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NOVEMBER 2013

**The  
Leadership  
Issue**

MANAGEMENT

## **The Number- One Skill Of Top Leaders**

STRATEGIES

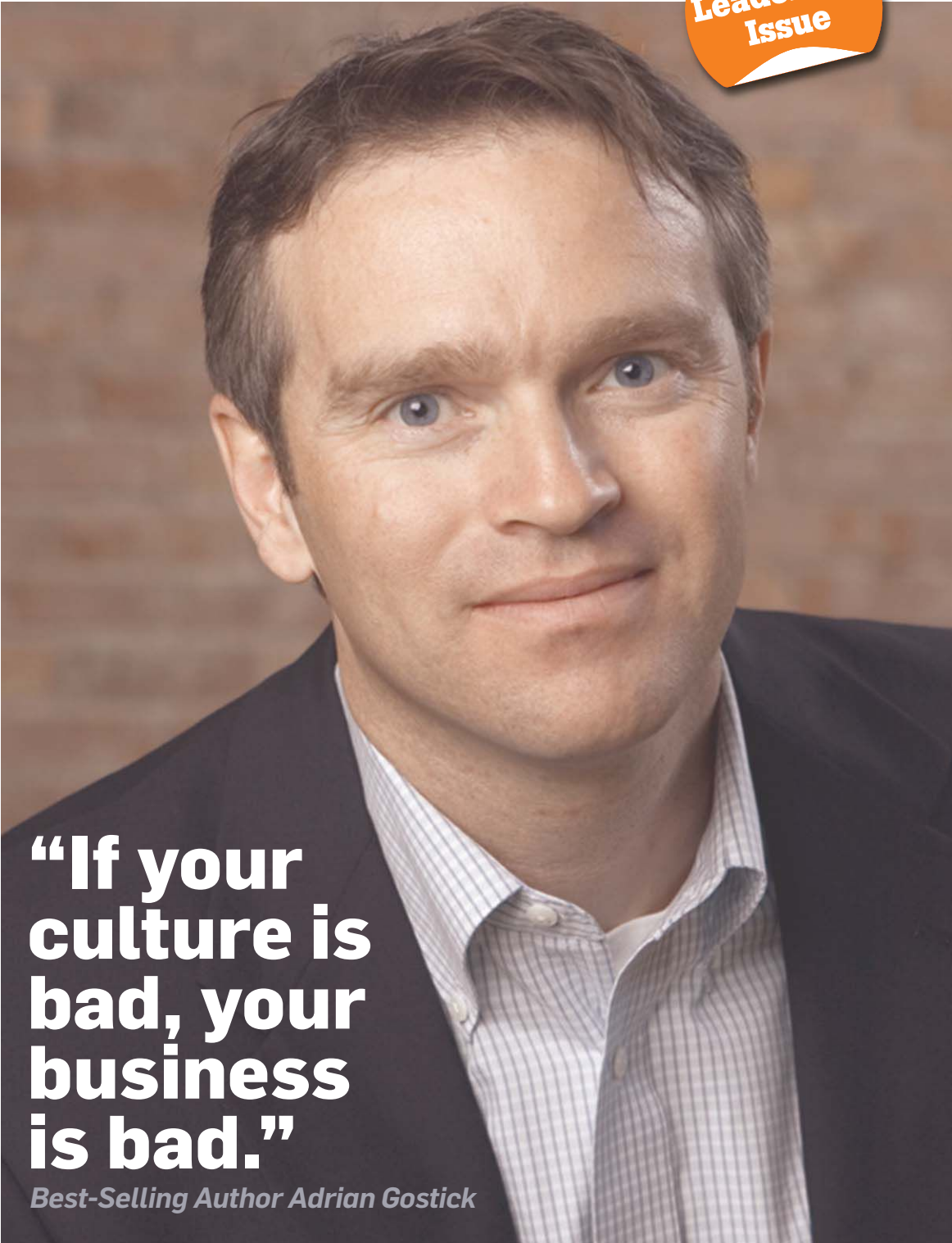
## **5 Leadership Traits You Must Avoid**

NEWS

## **Alibaba Offers IPO In USA**

MARKETS

## **Retail Sector Presents Big Sales Opportunity**

A portrait of Adrian Gostick, a man with short brown hair and blue eyes, wearing a dark suit jacket over a light-colored striped shirt. He is looking directly at the camera with a slight smile.

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culture is  
bad, your  
business  
is bad.”**

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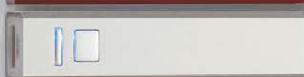
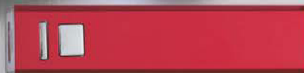
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Back

**NEW!**

**NEW!**



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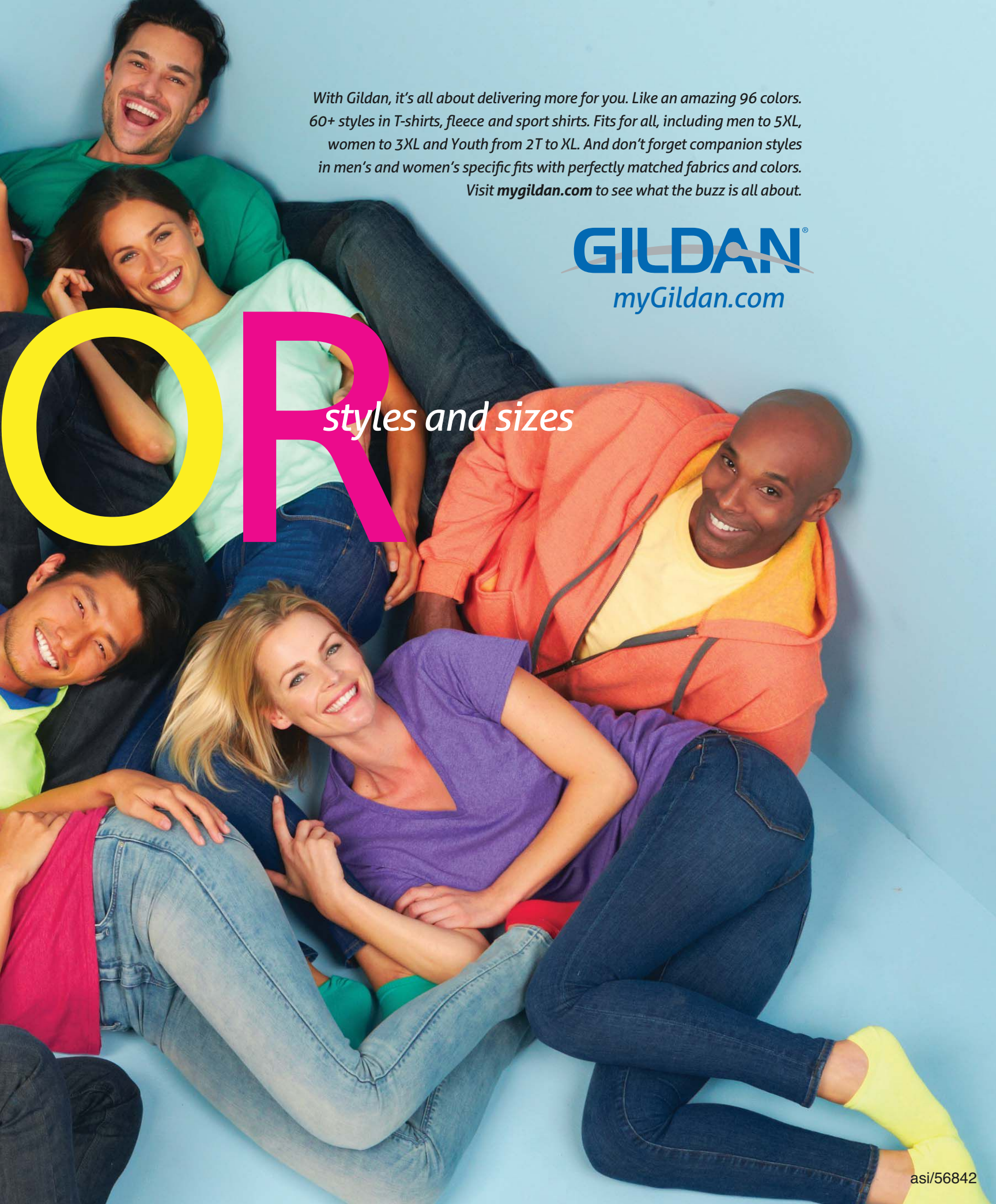
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# Version 2.0 is 2.more

Check out our enhanced websites, now with all *new* images

The screenshot shows the ALPHA website interface. At the top, there's a navigation bar with links: Products, Marketing Tools, My Account, Help Center, About Us, and Specials. Below this, a search bar is present with the text "Search here for style #, brand, etc." and a magnifying glass icon. To the right of the search bar, there's a "Customer Service" section with the phone number (800)523-4585 and operating hours. Further right, there's a login section with fields for "Login:" and "Password:", and links for "Forgot Username?", "Forgot Password?", "Open an Account", and "Remember Me".

The main content area displays a product page for a blue t-shirt. On the left, there's a "20 Available Colors" list with color swatches and labels: LIGHT BLUE (S-3XL), DENIM BLUE (S-3XL), DEEP ROYAL (S-3XL), NAVY (S-3XL), PURPLE (S-3XL), PALE PINK (S-3XL), DEEP RED (S-3XL), MAROON (S-3XL), ORANGE (S-3XL), and YELLOW (S-3XL). In the center, a male model is shown wearing the blue t-shirt. To the right of the model, the product name "5280" is displayed in large blue text, followed by "5280 Hanes 5.2 oz. ComfortSoft® Cotton T-Shirt". Below this, there's a "Hanes" logo. Further down, there are tabs for "CPSIA", "Overview", and "Specs". The "Overview" tab is selected, showing a list of features: 100% preshrunk ComfortSoft® cotton, Double-needle coverseamed neck, Taped shoulder-to-shoulder, Tag-free neck label, and Ash is 99% cotton, 1% polyester; Light Steel is 90% cotton, 10% polyester. Below the features, there's a "Sizes: S - 4XL Catalog Page (Category): 131" and "Companions: 5480(Youth)". There's also a link to "Email this Page". At the bottom of the product page, there are buttons for "View in Gallery", "Add a Logo", "Compare Similar", and "Save to Favorites". A footer note says "Questions? Click Here for Live Technical Support" and "Report an Image Problem or call (800)523-4585 for all other inquiries."



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# Editor's Letter

## Get Out of the Way!

Why some managers lose the trust of their people and others continue to gain it every day.

By Andy Cohen

There are many traits of great leaders. Among the list: the ability to listen, the desire to make their people and their companies better, the drive and will to succeed. But maybe chief among the characteristics of good leaders today is the incessant need to be involved with their employees.

"The best managers know that their most important job is always having the pulse of their people," says Adrian Gostick, author of *The New York Times* bestselling business book *The Carrot Principal: How the Best Managers Use Recognition to Engage Their People, Retain Talent, and Accelerate Performance*. "And, on the flip side, the worst managers lose their people by not always knowing what they're working on and not being involved. Basically, the best leaders are perceived simply as a member of the team, not the head of the team who is always dictating how things should be done."

In this special issue, we look at leadership from many angles. And, Gostick, who is on our cover this month, provides an overall look at the key to leadership today: getting employees hyper-engaged in their company's business. Engagement, he says, means so much more than people showing up to work every day and doing a good job. It means

that employees are fully vested and interested in the company's success.

"Effective leadership today is based on getting employees to love doing their jobs every day," Gostick says. "Whether it's the customer service rep

highly satisfied in their jobs describe their office culture as one in which they can make decisions and take risks.

Gostick, who recently finished a survey of more than 300,000 companies and employees, echoes the

agenda for your company, but also figuring out when to get out the way. According to Gostick, it's a bit of a feel thing. If you feel like you're making too many decisions during a particular week or month, hold a brainstorming meeting with



**Employees are happier when they feel like they operate in an autonomous and trusting environment.**

who gets a rise out of making sure his clients are happy, or the sales rep who enjoys closing deals and building the company's business, good leaders need to create an environment where people feel connected to the company's mission, and where they feel like they can thrive on their own."

That last point is so vital to leadership success today, I believe. Employees tend to be happier and more satisfied in their jobs when they feel like they operate in an autonomous and trusting environment. In fact, a Towers Perrin survey from earlier this year reports that 74% of employees who say they are

Towers Perrin survey. "Good leaders are able to set a course for their people, but then get out of their way and let them do their jobs," he says. "Micromanaging tends to be the place where managers lose their way the most. Yes, you have to be involved, but that doesn't mean making every last decision and telling people what to do every step of the way. Employees need to feel like they can own their work – maybe even more than you're willing to let them. When they don't feel like they have ownership of their work every day, that's exactly when you've lost them as a leader."

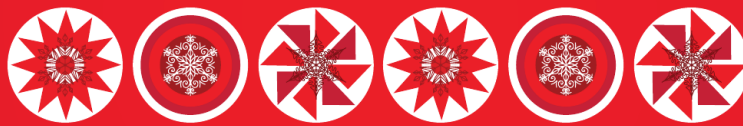
The challenge, of course? Being a leader and setting the

your team and give everyone the floor to come up with ideas. "Then you have to implement some of those," he says. "Your people should know that when they present ideas, you're open to listening to them and then putting them into operation for the company. They want to trust that they're being heard."

Ultimately, the best-performing companies have employees who are motivated, highly engaged in their work, and uniquely interested in seeing that their companies succeed. The heads of these companies, Gostick says, are often willing to cede the spotlight and give staffers the room to succeed on their own.

Enjoy the issue!





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# The HB Group Grows E-commerce With WebJaguar

*Providing for clients' every need, even online company stores, was the goal of The HB Group. Now they can with AdvancedEMedia's WebJaguar platform.*

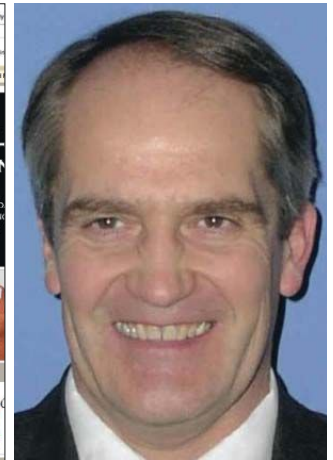
No order is too small nor any request too large for awards and recognition experts at The HB Group LLC. This full-service promotional distributor of 30 years has experience across a range of services: logo merchandising, logistics, importing and packaging as well as creating successful recruiting, recognition and retention programs. Now it adds an exceptional ability to produce online company store programs, helping clients reach their own e-commerce goals.

That ability is thanks to The HB Group's new website and e-commerce platform from AdvancedEMedia. The search for an e-commerce provider first began last year. "We looked for a solution that let us do whatever we wanted without spending a lot of money," says Kyle Stucki, the Head of IT for The HB Group. The WebJaguar platform from AdvancedEMedia offered the perfect balance of providing an effective e-commerce frame that Stucki could then configure and shape to reflect The HB Group's specific needs. "AdvancedEMedia has a good frame in place that we can make look exactly how we want it to be," Stucki says. "Our e-commerce ability is only limited by our imagination."

AdvancedEMedia, the developer of the WebJaguar e-commerce platform, provides small- to mid-sized promotional products companies an ability to easily automate and manage business with a fully-featured website, e-catalog/content management, shopping cart, CRM and lead generation technologies. "We've provided a front-end and back-end solution to sell products online," says Bachir Kassir, president and founder of AdvancedEMedia. "We worked closely with ASI to develop data feed based on the ASI database. This gives distributors access to hundreds of thousands of products as a complete turnkey e-commerce solution."

It took a few short months to put The HB Group's e-commerce solution in place, which has been active for the last eight months. Since the implementation, Stucki has received nothing but positive feedback from customers. He says that the most important indicators of success are two new university clients that have turned to The HB Group to manage online company store programs for their spirit/alumnae merchandise. "Users can simply sign in through their own portal and then come over to our site for their customized store," Stucki explains. The HB Group manages a collection of logoed merchandise particular to that school's needs and tastes. Every company store program can be customized to include as many or as few items as the client wants.

Stucki explains that the WebJaguar system provides complete freedom to configure and update its own web site, as well as its clients' online company stores, without any complications. "The product that AdvancedEMedia has provided is a configuration management tool. We have the ability to go in and select products or change pricing. You spend your time on content rather than site development," he says. The system also simplifies marketing and



Kyle Stucki, The HB Group

customer relationship management. For example, Stucki explains, "You can set up coupons or it lets you target customers with emails to offer specials."

With WebJaguar, The HB Group 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.

Learning the system was simple for The HB Group. "It is pretty intuitive," Stucki says. He praises the knowledgeable staff from AdvancedEMedia who have guided the transition and handled Stucki's every request to address any small wrinkles encountered along the way. "I would give them an 'A,'" Stucki says. "I always feel comfortable when I call. They are kind and responsive."

Looking ahead, Stucki sees nothing but growth thanks to the new website and company store functions. "Everyone we've shown it to likes it and uses it," he says. "Our goal is to grow a lot thanks to this system."

