/382569), a distributor based in Balston Spa, NY. "I'll lose bids for pennies because I can't go as low as they can," Taylor says. "It's driving me crazy."

Taylor is not alone. Whether distributors feel the pinch from Web-based companies selling directly to corporate clients or from tiny outfits with the power to slice margins razor-thin, most mid-sized distributors say it's an industry trend that they predict will be a continuing burden in 2015. Part of the problem is that "the Internet has created pricing transparency," so that clients realize what the distributor markup is, says Brian Abrams, president of Chicago-based Corporate Imaging Concepts Inc. (asi/168962). "If you're offering product where [the price markup] used to be opaque it's not anymore."

But what can be done about it? One thing to start – and something distributor companies should definitely emphasize in 2015 – is to "change the conversation and change the playing field on their competitors when their margins are being squeezed," says Anne Graham, managing director of the Legendary Value Institute in Vancouver and author of *Profit in Plain Sight*.



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## Pushing the Envelope

What's new to the ad specialty industry in 2015? Plenty, say distributors we talked to. Read on to find out what new products and market trends are headed your way in the coming year, as well as what distributors are doing to make sure they're ahead of the curve.

### Outdoors is King

Not only is the interest in outdoor lifestyles an ongoing fascination, but clients are pushing the envelope to find new ways to brand outdoor activities. That includes items as unusual as fire pits, says Scott Bates, president of Lamb Specialty Advertising (asi/248196), based in Shreveport, LA. Customers, Bates says, are having their company's logo carved into the side of a fire pit so that their name glows when the fire is burning. One client recently ordered \$125 fire pits as holiday gifts for top customers, Lamb says.

### Technology Talks

Playing into the outdoor theme, Bates says clients are also interested in how they can take the luxury of indoor living outside via technology. In one case he helped a client find Bluetooth speakers that could be imprinted with a company's logo and given to clients as gifts.

### Been There/Done That

Bob Horwitz, president of Idea Workshop Inc. (asi/229563), in Minneapolis, says he's tired of customers saying they've seen it all. To combat product fatigue, he and his team regularly shop retail vendors online to see what new products or ideas they can bring to their customers' attention. It's a trend – bringing retail items to market for corporate promotional use – that many distributors are looking to implement into their operations in 2015.

A marketplace revolving around margins is “a sure sign that they're being seen as a commodity vendor instead of a value-added supplier,” Graham says.

The best way to change that, she says, is to increase the perceived value a distributor offers. Many distributors are already realizing their need to leverage this advantage. As Bob Horwitz has found out, clients often come crawling back begging for their distributor's help when orders go wildly awry with low-cost competitors. Often a corporate marketer discovers after ordering, say, coffee mugs online, that the Web-based vendor won't decorate them and won't offer any help in that area, says Horwitz, president of Idea Workshop Inc. (asi/229563), a distributor based in Minneapolis.

That's a great opportunity on which to build, Graham says. How? For starters, Graham suggests that distributors figure out every conceivable “point of pain” a client may endure if she buys products directly from an online vendor, which might include products arriving late – or not at all. Maybe the prod-

ucts she orders can't be decorated and she won't realize that until she gets them. Figure out at least five to 10 possible painful outcomes then gently warn clients about those specific risks, explaining that, by purchasing products from a distributor instead, those risks are virtually eliminated.

That way, Graham adds, distributors can easily explain that the 10 extra cents a client might pay per coffee mug will be money well spent in the long term. When all else fails, Graham says, send the client to the competition. It might sound counterintuitive, but distributors who say, “I'm confident that if you try one of these companies you'll realize how much better our service is,” are saying implicitly that they're the best vendor for their client.

Not unlike doctors who are happy to refer patients to someone else for a second opinion, distributors who are willing to let go of clients so they can try another option are likely to regain that client down the road, Graham says, with an added level of trust.

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# SHIFT CHANGE





Not sure where you should be devoting time, money and resources for the future? Make a three-year plan that follows the path of the best brands.

*By Dave Vagnoni*

If you ask Apple's Siri what businesses should invest in, she sends you to the closest personal financial planner. Google's advice isn't much better – it displays search results for startups and the stock market. There has to be a better way, right?

Fortunately, successful brands have developed their own investment strategies, rooted in this straightforward philosophy – one that you can emulate. “The best companies position themselves as thought leaders,” says Rick Meekins, founder of consultancy Aepiphanni. “So right now it's all about innovation and aligning products and services with what customers are looking for.”

Delivering what customers want isn't always what it seems, though. Clients might prioritize lower pricing, but they'd be upset if their credit card data is compromised. They might ask for a single rep when a team of salespeople and designers could offer more creative ideas. They're happy striking deals face-to-face, but they spend countless hours online. What's a business to do?

Well, unless you're clairvoyant, you need to have a realistic, multi-year plan – one, let's say, that takes you through 2017. If you follow the innovation philosophy, you should focus your resources on two areas: technology and talent. With that in mind, here are six investments large and small brands are making now and into the future. You should do the same.

#### **Mobile & Responsive Design**

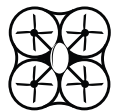
Ritz-Carlton is a premium brand that boasts lavish properties, luxurious amenities and exceptional service. Its mobile site, though, stands out for something much different – its simplicity. “We've really tried to listen to our customers and make using our site as easy as we can,” says Kyle Murdoch, the senior director of e-commerce at Ritz-Carlton. “With our mobile traffic growing, we're focusing on a task-oriented experience – basically what customers need quickly.”



Because Ritz-Carlton is a global company, it offers mobile sites in every language from English to Arabic to Portuguese. While it includes resort photos at the top of the screen, its centerpiece is a short menu of options: hotel information, reservations, rewards and a contact button. One of the newest features is a services option that lets guests check in, check out, request personal items like shampoo and even order food. “We want to get it right, and surprise and delight our guests,” Murdoch says.

The next Web project Ritz-Carlton is working on is one many companies are still sorting through – employing responsive design. A responsive site is built so that all of the content and images remain the same size on any device, like a phone, a tablet or a desktop. “It’s important for companies to have responsive sites because they’ll save money and time,” says Brandon Arnold, a lead designer at Web consultancy Zurb. “Responsive design is also future proof – we’ve found it even works with things like Google Glass.”

