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PPPB

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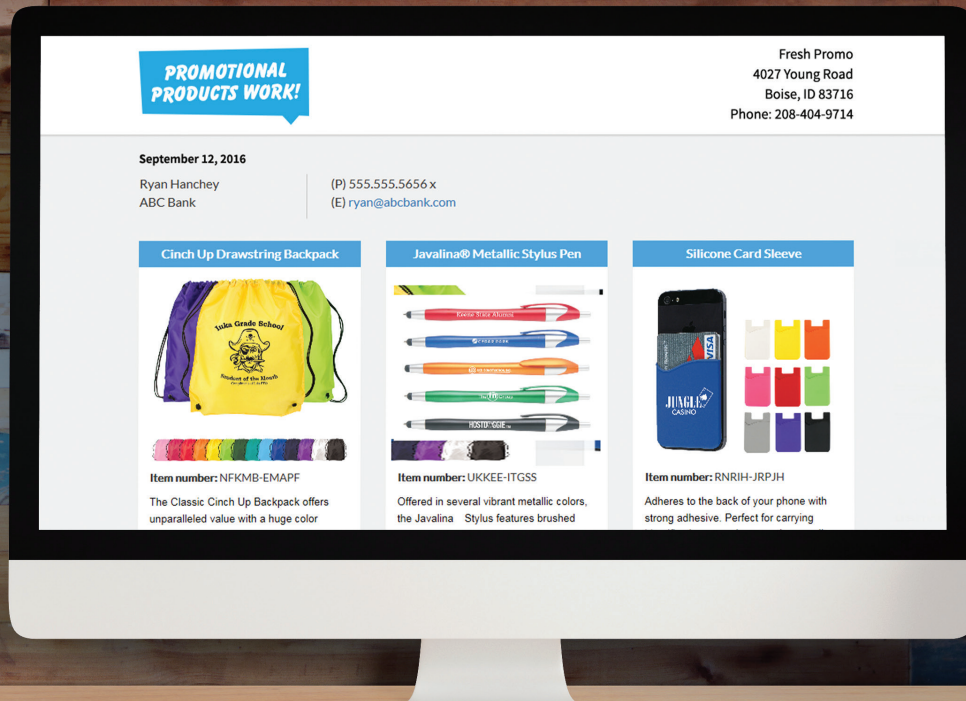


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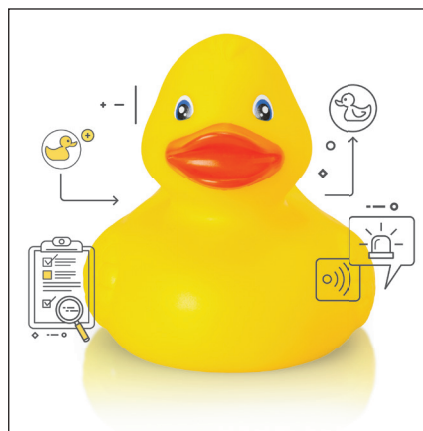


24 PPB RISING STARS

This year's most watchable young leaders are inspiring, irresistible, unstoppable. Top row: Keith Lofton, CAS, Tim Hennessy, Jr., Esmeralda Anaya, Ryan Hanchey, Elton Yeung. Bottom row: Dan Webb, CAS, Kenny Ved, Beau Ashton, Remy Kawaguchi, Kevin Mullaney. Insets, top: Sarah Merrill, bottom: Stephanie Lyndon-Wheeler



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These Rising Stars Ensure A Bright Future

It's no secret that I'm a magazine junkie. It's always been one of my favorite media. One magazine I read is *O*, a women's lifestyle magazine published by Oprah Winfrey. In every issue, she closes with a column titled "What I Know For Sure."

Years ago, in an interview, the late Gene Siskel asked her, "What do you know for sure?" She got flustered and couldn't answer—so she's never stopped asking herself that question.

With so many transformational changes taking place in almost every facet of our world today, and so much uncertainty, answering this question helps keep me grounded—reminding me of the truths I can count on.

One thing I know for sure is that the future of the promotional products industry is in very good hands. This month, we introduce you to the *PPB* 2016 Rising Stars (see page 24), a dozen up-and-coming young leaders who are working hard and making great things happen in their companies and, subsequently, across our industry. Last month I had the privilege of introducing 10 of these very impressive young pros at a presentation in their honor during the opening dinner at PPAI's North American Leadership Conference in San Francisco. As each one came to the stage to be recognized, I thought about the many others who had come before them.

Every year since 2010 we've devoted a cover story to these watchable young leaders—and in that time we've spotlighted 73 individuals from companies across the industry. I've continued to follow their progress as they've been promoted, moved to more responsibility at another company, started their own companies or volunteered to serve in key leadership positions with PPAI and their regional associations.

Brittany David, CAS, is an example. Always an overachiever, she was named a *PPB* Rising Star in 2014. Last year she was tapped to run for the PPAI Board of Directors and was elected for a four-year term. In January she begins her role as the board's vice chair, financial services. Kim Newell is another who was honored as a *PPB* Rising Star in 2010 and is currently serving on the PPAI board as a member of the class of 2017. She was also appointed to serve a year as board rep on the Promotional Products Education Foundation board. Her long-time leadership as president of supplier World Wide Lines, Inc. also

powerful numbers in company sales while Anita ran for the PPAI board in 2014 and has taken on more responsibility for the company's thriving Boost Technologies division. It has been named twice to the list of top 50 fastest-growing companies by the Women President's Organization, and, in 2014, Anita was named to the *Dayton Business Journal's* BizWomen's Power 50 List.

Former Rising Star Jessica Hutwelker, MAS, who made our list last year, is another who has taken on more responsibility and significantly expanded her involvement in the industry. She

One thing I know for sure is that the future of the promotional products industry is in very good hands.

brought the company more opportunities for expansion when it was acquired by supplier Gold Bond, Inc. two years ago.

Former Rising Star Marc Held has been making strong career progress since he was named to our list in 2012. Since then he's served on the PPAI Professional Development Committee, been a PPAI board candidate and was key in the transition when his then-employer Bodek and Rhodes was acquired by supplier alphabroder this past December. Just a few weeks ago he made news again when he stepped up to a new role as vice president at Hit Promotional Products.

Distributor Emoff is lucky to have two former Rising Stars on its roster—Jill Albers and Anita Emoff—named to our list in 2015 and 2010, respectively. Jill continues to drive

has served on the PPAI Distributors Committee, Government Relations Advisory Council, NALC Work Group for two years and has presented a number of sessions at the PPAI Women's Leadership Conference in recent years. And, after working in the industry as a distributor for a number of years, she moved to the supplier side to up her professional growth exponentially.

I could go on about this self-motivated and powerful group of young individuals because they continue to impress me with their vigorous dedication to their own growth and commitment to making the industry better tomorrow than it is today. The future of our industry is indeed in good hands. This is what I know for sure. **PPB**

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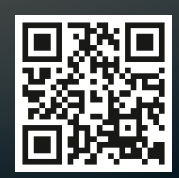
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Pictured are WLC attendees Lorraine Mancari, MAS+; Kim Reinecker, MAS; Laura Holt, MAS; Alissa Succi and Ashlee Duerr.

WLC 2016 Makes Its Mark

The 2016 PPAI Women's Leadership Conference (WLC) brought nearly 160 attendees to Atlanta, Georgia, June 27-29 for two and a half days of learning, listening, conversing, connecting and sharing experiences, ideas and knowledge.

Thank you for all the hard work on WLC this year. What you accomplished was amazing and it all seemed so effortless. (Although I know otherwise!) Many of the ladies remarked that they were definitely in for next year. A refrain that I kept hearing was that their plan had been to take a year off but it's been so good that they don't want to miss out on what's next!

KATE PLUMMER, CAS

Sales Manager
Clearmount Plastics Limited
Toronto, Ontario
UPIC: CLRMNT

I always come away feeling educated and motivated! I have been in contact with the four newbies I was mentoring and they are "high as a kite" on WLC! I think it exceeded many of their expectations. I even had one that said she would be coming back next year *and* she wants to bring at least two of their people with her! That says a lot! As someone who has served on countless boards and helped with many events, I truly know the *time, effort and dedication* necessary for a successful event. Thank you; it was a home run for sure!

NANCY JOLLY

Vice President of Sales
In Stepp Marketing
Madisonville, Texas
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PPAI's Distributor Sales Volume Report Highlights Industry Trends

PPB's July issue featured the results of the 2015 PPAI Distributor Sales Volume Report. Most notable among the industry trends and developments its findings highlighted was that 2015's sales growth was largely due to the significant gains in revenue achieved by the industry's large distributor companies.

We believe aggressive consolidation will continue for the next couple years.

“Sixty informative minutes were spent while enjoying lunch and earning CEUs toward my recertification. It doesn’t get any more convenient than this!”

If you factor in the online sales of the companies that are not counted in these numbers—VistaPrint, CafePress, Custom Ink, Zazzle, Discount Mugs, etc.—the reality of online sales approaching 25 percent market share is very real. By 2024 we believe the landscape will be forever changed.

JIM FRANKLYN

*Vice President and Partner
Inkhead, Inc.
Winder, Georgia
UPIC: InkHead*

The power of scale and technology can’t be understated. Main Street fell to big box retailers and now big box is falling to ecommerce. I think we’ll see the smaller suppliers become experts in one or two

niche product lines while protecting their distributor sales channel. I think larger suppliers will be tempted to go direct to earn higher margins while larger distributors will begin to manufacture more of their high-volume product lines. It’s a great time to be an entrepreneur!

JOHN REINER

*Principal
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PPAI Webinars Deliver High Quality, Convenient Education

Throughout the year, PPAI hosts a series of webinars for industry professionals looking for the latest trends, ideas and best practices to grow their businesses

and their careers. The webinars are also valuable steps on the path to industry certifications. Participants can join the webinars live or take advantage of one of PPAI’s extensive catalog of on-demand webinars. Learn more at www.ppai.org, Education, e-Learning.

I attended the first webinar of this summer series from the convenience of my office. Sixty informative minutes were spent while enjoying lunch and earning CEUs toward my recertification. It doesn’t get any more convenient than this! Thanks, PPAI.