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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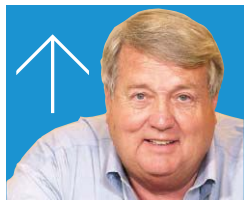
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# News

## WHAT'S YOUR OUTLOOK FOR THE AD SPECIALTY INDUSTRY IN 2014?



**Ted Stahl**  
GroupeStahl (*asi/88984*)  
“Demand for customized items is stronger than ever, but competing and winning means meeting the complex demands of today’s consumers.”



**Alan Chippindale**  
BrandAlliance (*asi/145177*)  
“Flat growth, increasing consolidation (both supplier and distributor), continuous price pressure and large customer demands for integrated IT and logistic solutions.”



**Jo-an Lantz Geiger** (*asi/202900*)  
“I’m very positive about the business in North America. I anticipate continued strong growth for the industry in 2014.”



**Emmanuel Bruno**  
Norwood & BIC Graphic (*asi/40480*)  
“I’m not convinced this industry is growing at the aggressive rate that has been reported. A 2% to 3% increase will be closer to reality.”

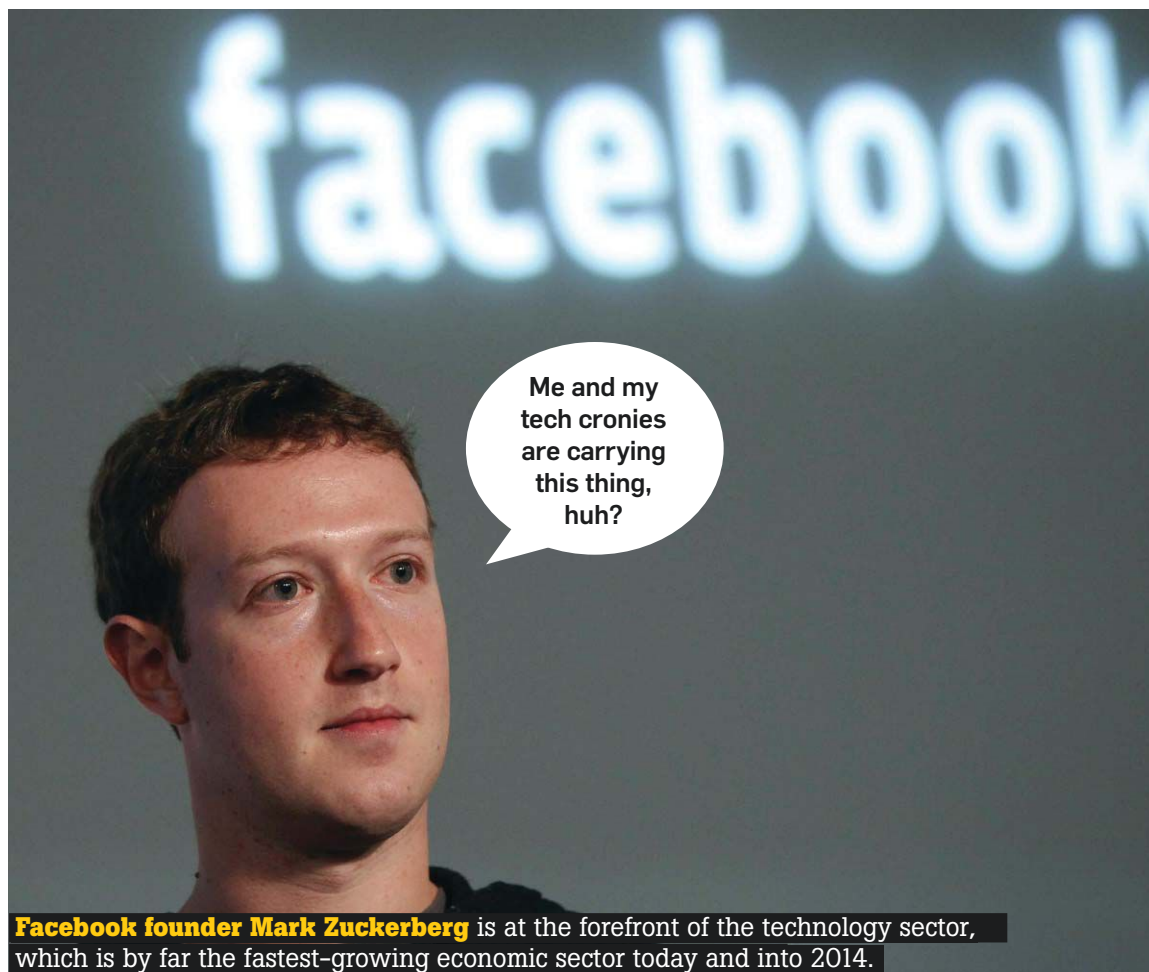


**Paula Shulman**  
Prime Line (*asi/79530*)  
“Companies seem to have opened their purse strings again. Anything to do with technology seems to be the strongest category right now.”



**Jason Black**  
Boundless (*asi/143717*)  
“I believe there will be some dark clouds coming for the economy with the rising insurance cost for business and increase in taxes.”

## Tech Sector Leads U.S. Economic Forecasts



**Facebook founder Mark Zuckerberg** is at the forefront of the technology sector, which is by far the fastest-growing economic sector today and into 2014.

► Forrester Research predicts that the technology sector in the U.S. will grow by more than **10% in 2014**.

► **Leading tech markets:** Corporate networking, social media, and electronic infrastructure, according to Forrester.

► The Federal Reserve predicts that the United States’ gross domestic product will **grow at a rate of 3% next year**.

► Sectors that are primed for **growth in 2014** besides tech: professional services, health care and construction are the next three.

# Chatter

## Readers React



“The term “industry” has been used to reference the sale of decorated merchandise from within our group of suppliers and distributors. We can expect that our industry will only cover about half of all promotional products actually purchased 10 years from now.”

**MICHAEL BERNSTEIN**, POLYCONCEPT, IN RESPONSE TO THE QUESTION: HOW DO YOU THINK THE INDUSTRY WILL BE DIFFERENT 10 YEARS FROM NOW?

“There will be 20% fewer suppliers in 10 years.”

**CRAIG CALLAWAY**, ECOMPANYSTORE (ASI/185782)



“Clearly tech gadgets are very popular, and as personal technology applications grow, this will create many new product opportunities for our industry.”

**DAVE THOMPSON**, NATIONAL PEN (ASI/281040)

“If we allow ourselves to become a commodity and sell only on price, our industry risks losing the creativity that has really been important to the industry’s success over the last 10 years.”

**JEFF LEDERER**, PRIME LINE (ASI/79530)



“New types of products will expand our markets, ease of communications will increase competition, and the continued decline of mass media advertising will enhance growth opportunities for our industry.”

**MARC SIMON**, HALO BRANDED SOLUTIONS (ASI/356000)

Facebook  
Forum

What's your best piece of business advice?

► **Raymond Laubert** You must have a business and marketing plan. I have had several small businesses. The first ones never had a business or marketing plan. They failed before I even knew it because I didn't understand what was going on. I would try whatever came to mind that day and had no real direction. The business and marketing plans help me stay focused.

► **Judi Brown** Don't rush to be the first to buy new technology.

► **Linda Wilcox** Never offer goods at a discount if there is an imprint issue, wrong color, imprint location error, etc. The customer never remembers the discount. They look at the item and think, “That's not what I ordered.” Offer perfection and nothing less regardless of a discount offered by the factory.

► **David Garthwaite** Terms and conditions – have them established, have every customer approve. No exceptions.

► **Jennifer Valanski Moyer** Always get a proof approval! Even if it is exactly what the client asked for, they might change their mind.

Twitter  
Feed

@**PromosCanada** What's your reason for using #promotional giveaways? Increase visibility? Advertise your organization name?

@**staplespromo** Americans will spend nearly \$7 billion on Halloween this year. Check out these 3 ways to join fun: [bit.ly/16GyXAv](http://bit.ly/16GyXAv)

@**promokorn** “You can never cross the ocean until you have the courage to lose sight of the shore.” – *Christopher Columbus*

@**GregoryHarris** Unfortunate quote of the day: “After being taken over by an investment company, we won't be winning any workplace awards soon.”

@**gingerichgroup** How would you add style to your employee uniform to make it more fashionable?

@**thinkbjpsw** Quick poll. Government shut down: Good or Bad?

@**iwearyourshirt** What's that thing inside your gut that you're suppressing because you're afraid? It's time to let the creativity out of its cage!



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# LILAC BLOOM



## “Their popularity has really hit a high point that I don’t foresee diminishing anytime soon.”

Jay Deutsch, BDA (see page 42)



# Supplier Sales Up 4.8% in Q2

Industry supplier sales rose 4.8% in the second quarter of 2013, reaching \$3.2 billion overall, according to data released by ASI. The increase marks the fourteenth consecutive quarterly jump in sales and exceeds the Q1 rise of 4.5%.

“I think the Q2 figure seems like a realistic growth percentage,” said Doug Hayes, CEO of *Counselor* Top 40 supplier Ash City (*asi/37143*), “though feedback from internal and external sources seems to indicate that hard goods are trending more positively than apparel in Q2.”

The majority (53%) of supplier respondents said their Q2 sales increased, an uptick

from the prior two quarters when less than half of suppliers reported year-over-year gains. Smaller suppliers (less than \$10 million in annual revenues) reported an average second-quarter sales increase of 6%, while larger suppliers (more than \$10 million) reported an average increase of 4.3%.

Most suppliers (54%) expect their total 2013 sales will be improved over last year, although smaller firms especially are now much less optimistic than they were several months ago. “There will always be companies that significantly outperform and you see that in the large and some medium-size companies,” said

Paul Lage, president and CEO of Top 40 supplier Gill Studios (*asi/56950*). “I think the smaller suppliers are struggling and I’m not sure if we are actually capturing those numbers.”

By comparison to suppliers, a greater number of distributors are forecasting better 2013 sales, with 69% of firms that have annual sales of more than \$1 million predicting a rise in revenues this year. So far in 2013, distributor sales also continue to outpace supplier revenues, ASI data shows. *Counselor* previously reported Q2 distributor revenues increased 5.1% year-over-year, following Q1 gains of 5.7%. – DV

## Alibaba Will Take IPO To U.S.

China-based e-commerce firm Alibaba Group will reportedly hold its highly-anticipated initial public offering in the U.S. and not Hong Kong, following failed negotiations over a listing in Asia. Alibaba’s IPO will likely value the company at \$100 billion or more, according to analysts, making the launch the most coveted since Facebook’s debut on NASDAQ last year.

Alibaba officials – led by company chairman and *Counselor* Power 50 member Jack Ma – decided against listing in Hong Kong because they prefer a specific partnership structure that will help them retain absolute control even as the firm goes public. A Hong Kong listing policy might have allowed key investors – instead of Alibaba’s founders and top personnel – to nominate a majority of board members.

Alibaba and listing officials in Hong Kong didn’t release any official comments, although Charles Li, CEO of Hong Kong Exchanges & Clearing Ltd., wrote a thinly-veiled blog entry about the situation. “We need to look objectively at the issues and not be swayed by emotional arguments or be distracted by specific circumstances of any given company or issue,” Li wrote. “In the end, we should take responsibility for doing what is right and best for Hong Kong, not just what is safe and easy.”

It remains unclear whether Alibaba will list on the New York Stock Exchange or NASDAQ, although the former appears more likely, analysts contend. Alibaba has not chosen underwriters for the stock sale yet either, although leading firms like JPMorgan Chase, Credit Suisse and Morgan Stanley are among the most aggressive suitors. – DV







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# Bobblehead Promos Lead To Attendance Jump

A new survey by *The Wall Street Journal* shows that Major League Baseball (MLB) teams that gave away bobblehead products to fans during the recently completed season increased their attendance by an average of 4.8% on the days of the promotions. In fact, teams like the Seattle Mariners and the Cincinnati Reds increased their attendance for bobblehead giveaway days by more than 40%.

*The Journal* matched the announced attendance for games in which bobblehead products were given away with games without any promotions that were held on the same day

of the week (a regular Saturday afternoon game, for example, compared to a Saturday game that contained a bobblehead promotion). In doing so, the study found that professional baseball teams grew their attendance by nearly 5% on bobblehead days.

The bobblehead with the biggest impact this season? Former Seattle Mariners' outfielder Ken Griffey Jr. The Mariners saw 46,027 fans line up to get their hands on one of 20,000 Griffey dolls on August 10, an increase of almost 50% from the typical Saturday at Safeco Field.

Counselor Top 40 distributor BDA (*asi/137616*), which sold

the Griffey bobbleheads to the Mariners and has created about 1.7 million bobblehead items for MLB teams this season, has noticed the trend of the giveaways successfully driving attendance increases.

"Over the past few years in particular, their popularity has really hit a high point that I don't foresee diminishing anytime soon," Jay Deutsch, CEO of BDA, told Yahoo Sports recently. "We're seeing fans line up outside the ballpark hours before giveaway games to make sure they receive a bobble. The emergence of social media has also increased the overall excitement



of giveaways. Clubs are taking advantage of tools like Twitter, Facebook, Instagram and Vine to promote bobbles and engage the fan base with a high rate of success."

*The Journal* estimates that about 2.7 million bobbleheads were handed out at Major League Baseball games this season. — AC

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# Proforma Launches Program For Large Distributors

*Counselor* Top 40 distributor Proforma (*asi/300094*) announced that it has launched Proforma MAX, a new program aimed at large industry distributors. Proforma MAX, which provides an exclusive suite of services that helps larger distributors grow their top line sales, bottom line profits and improve their quality of life, also offers a guarantee of success.

"This is a custom-tailored program for multimillion-dollar distributors," said Greg Muzzillo, founder of Proforma, in an interview with *Counselor*. "We're putting our money where

our mouth is on this program by guaranteeing success and growth for large distributors."

Muzzillo said that the essence of the program will be found in Proforma's ability to match up industry reps with large distributors that join Proforma MAX. "These are companies that are looking to grow, and we can help them do that," Muzzillo said. "We have a database of 50,000 or so sales reps who have expressed interest in joining Proforma at one time or another. We can now match these people up with any new Proforma MAX distributors and essentially do

the recruiting for them."

Ultimately, Muzzillo said, the Proforma MAX program is designed to provide distributors with assistance not only in recruiting sales reps, but also acquisitions and handling major account programs that these companies may not have been able to fulfill before. Muzzillo also said the program is meant to create an alternative exit strategy option for distributor owners who are looking to improve their quality of life.

"We're calling Proforma MAX a lifestyle business, because we've learned that many large distributor owners are trying



to determine what their end-game is with their business," Muzzillo said. "We have many services – through our 150-person support center and our technology platform – that can help to free owners up to run their businesses like they want. The program is designed to help them grow their business and their quality of life." – AC



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# Study Criticizes Fast-Food Chains Over Kids' Marketing

A new study blasts fast-food restaurants – particularly McDonald's and Burger King – for emphasizing toy giveaways and movie tie-ins instead of nutrition when advertising to kids on TV. The study, funded by the Robert Wood Johnson Foundation, offers evidence that fast-food chains aren't adhering to industry self-regulation guidelines that were established by the Children's Advertising Review Unit.

"Fast-food companies use free toys and popular movies to appeal to kids, and their ads are much more focused on promotions, brands and logos

– not on the food," said James Sargent, the lead author of the study, in a statement.

McDonald's and Burger King are especially in focus because they're among 17 food and beverage companies that have promised to show healthier food and lifestyles when marketing to kids, or not advertise at all. Yet, based on the TV spots the restaurants ran between July 1, 2009, and June 30, 2010, the study's authors conclude that "little emphasis was placed on actually showing the food compared with adult advertisements from the same companies. Toy premiums and

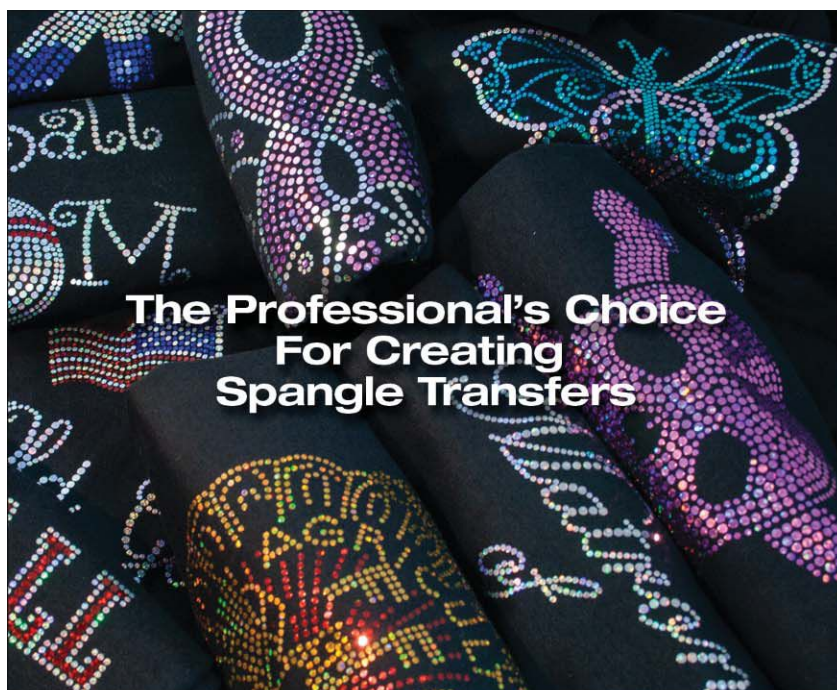
tie-ins were presented prominently in both the visual and audio elements of these advertisements."