Of course, what holds many companies back from investing in responsive design is the perceived high cost. Times are changing, though. Zurb, for example, now offers a free framework of tools – called Foundation – that lets IT personnel and even novice designers code and customize responsive sites faster. “It’s something we’ve done to give back,” Arnold says.



### Aerial Marketing

Carolina Digital Photo Group has been in business for 34 years, but only recently did the firm start offering clients a new way to advertise – by using marketing drones. “We primarily use them for real estate clients to show off their commercial properties and we use them above golf courses,” says Larry Harwell, president of Carolina Digital. “We have GoPro cameras on the drones to take video, then we’ll add music and voiceovers later. I think we’re going to see more and more of this in the future.”

One of Harwell’s clients, Wells Fargo, already sees the value drones can bring to promotions. The bank, which sponsors the annual Wells Fargo Championship each year in Charlotte, asked Carolina Digital to capture overhead views of the Quail Hollow Golf Club to help sell select tickets.

“They have a special seating area they’re

trying to promote,” Harwell says. “We shot video with drones this year and we know we’re going to do it for them next year, too.”

Beyond photography, drones can be used at live events like concerts, festivals and trade shows. A Philadelphia-based startup called DroneCast recently raised \$1 million in funding from angel investors to support an aerial advertising platform. Carrying banners and products, the firm’s drones act as flying billboards.

“We’ve been in business for nine months and we’ve gotten a ton of attention from major brands like Coca-Cola, Red Bull and Dave & Buster’s,” says GauravJit Singh, DroneCast’s founder and CEO. “*National Geographic* just asked us to advertise a new show they’re launching about Alaska. For part of the promotion, we’d have our drones dump fake snow on people on city streets if they tweet a certain hashtag.”

Even though DroneCast is in its infancy, Singh is booking events around the world, securing intellectual property rights and looking to partner with entrepreneurs to run franchises. “Right now, we work with ad agencies on campaigns, but we’d be open to a firm taking over a territory – especially if they have large clients that are really getting into marketing with drones.”



### Work-At-Home Programs

Forget telecommuters – the future is all about employees who never go into the office. Airline JetBlue has embraced a work-at-home program for more than a decade, allowing the carrier access to better job candidates and greatly reducing overhead costs. “Our model ensures we have eager people representing JetBlue,” says Frankie Littleford, the airline’s vice president of customer support. “Plus, the cost to run our reservations function is dramatically lower than other airlines because we don’t have to build and maintain large reservation centers.”

The scope of JetBlue’s program is massive – its main customer support center in Salt Lake City employs 2,000 people, but 1,800 of them work at home. These employees go through four weeks of training at a JetBlue site, taking live calls while experienced agents watch remotely via screen share. After that, agents are set up with a special computer system in their homes that utilizes a separate, dedicated phone line.

“When it comes to talent, we only hire people who are naturals at customer service,” Littleford says. “We teach them the computer system but their personality is why we hired them.”

The incredible flexibility lets JetBlue tap into a deep pool of talent that includes stay-at-home moms, retired business owners and tech-savvy Millennials who disdain cubicles. JetBlue agents don’t have to work in complete isolation, though. They’re given friendly feedback, can chat anytime with supervisors, and they attend live monthly group meetings.

“This promotes the JetBlue corporate culture even though our agents are based at home,” Littleford says.



### Cognitive Diversity

If you’re aiming for a diverse workplace based solely on race, age or gender, Mark Miller thinks you’re making a mistake. There’s another key piece to the puzzle – called cognitive diversity – that can improve your company’s innovation and production.

“In business today, it’s important to create and build teams with people of different thinking styles,” says Miller, the vice president of marketing at consultancy Emergenetics. “These different viewpoints can help you find a component of your message that’s missing.”

Think for a moment about how your marketing department operates. Who drives the conversation? How do projects get done? What kinds of personalities make up your staff? To be most productive and creative, according to Miller, your team needs to include these types of thinkers: a goal-oriented visionary, an empathetic soul, a data-driven ROI type, and a deadline-motivated person who excels at being a doer.

“The group also needs a leader that makes sure a project gets contributions from everyone,” Miller says. “What you want is more collaboration and teamwork.”

This approach, though, begs an obvious question: How can you know for sure how your employees think? This is where Miller’s firm, and a growing number of others, comes in. They offer online cognitive assessments that generate detailed thought profiles. Once you figure out your employees’ preferences, you can put together a more complete staff.

“At Emergenetics, we use assessments ourselves,” Miller says. “We live the same cul-



## Invest in Data Security

Reading about major data breaches at Staples and Home Depot might, ironically, give your business a sense of security. After all, what hacker would go after your firm when big retailers offer a goldmine of customer info? The reality, though, is that your business could be target number one.

"Hackers know the access points to larger businesses often come through smaller third-party firms, like vendors," says Michael Kaiser, executive director of the National Cyber Security Alliance. "What hackers are trying to do is exploit a relationship, through maybe a spoof of a product update or a set of credentials."

Kaiser points out that the statistics paint a concerning picture. Data from the National Small Business Association shows nearly 71% of security breaches target modest-sized companies that are ill-equipped to handle attacks. And according to Visa, 95% of the credit card breaches it discovers each year are from its small-business customers.

"As a smaller company, you have to assess your risks and defend against the crown jewels of your business – like customer data," Kaiser says. "You also need to be respectful about the data of your employees, like their bank account and social security numbers."

To ratchet up security, all companies should take basic steps like updating security software, encrypting emails and blocking suspicious websites. But your approach needs to be more specific, experts insist. For example, Kaiser recommends office personnel avoid sharing USB drives that could hold hard-to-detect viruses.

Also, if you have employees that telecommute, you should consider two-step verification for sign-on to systems. "This is similar to Gmail asking for a password and then also texting a code to your phone," Kaiser says. If you have salespeople who travel frequently, remind them to never access documents using an unsecured airport, café or hotel network.

"They need to be using a VPN connection," Kaiser says.

Over the long term, your company's planning should also include a data recovery plan in case your systems are compromised, as well as cybersecurity training for staff. "You want to build resiliency into your culture," Kaiser says.

tural perspective that we take to our clients."