JOHN MICHAEL HUDICKA

Promotional Marketing Consultant

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Just A Click Away

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+ **Work Wear**
Find the latest in uniform safety, visibility and function on **page 16**



Mary Dobsch

YES, SHE CAN

PPAI's 2016 Woman of Achievement Award Winner, Mary Dobsch, has soared through her career while giving back to others.

by Julie Richie

This year's Woman of Achievement Award winner, Mary Dobsch, president of supplier The Chest (UPIC: thechest) has spent her inspiring career—all 35 years—as an integral member of the promotional products industry, committed to sharing her knowledge and experience

freely to help others succeed.

As a committed PPAI volunteer, her service has included two terms on the PPAI Board of Directors (2008-2012, 2013-2014), as well as participation on too many committees to mention, including the Government Relations Action Committee (GRAC). She has also served as a facilitator for PPAI classes on packaging and has given numerous PPAI and regional presentations on selling.

"In an industry of duplicate products, Mary is an innovator, not an imitator," says Dave Degreeff, executive director of the Houston Promotional Products Association (HPPA) and the Promotional Products Association of the Southwest (PPAS), who nominated Dobsch for the award and who has known her for most of his life. "Her company has pioneered the way for distributors to separate themselves from the pack by way of creative packaging."

Early Career

Most people can point to a defining moment in their lives that led to the type of person they eventually became. For Mary Dobsch, that moment came when she was 13 years old and lost

her mother. Living on a pig farm outside of Washington, Missouri, and as the oldest girl of eight children (three brothers were older but they had to work outside on the farm), she was suddenly tasked with cooking for 10 people.

"It was the toughest part of my life by far. But my father was some kind of amazing," Dobsch says. "I'm sure what I cooked was horrible, but he was always so wonderful and said that was the best he'd ever had. And when you're 13 you really believe it." That early encouragement likely led to Dobsch's incredible resilience and perseverance, two essential qualities for any successful businessperson. "In my mind you can do anything you want to. You just do what you have to do. When my soup looked like it was solid, it didn't really seem like that was a problem. You just keep moving," Dobsch says.

An ambitious teenager, Dobsch was quickly ready to work outside the home and put her other skills to the test. She saw her chance when she went to the doctor for a sinus infection at age 16 and talked that doctor into giving her a job. "I was a receptionist. I typed insurance forms. I'd go after school at 3 pm and work until 5 pm. I'd try to make dinners the night before," Dobsch explains.

Her exceptional organizational and planning skills made her a huge asset at home and at the office, but didn't always earn her social credibility among her high school classmates. "You know how they give you a title at school? I was the busiest. Not the most



Mary Dobsch was presented the PPAI Woman of Achievement award on June 27 during the PPAI Women's Leadership Conference in Atlanta, Georgia. She is the 10th recipient of the coveted award.

“I don’t know that I’ve ever hit a roadblock where someone told me I couldn’t do something.”

popular or most likely to succeed. I was the busiest.”

After graduating from high school and then a local business school, Dobsch networked her way to a job in order entry at Hazel, an industry desk accessories company. “The lady who worked with me at the doctor’s office told me to call them, and I walked in and started working,” she says. “Hazel at that time was the coolest place to work and the best training ground for anyone in our industry. There are probably 20 or 30 people in our industry who started there. It was awesome.” At the time, Dobsch explains, Hazel was one of the



Mary Dobsch with her husband, Bob, (left) and her children, Laura and Jacob.

most prestigious companies in the industry. “It was a franchise, and you had to apply to sell their products. They didn’t give just anyone the ability [to sell their products].”

Dobsch left Hazel in 1987 after Bill Wood (another Hazel alum) called to recruit her to his new company, Magnet, LLC. “I was the second office employee there. It was growing so fast it was unbelievable. I remember meetings where we talked about slowing down on sales because we couldn’t keep up. It was fun to be a part of it. All we knew was this industry. We had connections. We knew how the game was played. It was perfect,” she says.

The Chest

At the time he started Magnet, Wood had also acquired The Chest

from a friend in California and both companies were located in the same building. “Nobody did anything with The Chest. It just sat there,” says Dobsch. In the early ‘90s, Wood sold it to Ken Bebermeyer, who had also worked at Hazel and then joined Magnet. Dobsch was part of the sale. “I went with The Chest and started as VP of sales. Then in 2005 I purchased the company because Ken was going to sell it and I was scared of who would buy it. I wanted it to stay in the industry.”

The Chest is unique in the industry in that the company makes everything per order, so no two orders are the same, says Dobsch. And, all the products are made in the U.S. “We control our own destiny. If it doesn’t get done it’s because we failed, not because someone let us down,” she says. Today the company has 40 full-time employees with more part-time employees hired in the fall for the holiday season.

One Of The Guys

Though there weren’t that many women in the industry in the 1970s and 1980s she didn’t ever feel like an outsider. “Everybody tells me I’m wrong [about not feeling like an outsider], but at Hazel, it was never like there was a difference. I never thought I couldn’t do it because I was a woman. That was never an issue. People tell me it was my personality,” she says. That and, perhaps, the fact that she has three older brothers.

Dobsch adds, “When I go to WLC [PPAI Women’s Leadership Conference], my thought process is, ‘These people think they’re being held back because they’re women’ but they’re not being held back—I

mean, maybe you work harder. Maybe I had to do that but I don’t know that it was ever a conscious thought. I don’t know that I’ve ever hit a roadblock where someone told me I couldn’t do something.”

Maybe it’s because she *can* do anything. “The old adage ‘If you want something done give it to a busy person’ fits Mary to a T,” says Ken Bebermeyer, vice president of The Chest. “Here in our hometown of Washington, Missouri, she has been president of the Rotary Club and the Chamber of Commerce, [but] as busy as she is there is never a time that she isn’t there when someone needs help. I am [not only] proud of what she has accomplished in our industry but proud to count her as my friend.”

In his speech introducing her at the 2016 WLC Welcome Dinner and Awards presentation, Bebermeyer said, “Having worked with Mary for most of 39 years, I have seen her, time after time, change someone’s question from ‘Can we do it?’ to ‘How will we do it?’”

Many Mentors

Over the years, many people inspired Dobsch with their confidence in her. “Ernie Hazel set an unbelievable example. Bill Wood gave me opportunities—I always wondered, ‘Does he just not want to do it or does he really think I can handle it?’ I remember my first show; he sent me up to the SAAGNY [Specialty Advertising Association of Greater New York] show when it was up in the Catskills. He said, ‘You go on up and I’ll be up there tomorrow.’ The guy never showed up! He let me do my job and he never doubted me.”

The list of mentors goes on. “Ken Bebermeyer, Sue Tobias

PROFILE

Mary Dobsch

Dobsch encourages everyone in the industry to consider volunteering because “it’s the most rewarding thing you can ever do.”

[senior vice president of sales at Fields Manufacturing]—she set an example of professionalism. When I got this award she sent me a card. It should be the other way around because she is inspirational,” Dobsch says. “We traveled together. I always found when there was a trade show, I’d always want to spend time with [Sue] because it was always time well spent. She was professional. She always took the high road.”

Family And Friendships

Reflecting on what she’s most proud of accomplishing in her life, she immediately points to her family—her husband, Bob, and two children, Jacob and Laura. “[Bob and I] got married at 21 and we’ve been married for 38 years. As he says, since I travel so much, he’s only married 50 percent of the

time so it works great!” she laughs. Jacob works at The Chest as West Coast sales manager and Laura works outside the industry selling medical equipment. Recently, Laura’s daughter, Grace, was added to the family.

But Dobsch is also proud of what she’s accomplished in the industry. “The Chest has a great reputation and I’m very proud of that. But I think what’s even more important is the friendships. You don’t just work in this industry. It becomes your family/friend network. And that’s something I think is just priceless,” she says.

“Where else do you travel with your competition and talk about best practices and what you should be doing, and those people are your friends? I don’t think you find anywhere else that can happen,” she adds.

Dobsch encourages everyone in the industry to consider volunteering because “it’s the most rewarding thing you can ever do. When you’re volunteering you’re hanging around with the best people in the world and you get so much more back.”

DeGreeff sums up some of the main reasons why Dobsch was chosen as this year’s PPAI Woman of Achievement. “I believe on reflection that Mary’s greatest gift is to be able to show empathy, fairness, kindness to everyone, no matter if they are friends, family, customers or colleagues ... Mary Dobsch is definitely qualified for the Woman of the Year Award, but she could also win as Person of the Year.” **PPB**

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

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WORK WEAR

The latest in uniform trends, visibility and industry-specific fashion



A great work uniform not only makes your employees feel and look good, but it also increases positive brand recognition and company image, and helps promote safety in the workplace. A 2013 survey conducted for Cintas Corporation by Harris Interactive[®] revealed that nearly 65 percent of U.S. adults said that uniformed employees give them a positive perception of a company. Survey respondents also said that uniformed employees made the company feel like a more secure place to do business and made them more likely to do business with the company.

So what constitutes a uniform in today's more casual culture? A uniform is any type of clothing that is worn on the job such as scrubs, company-issued t-shirts, aprons, lab coats, vests, hard hats, jackets and caps. But a uniform is not a company uniform without a logo on it. Branding turns a company uniform into a walking billboard that will hopefully attract new customers. So it's important to put considerable thought into creating just the right branded uniform, and you can start by knowing what's trending.

"The active, outdoor and athleisure markets continue to be a major influence across all apparel segments,

Uniformly Wearable

including uniforms,” says Susan Kohout, marketing director for Fort Worth, Texas-based supplier Dickies Occupational Wear (UPIC: dickies). Those influences mean that uniform fabrics must be driven by comfort, durability and easy care.

Dickies designs its uniform garments specifically for today’s workforce and the challenges customers face on the worksite. Kohout says, “To enhance our customers’ experience, our fabric innovations include enhanced cooling, ventilation, wicking, breathability and stretch for greater range of motion.” These innovations are the foundation of Dickies’ Workbench, Automotive Shop and Tactical product collections, and their Core Service uniform offering includes key performance fabrics as well.

With construction growing at a rapid pace in 2016—the infrastructure construction backlog indicator (CBI) grew 24 percent in Q1 this year, showing strong industry growth—branded uniform safety apparel, such as safety vests and hard hats, will be in demand. “One of the most important things distributors need to understand about safety apparel is the ANSI certification ratings,” says Joanna Waldman, marketing coordinator at Starline USA, Inc. (UPIC: STAR0009) in Grand Island, New York. “They need to know the importance of each safety rating; does the product have the proper ANSI certification rating in order to be used in the field for everyday use? By knowing all of this information before going into a sales meeting you are sure to get that order if you know what they are looking for.” (See sidebar on page 19 for more information on ANSI ratings).