Of the restaurants' ads directed at children, 99% marketed McDonald's or Burger King kids' meals. Of all of those fast-food ads, nearly 80% aired on Cartoon Network, Nickelodeon, Disney XD and Nicktoons, data showed. The study's authors argue that fast-food companies showed packaging, toys, movie tie-ins and logos so kids would build a brand association, rather than being interested in the meals themselves.

**Kids at Play**

Both McDonald's and Burger King have responded to the study's claims,

disagreeing with the conclusions and pointing out the data is from several years ago. "As a family brand, we take our commitment to responsible communication with our younger customers seriously," said McDonald's, in a statement. "The study in question is based on data that is three years old and does not accurately reflect our current advertising nor our commitment to promoting nutrition and active lifestyles in 100% of our marketing to children." – DV



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# Holiday Retail Sales Forecasted to Jump

Consulting firm Deloitte is predicting 2013 holiday retail sales will increase year-over-year by 4.5%, an improvement over 2012, as retailers are likely to continue strong discounts to lure customers into stores. Despite economic headwinds, total holiday sales from November into January are likely to reach at least \$963 billion, according to Deloitte's forecast.

"Rising home prices with steady job creation may buoy confidence in the economy and create a wealth effect," said Daniel Bachman, Deloitte's senior U.S. economist. "The debt ceiling and budget

debate will resume this fall alongside uncertainty about the implementation of health care reform, which may cause some concern among consumers, but at a macro level, these factors are unlikely to have a significant effect on the economy and retail sales."

While traditional sales channels are expected to produce moderate gains during the holidays, Deloitte predicts non-store revenues, which include online, catalog-based and interactive television purchases, will rise sharply by 12.5%. Deloitte is also forecasting mobile-influenced

store sales will account for 8%, or \$66 billion, of retail revenues this holiday season.

"Retailers now realize how to engage shoppers through their mobile devices both inside and outside the store, which is having a profound impact on customer interaction, store traffic and conversion rates," said Alison Paul, vice chairman of Deloitte. "Consumers using their smartphones are more likely to make a purchase compared with other shoppers in the store."

Deloitte's 2013 holiday sales forecast is optimistic compared to other research firms. By contrast, for example,

Happy  
Holidays



ShopperTrak announced last week it expects holiday retail sales to rise by just 2.4%. Regardless of predictions, retailers like Kmart and Walmart are already aggressively advertising special holiday offers and several stores have plans to boost temporary hiring. In fact, Chicago-based consultancy Challenger, Gray & Christmas is forecasting retailers will add 700,000 temporary employees for the fourth quarter. – DV

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# Small Business Concerned About Cyber Security

Costly and worryingly frequent, cyber attacks are a major concern for U.S. small businesses, a new study shows. The National Small Business Association (NSBA) released the results of a survey in which 94% of owners revealed that they are very or somewhat concerned about cyber security at their small businesses, nearly half of which have been victimized by high-tech attacks. "Small-business owners are handling more of their firm's IT operations," says NSBA President and CEO Todd McCracken. "This growing IT reliance makes issues such

as cyber security, intellectual property protection and a functional online marketplace critically important in today's global economy."

According to the NSBA's 2013 Small Business Technology Survey, cyber attacks cost small



businesses on average \$8,699 per incident. Companies that had their business banking accounts hacked lost, on average, \$6,927. The NSBA noted that such accounts are not protected the same way traditional consumer banking accounts are – a loophole in the law that only one in four small businesses are aware of.

Additionally, the survey revealed that business owners, one in four of which hold a patent, are concerned about intellectual property. "Unfortunately, among those impacted by the America

Lock it Down

Invents Act, the overwhelming majority say it has had a negative impact on their business," says NSBA Chair David Ickert.

In another key finding, the survey found that small-business utilization of technology platforms such as cloud computing, smartphones, tablets and high-speed Internet has increased over the past three years. This shift has driven an increase in small-business owners who report that they allow employees to telecommute – up from 44% three years ago to 60% today. – CR

# Small Business Hiring and Sales Forecasts Surge

A new survey reveals that U.S. small business owners plan to ramp up hiring. For August, the National Federation of Independent Business' monthly Small Business Economic Trends report indicated that 16% of small firms aim to increase total employment, a seven-percentage-point increase and the best reading since January 2007.

"Job creation plans for the next few months surged and plans to make capital outlays and expand inventory holdings improved as well," said William Dunkelberg, chief

economist at NFIB.

In addition to the hiring outlook improving, small businesses also told NFIB that they're expecting their sales to increase over the next six months. In fact, the amount of companies expecting sales growth within the next six months increased by eight percentage points, the largest jump in the survey this year.

The outlooks of the NFIB survey mirror what many in the ad specialty market are seeing right now. "Small-business owners remain the number-one buyers of promotional products and

confidence among small businesses, in general, is strengthening," said Bill Smith Jr., president of Top 40 distributor firm Brown & Bigelow (*asi/148500*). "I am optimistic about business prospects for our industry over the rest of 2013 and all of 2014."

Others believe growth and sales success is out there for industry companies that approach the market in specific ways. "Business is great, but business is always great if your company

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can continue to reinvent its brand position and point of difference to stay relevant," said Derek Block, CEO of

Top 40 distributor Touchstone (*asi/345631*). "The response may be a bit different if your business is built on taking orders, which puts you at the mercy of clients placing orders. The reality is most businesses are driven off the economy and the economy is doing well. I expect business to be strong the remainder of 2013 and in 2014." – DV



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# San Diego Moves to Ban Plastic Bags

The San Diego City Council's rules and economic development committee unanimously voted in September to move forward with an ordinance that would ban single-use plastic bags from the city's grocery stores and other retail outlets. San Diego's proposed ordinance would ban plastic bags in supermarkets, large stores that sell food, plus drug, convenience, hardware and clothing stores.

The proposal would also require stores to charge customers 10 cents per paper bag used as an alternative, but would exempt restaurants, nonprofits, food stamp recipients, and produce and meat products. The city would provide for distribution of reusable bags and

public education.

"San Diego is poised to become one of the largest cities to take such a positive step towards bettering our environment," said Sherri Lightner, chairwoman of the San Diego City Council committee overseeing the new legislation. "This is about protecting our ocean, our canyons, our waterways and landfills."

If the ordinance is passed, San Diego would become one of nearly 80 cities in California that have passed laws restricting single-use plastic bags. So far, interim mayor Todd Gloria said he would support the legislation banning plastic bags from supermarkets and some other retail stores. — DV



## Mergers & Acquisitions

# AIA Shifts Financing Partners

Top 40 distributor AIA Corporation (*asi/109480*) completed a recapitalization of the company in September, with private equity partner The Riverside Company selling its interest in AIA and being replaced as the company's main investor by McNally Capital of Chicago. Financial terms of the deal were not disclosed, but AIA CEO David Woods told *Counselor* that the transaction will result in no management or strategy changes for AIA.

"We have had a great eight year experience with Riverside," said Woods. "We welcome McNally Capital of Chicago as our new private equity partner, and we look

forward to a bright future of growth and success with the resources they bring to AIA."

The Riverside Company, based in Cleveland, OH, first invested in AIA in 2005 when it purchased the company from fellow Top 40 distributor 4imprint (*asi/197045*). "Riverside's business model typically anticipates a holding period of five to seven years," Woods said, "so it is normal for them to exit now."

### ► Vitronic Acquires Andrew Philips

Supplier firm Vitronic Promotional Group (*asi/93990*) announced that it has acquired Andrew Philips-Millennium

Leather LLC (*asi/36205*). Financial terms of the deal were not revealed. "I anticipate the Andrew Philips brand will become a core product offering for Vitronic," Lori Kates, general manager of Vitronic Promotional Group and president of the EBSCO Promotional Group, told *Counselor*. "They are known for their fine workmanship, their attention to style and design, and their application of superior quality materials. This is a natural extension of Vitronic's leading position in the interpretation of fashion trends and styles in the promotional market."

As part of the transaction,

Philip and Donna Kahan, former owners of Andrew Philips-Millennium Leather, will join the Vitronic organization. Philip will be the regional sales manager for New York City and New Jersey. Donna will join the supplier's product development team, focusing on leather products in the Andrew Philips collection. Kates said that there were "a small number" of Andrew Philips employees impacted by the sale. "They will be working with us during a brief transition as operations are moved to our 300,000-square-foot facility in Doniphan, MO," Kates said. "The employees have been provided a package to assist them in the future."



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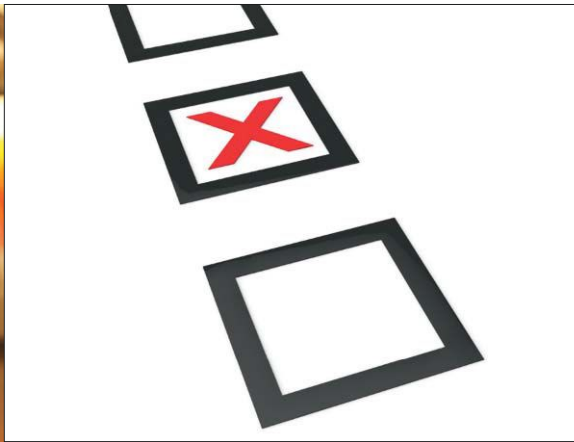
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### Selling to Nonprofits

Excerpt from a recent forum on our Facebook page about how distributors can market and sell effectively to nonprofit clients. To join our online forums, like our Facebook page at [www.asicentral.com/facebook](http://www.asicentral.com/facebook).

**Ryan Schade:** With money being tight for a lot of nonprofits, I find creating co-branded promos (a local biz shares imprint space and funds the purchase) a great way to win their accounts.

**Erich Campbell:** As garment decorators, we've often sold our 'dead' inventory at very low costs to nonprofits, or even re-decorated stock from 'abandoned' jobs through patches or covering prints.

**David Garthwaite:** Get your for-profit clients to donate products with both logos. They both get brand recognition, and you get to be the hero. Don't forget donating your time and services also benefits you in the long run.

**Richard Golden:** If they are NONprofits, they have NO money. Then why do business with them in the first place?

**Judi Brown:** Nonprofit does not mean no money. One of my nonprofit clients wants an item to distribute at a big conference. Most of the attendees will be corporate CEOs. I initially pitched products that I thought would represent the mission of the nonprofit, but it appears they're leaning toward a lower-end padfolio or something similar.



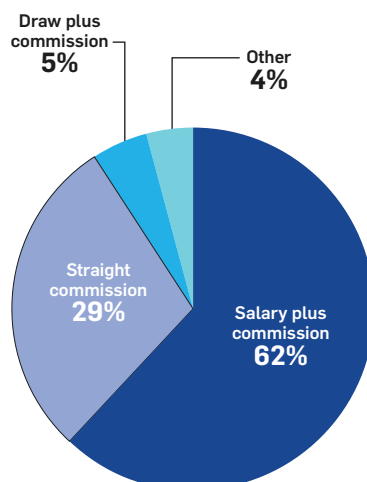
### It's in the Bag

"The best part about bags? They're lasting and people use them. They actually generate the most impressions of any promotional product."

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

### By The Numbers

What type of sales compensation model do you most prefer?



### Facebook Comments We Loved

'Tis Talk Like a Pirate Day.  
What's your fav pirate saying?

Laurie O'Shea

*I got my ears pierced for a buck an ear.*

Ali Derkatch

*Q: ARGGG.. If a pirate were not a pirate, what career would he have? A: A used cAAARRR Salesman? A bARRRRRtender? No, I think he would sell promotional yARRRRd sticks!*

Bling King

*Where's the rum, me wenches?*



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# Stock Report

## Suppliers Edge Distributors

Stock market ups and downs

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Distributor  
**+1.31%**

9/3/13-10/1/13								
Company	Stock Exchange	Symbol	52-week high	52-week low	Per-Share Price (10/1/13)	Market Capitalization (in millions)	Per-Share Change	Percent Change
DISTRIBUTORS								
► 4imprint Group	LSE	4IMPRINT	€ 570.00	€ 325.50	€ 551.50	€ 148	9.00 <span>▲</span>	<b>1.66%</b>
► Ace Marketing & Promotions Inc.	OTC	AMKT	0.60	0.20	0.35	16	(0.03) <span>▼</span>	<b>-7.89%</b>
► Inner Workings Inc.	NASDAQ	INWK	15.80	9.35	9.84	501	(0.77) <span>▼</span>	<b>-7.26%</b>
► New England Business Services Inc. <i>(Div. Deluxe Corp.)</i>	NYSE	DLX	43.49	28.33	43.15	2,170	3.77 <span>▲</span>	<b>9.57%</b>
► Tic Toc <i>(Div. Omnicom Group Inc.)</i>	NYSE	OMC	70.50	45.11	63.56	16,350	2.90 <span>▲</span>	<b>4.78%</b>
► Staples Promotional Products <i>(Div. Staples Inc.)</i>	NASDAQ	SPLS	17.30	10.94	14.80	9,780	0.97 <span>▲</span>	<b>7.01%</b>
SUPPLIERS								
► 3M Promotional Markets Dept. <i>(Div. 3M Corp.)</i>	NYSE	MMM	122.27	86.74	119.62	81,760	6.40 <span>▲</span>	<b>5.65%</b>
► A.T. Cross Co.	AMEX	ATX	22.62	8.38	19.18	254	(1.53) <span>▼</span>	<b>-7.39%</b>
► American Apparel Inc.	AMEX	APP	2.40	0.83	1.25	138	(0.13) <span>▼</span>	<b>-9.42%</b>
► BIC Corp.	PAR	BIC	101.50	75.01	86.04	4,107	(1.08) <span>▼</span>	<b>-1.24%</b>
► Cutter & Buck <i>(Div. New Wave Group)</i>	STO	NEWAB	39.30	19.00	35.40	1,616	(0.30) <span>▼</span>	<b>-0.84%</b>
► Delta Apparel Inc.	AMEX	DLA	17.97	12.80	17.39	136	0.87 <span>▲</span>	<b>5.27%</b>
► Ennis Inc. <i>(Parent company of Admore and Alstyle Apparel)</i>	NYSE	EBF	19.42	13.90	18.06	471	0.34 <span>▲</span>	<b>1.92%</b>
► Escalade Sports	NASDAQ	ESCA	8.70	4.67	8.65	117	0.75 <span>▲</span>	<b>9.49%</b>
► Fossil Special Markets Division	NASDAQ	FOSL	129.25	78.75	117.27	6,620	3.09 <span>▲</span>	<b>2.71%</b>
► Hanesbrands	NYSE	HBI	65.60	31.50	63.20	6,260	2.46 <span>▲</span>	<b>4.05%</b>
► Hilton Apparel Group <i>(Div. Jarden Corp.)</i>	NYSE	JAH	50.10	32.4267	49.11	5,530	1.68 <span>▲</span>	<b>3.54%</b>
► J.M. Smucker Co.	NYSE	SJM	114.72	81.60	105.41	11,080	0.02 <span>▲</span>	<b>0.02%</b>
► Johnson Worldwide Assoc./JWA	NASDAQ	JOUT	27.10	18.30	26.84	255	1.55 <span>▲</span>	<b>6.13%</b>
► Lancer Label <i>(Div. Mail Well Inc.)</i>	NYSE	CVO	3.15	1.85	2.94	188	0.04 <span>▲</span>	<b>1.38%</b>
► Lee Printwear <i>(Div. VFCorp. Acquisition Co.)</i>	NYSE	VFC	204.94	142.79	198.84	21,860	9.79 <span>▲</span>	<b>5.18%</b>
► Pfaelzer Brothers <i>(Div. ConAgra)</i>	NYSE	CAG	37.28	27.48	30.51	12,850	(3.39) <span>▼</span>	<b>-10.00%</b>
► Sanford Business-To-Business <i>(Div. Newell Rubbermaid)</i>	NYSE	NWL	28.47	18.84	27.66	7,970	1.94 <span>▲</span>	<b>7.54%</b>

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



# Next Level apparel

## Direct:

15730 S Figueroa St.  
Gardena, CA 90248  
310.631.4955

## Distributors:



Piscataway, NJ  
www.evatees.com

*Bodek and Rhodes*

HOME OF ULTRACLUB®

Pennsylvania, California,  
Florida, Massachusetts,  
Michigan  
www.bodekandrhodes.com



MCCREARY'S TEES

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www.mccrearystees.com



Gainesville, VA  
www.accinfo.com

*TSF* sportswear

Alabama, Florida,  
Texas, Puerto Rico  
www.tsfsportswear.com



Salt Lake City, UT  
www.slactivewear.com



San Diego, CA  
www.mission  
imprintables.com



San Jose, CA  
www.gsactivewear.com



AMERICAN  
T-SHIRT COMPANY

Honolulu, HI  
www.american-t-shirt.com

*Carolina Made, Inc.*  
Indian Trail, NC  
www.carolinamade.com

Style  
6760

[www.nextlevelapparel.com](http://www.nextlevelapparel.com)

# We've raised the bar when it comes to branding.

**Admint's & Zagabor®**

A-Z Food Gifts & Promotional Items



Logo Drop Wrapper

## Introducing 15 unique chocolate bar flavors... Exclusively for you.

Admint's & Zagabor is proud to introduce Hebert chocolates, a legacy of chocolate making that began in 1917. Hebert uses the finest ingredients, and offers fun-filled flavored bars to create a lasting impression.