### Employee Education

Tuition assistance programs are becoming more popular in workplaces today, with major companies like UPS, BP and Google paying college costs for employees. If you decide to offer tuition reimbursement to staff, experts suggest you partner with a local college that may offer discounted courses. But what if you can't afford a program like this?

Another way to help employees continue to learn is by following the example of WebpageFX, a Pennsylvania-based Internet marketing company. Through a point system, the firm rewards employees for completing internal training courses and reading books from a company library.

"Every week, new learning resources are added, so nothing is outdated," says Trevin Shirey, the senior business development manager at WebpageFX. "The incentives encourage employees to grow their knowledge, and they're more satisfied with their jobs. We've had very little employee turnover."

The rewards system is straightforward – reading a book, for example, nets a WebpageFX employee one point. Ten points can

be traded in for a \$25 gift card, while 100 points earns a \$500 gift card. The company also provides an internal social network as well as lunch-and-learn sessions where employees can share best practices.

"We'll bring in pizza or sandwiches for a department and pick a couple of people to present to the group," Shirey says. "It's an investment for us as a company because we're cutting out an hour or two from the workday, but we believe it's worth it."



### Community Causes

In tiny Hamtramck, MI, near Detroit, Rebecca Smith is making a giant impact. Her company, Better Life Bags (BLB), hires mostly first generation immigrant women who can't get jobs anywhere else. Smith pays the women – who are from countries like Iraq, Jordan and Bangladesh – a good enough wage so they can support their families.

"My company started from a hobby of mine, but I wanted it to have a bigger purpose," says Smith, BLB's president. "A lot of companies, of course, are for-profit, with a mission attached. We put our mission right up there next to profit."

Smith's mission is clear: to make lives

better in an especially depressed city – a two square mile area with a near 20% unemployment rate and little economic opportunity. Smith succeeds by offering chances. One of her workers, for example, stopped her on the street and asked for money. Smith gave her a job instead. Her first seamstress used her paychecks to furnish her home.

"I'd walk into her house to deliver fabric and she was so excited to show me she had bunk beds," Smith says. "Before, there was just a mattress on the floor."

Smith's company – which grew from an Etsy shop – also has a history of donating 10% of every sale to help a low income entrepreneur in a developing country. BLB has supported urban farms, sewing clubs and other local groups in need, as well. The 13-person firm's next big goal is to cut into Hamtramck's unemployment rate. "If we hire 40 people, we can reduce unemployment by 1%," Smith says.

Now you might be thinking, can a company that invests so much in its community really survive? Better Life Bags proves it can be done. "Investing in people above profits has never led us wrong," Smith says. "We've never had a loss – not one month."

–Email: [dvagnoni@asicentral.com](mailto:dvagnoni@asicentral.com);  
Twitter: @VagnoniASI

# IMAGINING

## MARKET WATCH

The sector that will buy the most promotional products in 2024 will be technology. As mobile tech becomes part of every American's life, it will be the companies in this sector that will do the most marketing over the next 10 years.

## TOP SELLER

**The number-one product category in the ad specialty market will still be shirts, but the fastest-growing category will be mobile accessories. That's the sector that will appeal to the greatest set of buyers.**

## CONSULTATIVE SELLERS?

*The most trusted business advisers and consultants won't be people at all, but rather software and computers. With algorithms, data and analytics, businesses will be able to receive customized advice for big (and small) decisions to run their business, all without dealing with a human.*

## RESPONSIVE ADVERTISING

Customized ads based on everything from your purchasing history to where you plan to go that day will be delivered to every interfaced device – computer, tablet, TV, car, phone, watch, security system, even your T-shirt.

## Telecommuting Nation

All employees will work from home at least half the week, and many companies will become complete virtual organizations.

## CONSOLIDATED MARKET

**Distributors and suppliers will continue the trend of consolidation. The Top 40 distributors, which accounted for 22% of industry revenues in 2013, will represent more than a third of overall sales in 2024.**

## REVENUE ROCKET

**As first predicted at the ASI Power Summit in September by futurist John Smart, revenues in the ad specialty industry will double between now and 2024, reaching more than \$40 billion. As one-to-one marketing becomes more important, companies will increasingly rely on advertising and promotions that interact more closely with their chosen audiences.**

## Online Dominance

Distributors will overwhelmingly move their business to online and mobile. More than half of all the industry's revenues will be achieved through e-commerce.

## SAMPLE ADVANCEMENT

**3-D hologram samples of products will be able to be "beamed" from suppliers to distributors so they can be shown to end-buyers for their selection approval, thereby cutting down the cost of shipping and production materials of samples being overnighted back and forth.**

## TRAVEL DROP

*To cut down on the cost and usage of natural resources like gas and oil, salespeople will travel less and presentations will be done virtually. Millennials and Gen Z after them, who are tomorrow's buyers, don't require (or seem to care for/about) in-person meetings.*

## WHERE'D THAT COME FROM?

**Due to the growing buying power of Gen Y and Z – who are more cause-driven and environmentally-conscious – promo products will need to have their sustainability history (where they were made, who made them, what components they're made of) available on demand and easily accessible online.**

## Merging Agendas

Distributor and supplier companies will continue to merge, breaking down some of the traditional business models in the ad specialty market.





# 2024

What will business look like 10 years from now? *Counselor* delved into its crystal ball and came up with 24 bold predictions for how business will change between now and then.

By Andy Cohen



## CAMERAS ON HIGH

Drones will be commonplace at trade shows. Attendees will use them to take pictures of products, record virtual demonstrations and even curate supplier contact information. Plus, these pictures and videos can be immediately sent to clients as virtual presentations.

## QUICK DELIVERY

Overnight and two-day delivery will be standard on most non-custom orders. Some suppliers will have already tested same-day delivery to select locations.

## ROBOT TAKEOVER

Suppliers and distributors will be using robots to market and sell their products. Robots will be standard in showrooms to demo items and walk prospects through product possibilities.

## All Things Connected

The majority of promotional products will be able to connect with mobile devices. There will be features on pens, T-shirts, mugs and bags that digitally allow users to track real-time functionality.

## MANUFACTURING SHIFT

3-D printers will allow companies the ability to print products just about anywhere. Yes, individuals could print items at home, but the real revolution will come from suppliers employing 3-D printers in multiple locations to increase speed of order turnaround.