Waldman notes that lighter-weight uniforms are particularly in demand. “Our clients are asking for lightweight/breathable fabrics and Velcro® [brand hook and loop fastener] closures that offer a break-away feature, which is very valuable in factory situations.”



Perfect for health and fitness uniform needs, the **Women’s Go Active Short** embraces both style and femininity. A contrast cross-cut bias offers an active look, while its performance features, such as inherent moisture wicking and BodyFreshé treatment (to inhibit the growth of odor-causing bacteria), provides protection and comfort. The **Men’s Workout Tech** style offers an innovative, breathable eyelet mesh back to help keep the wearer cool and comfortable. Its offset side seams cut down on the chances of chafing, while the overall athletic fit allows for plenty of room to lift and stretch. Other features include moisture wicking, BodyFreshé treatment and easy care properties.

Expert Brand UPIC: Expert698
www.expertbrand.com

Stay both cool and visible with this 5.2-ounce 100-percent polyester mesh **crewneck long sleeve shirt** featuring UltraCool® moisture-wicking technology. With two-inch reflective tape, a left chest Velcro® brand hook and loop fastener pocket and self-fabric cuffs, this shirt meets ANSI/ISEA 107-2010 Standards, Class 3/Level 2.

Tri-Mountain UPIC: TRIM0003

www.trimountain.com



These 100-percent acrylic knit three-finger activation **text gloves** come in two safety colors: fluorescent yellow-green and fluorescent orange. Conducting fibers located in three fingertips make these gloves fully compatible with touch screen devices for safer use on the job.

Suntex Industries UPIC: SUNTEX

www.suntexindustries.com



For workplaces where Western attire is fitting, this **denim shirt** fills the bill. It features a contrast whip stitch throughout and two front smiley pockets. A snap-front closure with snap cuffs makes dressing a cinch.

Scully Leather UPIC: S174962

www.scullyleather.com



Retail, restaurant and other service environments need good-looking and utilitarian aprons. This seven-ounce, 100-percent **cotton apron** fits the bill. It has a soil-release finish and gives you full-length protection from spills and splatters. Two waist-level patch pockets and a pen pocket provide convenience for storing necessary items. Choose from nine colors including black, classic navy, coffee bean, hunter, maroon, red, royal, stone and white.

SanMar UPIC: SNMR

www.sanmar.com

Can You See Me Now?

The American National Standards Institute (ANSI) published standard 107 for high-visibility clothing in 1999, laying out three class levels of garment visibility and the minimum quantity of fluorescent and retroreflective material to be worn in each class. The standards were created to protect workers from successively higher levels of risk from motor vehicles and heavy equipment. The International Safety Equipment Association (ISEA) later revised the standard. Published on February 1, 2016, ANSI/ISEA 107-2015 combined two high-visibility apparel standards into one. Here's what you need to know to talk more knowledgeably with your clients:

High visibility apparel is now broken down into three Types and five Performance Classes.

TYPES

Type O

Off-road—no exposure to roadway traffic

Type R

Roadway—exposure to traffic

Type P

Public safety—emergency/law enforcement responders with exposure to traffic



PERFORMANCE CLASSES

CLASS 1

Type O

There is a relatively low hazard from slow-moving vehicles, such as in a parking lot. Garments must have the minimum amount of high-visibility material.

Sources: ANSI/ISEA 107-2015, Grainger, Inc., AW Direct

CLASS 2

Type R or P

The worker is placed in proximity to vehicles moving up to 25 miles per hour, such as railway workers or school crossing guards. The standard requires reflective bands of greater width and 755 square inches of conspicuously colored fabric.

CLASS 3

Type R or P

When work takes place near traffic moving faster than 25 miles per hour, such as highway construction. The standard requires at least 1240 square inches of fluorescent fabric and two-inch retroreflector bands.

SUPPLEMENTAL CLASS E

High visibility garments such as pants, bib overalls, shorts and gaiters, which, in conjunction with a Class 2 or Class 3 item, qualify as a Class 3 ensemble.

OPTIONAL HIGH VISIBILITY ACCESSORIES

Headwear, gloves and arm or leg bands that are not intended to be used alone as high-visibility protective clothing and don't contribute to minimum area calculations of Performance Classes 1, 2 or 3.

The **Two-Tone 6 Pocket Surveyors Vest**, ANSI/ISEA 107 Class 2 vest is intended for workers performing tasks that divert their attention from approaching traffic that is traveling more than 25 mph. Made from durable polyester, the vest features a solid front and breathable mesh back, as well as two-inch two-tone tape for optimum visibility and multiple pockets. It's available in sizes M-5X in yellow and orange. A standard one-color logo or a TruColor™ multicolor imprint are priced the same.

Starline USA, Inc. UPIC: STAR0009

www.starline.com





The **CornerStone® CS401 safety T-shirt** is designed for high visibility and job-site safety. Available in a choice of safety orange or yellow, it features two-inch wide reflective taping on the front and back and is ANSI/ISEA 107 Class 2 certified. Made of 5.9-ounce, 100-percent polyester interlock, it wicks moisture and can be machine washed and tumble dried. It is screen-printable and can be heat-pressed using special care (garment temperature not to exceed 320 degrees Fahrenheit). It comes in adult sizes XS-4X.

Stahls' Transfer Express UPIC: STAHO001
www.transfereexpress.com



Add visibility with this **bright cap**. Made of 100-percent polyester, the hat has a structured, mid-profile, six-panel design. It features a pre-curved visor with a black undervisor and a self-fabric Flex-Strap™ closure. One size fits most. Colors include neon yellow and blaze orange.

Kati Sportcap UPIC: KATI
www.katisportcap.com



KOOLGATOR Cooling Neck Wraps provide a branded cooling solution to employees who work in the heat. White fabric is digitally printed in full color with any designs, logos, messages or photographs that a company wants. The cooling effect lasts all day and requires no ice or refrigeration. Simply soak in water, wear and splash with water to refresh throughout the day. Pitch these wraps to the construction industry, outdoor sporting event staff and participants, and pool/beach staff at hot-weather resorts.

Koolgator, LLC UPIC: KOOLGATR
www.koolgator.com

The Importance Of Input

In an industrial setting, comfort and protection are critical. This **WorkTech performance shirt** is made from mechanical stretch poplin and is 65-percent polyester/35-percent cotton. The shirt both ventilates and cools, providing relief from heat exposure.

Dickies Occupational Wear

UPIC: dickies

www.dickiesb2b.com



Uniforms can have a negative effect on employees' attitudes when they are selected without their input. For example, a waitress complained that her uniform's loose-fitting sleeves draped down and touched the food as she served and as she cleared places. Her uniform quickly became stained and dirty, making her self-conscious and less likely to interact with customers in a friendly manner. And customers couldn't have been too happy about her dirty sleeve touching their food. To avoid unintended uniform problems such as this one, be sure to ask for employee input when choosing new styles.



Source: Cornell Hotel and Restaurant Administration Quarterly, April 2000.



For an outer uniform layer, try the **Huzu Tailgate Hoody** with an insulated Neoprene pocket to keep a drink cold and your hands free while you're working on the job. The pocket is also a secure storage spot for a cell phone, wallet or other valuables.

J. America Blanks (Wholesale Blanks Division) UPIC: blanks

www.jamericablanks.com **PPB**

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

JUST A CLICK AWAY

Q **A DISTRIBUTOR ASKS:** What resources, such as books, podcasts, TED talks, videos, etc. have other distributors or suppliers found to be inspirational and helpful in their approach to running their business?

A These two videos have influenced the way I do business, and how I live my life. I hope they will influence our industry professionals as well.

1. Simon Sinek – “How Great Leaders Inspire Action”

This is from a TED Talk, and to date has received nearly 28 million views.

2. Steve Jobs – “Marketing is About Values”

This is from a presentation Steve made just after he returned to Apple in 1997. Both the content and his presentation style are very powerful.

DAVID J. HAWES, MAS+

*Brand Architect
Geiger
UPIC: G671322*

I love reading industry publications. I also follow PromoKitchen (www.promokitchen.org) and love it! I find PromoKitchen to be a great tool with great tips and info on industry leaders and icons. I follow them on Facebook and get their email newsletters. They have podcasts where they interview people within PromoKitchen and other people in the industry. I have learned so much from the podcasts. I really enjoy them. I have recently become a mentor through PromoKitchen and am enjoying this side of it too.

JOHANNA GOTTLIEB

*Senior Branding Specialist
Axis Promotions
UPIC: axispromo*

For a podcast recommendation:

Try season one and the follow-up seasons for *Startup* by Gimlet Media. It’s not really related to our business, as it follows Alex Blumberg as he gets funding and builds his podcast media company. But it’s a fantastic look into the growth of a company (warts and all) as he records everything. It’s surprisingly relevant to small-business owners. The following seasons are not quite so relevant but still interesting.

I also have another podcast suggestion that is not work related. Malcom Gladwell’s podcast *Revisionist History* is fantastic. It’s such a worthy listen no matter who you are. Just listen to it; I’ve been raving about it to everyone.

KATE PLUMMER, CAS

*Sales Manager,
Marketing, Designer
Clearmount
UPIC: CLRMNT*

Great books

- **Purple Goldfish** by Stan Phelps. This is a terrific book that shares some interesting ways to win customers and influence word of mouth. The main focus of the book is the concept of GLUE (Giving Little Unexpected Extras) and provides numerous examples. For anyone looking to differentiate in business, this is a must read.

- **Setting the Table** by Danny Meyer. Written by the CEO of Union Square Hospitality Group (the man behind such fabulous New York City restaurants as Grammercy Tavern, Union Square Café and Blue Smoke), this book is filled with insights on how to leverage the philosophy of hospitality to not only win but retain and delight clients.
- **Hug Your Haters** by Jay Baer. Eighty percent of companies state they deliver outstanding customer service, yet only eight percent of their customers agree. This book shares some valuable tools on how to close that gap by forcing the reader to rethink the way they approach customer service—by listening to your critics. As the book aptly states, “Haters are not the problem, ignoring them is.”
- **Curious** by Ian Leslie. As we grow from children to adults, we tend to lose our innate curiosity. The author makes a very strong case for cultivating the “desire to know.” Drawing on powerful research, the book looks at what feeds curiosity as well as what starves it. Filled with a ton of inspiring stories and case histories, this book challenges the way you think about the world around you.