### STOCK FLAVORS:

7-10 day production - Rush Available

- Mint Cookie Crunch
- Toffee Munchin' Crunch
- Peanut Butter Cup
- Raspberry Burst
- Café Espresso Bean
- Salty Sea Shore Caramel

Quantity	250	500	1000
Price	\$2.25	\$2.15	\$2.05

2.25 oz. Bar - 3R

### CUSTOM FLAVORS:

10-14 day production

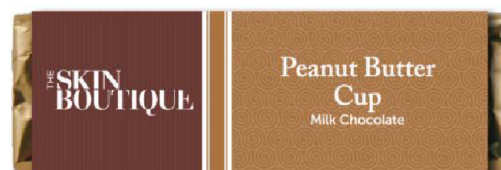
- Peanut Butter & Jelly Sandwich
- Coconut Craze
- Kettle Potato Chip
- Poppin' Candy Crunch
- Marshmallow S'mores Galore
- Shakin' Malted Milkshake
- Peppermint Candy Crunch
- Smokin' Chipotle
- Caramel Smoothie

Quantity	1000	2500
Price	\$2.05	\$1.95

2.25 oz. Bar - 2R



Full Custom Wrapper



**Gift Packaging Available**

856.931.7300 • www.admint's.com

ASI-31516 • SAGE-66741 • PPAI-227425





# Number Crunch Carry All

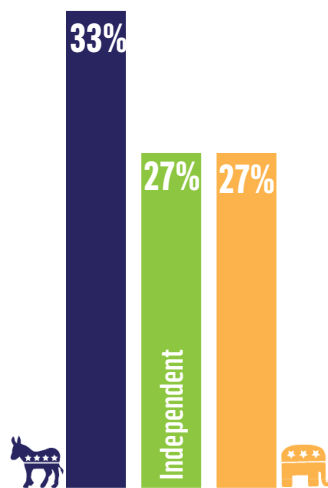
Generating the most impressions of any promo product, data shows that bags are a versatile ad vehicle.



**Logoed bags tie with writing instruments**

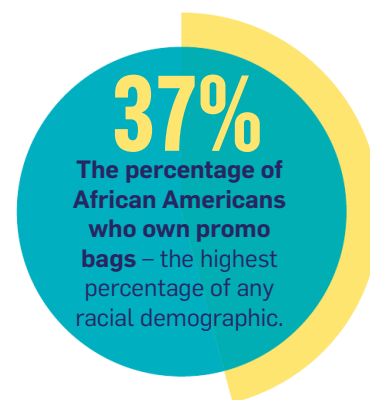
as having the lowest cost-per-impression of any promotional item in the United States.

**31%**  
**OF U.S. CONSUMERS**  
**OWN A PROMOTIONAL BAG**



## Politically Speaking

33% of Democrats own logoed bags, compared to 27% of Republicans and 27% of Independents.



## By the Bay

In the United States, San Franciscans are most likely to own a promotional bag.

**38%**

of consumers there have received one in the last 12 months.



## Income Gap

People who make less than \$50,000 are most likely to carry promo bags.



**Women are more likely than men to own branded bags**



Source: 2013 Global Ad Specialties Impressions Study

JUST THINK, IF THEY HAD MORE COMFORTABLE HOODIES,

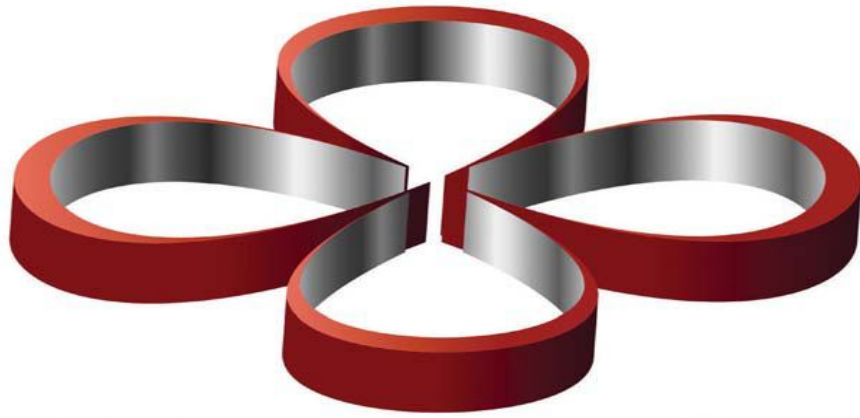


WOULD WE SEE THEM MORE OFTEN?

Outer space is cold—really cold. With so little body fat and after such a long trip, it's no wonder our green friends headed for the desert as soon as they got here. That's why if we could give them clothing, we'd give them our Ultimate Cotton® Fleece.

Made from patented 10oz heavyweight fleece and featuring a jersey-lined hood for wind protection, our Ultimate Cotton® Fleece keeps you cozy in the coldest places.



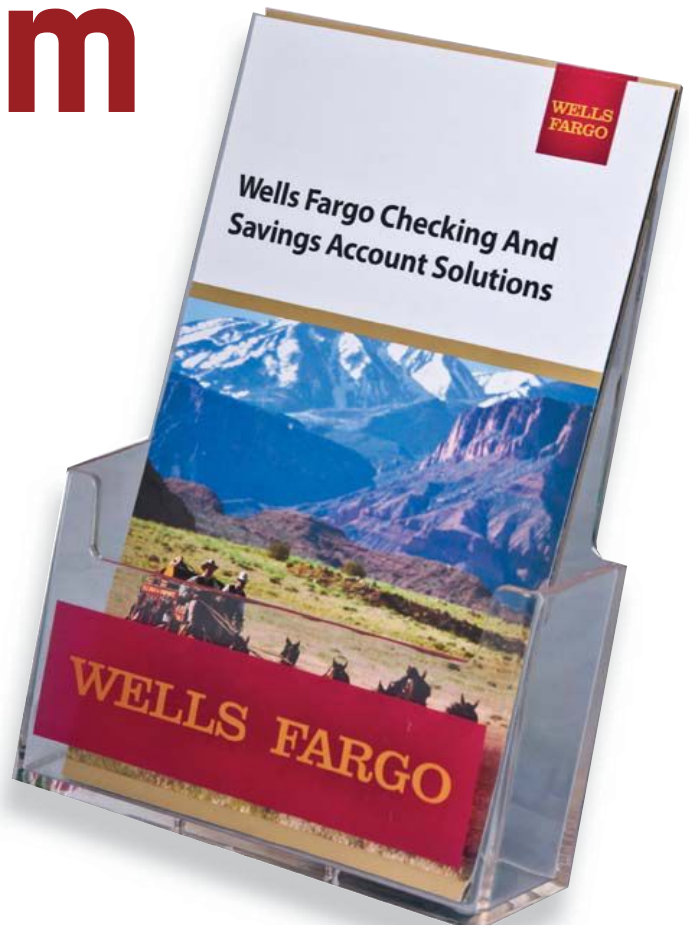


# The Display Source

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.

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,




Bruce Kelly, Vice President of Sales & Marketing  
The Display Source



# 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

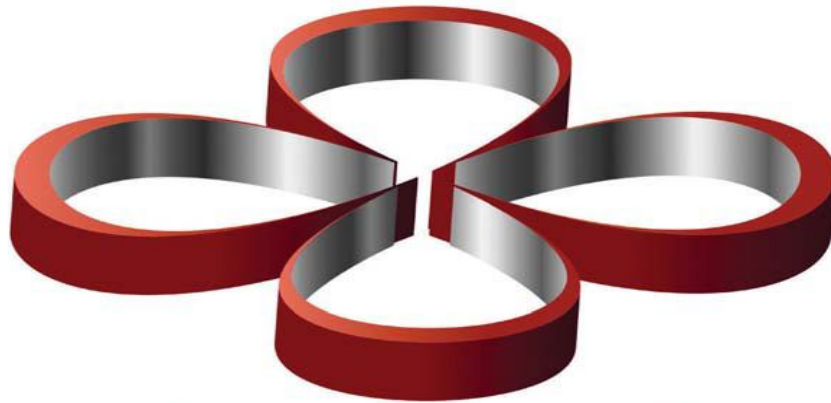
## Take Your Pick: Made in the USA or Customized Overseas



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



# COME ON!

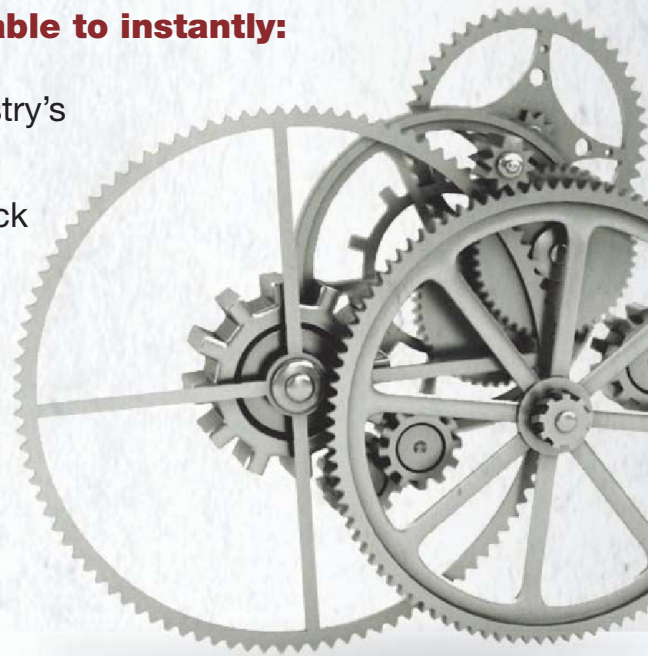
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# Product Picks

## A collection of unique products

By Chuck Zak



2

### 1. FLIGHT PLAN

EVA flying disc (MER-P100639) is fun for pets, children or anyone looking for some harmless playtime. Toss it out there for employee picnics, outdoor rallies and concerts. Available from Mercury Promos ([asi/70669](mailto:asi/70669)); [lilymercurypromos@gmail.com](mailto:lilymercurypromos@gmail.com)

### 2. SINKING FEELING

Hold clips, coins and odds and ends in this whimsical basin-shaped dispenser (MI-557). Humorous promo for plumbers or home supply retailers. Available from Minya Collections ([asi/71370](mailto:asi/71370)); [www.minyausa.com](http://www.minyausa.com)

### 3. CREATIVE WRITING

The Boogie Board LCD tablet (090050) is an ultra-light, 1/8" thin alternative to paper for home, office or school. Ideal gift for new homeowners or any paperless office. Available from Improv Electronics ([asi/62489](mailto:asi/62489)); [www.improvelectronics.com](http://www.improvelectronics.com)

### 4. GIFTED PROGRAM

Silkscreen or engrave this pewter-finished reindeer cast ornament (YP7100) for a tasteful holiday decoration. Includes cord. Memorable way to thank customers during the holiday season. Available from Marken ([asi/68760](mailto:asi/68760)); [www.marken-ind.com](http://www.marken-ind.com)

### 5. LEGAL TENDER

Present this custom JFK half dollar with a ring around it and in a capsule with a velour box. The Kennedy half dollar has been struck since 1964, but in 2002 the coins were held from circulation making them highly collectible. Available from Matthew Mint ([asi/69588](mailto:asi/69588)); [www.themattthew-mint.com](http://www.themattthew-mint.com)



5

### 6. SQUEEZE PLAY

Collapsible polyethylene water bottle (PL-4071) holds up to 28 oz. when fully expanded or 16 oz. when collapsed. Includes push-pull spout and makes a funky fitness or travel promo. Available from Prime Line ([asi/79530](mailto:asi/79530)); [www.primeline.com](http://www.primeline.com)

### 7. OPEN ENDED

Unique finger grip bottle opener (BO-FCL-03) features a comfortable, natural grip and vivid four-color imprint for intricate designs and logos. Great promo for microbreweries or sports bars. Available from Faro USA ([asi/53697](mailto:asi/53697)); [www.faro-usa.com](http://www.faro-usa.com)

### 8. SNOW DAY

Intricately-designed nickel snowflake ornament (ORN-NS) has a silver metallic string for hanging. Slip this into a large holiday order as a thank you or to decorate storefront displays. Comes in white or silver finish. Available from EMT ([asi/52263](mailto:asi/52263)); [www.emteasy.com](http://www.emteasy.com)

### 9. DESK STAR

Sand sifter paperweight (CS-SAND) features colored sand flowing through to reveal a different logo on each side. Especially effective with iconic logos or brief, bold messages. Available from ColorStrike/Liquid Technologies ([asi/45820](mailto:asi/45820)); [www.colorstrike.com](http://www.colorstrike.com)



1

[www.stada.de](http://www.stada.de)



9



8



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2



1



### 1. HAIR FLAIR

Soft stretchable elastic ties (ATS-L) are versatile accessories for the hair or wrist and can be worn as a bracelet. Add some color to high school competitions or charity events. Available from Quashies ([asi/80127](http://asi/80127)); [www.quashies.com](http://www.quashies.com)

### 2. STUCK UP

Powerful magnetic holder (MCC) holds mugs, tumblers, spray cans and more to any metal surface. Works great in the garage or workshop. Use it to promote auto repairs or any "hands-free" solution. Available from Ads On Magnets ([asi/31061](http://asi/31061)); [www.adsonmagnets.com](http://www.adsonmagnets.com)

### 3. DR. DATA

Unique doctor-shaped USB flash drive is plug-and-play compatible with PC or Mac. Ideal for medical transcription services or to promote medical-related media. Available from Pingline ([asi/78137](http://asi/78137)); [www.pingline.com](http://www.pingline.com)

### 4. PRIMARY COLORS

Get blue, red, green and black ink in this four-color mini pen (4CM). Great tool for teachers or avid readers who like to mark up their texts. Available from BIC Graphic North America ([asi/40480](http://asi/40480)); [www.norwoodbic.com](http://www.norwoodbic.com)

### 5. FRESH IMPRINTS

Keep food and drinks at the right temperature with a reusable cooler thermometer (121) that indicates when temperature is safe for storage. Nice idea for food service or energy conservation programs. Available from Thermographics ([asi/91100](http://asi/91100)); [www.thermographics.com](http://www.thermographics.com)

### 6. CUDDLE CORP

Create your own custom stuffed mascot – animal, airplane, vehicle or anything users can imagine. Stock plush also available. A great giveaway at sporting or community events. Available from Anico Promotions ([asi/36230](http://asi/36230)); [www.bearpromo.com](http://www.bearpromo.com)

### 7. TABLE SAVERS

The acrylic coating on these square coasters (1M3-KCC-375) protects against damage while the non-skid cork backing keeps them in place. Surefire product for any drink promotion in a wealth of colors. Available from Menu Essentials ([asi/43923](http://asi/43923)); [www.presentationessentials.com](http://www.presentationessentials.com)

### 8. BEST IN SHOW

Personalize this 8" convex optical crystal award (044006) with ILLUMACHROME 4-color design for an eye-catching message of congratulations. An impressive recognition for hard-working sales teams or employee anniversaries. Available from Crystal D ([asi/47759](http://asi/47759)); [www.crystal-d.com](http://www.crystal-d.com)

### 9. CLOUD COVER

Function meets fashion in this clear bubble umbrella (120BUB) with an extra-large 54" arc and convenient curved plastic handle matched to trim. Promote local network affiliates or public radio. Available from Stromberg Brand ([asi/89955](http://asi/89955)); [www.stromberg-brand.com](http://www.stromberg-brand.com)

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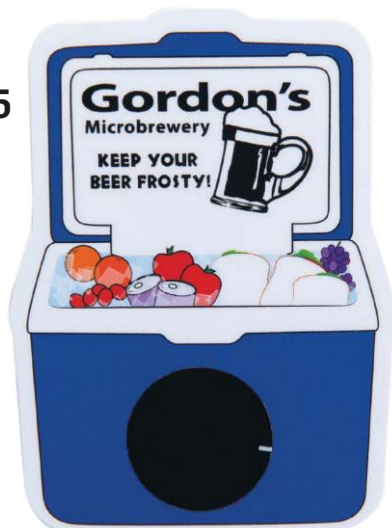
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4





# THE MISSY TEE

## Style 2517

shown in red

Our popular 5.5 oz soft spun 100% cotton tubular jersey style features a loose fitting, slightly boxy cut for comfort and ease of movement. Available in 11 colors and sizes XS-3XL.