## DEMOGRAPHIC SHIFTS

Following immigration reform, the Hispanic population in the U.S. will rise 5%-7% each year. To meet demand from this growing market, industry companies will train salespeople and customer service reps to speak fluent Spanish.

## PART-TIME WORKERS

Industry companies will increasingly be turning to freelance and contract workers for a variety of tasks they never imagined. Many marketers, salespeople, finance staffers, human resource executives, and chief executives will be hired on a contract basis, rather than full-time.

## Video Visions

The use of video cameras will increase dramatically (businesses, schools, cars, sports equipment and even on the athletes themselves.) This will have greater implications on behavior across all aspects of society.

## SOCIALLY CONSCIOUS

Businesses will take stronger stances on social issues. There will be apps that detail every cause a business is dedicated to. Many will want to attract likeminded citizens, and clients will want to know if a business supports unions or if they espouse a religious or environmental cause, for example.

## MADE IN USA

Rising labor costs in China will shift more manufacturing to the U.S. and Latin America. In 10 years, 25% of all ad specialties will be made in the USA.

## ASIAN TAKEOVER

Alibaba will fail to overtake Amazon in the consumer segment and will focus on the U.S. B2B market. The Chinese firm will partner with or acquire several suppliers and distributors, generating \$500 million in annual ad specialty sales.

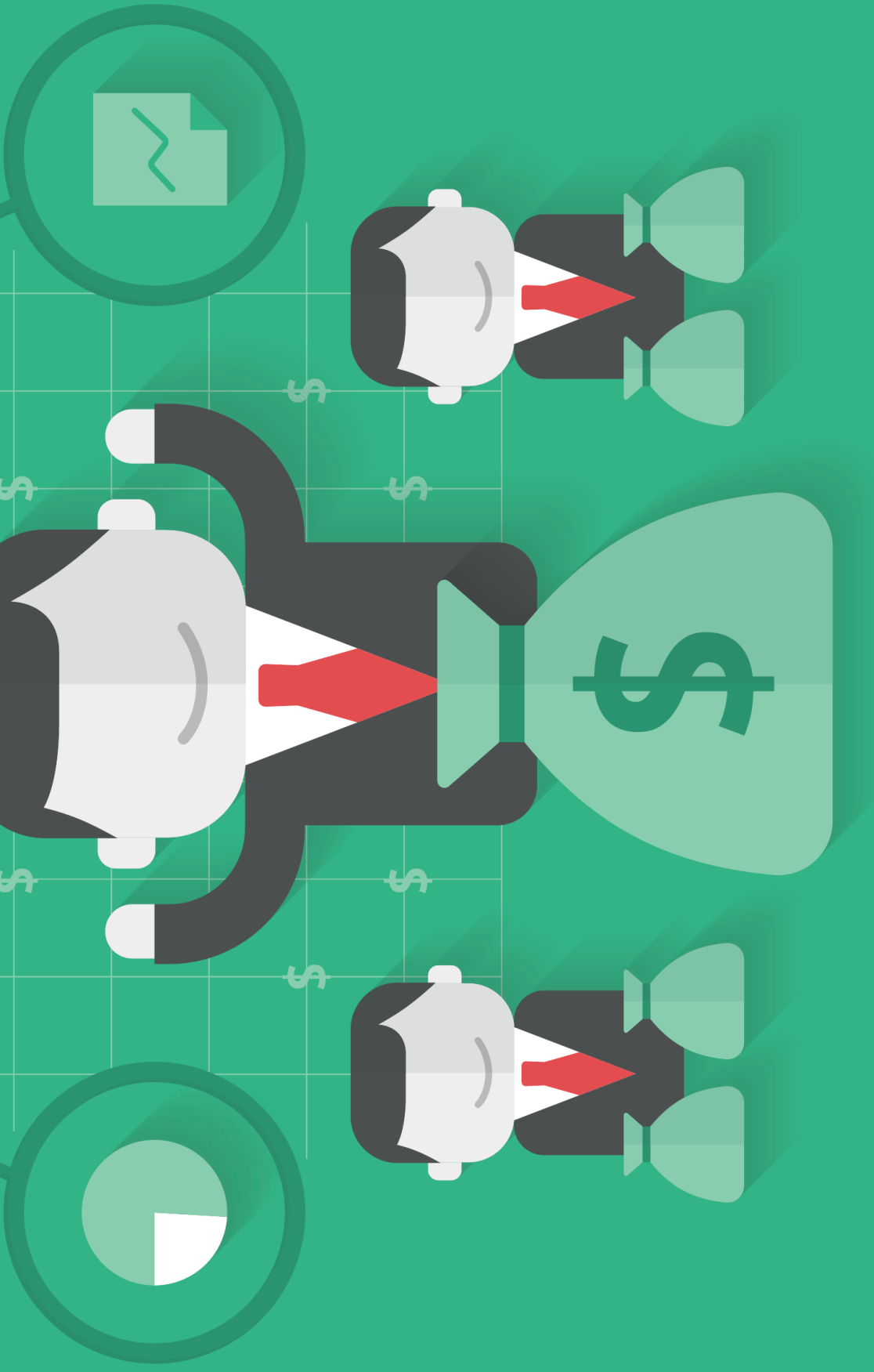
## PAY PALS

Distributors will pay suppliers completely through electronic means, and clients will remit invoices in the same manner. No checks will change hands anymore.

# PROVE THE ROI OF PROMOTIONS







## The newest version of ASI's Ad Specialties Impressions Study gives distributors statistical evidence of the power of promotional products.

*By Andy Cohen; Research by Nathaniel Kucsma*

"People just throw promotional products away after they get them."

"Nobody remembers the company that actually gives out promo items."

"We get more return from our television and online ads."

Wrong, wrong and, yes, wrong again. In fact, promotional products are kept and valued, recipients can clearly recall the advertiser imprinted on them, and they have a greater return-on-investment than almost

every other advertising medium. And yet, distributors hear the above objections from clients and prospects just about every day.

Now, though, ASI's Ad Specialties Impressions Study provides statistical evidence that distributors can use to answer most questions from clients or refute just about any objection that a skeptical prospect can throw out.