Podcasts

- **unscripted.** Promotional products industry insiders Kirby Hasseman and I talk about the world of marketing, branding, sales and just about everything else in this weekly 20-minute podcast.



- **Tim Ferriss Show.** A great show for any entrepreneur. In this podcast, he deconstructs world-class performers from all manner of industries to dig deep, finding the tools, tactics and tricks the listener can use.

Video/TED Talks

Any talk or video by Gary Vaynerchuk. A whirling dervish of activity, if Gary can't motivate you then you can't be motivated.

BILL PETRIE

Founder and CEO
Brandivate
UPIC: BVATE

Do You Have An Answer?

A Distributor Asks

Over the past 10 years I have been faced with the same problem over and over: how to design the perfect "professional" ad for the print media. I think we all do a great job at interactive and social media, but it is very difficult to come up with a truly classy magazine ad or flyer. How have other small distributors been able to create good-looking and effective magazine or print ads? Any tips are appreciated.

What's Your Answer?

Email answers along with your name, title and company name to Question@ppai.org by **September 16** for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue of *PPB* magazine.

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

Eight Great Promo Industry Blogs For Distributors

by Kate Masewich

Whether you are new to the promotional products industry or a veteran, it's important to keep up to date with the latest news, trends and resources available. If you do a quick Google search of the "best promotional products blogs" however, you'll notice most of the results are intended for end clients, not the distributors themselves. So we've rounded up a list of eight great promo industry blogs that will help keep distributors educated, inspired and sharp.

- ### 1 PromoKitchen

PromoKitchen is an all-volunteer organization led by suppliers, distributors and service providers who are creating a new voice for the industry. The blog includes helpful features, interviews and episodes of the PromoKitchen podcast.
Check out: "Your Vendors as Partners" from March 22 at promokitchen.org/blog/
- ### 2 Brandivate

Bill Petrie has been in the promotional products industry for over 15 years helping distributors and suppliers. On his blog he shares his knowledge and experience through helpful posts.
Check out: "The Non-Product Website" from May 5 at brandivatemarketing.com
- ### 3 Connections

Observations from Paul Bellantone, CAE, president and CEO of PPAI, as he shares his personal insights and experiences, and features guest posts by industry professionals.
Check out: "Industry Transformation & A Time to Pivot" from January 20 at paulbellantone.wordpress.net
- ### 4 Hasseman Marketing Blog

Every week, Kirby Hasseman and the team update their stream of content, which includes promo ideas, Kirby's personal blog and the *Delivering Marketing Joy* podcast where Kirby interviews someone in the promotional products industry.
Check out: "Be a Connector" from January 16 at hassemanmarketing.com
- ### 5 Brandextenders

Steve Woodburn shares his thoughts on branding and life in general from his 25 years of experience in the industry.
Check out: "Innovate or Die" from January 5 at brandextenders.com
- ### 6 Delta Marketing Group

DMG has been in the business for over 30 years and their blog shares weekly insights on everything from inbound marketing to sales to promo trends.
Check out: "This is The Biggest Piece Missing From Your Sales Calls" from May 23 at godelta.com/blog#
- ### 7 Your Brand Marketing

Ben Baker is all about creating tangible evidence to help companies communicate effectively. His blog provides insights into achieving results through branding, trade shows and more.
Check out: "Why Should You Re-Brand?" from April 19 at yourbrandmarketing.com/blog/
- ### 8 Quintain

Quintain's blog posts help you better understand how social media, content marketing and email marketing fit into your digital marketing strategy.
Check out: "Should I Use Social Media Marketing as Part of My Inbound Strategy?" from May 16 at quintainmarketing.com/blog

Bonus: commonsku
The commonsku blog is where you'll find business resources, insights on promo industry trends, sales and marketing tips and episodes of its podcast, *skucast*.
Check out: "Designing A Sales Compensation Plan That Works" from March 24 at community.commonsku.com

Kate Masewich is marketing manager at commonsku. This article is adapted from a May 26 blog post on commonsku.



12

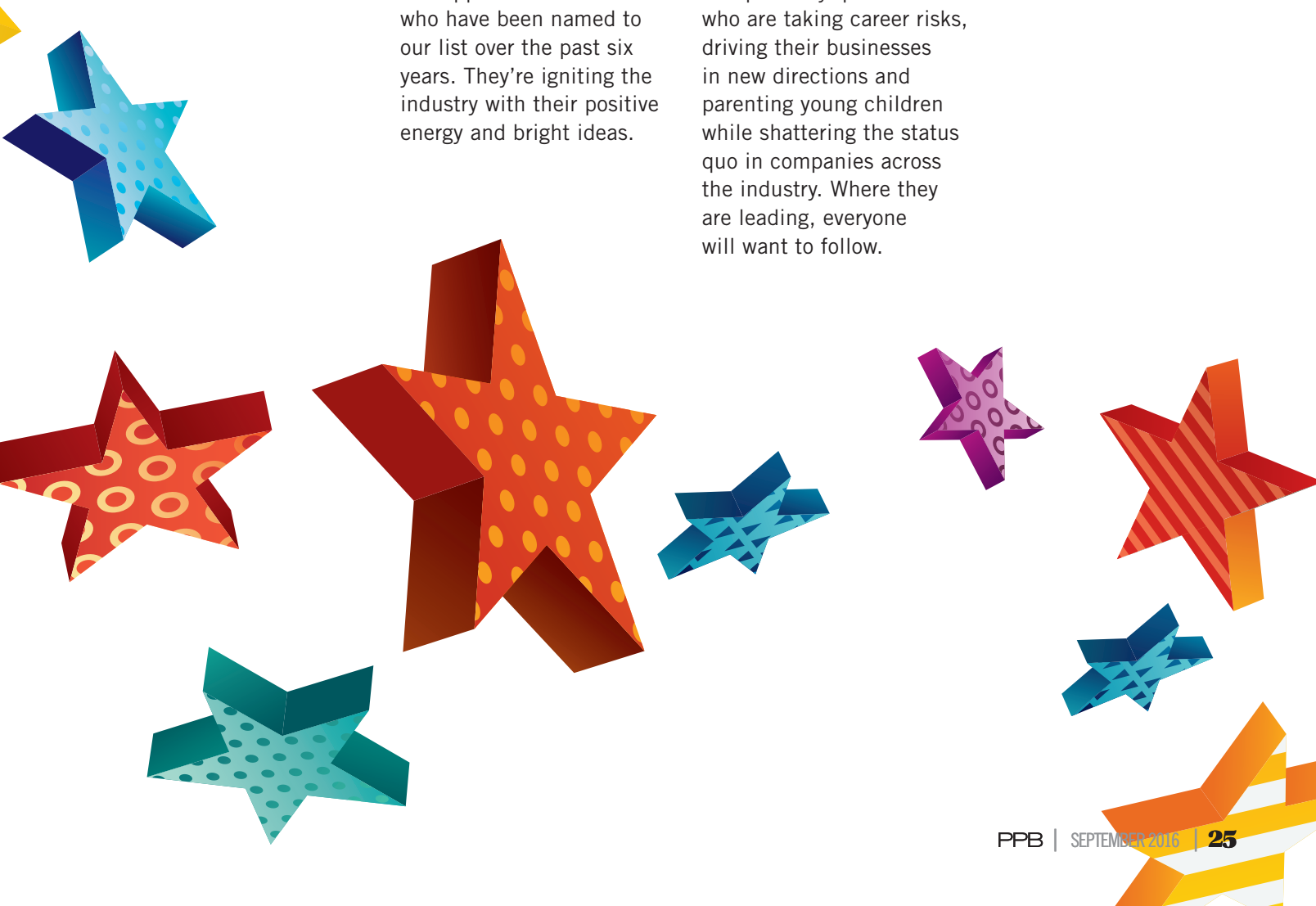
Irresistible Young Leaders

PPB RISING STARS

by Tina Berres Filipski

Energetic. Innovative. Inspiring. These 12 *PPB* Rising Stars join 73 unstoppable overachievers who have been named to our list over the past six years. They're igniting the industry with their positive energy and bright ideas.

This year's dozen are exceptionally quick studies who are taking career risks, driving their businesses in new directions and parenting young children while shattering the status quo in companies across the industry. Where they are leading, everyone will want to follow.





Esmeralda Anaya

MARKETING COORDINATOR
Terry Town

HER INSPIRATION

Her parents. “They overcame so many obstacles and have succeeded in every single one, against all odds, while always helping me to construct my future. The best I can do is take advantage of all the opportunities they have worked so hard to give me.”

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

She wants to see the industry modernize itself—specifically, for distributors and suppliers to communicate more through social media. “Social media partnerships would allow constant and open communication between one another.”

ON HER TO-DO LIST NOW

Storyboard for an upcoming video series; update and post to social media platforms; check Google Analytics; prepare marketing materials for upcoming trade shows and ideas for next year’s catalog.

Esmeralda Anaya moved with her family to the U.S. from her native Mexico at age 15, leaving behind her home and friends, and entered high school in California with no knowledge of the language or American culture. It was the most difficult time in her life, she says, but her parents wouldn’t let her give up. “My parents have been a guiding hand that has followed me through every step of the way. They taught me that if you persevere you will achieve everything you set your mind to,” says the 24-year-old, who went on to finish high school and earn an associate of arts degree in accounting at San Diego Mesa College before moving on to San Diego State University, where she graduated with a B.S. in business administration marketing. She also earned a specialization in integrated marketing communications. After interning with an online gift retailer and the Aztec Business Consulting Center where she was a business consultant for local companies, she joined supplier Terry Town in San Diego, California, a year ago.

She says the job has allowed her to learn a lot in a short period of time. Among Anaya’s responsibilities are developing new marketing strategies and expanding the company’s exposure in different channels of communication, along with creating a strong social media presence. She says she gets a great deal of satisfaction from creating new ideas for the company and strategies to strengthen the brand. Among the lessons she’s learned at Terry Town is that in order to grow, you can never stop learning. “You need to move along with the growth of the company in order to keep going forward,” she says.

She passes along her experience about continual learning to her little sister with this piece of advice: “Only dead fish go with the flow. Take the opportunities that life gives you; don’t be afraid of taking risks. There is no such thing as luck. If you work hard, and take opportunities that life presents, you will be able to succeed in whatever you set your mind to.”