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**AA**

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# Case Studies

Profile • Market Watch • Promo

## Profile

### How We Sell Sustainability

Finding the right customer is key.

By Dave Vagnoni

How has Fairware Promotional Products (*asi/191452*) become one of the fastest-growing distributors in the industry? By selling on principle, not on price. “We identified a gap in the market,” says Denise Taschereau, Fairware’s CEO and co-founder. “Eight years ago, there were some distributors focusing on the green products arena, but very few that were also identifying social compliance as an issue.”

So, Taschereau and Fairware’s other founder, Sarah White, decided to focus their pitch on sustainable products and ethical sourcing. They targeted companies that made commitments to purchasing with the environment in mind, and it worked. Fairware has since won business from companies like Johnson & Johnson, Aveda and Patagonia. Between 2009 and 2011, Fairware more than doubled its sales, joining the multi-million dollar revenue club.

**Q: How do you find companies to call on?**

**A:** Our narrow focus on our niche makes it easier to prospect. We look for brands and organizations that have a strong commitment to social and environmental responsibility – we get them and they get us. Being so specialized enables us to sell



**Denise Taschereau (left) and Sarah White** are co-founders of Fairware.



into markets all across the U.S. and Canada. It also helps us say “no” when there isn’t a good fit.

**Q: What approach do you take with suppliers?**

**A:** We ask our suppliers to review and sign off on a four-page survey that includes our supplier code of conduct. The survey provides us with information on our suppliers’ commitment to worker rights and environmental management. Where possible, we prioritize sourcing sustainable products such as certified organic cotton and recycled items.

**Q: How do you respond to client objections about eco-friendly products?**

**A:** The classic objections relate to price (green products are too much) and selection (not

enough variety or color options). The former can be hard to respond to – but because we don’t compete on price, we are usually able to steer the conversation back to the value add of aligning merchandise with brand promises. When you’re sourcing merchandise for an organic food company, for example, they get that certified organic costs more because they live that challenge in their own supply chain every day. To tackle the issue of selection, we work with retail suppliers for specific projects, or design and manufacture our own products.

**Q: What’s an example of a campaign you’ve run recently?**

**A:** A favorite that comes to mind is a campaign with an environmental NGO and Patagonia Toronto. We provided

them with biodegradable seeded paper hang tags to use in urban ravines as part of a community engagement program.

**Q: What markets respond well to eco-friendly offerings?**

**A:** The natural food and products sector is a good fit, as are outdoor retail brands. We work with many consumer product companies because we can help them leverage promotional merchandise to connect their story and commitment to the end-consumer.

**Q: What eco-friendly trends do you see developing in the near future?**

**A:** There has been a lot of innovation in technical textiles over the past few years and some emerging systems for minimizing impact. The Sustainable Apparel Coalition and its HIGG Index is probably the most interesting development. The initiative boasts a coalition of major footwear and apparel brands. The aim is to quantify the impacts of apparel and create a common way to measure that across brands, meaning you could compare a Nike shoe to an adidas shoe using the same indicators.

*Read more at [asicentral.com](http://asicentral.com).*

# Market Watch

## Retail

How to approach stores and brands to get results.

By Betsy Cummings

If all goes well in Q4, Match Up Promotions (*asi/264230*) will have a “substantial presence” with a national retailer by early 2014, according to Adam Thornton, the company’s president. The deal, which Thornton can’t reveal until it’s finalized, could bring in more than \$1 million each year to the Longwood, FL-based distributor.

For Match Up, the retail sector – which represented 4.1% of total distributor revenues in 2012 – presents a new opportunity for consistent growth. Are you wondering how you, too, can make gains in the retail market? Read on for approaches you can take.

### ► The Way In

Distributors admit getting promotional incentives inside stores – whether through contest giveaways, mid-aisle kickstands, gift-with-purchase ties or premiums handed out with product demos – can be a challenge. And, let’s be honest, if you have no experience working with retail groups, the chances of landing an in-store promotional gig with Target or Wal-Mart are probably slim to none. So what can you do? Where should you look to gain orders from retailers?

Successful distributors say a great way to win business in the retail sector is to partner with a brand marketer or



manufacturer who already has ties with a store. A distributor can then leverage connections to set up pitch meetings that might otherwise never occur.

Ryan Kaback, whose company just created denim cell phone covers for a national jeans company, acknowledges that using existing contacts has been a big key for him in landing business with retail outlets. “A lot of times people will leave one company and go to another,” says Kaback, a partner at Custom Logos (*asi/173183*).

Of course, even with the right contacts, persistence matters, too. Kaback, in fact, believes that one of his sales reps was able to land a large

fast food client account simply by dogged effort. “It took us two years to get in,” Kaback says, “and that’s just because the rep was persistent and would constantly show up and bring things and call.” One day the food chain’s vendor made an error and Custom Logos was there to pick up the business.

That kind of luck is rare, though, Kaback concedes, and most distributors insist that cold calls, particularly to large stores, are rarely the way in. “We’re intelligent enough to know what we don’t know,” Thornton says. “For us, it’s easier to partner with folks that have an existing presence in that realm.”

Indeed, it’s better to leverage

referrals from marketers you already work with, says Steve Garst, owner of Stamford, CT-based Proforma Promotions Consultants (*asi/300094*), who’s done just that. Several years ago, a national bottled water company filed for bankruptcy and disbanded. Suddenly, the company’s marketers, many of whom Garst knew, were out of jobs. When some of them found work at other beverage companies, Garst was there to reconnect. Doing so allowed him to pick up a \$1.6 million promotional campaign, which used scooters as a contest giveaway. The water company’s bankruptcy turned out to be a great opportunity for Garst’s company, he says.



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Another point of entry into the retail sector may come through trade shows, says Zina Santos, co-founder and vice president of business development for Westchester, NY-based August Kitchen, which produces J-Burger Seasoning, an organic gourmet food item. For small companies like hers, Santos says, partnering with a distributor who could offer signage, incentives and in-store demo concepts is ideal, particularly if they've previously created them for other brands. Tablecloths, shirts and aprons are all effective promotional product giveaways that have worked during her demos, she says.

### ► Making the Pitch

Even distributors who manage to connect with brand marketers or manufacturers should still enter a meeting as if they're pitching the retailer directly and make sure they keep in mind a few key things. For starters, distributors should find out everything they can about that particular retailer.

"They need to understand how they go to market," Garst says. "They really need to know the industry and how the company gets the product to retail, whether it's through wholesalers or a network of sales individuals out there selling the product."

In addition, experts insist, it helps to know about product safety concerns, shipping specifications and other details that any promotional item would be affected by as a result of working with the retailer. Vanessa Ting, a former

buyer for Target and founder of Retail Path, a retail growth consultancy, thinks it's also important to recognize the differences – some of which are stark – between one retailer and another.

"I worked at Target, and their way of handling in-store displays is a lot different than Wal-Mart versus CVS versus Kroger," says Ting. "Target is notorious for controlling the brand of the store."

Suggesting displays, promotional campaigns or other items that deviate from Target's brand identity would most likely be an immediate deal breaker. Likewise, proposing a kickstand for a promotion at Costco would undoubtedly end any chance of doing business with that national retailer, Ting says. "If you walk down a Costco aisle you will never see that as a shopper. If I was a Costco buyer and I saw a proposal with a kickstand in it, that would turn me off. It's like, 'did you not even walk into my store? If we didn't get a thoughtful proposal, how will you be a thoughtful business partner?'"

Rama Beerfas, owner of San Diego-based Lev Promotions, believes it's also critical to know a store's demographics, even if a distributor is pitching executives in tandem with a product's manufacturer. "Take a look at the website, see the physical property, walk the floors, see what it is they're selling," Beerfas says. Also, find out how the store is selling products in conjunction with promotional items.

Besides spending time in a store, gathering demographic and sales data is crucial, too. Companies with loyalty programs often have a wealth of information on customers, Beerfas suggests. Other reports can come from the store's point of sale system or even security tapes.

Additionally, Beerfas says, all pitches should be accompanied with data to prove the power of the promotion. "If you're going to pitch something like that you've got to be able to back it up with case histories, statistics that will show that what the retailers put into it will be nothing compared to what they get out of it," Beerfas says. She adds that ROI should be not just about the dollars that one specific promotion brings to the store, but the long-term growth potential of that promotion and similar ones in the future.

### ► Show Samples And Value

When considering products, it's crucial that distributors suggest items that are not only appropriate to the product they're trying to promote, but appropriate to the store's typical customer and to the retailer's brand identity. Presentations themselves should be tailored to the store's level of sophistication. Pitching a larger retailer? A Prezi presentation with visuals and virtual samples is likely in order.

Pitching a small chain in your city? A look-them-in-the-eye conversation with tangible

samples will go over well, distributors say.

As with many product pitches, retailers – especially those focused on a promotion's financial return – will most likely want to see mock-ups of promotional pieces. When Custom Logos presented its denim cell phone holder, it offered up a "virtual image of what it would look like," Kaback says. "That sealed the deal. Without that image I have no doubt that we would not have been able to close" the deal.

Perhaps that's because retailers are always keen to know what the perceived value of a product will be among consumers, something they're more likely to gauge if they can see the item for themselves.

"One of the most regular things that occurs when I'm being asked about a gift-with-purchase is perceived value," says Kaback. With retailers, store shoppers "are paying to get the incentive." For that reason, Kaback says, a promotional product has to seem like it has tremendous value because "it's incentivizing [customers] to spend money."

Finally, distributors caution, don't be in a huge rush to make your move on the retail market. Taking your time and being thorough matters a lot. In such a competitive market, every impression counts, so do all you can to get it right the first time. As Santos points out, "it's so hard to get a meeting with retailers, and if you blow that first time you may not get that call back."



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# Promo Close-Up Hog Heaven

A distributor adds flavor to a culinary campaign.

By Jennifer Vishnevsky

There's little doubt pork producers have benefitted over the years from TV ads. After all, who hasn't seen a spot for "the other white meat" at least once? So it made perfect sense for trade group Alberta Pork to launch a promotional campaign with TV commercials.

But, it turns out, as soon as the spots ended, so did enthusiasm for the group's Passion for Pork domestic campaign. In fact, Alberta Pork's website hits tumbled from up to 400 a day to just above 50. It was time, the organization realized, to reinvigorate interest, so it turned to promotional products.

Distributor The Image Group (*asi/230059*) stepped in to bolster the campaign, suggesting products like an embroidered chef coat and animal-shaped flexi cutting boards with the Passion for Pork logo. As distribution of the cutting boards was underway at events, a few people provided feedback that they planned to use the cutting boards as place mats.

"The campaign's success is largely attributable to the prominent role of public feedback in the re-branding process," says Janet Dickerson, co-founder and principal of brand management firm Pixel Prose Media. "Having an attentive listening program in place to monitor the audience's engagement with your product is critical to identifying and addressing potential shortcom-



A flexible cutting board pumped up Alberta Pork's campaign.

ings before they become a hindrance."

A key campaign event was a high-profile dinner in Edmonton, attracting more than 1,400 diners. Here, local restaurants and chefs clad in their Passion for Pork coats prepared local ingredients and favorites from the region. The Passion for Pork cutting boards were set out as place mats so people could take them home following the event.

Next, the campaign went viral. Alberta Pork started to receive photographs of fun and crazy poses of the pig cutting boards in various get-ups and in different places. Alberta Pork

has used the photos on its websites and continues to promote them through social media to build up demand for the boards.

"Television advertising, while effective, tends to have a shorter lifespan than viral ads, which continue to build momentum the more people see and share it," says Dickerson. "The Image Group's decision to convert to an online medium was a particularly smart and intuitive move, as it allowed the marketing team to cast a wider net at a much lower expense to the client."

Website visits have again increased, and at much lower

costs than buying television spots, Alberta Pork admits. The organization ordered 4,000 cutting boards and 72 embroidered coats, totaling just \$7,200.

"With this well-executed campaign, The Image Group showed clients and competitors that it can think outside of the box and implement solutions that will have diverse and widespread appeal," says Dickerson. "The pig-shaped cutting boards were a lighthearted, effective way to forge an emotional connection with Alberta Pork's audience by offering a product that can be used practically and creatively."




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# Apparel

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## Trends Wrapped Up

Scarves present a versatile and unique option for a variety of promotional programs.

By Sara Lavenduski

At September's New York Fashion Week, designers stuck out their necks – and then covered them with all manner of neckwear. Men's design houses such as N. Hoolywood and Michael Bastian showcased bandanas tied around the neck with collared shirts. Meanwhile, women's neckerchiefs from Marc by Marc Jacobs, Ostwald Helgason and Creatures of the Wind channeled Paris cafés.

As the bandana and neckerchief look sparked interest on the catwalks, promotional suppliers have been in on the action for years. Bruce Everakes, president of Wolfmark (*asi/98085*), says his company offers a large variety of both solid and pattern scarves in silk and polyester, in over 25 solid colors. "We also offer scarves that complement our fashion ties," he says. "And, we just introduced our Infinity scarves, in six fashion colors. They are made of a cotton/silk blend that goes perfectly with any attire."

Meanwhile, Buffalo Bay (*asi/42416*) carries custom 100% silk and 100% polyester wet-dyed and woven ties, custom 100% silk and 100% polyester wet-dyed

scarves, and 100% silk custom digital print ties and scarves. "We've seen increased popularity of our digital print on silk items," says Kelly Holmes, vice president of sales. "The ability to reproduce photographic images or original artwork with a depth of color and shades has really been gathering a following."

Among the most common clients for tied neckwear, says Everakes, are those looking to put together a uniform program, particularly hospitality staff and sales representatives at trade shows. "A scarf is a very classic accessory piece that adds a certain level of sophistication to the user," Everakes says. "This conveys a high-end image to the intended target."

Holmes adds that the different styles of scarves make them a versatile choice. "They're very popular with many industries," she says. "In addition to basic corporate wear, we see a lot of demand in health care, charities, events and employee recognition."

When pitching neckwear, says Holmes, suggest a custom-printed item. "Neckties and



This 100% silk scarf (004SSD-6\_36) from Buffalo Bay (*asi/42416*) features a custom full-color digital print of official Kentucky Derby artwork.

scarves can literally be wearable art," she says. "If a distributor has an end-user client that they think is a good match for the category, we always recommend creating a virtual fea-

turing their logo and product. Suddenly, instead of just trying to imagine doing ties or scarves, their customer sees their customized scarf. It becomes much more personal that way."

# Sizing Special Dimensions

An apparel program can go awry if distributors don't understand the sizing needs of their clients.

By Samantha Phillips

One of the most vexing aspects of any promotional apparel program is providing the right range of sizes. When garments are intended to fit a large and diverse audience, there are going to be vast differences in the sizes required to fit each person properly. You'll need a wider selection of sizes than XS to XL.

That's why promotional apparel suppliers are expanding into specialty sizes that are cut in proportions more favorable to different body types. A petite pant, for example, will have a shorter stride and inseam for women who are under 5'4". A tall size pant might be cut with a longer rise and inseam length. Shirt-sleeves and shirt tails will be lengthened as well. Tall sizes can be applied for either women or men; they are typi-

**"With 75 tall options in full-color runs, we hope to comfortably outfit every member of the team, allowing for a more unified look."**

Lee Strom, SanMar (*asi/84863*)

cally indicated for women over 5'9" or men taller than 6'2".

SanMar recently announced its 2014 apparel catalog will carry the industry's largest selection of Talls. "We're putting a stake in the ground regarding Talls," says Lee Strom, senior marketing manager at SanMar. "With 75 tall options in full-color runs, we hope to comfortably outfit every member of the team, allowing for a more unified look."

There's more about specialty sizing than just height, however. Garment manufacturers and apparel brands are all catching up to the fact that Americans have gotten bigger and are in need of plus sizes. An NPD study found that more than two-thirds of the 7,500 women who participated in the survey consider themselves "special size" customers. They aren't looking for an entirely different brand or line dedicated to their body type. What they really want is plus-size clothing in the same brands, colors and styles that are offered to smaller women.

The same is true for women receiving promotional clothing or uniforms. They want to be outfitted like their more petite counterparts to feel part of a team. Furthermore, offering plus sizes in a promotional style makes it possible for companies to maintain a common identity among its staff members.



This Sport-Tek performance sweatshirt (TST246) from SanMar (*asi/84863*), is made from double-knit polyester with a full athletic cut. It's available in Tall sizes LT-4XLT.



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# Fabrics

## Foray Into Fashion Fleece

A cold-weather staple, fleece presents many sales opportunities in the promotional market.