On the following pages, we delve into this information to present distributors with compelling evidence

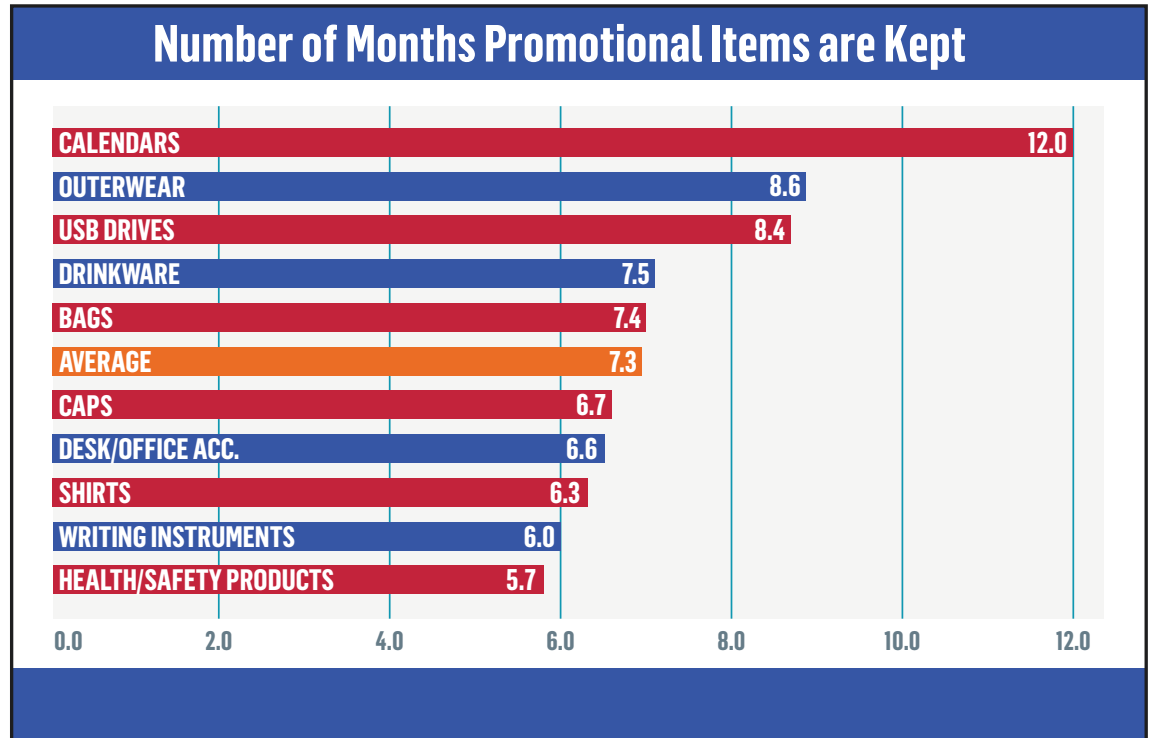
about the power of promotional products. From cost-per-impression data and advertiser recall numbers to length of times that various promotional items are kept by recipients, the following infographics give distributors and their salespeople powerful data to use with buyers.

To view the complete Ad Specialties Impressions Study, go to [www.asicentral.com/study](http://www.asicentral.com/study).

# Staying Power

In an effort to prove that promotional products aren't just thrown away after a targeted group of people receive an item, respondents were asked how long they keep a typical type of promotional item. Across all promotional products, the average was just over seven months.

Some products such as calendars can stay around for about a year, while others, especially health and safety products and writing instruments, last for about six months. Calendars, which have the longest staying power, are the one item used most often for reference purposes, such as referring to a name or phone number.



# Impression Maker

Ultimately, the goal of all marketers and advertisers is to gain impressions for their brands. Well, this study proves that promotional products do that extremely effectively.

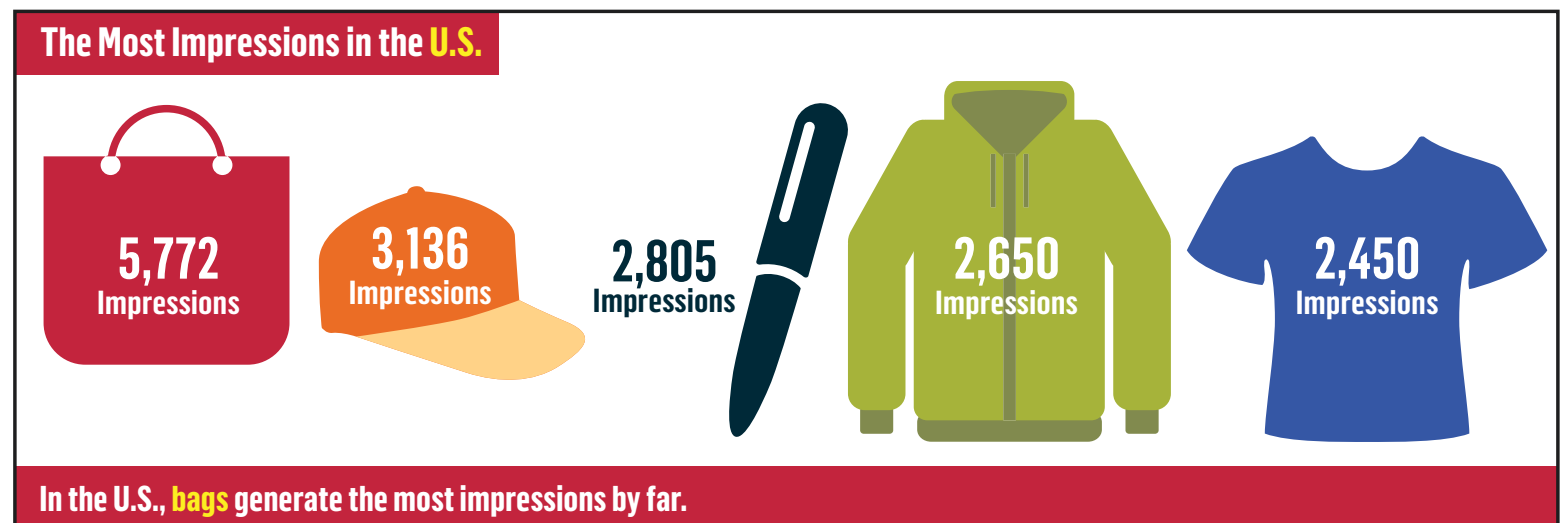
The number of impressions a product makes was derived from multiplying how long a recipient has the product to how many people they come in contact with each month while using it. In the U.S., bags generate the most impressions (5,772) of

any item measured in the study. This is because bags are used often in public places where they can be seen by many people.