Her attitude and work ethic quickly caught the attention of Ray Adams, a sales executive at Terry Town, who nominated her as a Rising Star. “Esmeralda has been a breath of fresh air from the moment she started with Terry Town,” he says. “She has worked tirelessly to not only understand Terry Town’s products but the promotional products industry in general.” In just a few months, he says, she has transformed the company website and increased views by more than 300 percent and overhauled e-blasts to make them more relevant to distributors, which increased views and clicks by 200 percent and led directly to increases in requests for quotes and orders. She’s also added video to the site to help sales reps and distributors better understand and promote the products. In addition, she has produced new end-user videos that distributors can send to their customers to better show how the products make sense for their events and she’s increased traffic on the company Facebook, Twitter and other social media sites.

“For Terry Town, this has been more than what we expected,” he admits. Not only has Adams been impressed with Anaya’s progress at work, but he’s also moved by her work with the national Seal of Bilingual program at nearby middle schools. “She helps the teachers spread the importance of speaking two languages and teaches how it can help one succeed in the workplace and in life,” says Adams. “She encourages people to be proud of their heritage and to use it as an advantage.”

In her spare time, Anaya likes discovering new places in her adopted hometown. She also hikes to help her relax and enjoys spending time with her family. “It’s a way for me to recharge and get motivated to keep going,” she says.





Beau Ashton

DIRECTOR OF FINANCE
AIA Corporation

After earning his undergraduate degree in accounting and finance from the University of Wisconsin-Oshkosh in 2004, Beau Ashton was still ready to learn. In 2009, he went on to earn his MBA at the same university, yet that didn't satisfy him. He still wanted more so he set his sights on passing the CPA exam. It would prove to be his biggest challenge yet. The exam is actually four exams taken over 18 months, and earning it required hours of studying every day. "I found it really became a personal challenge," he remembers. "I didn't want to look back in 10 years and wish I had completed it, so I stuck with it—and passed!"

Three years ago, while working for a multi-channel merchandising company, he saw a video about distributor AIA Corporation describing it as a great place to work. "I was so impressed with the video and the employees' attitudes that I knew I had to apply for the position as controller," says the 35-year-old Wisconsin native, who had previously worked for a defense contractor.

He says his coworkers are his favorite part of the job. "Everyone at AIA is truly supportive of each other and it is one big family."

Even within families, leaders rise to the top, and that was the case with Ashton, who caught the attention of IT Director Paul Weller, who nominated him as a Rising Star. "During Beau's quick three-year tenure with AIA, he has accomplished many great things with his strong and effective leadership over our accounting team. With his personal support, we as a team accomplished an accounting software package

upgrade in 2015 that was eight years overdue. He also stepped up and delivered exceptional service and accounting leadership when our CFO left the company last year.

"I consider Beau a rising star in the promotional products industry because he is making a difference at AIA and in our industry by challenging the way we look at and engage with finance, sales and the entire business supply chain," Weller says. "He is a key part of our leadership team, and he is constantly pushing us to go further than we have before on projects and goals."

Weller adds that Ashton continues to build new and strong business partnerships with all of AIA's distributor partners and its top industry suppliers. "He is very involved in a number of strategic projects that are internal and external to our business and that are aimed to help AIA grow sales and become a better solutions provider," he says, citing examples that include streamlined web store payments, ecommerce platform solutions, UPS freight billing and auditing solutions, and an improved supplier payment process with top suppliers.

Weller also calls Ashton an exceptional listener as well as a leader. "With his previous work experiences he is able to share and apply sound advice and positive feedback on a multitude of topics," he says. "I really appreciate that Beau takes a personal ownership in his work and he has done a lot to learn more about our industry, our distributors and working with our top suppliers."

For Ashton, the most important lesson he's learned in business is to ask

HIS INSPIRATION

"I like to be proud of the work I'm responsible for. If my name is associated with a deliverable, I want to feel a sense of pride that I was a part of that."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

"I see the industry becoming more integrated between suppliers, distributors and customers. This is going to happen through the growth of ecommerce and how customers purchase products, as well as the continued systems integrations between distributors and suppliers."

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Personally, he's preparing for the arrival of the couple's second child. Professionally, he's about to start the 2017 budget process.

questions and keep asking them. "One of the tools in Six Sigma Certification is the five whys, which focus on finding the root cause of a problem. I have never found a solution to a problem that could be solved with only the first question."

With all of his AIA responsibilities and a new baby on the way as this issue went to press, Ashton finds an easy way to relax and recharge. "I enjoy playing with my three-year-old son," he says. "It's amazing how easy it is to forget about work when you are digging in the sandbox."

2016
PPB Rising Stars



Dan Webb, CAS

PRESIDENT | Webb Company

At age 18, Dan Webb started working as receptionist at his family's supplier company, answering phones and filing paperwork. That was just the first step. By the time he moved into his current position he had worked in every department and subsequently learned the company from the inside out.

Now, at 31 and the company president, he's working to continue shaping the company his father built and creating a legacy his two children will want to become part of one day. He says he was born into the business and is lucky that he loves it. Webb most enjoys the sales aspect and engaging with customers, but he's naturally an introvert. "I used to stay far away from sales but the more you do it, the more fun it becomes, and now I thrive on it," he says.

The most difficult challenge he's had to overcome at Webb Company is that of driving continued growth during economic downturns, combined with online direct sellers and customers going direct. Even so, Webb Company has grown nearly 300 percent in the past four years. What the challenge has taught him is to stay focused. "You can't please everyone and not everyone's business model is a fit for your

business to equal a profitable venture," he explains. "Stay focused on your path and target the customers that you enjoy working with."

For other young business owners, he offers this advice: "The only thing you can control is yourself," he says. "Don't chase money and don't chase people. When you focus on yourself, these things chase you."

To relax, he gets away with his daughter, Hayden and son, Roman, and also plays golf and runs. "Running is a great tool I use to free my mind and reenergize as well," he says.

Nominator Patty Batalden, who recently retired as sales and marketing manager for the Webb Company, is impressed with Webb for a number of reasons, starting with the fact that he's an amazing listener. "He never responds until the person is done speaking. He cares about what the distributor, employee or fellow supplier is saying—and when he responds, his answer is well thought out."

Batalden worked for the Eagan, Minnesota, supplier for 10 years, the past six under Dan's leadership, and calls him one of the nicest people she's ever met. She shares these examples: "He treats everyone equally and

HIS INSPIRATION

His father, Alan, and his two children. "My father built the Webb Company from our basement. I've watched it grow from nothing to massive and back to almost nothing again. I've learned a lot from him and I strive every day to continue growing the company bigger and better than before—not to show him up, but to show him off. I wouldn't be here without him and I also wouldn't be here without my children. I want them to grow up seeing what hard work looks like. I don't think I'd be as driven as I am without them. They are such a driving force for me and the best things in my life."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

He sees more consolidations, buyouts and mergers. "All of it, and a lot of it. I see a lot more suppliers working together than ever before as well. This can be scary for companies that are unsure of their future, but Webb has no doubt they are here to stay and grow. The future is quite exciting."

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Work on implementing new cloud-based ERP/CRM system, hire additional sales staff, increase support staff to handle the growth.

values all the relationships he forges. When he meets a distributor at a show, gives them his card and says call me anytime, he means it. When he says his door is always open, that is true too. On a personal note, the fact that he is much younger than me, doesn't affect me at all as I have learned so much from him. To be able to work for a person who talks the talk and walks the walk is a great thing."

She also describes Webb as someone who is truly dialed in to what is happening within the industry and what the trends are, and he's glad to share the information with employees so they can answer customer questions. He's also recently brought in several new product lines, including a line of lip balm manufactured on-site.

"Our industry is lucky to have such a rising star looking after it," adds Batalden. "When Dan and I are out on the road together, I am often asked if he's my son. I thank them and tell them he is not but I consider it a compliment as he is such a great man."





Keith Lofton, CAS

NATIONAL ACCOUNTS MANAGER/SPORTS MARKETING COORDINATOR

Pro Towels

In 2005, Keith Lofton, CAS, was working at a Utah restaurant when he noticed the logoed pens, polo shirts, beer steins and other items being used to promote the restaurant to patrons. There's something to this type of marketing, he thought. Not long afterward, he took a job at an industry supplier company in the samples department, sorting lanyards and shipping samples to clients. He credits that exposure and responsibility with helping him learn how to become an expert in the product line he sells today. "I was always trying to find ways to help distributors sell the items I was sending, too, and suggesting another item. That's how I found my way into sales."

Five years ago he accepted a position with Pro Towels and made the cross-country move from Utah to Atlanta, Georgia. He calls the relocation his most difficult challenge yet. "Only knowing a couple of people here, moving my family and 'farm' animals, learning a new culture, having a new sales territory, a new job and learning how to be a dad all at the same time has been challenging but also extremely rewarding," he says. Lofton, 31, is the kind of guy who looks on the bright side and always finds a way to have fun. "Whether in this industry or another, if you don't enjoy what you do, it shows and will wear you out before you know it," he says.

What Lofton likes best about his position at Pro Towels is that every day is different—whether it's a new project to manage or a new challenge to solve. "I can never get bored doing what I'm doing. I also absolutely love seeing our product being used." Recently, at the mall, a beach towel in a store window display caught his eye.

He immediately knew it was a Pro Towels product and it made him smile.

Lofton's pure enthusiasm for the industry is what has endeared him to his co-workers and industry peers alike. "Keith and I have worked together for over four years, and day in and day out he has proved to me just how good he is at what he does, and how valuable he is to the organization," says nominator Brian Porter, vice president of North American sales at Pro Towels. "He's on the clock 24/7, people enjoy working with him, he goes above and beyond to ensure that not only do people get what they need and he's also made many friends beyond the daily scope of his work."

Nominator Janet McMaster, regional sales vice president at Geiger, knows Lofton from trade shows, sales meetings and customer-focused events, and has worked with him on regional association events. "Keith infuses energy and enthusiasm into every segment of his business and relationships, from clients to fellow board members to fellow supplier reps, keeping us all fresh and innovative," she says. "He has a genuine desire to build lasting partnerships with his distributor clients and not be just a 'one hit wonder' who sells towels."