By Samantha Phillips

Fleece isn't just for a cozy weekend at home. Today there are new blends and weights of fleece garments cut in more fashionable styles than ever before.

"The popularity of fashion fleece has grown in recent years," says Steve Valeri, vice president of marketing for Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*). "We've kept up with this trend, giving our customers an outstanding selection from leading fashion brands such as Alternative, Anvil and Bella + Canvas. Some of the noticeable features you'll find on fashion fleece styles are a lighter weight, high cotton content, contrasting drawcords and white metallic zippers."

Performance technologies have also defined a new era of fleece garments. Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*), for example, has incorporated a number of features that make wearing fleece an even more comfortable experience. "The newest, innovative features from our fleece can be found in our outerwear pieces that feature TempUp fabrics," says John Perez, spokesperson for Tri-Mountain. "These fabrics actually work to retain your body heat and keep you warm, even though the piece itself is relatively light."

Perez highlights the Solstice (F7260) and Lady Solstice (FL7260), which also feature moisture-wicking technology



◀The Hana (FL688) from Tri-Mountain (*asi/92125*), features a long cut, fashionable funnel neck with drawstrings and kangaroo pocket along the princess seams. Made from 60/40 cotton/poly slub fleece.



▲Anvil's fashion fleece stands out with its slimmer fit and contrasting drawcords. Available in ladies' crewneck (71000L) and men's full-zip hoodie (71600) from Broder Bros. Co. (*asi/42090*).

to draw perspiration away from the body. "This whole system keeps your body warm and dry," he says.

Now is the time to sell these garments. With the holiday selling season around the corner, think of fashionable fleece

for an executive gift that can go from casual Friday at the office to a comfortable evening at home.



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# SHIP LE

An in-depth guide to energizing your workplace, motivating employees, improving productivity, and becoming a leader that people want to follow.

**W**ant to get the most out of people, improve your workplace culture, and increase your company's profits?

Stop dictating everything to employees. "No good leader walks around an office and tells people how to do their jobs," says Mark Howard, president of Howard Associates, a management consulting firm in New York. "The best leaders listen, process other people's ideas, and create environments where employees can thrive. They ensure that people are able to take risks, and they allow them the space to help the company's bottom line in unique ways."

Ultimately, good leaders engage their people and help ramp up their performance so that the company and the employees benefit. Is that you? On the following pages, we offer a multitude of tips and strategies to help you achieve what Howard describes above. There's a feature on the power of listening, another article on five mistakes that leaders must avoid, an interview with leadership and motivation guru Adrian Gostick, and even a quiz to help you determine your leadership strengths and weaknesses.

Turn the page to begin.

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Bestselling business book author Adrian Gostick on corporate culture: "You need to foster an environment in which people are empowered to do their jobs and have the motivation to do it."



# HAPPY PEOPLE, HAPPY BOTTOM LINE

Best-selling author Adrian Gostick explains the importance of having engaged employees, and makes the business case for improving corporate culture.

*Interviewed by Andy Cohen*

“If your culture is bad, your business is bad.” Adrian Gostick, best-selling author and business consultant, is explaining the correlation between a company’s corporate culture and its bottom line – and he has some very clear advice for anybody running a company today. “Listen, you can come up with all the great sales strategies you want and all the clever marketing campaigns possible, and even devise the most creative new products,” he says. “But your company won’t perform well unless you have engaged employees who want to do a good job every day. That drives everything your company does.”

Gostick, the head of The Culture Works, a global training and consulting firm, has seen firsthand through the clients he works with that there’s a clear link between positive corporate cultures and high-performing

companies. “The key is that companies that consistently grow their revenues and profits also have cultures that employees want to work in,” Gostick said, in an interview with *Counselor*. “These companies have highly engaged employees who are also empowered and energized. Oh, and they also happen to do really well financially.”

Indeed, according to Gostick, who’s the author of *The New York Times* bestselling business book *The Carrot Principal: How the Best Managers Use Recognition to Engage Their People, Retain Talent, and Accelerate Performance*, there’s no better way to ensure success today than to increase employee engagement. “It’s the holy grail in business today,” he says.

Gostick spoke to *Counselor* about how leaders in the ad specialty market can increase their employee engagement, improve their corporate culture, and

ultimately make their companies grow because of it.

**Counselor:** You’ve done a lot of research into high-performing companies? What do you think makes them that way?

**Gostick:** Over the last few years, we’ve done a major study of 300,000 global companies, and we’ve been able to make a link between financial performance and corporate culture. It seems like the companies that perform the best – both top and bottom lines – also have corporate cultures that allow employees to flourish. These employees aren’t dictated to all the time, and they’re given the freedom to make decisions.

**Counselor:** They’re engaged in their work?

**Gostick:** Absolutely. We found that in high-performing companies, employees tend to be enabled and energized, which is

a level beyond even engagement. They're empowered to do their jobs and they have the motivation to do it well.

**Counselor:** And even though that link exists, you're finding that many companies today aren't focused enough on their cultures?

**Gostick:** That's correct. There is a lack of focus today on making sure employees are engaged in their work, but I'd make the argument that if your corporate culture is bad, then your business is probably bad, as well. Unfortunately, I see a lot of companies that just don't have a high level of truly engaged employees.

**Counselor:** Why is that?

**Gostick:** Well, you can't ignore the effects of the economy over the past five years on employees today. Companies have been pushing their people harder and faster. They're really asking a lot of their people and employees aren't necessarily benefiting from the increased expectations and workloads. As the economy continues to improve, though, I'd hope that we'll see a resurgence in employee engagement.

**Counselor:** What do good leaders do to ensure they have engaged employees?

**Gostick:** First of all, they create a transparent culture that breeds trust throughout the whole organization. And, they see it as part of their job and their mission to make people feel great about working at that company. Ultimately, they know it is their responsibility to ensure that their people are happy coming to work every day.

**Counselor:** That sounds like a relatively simple thing, but clearly it's not.

**Gostick:** It's really not. There are many factors that can go into why somebody is happy at work. We've found that people are happiest at workplaces where the mission is clear, where management shares information with employees, where there's an agility to the operations because everything isn't micromanaged, and where there's accountability. Employees want to know that they'll be rewarded for a job well done, and people will be held accountable if they're not doing their jobs. The worst thing managers can do is allow some employees to subsist if they're not doing their jobs well. That becomes really demotivating for all the other employees of the

company who are doing their jobs well.

**Counselor:** As far as recognition goes, what do managers need to do to ensure they're keeping employees motivated?

**Gostick:** They need to use the sociology of the five-to-one ratio. Great managers offer five times more positive comments than negative ones. Every single day, leaders of high-performing teams are consistently recognizing their people for a job well done. Sometimes it's with tangible rewards and other times it's just thanking people for working extra hard on a project. Companies that work on offering five times more praise than criticism tend to have more motivated and engaged workforces.

## “Effective leaders are open to their people's ideas and they're interested in implementing them.”

**Counselor:** That kind of approach must really show up when employees describe the culture of their companies.

**Gostick:** It absolutely does, and we talk to employees all the time about this. The companies that grasp this and really are implementing it are usually the places that people just like coming to every day. Those that think of recognition as an afterthought are sure to have cultures that are lacking. And, if your corporate culture isn't working, nothing will work. Sales, marketing, R&D, customer service. It will all be lacking if your corporate culture doesn't make people feel great about working there.

**Counselor:** Like you said earlier, the recent economic environment has made it difficult on many companies. Employees are being asked to do more with less today, so how can you motivate people under those circumstances?

**Gostick:** You can't manage every person the exact same way because everyone is motivated differently. Good leaders figure

out ways to provide individualized motivation. They understand what motivates different people on their staffs, and they ask questions of their employees. What drives you? What are you passionate about? Where do you want to be in five years? The answers to those questions are different for everybody – good leaders really understand that and can manage to those different individual needs.

**Counselor:** Do most employees think their companies are doing a good job at all of this?

**Gostick:** Not really. Our survey found that 67% of employees feel their moms could run their businesses better than their bosses.

**Counselor:** How can they do better?

**Gostick:** Good leaders do a great job of explaining the 'why' of their employees' work, as opposed to just the 'how.' Ineffective leaders are always talking about how to get stuff done, but leaders of high-performing companies thoroughly explain the why – how their work fits in with bigger goals, and why what they're doing is important to the overall company's mission.

**Counselor:** Is that the key to real engagement?

**Gostick:** It is. When employees know why they're doing what they're doing, then they're connected to a bigger purpose and not just showing up every day. They'll be more invested in the company's overall goals because they know how they fit into that, and they'll be energized and motivated to do their jobs. That's how you get people engaged.

**Counselor:** There's a big focus in business today on innovation. How does corporate culture fit into that?

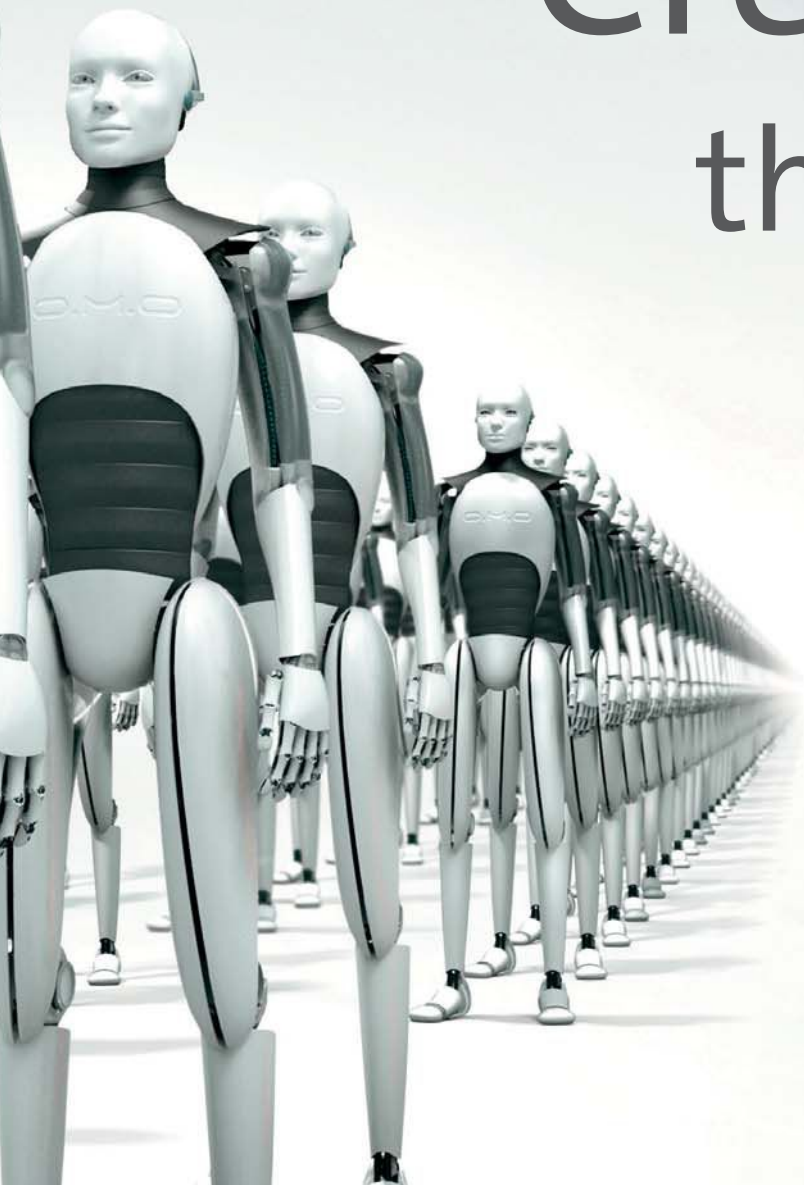
**Gostick:** Culture and people drive everything, so without those two headed in the same, positive direction, there can't be any real innovation for a company. Innovation is driven by culture, because the company has to really encourage risk-taking and out-of-the-box thinking. If those things aren't encouraged regularly by the company's leaders, then how can employees really innovate? They can't. Effective leaders are open to their people's ideas and they're interested in implementing them. If that culture exists, then everybody in the company will be focused on innovation.





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# LISTENING EXERCISE

The key to good leadership today? Actually listening to employees and clients – and implementing their ideas.

*By Betsy Cummings*



**W**ith all the business world's means of communication these days – think e-mail, phone, video conferencing and that antiquated standby, face-to-face meetings – you'd think we'd hear each other. So why isn't anybody listening?

That question holds true for today's business leaders possibly more than anyone else, where a failure to listen is a problem endemic to business management. Poor listening accounts for lost productivity, demoralized employees, angry customers and an overall inefficiency in many of today's businesses. And much of the listening problems, experts contend, start at the top – with today's business leaders turning a deaf ear toward staff and clients alike.

So why aren't more leaders listening? Some blame a slew of distractions barraging us everyday in the form of social media, marketing messages, too little time in a fast-paced economy, and various market conditions. "How much listening to a customer is there when a customer just buys off the Internet?" asks Dave Regan, vice president of sales for Top 40 distributor The Vernon Company (*asi/351700*), based in Newton, IA. "I think listening is a lost art today."

### **Are You a Good Listener?**

Part of the problem may be in how today's leaders are groomed. Most executives have been told that in order to be outstanding leaders, they have to speak, not listen, says Ken White, associate Dean of MBA and MS programs at the Robert H. Smith School of Business at the University of Maryland. Today's executives, White continues, are "taught to speak, and the focus is on speaking, not on listening."

That's a problem when more and more of today's business audience – from clients to vendors to employees and partners – are demanding to be heard. Suddenly, communication needs to be reciprocal, but leaders who have been groomed to do all the talking aren't the best candidates to make that happen. "I don't know if there's a failure in the marketplace to listen effectively, but I do think we all can do a better job of listening," says Ross Silverstein, president of Top 40 distributor firm iPROMOTEu (*asi/232119*).

That starts with figuring out whether

or not you're a good listener to begin with, says Jack Zenger, CEO and co-founder of Zenger Folkman, a leadership development firm based in Orem, UT. "My experience has been that leaders who are bad listeners often do not recognize that they are not good listeners."

Indeed, most poor listeners don't know they're missing out. How to correct that? To start, experts suggest collecting feedback from groups that matter – employees or clients, for instance – to gauge how well a leader is really hearing them.

That can be tricky for staffers that don't want to offend their boss, but there are plenty of ways to get honest feedback without putting employees on the spot. Depending on the size of a company, surveys or periodic reviews of corporate leadership can

## **"There's a strong correlation between good listening and employee commitment."**

be distributed and filled out anonymously, says Abhay Padgaonkar, president of Innovative Solutions Consulting LLC, a business consultancy based in Phoenix. In larger firms, managers can be evaluated by "skipping a level," Padgaonkar says, asking staff to review their supervisor's boss – reducing the tension of working with someone a subordinate has reviewed negatively by not commenting on a direct reporting relationship.

For managers actively seeking advice, but sensing that their direct reports are wary of giving it, it's often helpful to let them off the hook, so to speak, says Tracy Benson, founder and CEO of On the Same Page LLC, a change management firm based in Mount Kisco, NY. Ask, "what questions are your employees going to have that you're not prepared to answer?" Benson suggests. By allowing a leader's next-in-command to voice comments, complaints and sugges-

tions under the guise of staff questions, it allows them to critique a leader's listening skills in a non-confrontational way.

Several years ago, Regan says, "we realized we needed to do a better job at listening." So the company began attacking the problem on three levels: They decided to listen to the customer, the employees and their salespeople.

To do that, they revamped their twice-a-year business development meetings so it wasn't just Regan and the company's vice president of marketing having a one-way conversation with the sales members elected to help generate new ideas. "The joke that we tell is that several years ago it would be me and one other guy in the room and we'd pat each other on the back only to have salespeople tell us it was the stupidest business development idea they'd ever heard in their life."

Now meetings are more collaborative and Regan and his team make a concerted effort to actively listen to sellers and develop new ideas collaboratively. "They tend to be better than if we just created them in a vacuum," he says.

Regardless of the method for gauging a leader's listening prowess, gathering this information from staff is crucial, Zenger says. "There's a strong correlation," he says, "between good listening and employee commitment and customer loyalty."

### **Practice Matters**

Admittedly, in today's business world "we do too much assuming," says Brad Akers, president and owner of Tip Top Branding (*asi/344851*), a distributor in Chicago. "A lot of times we sit and guess what clients are thinking," Akers says, characterizing the industry as a whole. "If you don't know what they're thinking, ask them."

For leaders intent on becoming better listeners, doing so is like most other skills, Benson says. It just takes practice. One exercise to try? "Next time you're talking with somebody casually, be it a client, employee or vendor, ask them to pause for a minute while they're speaking so that you can confirm what's being said," Benson suggests. "Then repeat back to them what you heard them saying. It sounds ridiculously easy, but most people will be challenged by it because most people aren't fully listening."

The problem is that leaders are too often using the other side of their brain to begin formulating a response, Benson says, before they've actually heard and processed what the other person is saying – even before the other person is finished actually speaking. “What research has shown,” says Padgaonkar, “is our brain is not really meant to multitask.” Which makes listening and talking (or doing anything else, for that matter) at the same time very difficult.