Other items that deliver a large number of impressions are writing instruments, hats, outerwear and shirts. Items that create the fewest impressions tend to be those intended mostly for one person, such as health and safety items and USB drives. The value of these items is more in the connection they make with the user than the

total number of impressions generated.

Ultimately, distributors should work with clients to determine the goals of their campaigns and the connection they want to establish with the intended recipient before selecting the right vehicle to deliver their message. Taking into account the number and quality of the impressions generated gives the distributor the opportunity to serve as a consultant rather than an order taker.





# Recipient Views of Advertisers

In possibly the most powerful data point in the whole Ad Specialties Impressions Study, 85% of recipients of promotional products could identify the advertisers on the promotional items they owned. That is significant recall and much higher than marketers using traditional media outlets tend to receive.

The information is also important, con-

sidering that promotional products have such a long shelf life with the consumers who own them. Additionally, recipients not only remember the name of the advertiser, they also overwhelmingly feel more positive about the advertiser. This number is highest for recipients of outerwear, where nearly two-thirds have a more favorable rating of the advertiser.

And while promotional products get an advertiser remembered and drive positive opinions, they also can impact future purchase intent. Across all promotional products, more than one-third of recipients state they are more likely to do business with an advertiser after receiving the item than they were beforehand.

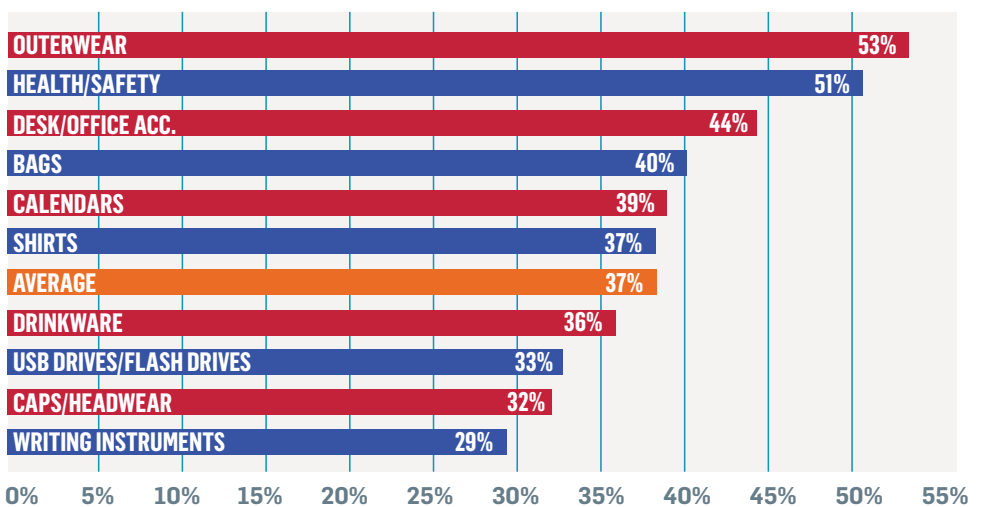
**The world remembers.**

**85%** remember the advertiser worldwide.



Recall is highest for apparel items, as 88% recall the advertiser that gave them a shirt or hat.

**Drive New Business in Addition to Favorable Opinions.**



Nearly four in 10 consumers who received a product from an advertiser they had not done business with said they were more likely to do business with them in the future.

## Promo Items Sway Opinions



**50%**

Half of the people who received a promotional product had a more favorable opinion of the advertiser who gave it to them.

**63%**

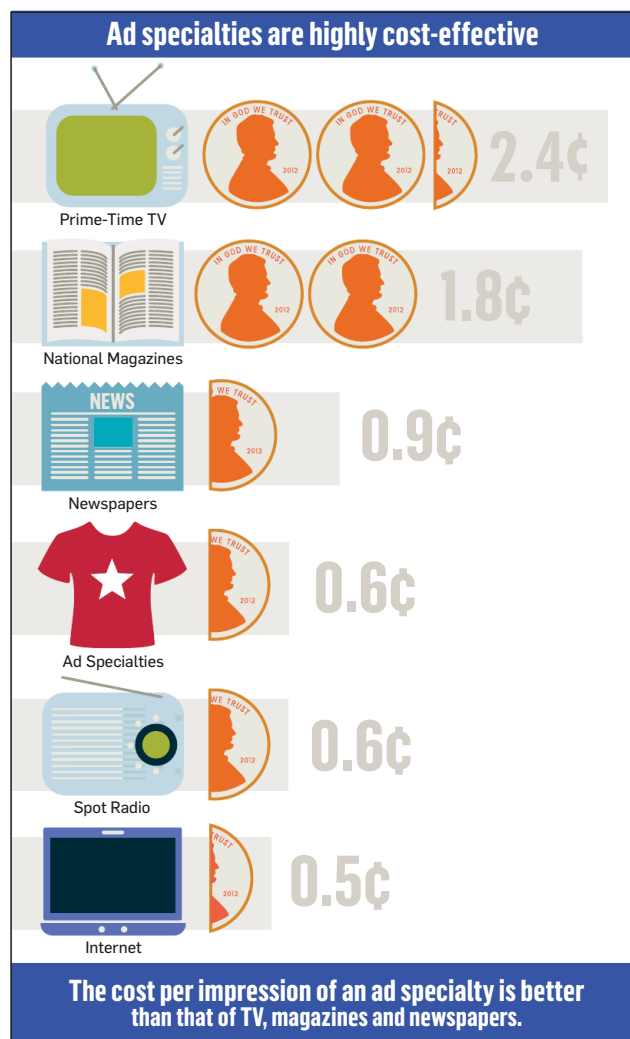
Percentage of people who had a more favorable opinion of a company after receiving a piece of outerwear with their logo on it.

# Low CPI, High Value

Ultimately, the return on investment that clients receive from using promotional products in their marketing campaigns can be found in the fact that the items have an extremely low cost-per-impression (CPI).