Despite his busy workload and a full family life, Lofton is also currently serving as president of the Georgia Association of Promotional Products Professionals, and it was in that role that nominator Lisa Bibb, MAS, executive director of GAPPP, saw his leadership abilities in action. "Keith has proven himself to be a very dedicated board member, even with his hectic schedule,"

HIS INSPIRATION

He cites those he has worked with—Charley Johnson, Dana Zezzo and Brian Porter—saying all have taught him so much about what it takes to succeed in business and in his personal life. "I've been able to surround myself with some great people and these are three who have helped shape my business mind and approach. I wouldn't even be doing what I'm doing today if it weren't for them."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

"I would like to see the industry get younger and get that next wave of marketers, game-changers and leaders coming into the industry. I've always been one of the younger people in our industry and I've been around almost 10 years. Now I feel like it's my turn to show some younger people the ins and outs of what we do—like my mentors have done for me."

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Prepare for business trips, clean out inbox, ship trade-show booth.

she says. "He always wants to attend every conference and meeting in order to learn more, connect with his peers and be the best ambassador for GAPPP. His passion for taking the association to the next step is truly inspiring."

2016
PPB Rising Stars

“It’s a beautiful thing when a career and a passion come together,” says Sarah Merrill, who combines her loves of marketing and merchandising in her role with Sterling Heights, Michigan-based distributor Mercury Promotions & Fulfillment. Although she grew up in the state and attended college at Northwood University in Midland, Michigan, Merrill moved south to Atlanta, Georgia, to take her first job with distributor Quest Promotions. There she learned the complete scope of the business from sourcing products to accounting. When it was time to come back home nine years ago, she chose Mercury Promotions & Fulfillment.

Merrill, 34, loves the fact that she can use her education (a degree in business with a dual major in fashion marketing and merchandising management) and her work experience to craft creative solutions for her clients—and no two days are ever the same. “Each day I’m presented with new challenges and situations, which keeps me excited and focused,” she says. “I am encouraged to think outside of the box and am trusted to get things done. I am able to do what I love, for a company I love, and I am building amazing relationships in the process. It doesn’t get much better than that!”

While Merrill manages a pretty full plate most days, she makes time to serve the industry through her regional association, Michigan Promotional Professionals Association (MiPPA) where she is board secretary, serves on the executive committee and is chair of MiPPA’s TOM Show and co-chair of the spring tabletop show, Ideas in Bloom. Her effervescence and energy as a volunteer caught the eye of MiPPA Executive Director Paul A. Kiewiet, MAS+, who nominated her as a Rising Star.

“Sarah demonstrates an uncommon level of both leadership and organizational skills,” says the former PPAI Board chair and PPAI Hall of Fame inductee. “She is able to grasp the big picture, focus on the end objective and keep all of the details, pieces and people moving in the right direction.”

He also says Merrill has an energy level that matches her high level of commitment to the association. “The result is that she gets things done, and her attention to detail ensures that she gets things done right. Amazingly, she

is able to balance this with a sense of humor and a sense of perspective, never acting as if she is overwhelmed. She commands respect and is a capable and inspirational leader.”

A former distributor himself, Kiewiet admires Merrill’s solid reputation for working nimbly and skillfully with industry partners. “Sarah is widely respected for her treatment of suppliers and reps,” he notes. “She develops partnerships that help her company grow and gets the best work from suppliers.” He calls her a consummate professional who also serves as a mentor to new employees at Mercury and adds that she is always willing to share her knowledge and her network with others.

Always on the go, Merrill says her most difficult challenge is learning to delegate and say “No.”

“I have the tendency to try to be everything to everyone,” she admits. “Juggling everything becomes exhausting over time but building a team with the right people and learning to trust them and delegate tasks is essential. The bigger the dream, the more important the team.”

In just a little over a decade in business, she’s also learned an important lesson: “Respect your time and talents; both are invaluable. Always surround yourself with people who agree with this.” She adds that it’s okay to say “No.”

Her advice to others looking to find balance and full satisfaction in their lives and careers is to get involved. “Don’t be afraid to ask questions or to learn a new way of doing something. To be successful, know what you are doing, love what you are doing and believe in what you are doing. Finally, take care of your relationships and the rest will take care of itself.”

When it’s time to relax, Merrill favors long weekends, especially during the summer and spends time boating, entertaining friends and family, and reading magazines (everything from *InStyle* to *Forbes*).



Sarah Merrill

MERCHANDISE DIRECTOR
Mercury Promotions & Fulfillment

HER INSPIRATION

“My dad always encouraged me to follow my dreams, try my hardest and be the best I can be. His work ethic inspired me to become a hard-working person and his positive outlook on life is contagious. He taught me to always look on the bright side and face any challenges in life with a positive attitude.”

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

She believes in a need for increased awareness of the industry in colleges and among young workers. “Attracting, engaging, developing and retaining the next generation is vital right now. I would love to see our industry develop an ongoing strategy for college outreach and recruitment. Recruiting students to volunteer at industry events and shows would be a great way to introduce our world to the next generation.”

ON HER TO-DO LIST NOW

Format e-mail campaign, update showroom with new apparel samples, book Pensacola flight, get ice for BBQ.





HIS INSPIRATION

His parents. “My mom is the most patient and caring person, and my father taught me the foundation for sales success. I find my balance in life with their upbringing.”

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

He wants to see more education geared towards the industry and more young talent to add value to the traditional distributor model—especially for innovative and creative ideas for end clients.

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Continue strong double-digit growth and make 2016 a banner year.

Kenny Ved

VICE PRESIDENT OF SALES | Goldstar

Kenny Ved joined San Diego-based supplier Goldstar in April 2001 and was still getting acclimated when terrorists struck the U.S. that September. Along with all the losses the country endured, businesses were hard hit nationwide as sales slowed for a time in reaction to the devastation and aftermath that ensued.

The tragedy of 9/11 wasn't the only disaster Ved has had to circumvent. For years Goldstar had a huge presence in the pharmaceutical industry with its pens making their way into doctors waiting rooms and hospital pharmacies nationwide. He came to Goldstar with connections to the healthcare industry from his previous employer, supplier Belding Sports, and he expected to build that piece of business. But when PhRMA was enacted in January 2009, the voluntary code discouraged its healthcare members from giving away non-educational promotional products. It was the first step to a devastating loss of business in that sector for the promotional products industry.

With PhRMA, “the writing was on the wall but our organization didn't believe it,” remembers Ved, “and one day the faucet just shut off and sales stopped. The company took a major hit. We had to rebound quickly.”

Understanding the marketplace and where Goldstar would fit in was a big challenge, and Ved wasted no time taking it on. He immediately started knocking on doors, pitching the company's capabilities,

working with multi-line reps and rebalancing how Goldstar marketed itself. “It was tough but it made us stronger,” he says.

Sixteen years later Ved's passion about the job is still rock solid and, at 40, he continues to make a memorable impression on everyone he meets. “Kenny is really a hard guy to miss,” says nominator RJ Hagel, marketing manager at Goldstar. “He is outgoing, friendly and quite honestly fairly flamboyant when it comes to his dress at trade shows. If it isn't hot-pink pants, you might find Kenny with a stars and stripes suit or a ‘pen jacket’ that he custom tailored to showcase the line of Goldstar pens he sells. He is always coming up with something new and thinking outside the box. If you spend enough time with Kenny, you start to build anticipation for ‘What is Kenny going to do next?’”

Hagel also calls Ved a hustler—but only in the most positive way. “He works hard and he keeps his head up. When challenges arise, he works them through and keeps moving. He is exactly the type of supplier salesperson that we need more of in the industry,” says Hagel. “He is passionate about the products he sells and he is equally passionate about helping people solve their challenges.”

During a time when suppliers and distributors are struggling to find opportunities to grow together, Ved leads by finding common ground to help distributors add value to the supply chain, says Hagel. “To be honest, this nomination is way overdue for Kenny; he has been

a rising star for quite some time now.”

During his years with Goldstar, Ved has seen the company grow 500 to 600 percent. He regularly travels across the U.S. and Canada meeting with clients and supporting his sales staff, sometimes for four weeks at a time. Still, he clears his schedule to give back to his industry as a board member for Promotional Marketing Association of Northern California (PMANC) and has worked to partner with a number other key industry suppliers to find synergies and opportunities to offer more value to distributors and the industry as a whole.

For Ved, the lessons he's learned in his career have been the best teachers. “Take risks,” he advises. “Calculated risks and decisions tend to lead to the biggest awards.” He also believes in giving respect to others and love to friends and family. “Everyone wants to be loved. Respecting everyone you cross paths with will make you a stronger person.”

Away from work he spends time with his two children, Jay and Alyssa, and enjoys playing, coaching and watching sports, especially basketball, and recharges by taking short vacations. “Sometimes all you need is some fun in the sun,” he says.

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Remy Kawaguchi

SENIOR ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE
Image Source, Inc.

Remy Kawaguchi was in college at the University of Redlands when she was first exposed to the world of promotional products. As a summer intern at Image Source, Inc., in Kirkland, Washington, she got a taste of the freebies in the sample room and then, following graduation, went to work at the company as a receptionist. After what she calls a whirlwind stint as an account coordinator, she took the plunge into the world of sales and has no regrets. “Each role I filled taught me something different about the business and the industry, and has shaped where I am in my career today,” she says.

Asked about her favorite part of the job, Kawaguchi chooses to back into the answer by talking about her least favorite part of the job first. “I’m not a sales-y salesperson and my elevator pitch is not well-rehearsed, but I put trust in performance and results (and I know my clients do too),” she says. “I am a believer in ‘give us a try,’ and then knock it out of the ballpark. My favorite part of the job is hearing clients say, ‘You made me look good!’”

At only 28, she has been a multi-million-dollar annual producer at Image Source for the past three years, but is still discovering the ins and outs of sales. “I’m learning that it’s okay to not be the right partner for every potential client,” she says. “Being goal-oriented as I am, it was hard to shake the feeling of failure if I wasn’t able to secure every prospect or grow the business with target accounts. It was actually guidance from my executive team, the ones whom I thought I was letting down, who showed me it was okay to focus my attention on the right opportunities for me. They continually put trust in my evaluation (and reevaluation) of prospects and support me unconditionally.”

Not only do her teammates support her, they rave about her. Fifteen members of the Image Source team nominated her as a Rising Star along with nominations from her reps at suppliers SanMar, Cutter & Buck and Hawkins Embroidery. Nominator and co-worker Janelle Gradinaru describes Kawaguchi as always positive, creative and witty. “When you think that every idea for a project has been thought of, she comes up with 10 more great ones! She constantly goes above and beyond for her clients and is great at on-the-spot problem solving.”