In fact, active listening – being able to reflect back to a person what he's said in your own words – is one of the biggest challenges today's business leaders face, whether they know it or not, experts say. To do that it's often helpful to stop someone at multiple points in a conversation to reflect back what it is he's saying. It sounds disruptive, but experts insist stopping to say, “I want to make sure I'm hearing you accurately,” does far more to enhance a business relationship than sitting across the table silently and missing half the conversation. Plus, mirroring back what someone says helps executives become more attentive by practicing their listening skills.

Of course initiating a productive conversation is key to effective listening as well, experts insist. One way to do that, Padgaonkar says, is to ask open-ended questions. Doing so “generates responses a business leader may not have expected,” he says. It also avoids one of the biggest listening mistakes in business today: Asking a closed-ended or “yes/no” question. A question of this type “assumes the person who's asking the question” – often the business leader – “has basically solved the problem,” he says. By asking open-ended questions, a leader is essentially saying she has respect for her colleague's opinion. Closed-ended questions do the opposite.

### Slow it Down

Thanks to the spread of technology, communication today is often quick and to-the-point, leaving businesspeople without the conversational nuance that can often reveal key points. Leaders shouldn't be afraid to “slow down the dialogue” during meetings or discussions with employees, clients and other business contacts, Benson says.

“We live in a world now – as opposed to

## Listen Up

**Think you're a great listener? So do the majority of today's business leaders. Sadly, most poor listeners have no idea just how bad their listening skills are. Read on to find out what makes a great listener, and whether or not you measure up.**

- **Decide to Hear.** Oddly enough, listening, like any skill, involves being an active participant. That means putting aside work, cell phones and other distractions when meeting face to face with someone. It also means listening to every word someone's saying without trying to focus on what you'll say next.
- **Send the Right Signals.** So much of what we “say” and “hear” is done through body language as much as the words we speak. Crossing arms, looking around the room and breaking eye contact signal that you're not listening. That can impact the rapport of a conversation and sets up more of an adversarial relationship than necessary.
- **Start Reflecting.** Even the best listeners can't truly know they're engaged unless they repeat back what it is they've just heard. That doesn't mean parroting responses. Great listeners take in what's being said then reword and say back to someone what they think the other person has said. Doing so sends a strong message that you're listening and helps build trust among those you work with.
- **Set a Listening Agenda.** Before each meeting, take a moment to decide how much you'll talk. By determining if you'll be talking, say, half the time, or just for a few minutes, that can help keep your listening awareness top of mind throughout the meeting.

10 years ago – where things are moving at the speed of light,” she says. “You get about seven seconds of somebody's attention before they tune out.”

In a landscape of rapid-fire social media posts and constant communication distractions, becoming a better listener can be difficult. So, it's crucial, she says, for business leaders to slow down conversations to make sure they're hearing what's being said. Stopping clients, for example, to say, “I really want to understand what you're saying,” then reflecting back their comments can not only better develop listening skills, but sends the message to a customer that a business executive is really trying to hear him.

“You can't hear and know everything by yourself,” says Silverstein, acknowledging that one main reason to become a better listener is to gather more knowledge so that you can build a better distributorship. “But the second reason to listen,” he adds, “is to make the person who's speaking to you feel heard and special and important.”

That's critical to building more effective work processes and a more efficient company overall. Listening more intently “gives a voice to your staff” and a greater level of respect to customers, Silverstein says. In fact, Silverstein advises that executives

pause after a colleague finishes speaking. That way the other person doesn't feel as though you're just waiting for him to stop, so that you can pounce with your answer.”

One strategy leaders can take before meetings is to set a listening agenda before heading in, says White. Think about the content of the meeting and who you're talking to, White suggests, then set a listening goal. “What's really helpful is setting a goal for each interaction before that interaction takes place,” White says.

It's something that takes seconds to do before a meeting starts. For many meetings that might be 50/50, where a manager is talking half the time and listening the other half. In a client meeting a manager might talk less, while with a salesperson looking for advice, she might talk more. Ultimately, remaining cognizant of the ratio of listening to talking is an important step towards practicing better listening.

At schools like the University of Maryland, White says, listening has been deemed such a priority that it's now a regular component of management classes, something that wasn't always the case in years past. Ultimately, says Benson, “listening is the most critical component of leadership.”  
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**MISTAKES**



# LEADERS MUST AVOID!

Even good managers make leadership errors. Here, a business consultant looks at the five most common missteps and provides strategies for ways to avoid them. *By Christine Comaford*

**C**arrot or stick? Few leaders today get anywhere with the stick.

In fact, most leaders know that command and control is dead and that fear doesn't motivate employees. It's quite the opposite that actually works in business today. That's why, for the most part, we refrain from doing scary things. Only the worst "bully bosses" make it a practice to scream at employees, call them abusive names, or threaten to fire any of them the next time they make a mistake.

Even good leaders, though, unintentionally strike fear in the hearts of their workforce. More accurately, they strike it into their employees' brains. And the consequences are more dire than you might realize.

From time to time we all say or do things that spark unconscious fears in our employees. The primitive 'fight, flight or freeze' part of the brain takes control. When that happens, when people are stuck in this so-called "critter" state, all they can focus on is their own survival.

In other words, everything that makes them good employees – their ability to innovate, to collaborate, to logically think through problems – goes out the window. All decision-making is distilled down to one question: What course of action will keep me safest?

That's not what you want your people thinking about all day long. Obviously, you need your employees to be in control of their whole brain – especially the parts responsible for the emotional engagement and intelligent decision-making that lead to high performance. Today's economy demands it. That's why leaders need to get their teams unstuck and shift them into a "smart state" that allows them to regularly succeed.

In my business, I regularly see clients who master these techniques and quickly see their revenues and profits increase by up to 200% annually. It just goes to show how pervasive fear in the workplace actually is – and how crippling it can be. When companies can get their employees to move from acting in a fearful way to acting in a smart way, the business results are clear.

It's what happened for Sharon MacDonald, CEO of a company called Interim Furnishings. MacDonald knew she had an employee motivation issue, and boiled it down to them not being empowered to make decisions because they feared repercus-

sions from management. In fact, everything seemed micromanaged and slow in the business – and much of it was because management was too involved every step of the way.

"Now, I think bigger – we will double (or greater) our revenue this year as a result of my increased ability to create new strategies, expand my vision, see into my blind spots," MacDonald says. "I began to realize that it was time to bring on a seasoned COO, scale up my team, and bring them new resources. We've created accountability structures and communication rhythms for my team so everyone is aligned and charging forward. We're rapidly growing the company in a safe and sane way while preserving and increasing the fun of our culture."

So how might other leaders inadvertently be holding back their teams and crippling their own corporate cultures? Here are five strategies that many leaders employ that are helping to tamp down business success and corporate innovation – as well as some strategies for how to avoid them.

### You Give Them the Answers

If your team is simply following your orders, rather than coming up with their own strategies and taking their own risks, then you're doing too much of the thinking – and talking. When we consistently tell people what to do instead of encouraging them to figure things out on their own, we develop a company full of order-takers instead of innovators. By training them to always ask if it's OK to move forward on a project, leaders end up creating a workforce of employees who are perpetually frozen and become somewhat thoughtless.

On the other hand, when good managers engage them in solving problems themselves, they create a sense of safety, belonging and mattering – the three things studies show workers today actually value the most. And of course, we help them develop a sense of ownership that will serve them – and the company – well.

Start inquiring and see what happens. Ask, 'How would you do it? What impact might your course of action have?' After you do this a few times with someone, she'll start expecting you to ask questions instead of give orders. She'll start coming to you with ideas, seeking feedback and validation. And after a few of these sessions, she'll come to you saying, 'I have a plan, here it is, and speak now if you aren't OK with it.' Finally,

she'll stop coming to you altogether.

Aim for five inquiries for every order or command you make to employees. You'll be amazed by what a powerful difference this makes in your employees and your company.

### Your Meetings are Scary

Why might a meeting scare your employees? Because confusion and uncertainty create fear. Meetings that are rambling and unfocused send people into the fight-flight-freeze state that ends up paralyzing many organizations. On the other hand, short, high-energy meetings that have a clear agenda keep everyone focused and energized.

The key is to understand the five types of communication: information-sharing, sharing of oneself, debating, requests and promises.

The typical meeting is heavy on the first three and light on the last two. Ideally, you should focus on only enough information-sharing in order to solicit requests from parties who need something and promises from parties who will fill that need. Good leaders need to tune up their communication and the result will be meetings that are efficient and effective. That keeps your team happy and clipping along to accountability and execution – when employees know exactly what's expected of them because it is clearly established, then they're more apt to hit their goals and exceed expectations.

### You Give Feedback Without Rapport

Imagine for a moment that your employees are antelopes. Because you have authority over them, they quite naturally view you as a lion. It's not that you're purposely ruling with teeth and claws. It's simply their critter brains at work, peering out and "coding" who is a friend and who is a foe. That means unless you can get employees to see you as "just another antelope," you won't be able to influence them – they'll be too busy ensuring their own survival to accept your feedback.

On the contrary, good leaders need to get inside their employees' heads and truly establish rapport. Here are three quick methods of conversation that can help managers create a trusting culture among their employees:

**1. "What if...":** When you use this preface to an idea/suggestion, you remove ego and reduce emotion. You're curious – not forcing



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## Management Myths

### Are you guilty of these three leadership myths?

By Erick Lauber

**Some failing management techniques are rather common in the workplace today. Here are three myths of leadership that too many executives employ on a daily basis.**

#### 1. The Myth of Omnipotence

This shouldn't be confused with the myth of omnipresence, which is the power to be everywhere. The myth of omnipotence is thinking you can tell anyone on the team to do practically anything and they're going to just hop to it, with a grin and a nod and a comment that means "You got it, boss. I'd walk through fire for you."

It might happen in the movies, but we know in reality a leader doesn't automatically get enthusiastic cooperation. He or she

more often gets quiet acceptance, or perhaps begrudging compliance. Building cooperation and energetic participation requires time and careful nurturing in the real world. You might have to not get your way a few times in order to "collaborate" with your team. Real humans don't give blind obedience because of someone's position in an organizational chart. And good leaders simply don't alienate people.

#### 2. The Myth of Omniscience

This is the belief that being the leader means knowing everything about everything. It comes in two varieties. In some environments, it makes the leader micromanage and attempt to oversee the smallest detail. In others, it makes the leader think they have to know the answer to every question. Why else would they be the leader? Quite the opposite, good leaders actually know that they don't have all the answers – that's precisely why they've hired good people to work for them. Leaders who do think they have all the answers? They're well on their way

toward creating a disengaged workforce.

#### 3. The Myth of Omni-adrenaline

This is probably the most damaging management approach in today's complex, skill-driven team environments. It is the belief that excellent execution from a team demands adrenaline surges, rousing speeches and lots of shouting. Shouting and adrenaline surges are only useful for invoking over-learned, mindless performance in the face of fear and actual physiological arousal. Military units and sports teams are perfect for this type of leadership.

But adrenaline surges also narrow cognition and thinking. Today's American work environment demands creative problem solving, flexible decision making and complex reasoning. A leader suffering from "omni-adrenaline" in the modern workplace looks clueless and simple-minded.

– Erick Lauber is a professor at Indiana University of Pennsylvania. Reach him at [www.ericklauber.com](http://www.ericklauber.com).

a position, but kind of scratching your head and pondering. This enables someone to brainstorm more easily with you.

**2. "I need your help.":** When a leader uses this phrase in conversation with an employee, they are enrolling the subordinate person and asking them to rise up and swap roles. This is an especially effective conversation tactic when you want a person to change their behavior or take on more responsibility.

**3. "Would it be helpful if...":** When someone is stuck in a fearful state and spinning or unable to move forward, offering up a solution will help them see a possible course of action or positive outcome.

### You're Too Focused on Problems

Organizations that are run by ineffective leaders tend to be much more focused on problems, rather than creating solutions. This is how the culture of fear is created and cultivated over time – and it's something that good leaders need to work on constantly to ensure they avoid.

Leaders who see everything as a problem cause anxiety among their teams, which leads to a reaction, which leads to another problem. It's a self-perpetuating cycle. The solution is to switch your focus from problems to outcomes. Instead of asking 'What's wrong?' and 'Why is this happening?' you should ask 'What do we want?' and 'How will

we create it?'

Being outcome focused feels very different. It's empowering and energizing and fills employees – and managers, by the way – with confidence. So, how do you make the switch from being problem-focused to outcome-focused? First, shift your conversations with employees so that you're not always trying to identify the "why" of a situation – as in, why did an order get delivered late – and instead you're trying to identify "how" to achieve a desired outcome. This is working to both solve a problem and get employees involved in fixing it for the future.

If you do this in every conversation, and teach others to make the shift as well, you will transform your corporate culture because employees will suddenly be vested in actually helping to move the company forward, rather than always fearing that they'll be caught in the midst of a problem.

### You Frame "Change" the Wrong Way

Almost all leaders want – and, probably need – their companies to change at certain points. It's the only way you can achieve growth in an economy that rewards innovation and creativity. Yet as we all know, people inherently resist change. In fact, according to Rodger Bailey's groundbreaking work on Meta Programs in the workplace, 27% of Americans can tolerate change only if it is

couched in a specific context. That context is called "Sameness with exception."

What does this mean? Essentially, it means leaders need to present the "change" as merely an improvement to what we are already doing: The bad stuff is being removed, and good stuff is being added. This is by far the best way to package a change message, because it taps into employees' innate need for sameness at some level. And don't use the C-word. Say 'growth' instead. You're leading them and the company toward growth – that's the goal, so keep employees focused on that.

And, by the way, resistance to those changes isn't necessarily a bad thing. It's just the first step on the organizational path, but once you can clear the resistance hurdle – and it will go fairly quickly when you present change simply as a growth objective – you're well on your way toward creating a positive culture. Because leaders that mandate change and present employees with all the answers before actually involving them in the process, foster a corporate culture that employees can't thrive in. They'll be held back and resistant – exactly the opposite of the engaged and motivated type of people that actually move companies forward today. – Christine Comaford is the author of *SmartTribes: How Teams Become Brilliant Together*. For more information, visit [www.christinecomaford.com](http://www.christinecomaford.com).





# a test of LEADERSHIP

Think you're a good leader? Take our quiz to see how you measure up.

*By Dave Vagnoni*

**1** You're trying to improve your company's office culture. Which of the following activities do you plan for your staff?

- ☐ a) golf tournament
- ☐ b) square-dancing contest
- ☐ c) catered picnic
- ☐ d) wine tasting

**2** Your company just lost an account because of a labeling mistake made by a brand-new hire in your warehouse. To demonstrate leadership, you should:

- ☐ a) demote the warehouse supervisor
- ☐ b) fire the worker directly responsible for the error
- ☐ c) both a and b
- ☐ d) punish no one

**3** Two of your employees – one a salesperson and the other your CFO – ask to work from home one day each week. You should:

- ☐ a) let the salesperson work from home, but not your CFO
- ☐ b) let your CFO work from home, but not the salesperson
- ☐ c) let them both work from home
- ☐ d) think about it for a week

**4** Your company just won an industry award for providing exceptional customer service. What should you do next?

- ☐ a) give your customer service team more comfortable chairs
- ☐ b) re-evaluate how your customer service department operates
- ☐ c) model other divisions after your customer service department
- ☐ d) ask top customer service

personnel if they want to be salespeople

**5** Your company is pitching a prospective client in two days, but the person heading up the presentation has come down with the flu. A strong leader would:

- ☐ a) personally fill in and lead the presentation
- ☐ b) reschedule the pitch
- ☐ c) delegate the work to another team member
- ☐ d) offer free flu shots to all employees

**6** You find out your company has just suffered a data breach. The personal information of several customers was just hacked. What do you do?

- ☐ a) try to contain the damage to protect your firm's reputation

## 11 Questions

- ☐ b) ask police to privately contact the affected customers
- ☐ c) send out a memo to employees and a press release about the incident
- ☐ d) all of the above

**7** You ask your full-time employees to work 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m. each day. What work schedule should you, the boss, keep?

- ☐ a) 8:00 a.m.-6:00 p.m.
- ☐ b) 8:30 a.m.-5:30 p.m.
- ☐ c) 1:00 p.m.-3:00 p.m.
- ☐ d) 7:00 a.m.-7:00 p.m.

**8** Which of the following should you spend money on every year?

- ☐ a) improved technology
- ☐ b) employee surveys
- ☐ c) plaques for top performers
- ☐ d) client dinners

**9** Hoping to spark sales, you've decided to re-brand your company. Your marketing department offers several ideas to help publicize the re-branding. Which one do you pick?