Advertising specialties remain less expensive per impression than most other forms of advertising. The investment in ad specialties is modest, more targeted and allows for much greater levels of interaction with consumers than other forms of advertising. In fact, promotional products have a lower CPI in the United States than prime-time television advertising, national magazine advertising and newspaper ads, and a similar CPI to radio and Internet advertising.

Plus, while all of these other forms of advertising are often passive, advertising specialties allow for much more active interaction, such as storing valuable information on a USB drive or carrying groceries or other items around in a promotional bag.



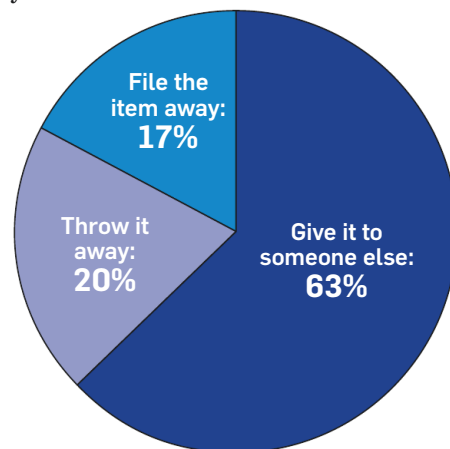
# Promo Products Are Passed Along

While many people hold onto and use or refer to promotional items for a while after receiving them, some people choose to pass along products or give them to friends and colleagues. For distributors, this enhances the value of an item, as products gain advertiser impressions not just with their intended recipient audience, but also with a pass-along group that also can remember an advertiser's message or name.

In the U.S. and Canada, nearly two-thirds of ad specialties that are not wanted are given away. In fact, in most countries, more than half of consumers report that they will give away a product that they are finished with rather than throw it out or file it away.

## What Do You Do With an Item That You Don't Want to Keep?

(U.S. Recipients)



# Utility is Vital

Consumers want products that are, first and foremost, useful to them, especially when it comes to the more practical items such as writing instruments and USB drives. Here, usefulness outweighs attractiveness by at least five to one.

However, that's not to say that attractiveness isn't important, especially if the item needs to be worn. For outerwear, attractiveness is a very close second to usefulness in reasons for keeping the product, with more than half of those who own outerwear reporting they keep it because it is attractive.

If distributors want a customer to use the product for reference, then calendars are the way to go. Apparel items, whether they're shirts, outerwear or hats, are cited as the most enjoyable to have.

**93%** Percentage of U.S. consumers who say they keep a promotional pen because of its usefulness



**91%** Percentage of U.S. consumers who cite utility as the main reason they keep USB drives





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# Social

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## Profile Holiday Helpers

This family-owned distributorship established a charitable organization to give back to those in need.

By Sara Lavenduski

It begins like clockwork every Black Friday: the ridiculously early doorbuster sales and the stampedes of fervent shoppers they attract is a stark reminder of how commercialized the holidays have become. Unfortunately, while some consumers agonize over being first in line for that must-have gift, others struggle to meet even the most basic needs for themselves and their families.

But for the Dabiero family of Lasting Impressions (asi/249926) in Westland, MI, giving back to the needy is inextricably linked to the holiday season. Beginning in 1986, owner Mark Dabiero and his wife Barbara shopped and donated food and gifts to one or two families in the weeks leading up to Christmas, when financial circumstances permitted. As they welcomed four children of their own, they established a Christmas tradition: The kids exchanged gifts, while Mom and Dad continued to save the money that would have been spent on each other to give to families in need.

Then, in 2006, the Dabieros rethought their Christmas morning. “We decided that, rather than exchanging gifts with one

another, we would adopt a family in Melvindale, MI, where my dad grew up,” says Carla Dabiero, the fourth and youngest Dabiero sibling. “For a few years, it was just us six. We would shop and deliver the gifts to one or two families, and then go out to eat afterwards at my parents’ ‘date night’ restaurant. It was a great tradition for a few years.”

As word spread about the Dabieros’ unconventional celebration of the season, friends and family showed increased interest in becoming involved. “They’d tell us they wanted to donate money, or that they wanted to take the time to shop for a family,” says Dabiero. “So we were able to help more and more families each year.”

In 2012, the Dabieros took their efforts one step further and applied for 501c3 status, successfully establishing Dabiero Charities. Managed by Barbara Dabiero, it has a voluntary board of directors and offers no paid positions. “All operating expenses are covered by individual and corporate contributions,” says Carla Dabiero, now committee chair. “We want to ensure that all the money and items go



**Mark Dabiero** pitches in at the First Annual Dabiero Charities Tailgating fundraiser.



**The Dabiero Charities team** sorts items to be packed into hygiene kits for the homeless.

directly to those in need.”

While Dabiero Charities is involved in several projects throughout the year, the organization is best known for its efforts with Adopt-A-Family. The team pairs needy families with

donors and shoppers by the end of October, and has all gifts and groceries delivered by the week before Christmas. “These families receive a Christmas that they otherwise would not have had,” says Dabiero. “Only about five years ago, we started with just a few families. Three years ago, we adopted 67 families, including 200 children, and last year, we helped more than 260 children.”

Over the past few years, the organization has branched out from the Melvindale area and started working with churches in other towns to find those who need help. Now, the team puts together care packages of hygiene items for the Shoebox Project, and collects coats, hats and gloves for the local Coat Drive for the Homeless. “We have over 18,000 homeless people living in Detroit, and that’s said to be a conservative number,” says Dabiero. “As the winter months grow colder, we like to do our part. From the donations to the shopping and delivering, it’s truly an amazing, and very emotional, experience.”

For more information, visit [www.liteam.com/dabiero-charities](http://www.liteam.com/dabiero-charities).

# Appointments & Promotions

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

Compiled by Sara Lavenduski



**Mary Ellen Sokalski**

Scarlett Marketer



**Mike Newman**

Vantage Apparel



**Ian Kalna**

Pop! Promos



**Kari Rehder**

Crown Products



**Mark Goldring**

Crown Products



**Doug Yount**

K.C. Fields



**Sarah Furth**

Beacon Promotions

► **American Apparel** (asi/35297) named Scott Brubaker as its interim CEO; promoted Patricia Honda and Nicolle Gabbay to president of wholesale and president of retail, respectively; and welcomed back Iris Alonzo as senior creative director.