Nominator Lori Horand adds, “I am always impressed at the creative, outside-the-box thinking Remy displays.” Another nominator, Arian Weatherman, says, “Remy initially caught my attention with the speed at which she moved through the company. She’s got a serious side coupled with a creative side that makes for a great AE to have in your corner. Remy is constantly thinking about her clients and teammates, and ideas and forethought are natural to her. Her client list has been impressive given her initial experience level, and now I’ve watched her become a leader in the company. She’s someone from whom I expect greatness.”

For Kawaguchi, winning at business is a lot like excelling at sports. “Just about anyone can be on the field, but you have to separate yourself if you want to make a difference,” she says. “Know your team as well as your opponent, play to your strengths, be anticipating scenarios so you are prepared, and most importantly, celebrate your successes as much as you learn from your failures.”

Her best advice is to be flexible. “I describe my role as a utility player. I love finding out in what areas my clients need help and filling those

HER INSPIRATION

Competition. Kawaguchi grew up very involved in athletics and played softball and golf at the collegiate level. Post-grad (and lacking a ball to hit), she found a renewed competitive spark at Image Source with its team-focused culture. “Being in sales keeps a fire lit under me,” she says.

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

She believes that second to money, time is the greatest currency. “If we can save our clients time, then we can add value. As a whole, retail consumers are getting smarter and more savvy in the way that they buy. They are more resourceful and have higher expectations. To remain relevant and thrive, our industry needs the continual push for resources, and particularly the technology to stay a couple of steps ahead and ensure that we continue to add value.”

ON HER TO-DO LIST NOW

Spend more time with clients, continue targeting prospects/ industries and hit a single digit handicap on the links.

voids. I enjoy that my role varies from team to team but when I find that sweet spot, I really feel like a valuable contributor to their cause—and when you partner with a client, be passionate about their brand.”

When Kawaguchi’s enthusiasm occasionally wanes, she takes time out with her boyfriend, Josh, whom she calls her biggest supporter and partner in crime, whether it’s eating Thai takeout on the couch in sweatpants or planning the next stamp on their passports. “We joke that I make it easy for him, though, given that I hate flowers and chocolate but I love poker and golf.”





Ryan Hanchey

DISTRIBUTOR SALES MANAGER
SAGE

HIS INSPIRATION

Hanchey admits he's inspired by a long list of heroes. "My wife inspires me to be a good person, appreciate my family, to be caring for others and to work hard. My mother's work ethic inspires me to suck it up on tough days and work hard. My dad inspired me to be myself. My sister is the most solid, grounded person I know and definitely inspires me to do the right thing. My brother is a successful entrepreneur who is always challenging himself physically and mentally. Many of my team members inspire me with their work ethic, constant brainstorming and excitement for their jobs. And, of course, there's Dwayne 'The Rock' Johnson."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

I want to see more young entrepreneurs enter our industry and challenge the status quo; find new products that I've never seen before; see distributors building entire marketing campaigns not just fulfilling orders; and realize the value in information being shared live across the distribution channel. I also want to strike 'trinkets and trash' from everyone's vocabulary.

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Record how-to videos, implement the SAGE Web 2.0 rollout strategy and wrap up *The Speed of Trust* by Stephen M.R. Covey.

Ryan Hanchey was somewhat familiar with the promotional products industry before he stopped in at the Dallas offices of industry technology services company SAGE to return a book to his cousin, who worked there. Hanchey had a good job selling technology staffing and wasn't looking to make a change. Once inside, though, his thoughts began to churn. "I met everyone, exchanged stories and decided if they ever had an opening, I wanted to go for it," says the 33-year-old, who ended up joining the SAGE team in 2010.

With a degree in emergency management from the University of North Texas, Hanchey was trained to keep a cool head while quickly handling multiple problems. At SAGE, he put that preparation to good use in assisting distributor clients to get the most out of SAGE products and programs. But his biggest challenge wasn't keeping up with the work, it was being promoted from team lead to sales manager. "There is a transition period there that can go one of two ways and you're certainly tested," says Hanchey. "I had to quickly ramp up my managerial skills, but luckily I have amazing mentors who helped me make the transition and they continue to give me advice.

One important lesson he learned is to listen more and talk less. "Listen to your customers' needs, complaints, suggestions, praises, but also listen to your teammates." He quotes financial author and radio host Dave Ramsey who, he says, talks about having a servant mentality by putting your team and customers first and establishing that you are all in this together.

Hanchey truly admires his coworkers and they admire him. One of his nominators, Bille Walchek, SAGE's director of marketing, says two characteristics that instantly come to mind when she thinks of Hanchey are commitment and attitude. "If you expect your team to work hard and produce, you need to lead by example and that is exactly what Ryan does," she says. "Ryan works alongside everyone else on his team and there is no greater motivation. He has proven to his team that he is not only committed to SAGE but more importantly he is committed to them. He truly cares about their success and is willing to do anything to help them succeed on a day-to-day basis. When one of his team members succeeds I think sometimes he is even more excited than they

are. Ryan is one of the most passionate leaders I know, which is such a hard trait to find. And with this passion is a strong desire to better himself personally and professionally."

SAGE Director of Sales Blake Bozeman, MAS, who also nominated Hanchey, says his attitude inspires everyone around him to elevate to the next level. "He is consistently positive and excited day after day for what the next achievement is, or the next great idea. This positivity keeps his team motivated and keeps their energy level up. Ryan has quickly gained a vast understanding of the industry overall and is a natural behind the camera, and delivers our messages in videos with precision and enthusiasm. He is a tremendous asset to represent our company, our passion and our professionalism."

Hanchey says his favorite part of the job is seeing his team tackle goals and then celebrate their success. Since he joined SAGE, he has won a number of awards including Rookie of the Year during his first year at the company, Top Sales Producer when he was an account executive and the All Star Award during his first year as a manager.

When called on from time to time to share advice, the words come easy. "If something makes you miserable and there is no light at the end of the tunnel, get rid of it," he says. "It's not good for you or anyone around you. However, if there is a light at the end of the tunnel it's probably worth it. My dad always said, 'You've got to spend time in the gutter, son.' I don't know where that came from, but spending time in a gutter doesn't sound fun so I guess it makes sense. On the other side of the coin, don't take for granted the great things you have in your life. They might not always be there."

When he needs to relax and recharge, Hanchey gets energized by spending time outdoors—sitting on the porch, backpacking in the woods or cruising around in his old Bronco. Just the same, he confesses to being a spreadsheet nerd. "I love looking at numbers."

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PPB Rising Stars



Stephanie Lyndon-Wheeler

NATIONAL ACCOUNT DIRECTOR
Boundless

Stephanie Lyndon-Wheeler bought promotional products in her first job right out of college as a brand manager. She left the company to take another job and when it didn't work out, she called her promotional products distributor, with whom she had a strong relationship, and asked her to put out some feelers for another opportunity. "I told her, 'I think I want to do sales.' She said they were expanding and that I should come to work with her." Lyndon-Wheeler jumped at the chance and worked hard to quickly learn the sales side of the business. Eight years later she was ready for her next challenge.

A sales career wasn't necessarily on the drawing board for Lyndon-Wheeler, who studied communications with an emphasis in public relations at San Diego State University. "Since age three I would tell my mom and dad, 'Hey, I've got an idea!' Always creative, in college she put those skills to work whenever her sorority ordered promotional products, usually t-shirts and bags, for its events. After college, her role as a brand manager was an opportunity to continue using her imagination and resourcefulness.

Now 34 and expecting her first child as this issue went to press, Lyndon-Wheeler still calls the creative part of her job her favorite. "Creativity is a daily requirement, whether it's creative challenge solving (never a problem, just a challenge), new ideas needed or creative marketing initiatives, there's so much fun in the creative process of branded merchandise."

Lyndon-Wheeler's talents as a savvy innovator and sales dynamo have made her a double asset within the Boundless team, and influenced Pat Barry, senior VP of sales, to nominate her as a Rising Star. "Stephanie is passionate about the promotional products

industry—she's a professional driven by creating solutions and delivering results," he says. "She has seen substantial growth and has doubled her business consistently throughout the past few years. What makes this even more impressive is the fact that she has done this with half a dozen accounts that are working with her and doing significant volumes—and is well on her way to a multi-million-dollar year, having qualified for multiple incentive trips within the company."

Barry also describes Lyndon-Wheeler as incredibly versatile. "She adapts herself to different buyers, aligning with their goals and working styles as well as understanding their approach so she can create a custom promotion that ensures her clients get the most out of it." He also notes that she has mastered the fundamentals of the business—creativity, providing excellent service, partnering with clients and sourcing. She tailors her approach to each client, whether they are younger buyers or more senior managers and, in this way, earns their trust. As a result, clients bring her in during the early stages of marketing campaigns. He's amazed at the phenomenal relationships she's able to build with her clients.

"She is quick to leverage new technology to ease the process and offer creative solutions, and is always willing to lend a helping hand to peers, but is also aware of when *she* may need help and is unafraid to reach out," he adds. "These traits have primed her for continued success."

Self-confidence comes easy for Lyndon-Wheeler now, but that wasn't always the case. In 2008, she developed severe allergies that made her face swell. "I couldn't wear makeup for a full year while doctors tried to figure out what was wrong with me," she says. "When you're in outside client-facing sales meetings and sales

HER INSPIRATION

Lyndon-Wheeler says she has always been self-motivated to achieve personal success. "I've got this inner drive and voice that motivates me to design a life I love. I've had plenty of life challenges but I just keep at it and feel blessed to do a job I enjoy and I work hard at not sweating the small stuff. That said, my husband and daughter are huge new motivators for me."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

She wants printed catalogs eliminated and to see suppliers spend the money on personal visits and samples. "I also want to see a path to get more young blood thriving in our industry and see more long-standing industry programs established to support the growth of young, creative minds." She also believes in the importance of transparency for supply lines and channels. "I applaud our CEO Henrik Johansson in his efforts and am excited to see what kind of programs we begin to offer our clients."

ON HER TO-DO LIST NOW

With a baby on the way, she's searching for a traveling nanny.

calls wearing no makeup—it was a scary thing for me to do. But I had no choice, I had to pay bills so I kept pushing on." Not surprisingly, her clients were supportive and many appreciated her vulnerability. "Sharing my story took some of our relationships a bit deeper and my clients often related the adversities they had struggled with. That year became my best sales year to date back then," she says.