- ☐ a) launching a new website dedicated to testimonials and case studies

- ☐ b) giving discounts to any customer that "likes" your company on Facebook
- ☐ c) inviting media to your product showroom
- ☐ d) holding an online chat focused on future market trends

**10** If you could design the perfect office for yourself, it would be most like which of the following?

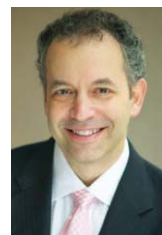
- ☐ a) it would have a sofa, a TV and a refrigerator
- ☐ b) the walls would be glass so people could see in and you could see out
- ☐ c) it would be a simple cubicle
- ☐ d) your desk would be a Ping-Pong table

**11** You hear a rumor that your company's top competitor is tripling its staff and opening another office. What do you do?

- ☐ a) begin hiring more people
- ☐ b) hire someone to spy on your competitor's CEO
- ☐ c) try to upstage your competitor by temporarily offering better pricing
- ☐ d) none of the above

## The Leadership Team

Information and research for our quiz was provided by:



**David Goldsmith.** A former professor at NYU, Goldsmith has written more than 500 published articles on strategy, product development and leadership. He is also the author of *Paid To Think*. [www.DavidGoldsmith.com](http://www.DavidGoldsmith.com)



**Kathy Caprino.** The founder of Ellia Communications, Caprino is a contributor to *Forbes* Magazine. She specializes in helping women advance their careers. [www.elliacomunications.com](http://www.elliacomunications.com)



**Dave Horsager.** The author of *The Trust Edge*, Horsager has consulted for Wells Fargo, ING and the Department of Homeland Security. [www.DavidHorsager.com](http://www.DavidHorsager.com)

## Answer Key

How many did you answer correctly?

**1) Answer – C**

**Reason:** The best leaders take an all-inclusive approach. Picking the event most of your staff would enjoy is the way to go.

**2) Answer – D**

**Reason:** Employees mess up. Firing a new worker or blaming a supervisor won't increase accountability, experts say.

**3) Answer – C**

**Reason:** One of the key principles of strong leadership is consistency.

**4) Answer – B**

**Reason:** Good leaders challenge the status quo.

**5) Answer – C**

**Reason:** Leaders resist the temptation to take over and instead try to empower others. Give people a chance to shine.

**6) Answer – C**

**Reason:** Experts agree that the best leaders

believe in transparency (and doing the right thing), especially when it's easier to be secretive.

**7) Answer – A**

**Reason:** Leaders set a good example and should do more than what's expected (within reason).

**8) Answer – B**

**Reason:** Experts say it's better to genuinely listen to employees than always give them the nicest stuff.

**9) Answer – D**

**Reason:** Leaders don't dwell on the past – they spend the most time thinking about the future.

**10) Answer – C**

**Reason:** People tend to respond to leaders who try to be like them.

**11) Answer – D**

**Reason:** Great leaders never assume anything and they don't overreact.

## Scoring

**11 Correct –**  
You deserve a spot on Mt. Rushmore.

**7-10 Correct –**  
You're born to lead.

**3-6 Correct –**  
You've got leadership potential.

**0-2 Correct –**  
Step it up! Better read this issue of *Counselor* cover to cover.



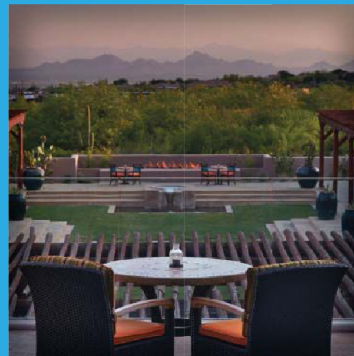
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# BE A BETTER MANAGER— NOW!



## Can ad specialty execs improve their management style in a single day? Yes. Follow these proven strategies.

*By Christopher Ruvo*

**W**hether they oversee inside salespeople, outside reps, customer service people or fulfillment specialists, top managers of ad specialty distributor companies supply the support, tools and inspiration their people need to succeed.

A leading sales trainer, author and speaker featured in media ranging from *The Today Show* to *The Wall Street Journal*, Barry Maher believes a good manager can be a powerful facilitator that jumpstarts even a severely struggling team to lofty achievement levels. Once, Maher took over a sales team that was at the bottom of the sales report. But in his first meeting with the unit, he told them within one year they would be the number one group in the region.

"Within less than a year," he says, "they were."

Maher helped make the team's success possible by demonstrating faith in them, making it clear that he truly believed they could be the best. Team members tried to live up to those expectations and soon adopted them as their own. Maher championed his group within the company and helped members work out short- and long-term goals. He supported the salespeople however he could and offered praise and rewards for their accomplishments.

"We created a team mentality," he says, also noting that the unit focused on building strong rapport with customers. "No one who wanted or needed help was ever left alone."

Intent on turning negatives into positives wherever possible, Maher helped his

salespeople to overcome fear of failure. They learned to rigorously review their own performance, always asking what they could have done better. "But after absorbing the lesson, they learned to absolve themselves, leaving the mistakes behind and moving on to the next call," Maher says.

Reasoning that sales professionals who enjoy their work will ultimately sell more, Maher focused on creating a fun atmosphere where people looked forward to coming to work. "A salesperson who can make the call fun for the prospect is half way to a sale," he adds.

Similarly, at distributor firm 14 West (*asi/197092*), Kevin Scharnek has spurred success from his sales and client services teams by creating a fun, open and team-oriented environment. The Wisconsin-based distributorship frequently takes part in camaraderie-building activities, such as employee-only dinners and trips to downtown Milwaukee and Brewers games.

"We actually have a fun committee," says Scharnek, the company's founder.

When it comes to helping salespeople prosper, Scharnek has found it effective to aid associates in setting measurable goals and developing plans for meeting them. Furthermore, he finds that by accompanying salespeople on calls, he shows that he is invested in their success, while also reinforcing the distributorship's commitment to the clients. "We encourage our salespeople to be in front of clients as often as possible," Scharnek says.

To help maintain a smooth relationship between his sales and client service teams, Scharnek has everyone – including himself – fill out DISC personality profiles, a behavior assessment tool. Everyone has access to each other's profiles, which helps employees understand the most effective ways to work with different individuals.

To start off right with building a cohesive team dynamic, Scharnek places particular emphasis on hiring people who fit the 14 West culture – something he says is critical to being a good manager. "We have a fairly extensive process that's worked out unbe-

### Sales Leadership Training

Mark Venezia is senior vice president of sales, North America, for Spreadshirt: an e-commerce platform for personalizing apparel. Here are his five best tips for improving a sales team's performance:

1. Astutely identify top targets for potential partners/prospects.
2. Keep the team's focus on relationship-building with clients and prospects.
3. Leverage strong relationships for referrals and ongoing effective account management.
4. Share best practices and what has worked with internal and external teams.
5. Don't ask any team member to complete a task that you would not do yourself.

lievably well," says Scharnek.

Like Scharnek, Andy Shuman, general manager at Rockland Embroidery (*asi/734150*), says getting good people to join the screen printing and embroidery crews at the Topton, PA-based decorating shop is a critical managerial function. This contributes directly to another tenet of Shuman's successful managing style: Giving employees the autonomy to make efficiency-enhancing decisions amid the hustle and bustle of fast-paced decorating runs.

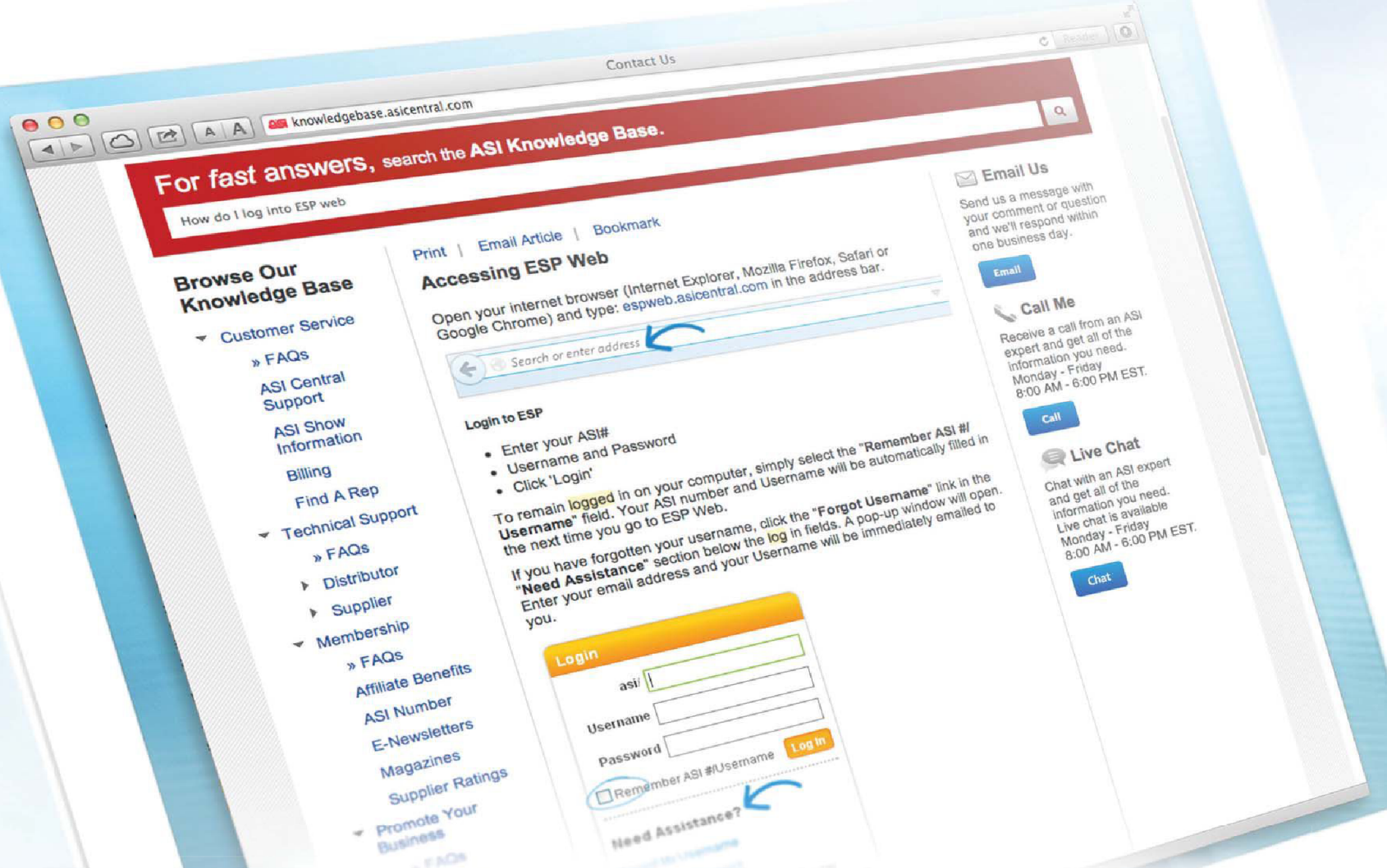
"I don't want to micro-manage," says Shuman. "If you get the right people and you train them well, they're going to get the job done."

Additionally, a tiered bonus structure that rewards collective achievement helps Shuman get the most out of his teams: "It encourages teamwork, double-checking and accountability," he says.

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## Bess Cohn Humanitarian Award Nominee The Race is On

How one distributor firm lent a helping hand at a charity event benefiting breast cancer research.

By Sara Lavenduski

In honor of National Breast Cancer Awareness Month in October, the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation (CBCF) held a series of Runs for the Cure, sponsored by the Canadian Imperial Bank of Commerce. Image Group (*asi/230059*), located in Vancouver, signed up as a regional sponsor for the Run held in its home city and, along with several generous suppliers, donated \$25,000 worth of imprinted promotional products to the event.

"We always strive to exceed expectations," says President Laura Hansen. "For each client, the process begins with a keen interest in their goals and a strong understanding of the products available. Promotional products aren't the most important things in our clients' world, but they are in ours."

Since its inception over 20 years ago, Image Group has been involved with charitable events and projects in various capacities. Its work with the CBCF began in 2008, when Terry Cochrane, account manager for CBCF, received a call from the organization's director of com-

munications and marketing. "She was a previous contact of Terry's from another company," says Hansen. "When she moved over to CBCF, she got in touch with Terry to request that he continue to work with her. It just goes to show that good relationships are so important."

For the 2013 CBCF Run for the Cure in Vancouver, Image Group and other industry organizations donated banner pens, silicone bracelets, nail filing boards, microfiber cleaning cloths and other items, all imprinted with the event logo and date, as well as breast health tips for women. Thanks to Image Group's attention to detail, all items were ready on time to be in the end-user's hands by October 6. "There's full redundancy built into everything we do," says Hansen, "so we can anticipate most problems before they arise, and select the most reliable product suppliers and shipping companies."

The Run for the Cure isn't the only event Image Group has worked on for CBCF. At the 18th Annual Awareness Day Luncheon, hosted by the CBCF BC/



**Image Group** donated imprinted items to the Canadian Breast Cancer Foundation's 2013 CIBC Race for a Cure in Vancouver, BC.

Yukon region in the BC Ballroom at the Fairmont Hotel Vancouver, Image Group supplied pashminas in three different shades of pink and draped them over the chairs for an eye-popping effect. "Bif Naked, a Canadian singer-songwriter, was the guest speaker as a breast cancer survivor," says Hansen. "She told her inspiring story about overcoming her fears of the disease, and some of the guests used the pashminas to dry their tears."

Image Group has clients in a broad range of industries, mainly in manufacturing, professional services, entertainment, retail and media, while continuing to

look for ways to give back. "We always have projects on the go with the key charities we give to," says Hansen, "and we'll broaden our reach as we can."

Why does Image Group take the time out of its busy schedule to contribute to community causes? It's about the larger picture, says Hansen. "Charitable efforts help us develop and grow as people and a company," she explains. "We gain new perspectives and feel good about making our community a better place, even in a small way. We want to live our lives to the fullest and we want others to as well. We're selfish that way."

# Appointments & Promotions

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

Compiled By Sara Lavenduski

► **Bag Makers** (*asi/37940*) hired Sue Kennedy as the Upper Midwest sales manager and named Jennifer McFadden as its communications director.

► **Beacon Promotions** (*asi/39250*) appointed Lisa Pelzel to the position of national accounts representative.

► **Chocolate Inn/Taylor & Grant** (*asi/44900*) announced that Kurt Boehringer, former vice president of operations, has rejoined the company in the same capacity since concluding a brief stint at Hebert Chocolate/Gifted Expressions (*asi/56777*).

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

► **Crystal D** (*asi/47759*) hired Steve LaFalce as territory manager for the northeast territory, and Sandy Nichols for its sales support team. Additionally, Paula Doll shifted from customer service to accounting as an accounting clerk.

► **Fey Promotional Products Group** (*asi/54040*) hired Tom Carpenter as its national account manager.

► **Full Line Specialties** (*asi/199688*) announced that it added Mike Jeroski to the company's sales team.



**Sue Kennedy**  
Bag Makers



**Jennifer McFadden**  
Bag Makers



**Lisa Pelzel**  
Beacon



**Steve LaFalce**  
Crystal D



**Sandy Nichols**  
Crystal D



**Paula Doll**  
Crystal D



**Tom Carpenter**  
Fey Promotional



**Ross Fraser**  
SELCO



**Isaac Roberts**  
Visstun

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

► **Goldstar** (*asi/73295*) announced that it appointed R.J. Hagel to the position of national marketing manager.

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

► **JP Promotional Products** (*asi/232668*) announced that Robert Rosenthal returned to the company in a full-time capacity after several years of high-level management consulting within the industry.

► **Luxury Lines by MMSC** has hired Spencer Toomey as senior vice president.

► **MediaTree** (*asi/70303*) announced that it hired Craig

Richards as its director of sales.

► **Motivators Inc.** (*asi/277780*) welcomed distributors David Seymour, Cheryl MacDonald, and Jennifer Cottrell to the company's Dealer Sales Program.

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

► **Polyconcept** announced the addition of two senior management members to its executive team. Willem van Walt Meijer assumes the role of managing director, Polyconcept International Markets, and Marc L. Brown has been named the company's interim global chief information officer.

► **SELCO** (*asi/86230*) announced that it hired Ross Fraser to the company as sales manager.

► **Sonoma Promotional Solutions** (*asi/88188*) hired Nickolai

Mathison as general manager/senior vice president of sales.

► **Spector & Co.** (*asi/88660*) promoted John Rex to factory direct coordinator.

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

► **The Premier Group** (*asi/230240*) appointed Bill House as executive director.

► **T-Shirt Tycoon Solutions** (*asi/87000*) announced that it hired Shelley Knight as vice president of corporate markets.

► **Visstun** (*asi/93975*) and **Disispec** (*asi/49716*) named Isaac Roberts as a sales counselor.

► **Vitronic Promotional Group** (*asi/93990*) announced that it promoted Bob Heintz to national sales manager.



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# Quotables

A selection of this month's sources

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**“Our survey found that 67% of employees feel their moms could run their businesses better than their bosses.”**

Adrian Gostick, author

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a.



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c.



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b. **4120** Oasis Tumbler

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d. **1897** Bordeaux Wine Opener

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