► **American Solutions for Business (ASB)** (asi/120075) named Justin Zavakil as executive VP and Katie Hallstrom as executive director.

► **Beacon Promotions** (asi/39250) hired Sarah Furth as an e-commerce specialist.

► **Charles River Apparel** (asi/44620) hired Sharon Wohlleber as partner and executive vice president of Hartley-Wohlleber & Associates and will cover southern Texas; Scott Schaefer is responsible for western NY and western PA; and Scott Blankenship will cover northern TX and OK.

► **Chocolate Inn/Taylor & Grant** (asi/44900) welcomed Shelley Bednarski as Southeast regional sales manager and Sammy Gallardo as its new customer service/inside sales rep for the Southeast region.

► **Crown Products** (asi/47700) named Kari Rehder to the position of regional sales manager. Her territory will include MN, IA, ND and SD. In addition, Mark Goldring is now the company's Northeast regional sales manager, responsible for NY, NJ, eastern PA, CT, RI, MA, NH, VT and ME.

► **Full Line Specialties** (asi/199688) announced that it has added John Graham to its Vancouver Island sales office.

► **Innovation Line** (asi/62660), based in Culver City, CA, announced that Dan Pigott joined the company's sales team as a multi-line representative, responsible for NJ, PA, DE, MD and Washington, DC. Also, Mike Doyle, Kerry Schmock and Lorel Gardner of The Doyle Group will now represent the company's product line in Michigan.

► **K.C. Fields and Associates** (asi/822150) welcomed Doug Yount to represent 3M/Promotional Markets (asi/91240), Cap America (asi/43792), Flexible Innovations (asi/54596) and Eversole Run (asi/53040) in IN and western OH.

► **Mary Ellen Sokalski** has launched The Scarlet Marketeer, a boutique creativity and marketing strategy firm for the ad specialty industry.

► **Penn Emblem Co.** (asi/77120) hired Eric Garced as a graphic designer.

► **Pop! Promos** (asi/45657) hired Ian Kalna as VP of West coast sales.

► **PPAChicago.** announced that Matt Gallegos of HALO Branded Solutions (asi/356000) and Bob Notter of alphabroder (asi/34063) are the newly elected directors for the organization's 2015 board of directors, and will join current directors Stephanie Bookbinder of Jetline (asi/63344), David Falato of Jack Nadel International (asi/279600) and Colleen Krause of Summit Group (asi/339116). In addition, the 2015 executive board is comprised of the following representatives: Jeff Schmitt, Cedric Spring (asi/332750), as president; Jaime Becker, Gill Line (asi/56950), as vice president; and Jennifer Savor, LinJen Promotions (asi/254382), as treasurer.

► **SanMar** (asi/84863)

welcomed Yen Gao as director of sourcing.

► **Storm Creek Apparel** (asi/89879) added Carman Thorne of Gary Thorne & Associates to its national team of sales representatives.

► **TPS Promotions & Incentives** (asi/341409) announced that Karen Nixon has become a partner in the company.

► **Tranter Graphics** (asi/91880) announced that Cameron Tranter joined the company's sales team and will represent the supplier on a national level.

► **Vantage Apparel** (asi/93390) welcomed Jennifer Strauss as sales rep for GA, MS, AL, FL and Puerto Rico, and added Mike Newman as sales rep for New England, including parts of NY and CT.

► **Victorinox Swiss Army** (asi/93755) named Andrew Spellman as VP of corporate channels, responsible for updating his team's approach to selling and marketing Victorinox, Victorinox Swiss Army, Wenger, and Swiss Gear products in a coordinated manner.



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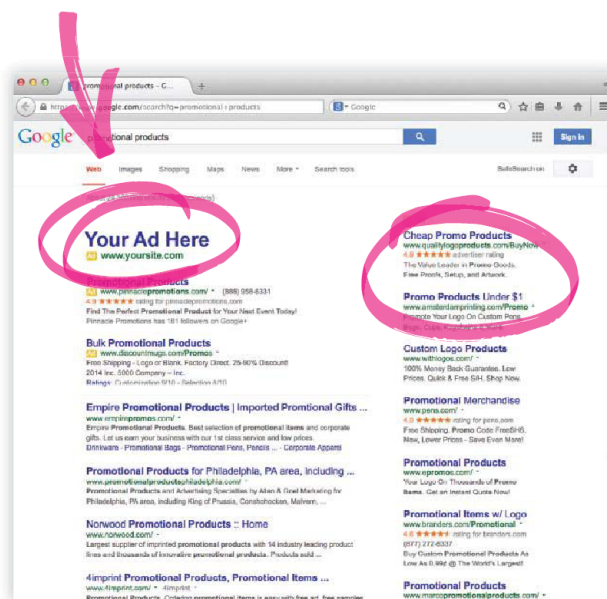
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**"I know Google and Tesla are trying to create cars that can drive themselves. Think of how that'll change life."**

Steve Wozniak, co-founder, Apple Inc.  
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COUNSELOR December 2014; Vol. 61, No. 13 (asi/ISSN 0011-0027) (asi/USPS 134640) is published monthly, except semi-monthly in July. Subscription rates \$75 per year in the United States and Canada; \$90 per year in all other foreign countries. Publication offices are located at 4800 Street Road • Trevoise PA 19053-6698. Periodical Postage Paid at Langhorne, PA and additional offices.

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

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# Best Places to Work SnugZ USA

Casual atmosphere inspires employees at this Utah supplier.



You never know when a soccer game is going to break out on the permanent grass field in the parking lot of **SnugZ USA's** (asi/88060) West Jordan, UT, headquarters. "We work really hard, and if we want to go outside and play for an hour, we will," says Brandon Mackay (standing, second from right), the president and CEO of SnugZ, who espouses a laid-back and casual atmosphere in both approach and dress code. Success enables what he calls "earning the right to make choices" – of the fun variety. Employees get "recess" once a week. Yoga is taught by one of the company's sales reps. SnugZ sponsors fun activities like staff softball teams and even a 200-mile relay race, and company-wide Halloween parties and barbecues are annual traditions.





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