For others wanting to follow Lyndon-Wheeler's success, she offers simple advice: "Just go for it. There are a lot of skeptical people in this industry who are fighting change and the 'Millennial takeover' but I say just get up, put on a good outfit and a good attitude, and work at your to-do list. There is so much opportunity out there."

2016
PPB Rising Stars



Elson Yeung

**DIRECTOR, PRIVATE LABEL
DESIGN & MERCHANDISING**
alphabroder

HIS INSPIRATION

“People inspire me. I thoroughly enjoy meeting new people, learning about their lives and interests. In a generation where information is so easily accessible and mediums typically lack human interaction, I enjoy everyday conversations with colleagues, friends, strangers, etc. I love to talk things out and sometimes debate and learn from others’ perspectives.”

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

He says industry buyers and consumers are starting to request more of what they’d buy at retail themselves, so the gap between retail and our industry is shrinking rapidly. He’d also like to see fewer disposable purchases and increased demand from consumers for quality products.

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Look at new ways and things to offer to customers: new designs, new technology; communicate with the sales team on what’s working and what’s not. Find time to take a vacation.

If Elson Yeung had followed his mind instead of his heart he would probably be a banking executive figuring out rates of return instead of designing fashion-forward garments for the industry’s largest apparel supplier.

While he always had a passion for fashion and followed major fashion brands such as Versace, he began to study economics in college because his parents both had careers in banking. But during his freshman year, he learned that while his mind was willing to pursue economics, his heart was not. He says the challenge became overwhelming with dividing opinions from family and friends, and while now he’s sure he made the right decision, at the time it was not as clear. What helped him decide was talking through it with those close to him, and remembering what his mother had always told him: No matter what you do, do what you can to be the best at it.

Yeung, who grew up in Hong Kong and emigrated to Canada at 12, went on to fashion design school to learn more about the craft, and then joined a national retail company as a graphic artist creating technical drawings for footwear, home furnishings and packaging. He then landed at Ash City as a technical coordinator in the technical design department. In January 2014, the company was acquired by Trevoze, Pennsylvania-based supplier alphabroder.

Yeung, now 34, says his favorite part of his job is the opportunity to be creative, constantly looking for new ways to improve on designs and quality of products. “It’s an exciting process to be in an environment with so many moving parts; it goes beyond just designs from paper to garment,” he says. “The ability to be ahead of the curve, introduce new trends and create products that consumers are excited about is really exhilarating.” He also enjoys being involved in transforming and articulating what designs are best aligned with his customers’ needs through marketing, photography, illustrations and presentations. “It makes what we do really come to life. I get true satisfaction in knowing that my designs are well received; to see someone on the street wearing the actual garment I designed will never get old.”

Nominator Andrea Lara Routzahn, senior vice president, portfolio and supplier management at alphabroder, says she met Yeung in 2013 just prior to the acquisition and was immediately

impressed with his poise and intelligence. “During the process of integrating the Ash City and alphabroder product teams, Elson quickly distinguished himself as a bright, creative and driven young man. In the nearly three years since Elson has been part of my team, he continues to grow and prosper at alphabroder. I can count on one hand the number of people with whom I have had the privilege to mentor in my career that are of the caliber of Elson Yeung.” She says he has an insatiable thirst for knowledge and for using that knowledge to make the company more successful. “Elson has a passion to deliver quality products to the marketplace and spends countless hours analyzing past success and failure to drive continual improvement.”

She describes the award-winning designer as possessing a unique combination of creative talent balanced with real business acumen. With a keen understanding of the practical needs of the customers, he has developed analytical tools that evaluate the industry landscape and identify opportunities. In addition, he’s one of the best apparel presenters you will ever see, she adds. “Not only is he high energy and with a contagious positive attitude, he understands practical use and clearly demonstrates how his products translate to our customers and the end users. He’s a true rising star.”

One of the most important lessons he’s learned in business is that to be successful, “you have to trust your gut, sharpen your instincts, be open minded and then support it with data. In the field of design, you have to find the balance between art and science.”

He’s also learned to never assume. “Even if you think you know the answer, still have the conversation. This is critical to better team work, ownership of responsibilities and to eliminate unnecessary wasting of time,” he says.

In his downtime he likes spontaneity that fits his mood, whether it’s relaxing at home with his wife, Amanda, and their cat, Tatlim; scrolling through Netflix; discovering new music or cruising on his bike.

2016
PPB Rising Stars



Tim Hennessy, Jr.

DIRECTOR OF SALES AND MARKETING
Concepts & Associates, Inc.

For years Tim Hennessy, Jr. worked summers and holidays at his family's distributor company in Birmingham, Alabama, before officially joining the company following graduation from Auburn University in December 2001. "I saw how my parents worked and their passion for what they did," he says. "It was infectious. Working here was never a question."

While a career at Concepts was clearly in Hennessy's plans, he had to overcome the misconceptions about his youth when he was eventually promoted to director. He says that even though he had worked in virtually every department in the company, he was considerably younger than most of his industry counterparts when he took on his current role and not everyone took him seriously. "I really had to work twice as hard to prove I knew the business and demonstrate that I could deliver results for our clients," he says.

Although Hennessy has a degree in business administration with a double major in management information systems and logistics, his favorite part of the job is the creative side. "Without question, it's The Big Idea," says the 37-year-old. "We love coming up with an idea that's memorable, reinforces the brand and, most importantly, provides value and return on investment for our clients."

His creativity hasn't gone unnoticed. Hennessy has won five PPAI Pyramid Awards for promotions he's created for clients. He's also snagged a PPAI Image Award for the company.

On the sales side, Hennessy's passion for the business has resulted a staggering track

record. His sales have increased more than 57 percent in the past five years, and from 2011 to 2014 this go-getter boasted sales of well over \$1 million year after year, says his nominator, Concepts Accounting Manager Sonya Holcomb. Last year, he set a personal goal to hit \$2 million in sales, which he met and exceeded, she adds. "Tim has done nothing short of trailblazing for the success of the company by expanding business opportunities with clients throughout the country, keeping customers satisfied from project to project, and meeting and exceeding the goals he sets for himself. With successes like these, he's turning heads."

Outside the office, Hennessy spends time with his three children, is involved in his church and serves on the boards of several local philanthropic groups. "Being able to balance all of these tasks while performing at such a high level during business hours exemplifies that Tim truly is a rising star," Holcomb says. For Hennessy, spending time with his wife and children puts everything in perspective.

His best advice to others wanting to make serious headway in their business is to remember: your word and your reputation are everything. "If you say you are going to do something, do it without fail," he says. "It is the cornerstone of a solid business relationship."

HIS INSPIRATION

Hennessy's parents, Tim, Sr. and Lynne, have been his biggest influencers from both a personal and business standpoint. "They are not only my bosses, mentors and parents but also my best friends. I learned to emulate their work ethic, and am so thankful for the impact they have made on my life."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

"I have enjoyed seeing the continued improvement of technology from decoration techniques to all kinds of textiles in all facets of our industry. It's a constant process that will continue to evolve and I can't wait to see what comes out next."

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Schedule site visits, read more books on sales, religion and creativity, take a family trip and enroll in a master's degree program.





Kevin Mullaney

VICE PRESIDENT/PARTNER
Brandito

HIS INSPIRATION

He says he's inspired by entrepreneurs who put their time, sweat, money and passion into their dream, such as Shawn Boyer, the founder of his previous employer, Snagajob, and his current boss at Brandito, Michael Lovern. "It has been an honor and privilege to follow behind such great leaders."

THE INDUSTRY IN FIVE YEARS

He hopes suppliers continue to mirror retail trends and focus on developing products geared towards tech companies. He's also looking forward to five years from now when the 10-day turnaround is a thing of the past, and catalogs are digital instead of printed.

ON HIS TO-DO LIST NOW

Increase client base in Northern Virginia, step up social media presence, get better at golf and sell, sell more and keep selling!

Kevin Mullaney loves seeing someone wearing a branded polo—so much so that he'll often say, "Hey, I like your shirt!" That always gets the person talking about where they got it and why it's their favorite. "I love seeing our shirts worn around town," says Mullaney, who is vice president/partner for distributor Brandito in Henrico, Virginia, a Richmond suburb. "I feel they are brand ambassadors for their company, and in turn, ours as well."

Originally from Westfield, New Jersey, Mullaney earned a B.S. in communications and a minor in media studies from Radford University in 2006, then went to work for a local tech company, Snagajob, selling software. He loved it, but in 2011 the company was going through significant changes and Mullaney thought it was a good time to explore new opportunities. "I reached out to Brandito's CEO Michael Lovern because I had been following his company and knew they were doing great work and developing a strong reputation in the city," he says. "And I'm a sucker for a fresh polo so I knew selling swag had some perks."

Mullaney, 32, became the company's first employee that year and fell in love with the industry. Since then the company has carved a niche business for itself by developing innovative solutions and working to be their clients' most valued partner. Toward that goal, Mullaney has also established himself as a critical link with his suppliers and their reps.

"Kevin is literally the definition of a go-getter," says his nominator Amanda Delaney, sales associate at supplier SanMar. "He not only goes after business with a fiery energy, he's quite possibly one of the most positive people I've met in my 14 years in the industry. His energy level and willingness to learn

and adapt to what his customers need is contagious—you can't walk into a room and not simply be drawn to him."

Mullaney hasn't always seen himself that way, and he wasn't always so confident either. Earlier in his career he felt challenged by his own insecurities and self-doubt. Through the years though, he learned to make the difficulty work for him. "I've been blessed with attention deficit disorder, so I've had to learn how to manage those symptoms in the professional world and channel that energy into something positive," he explains.

He's also found success by under-promising and over-delivering. "It's about being transparent with your customers," he says. "That's how you earn their trust, and in turn, their business."

Not only does Mullaney make a good impression on his clients, suppliers who work with him find him unforgettable. "First is the bow tie," says nominator Mark Chipchase, owner of Mac Marketing, a multi-line rep firm in nearby Norfolk. "He always comes prepared for his client meetings wearing a bowtie and with more energy than a Starbuck's cafe. Kevin and Brandito are bucking the old sales style of dropping off catalogs. He and his team are true consultants that start taking in information about a client as soon as they walk in the door. They also take a consultative approach to understanding a company's mission, values and obviously their corporate colors to make sure that every product he pitches is going to be something that people use again and again."

Chipchase shares an example of Mullaney's creativity developed for a Brandito client show two years ago. Instead of using a ballroom, Mullaney arranged the show at a brewery client's facility, with suppliers displaying

products in the back while Mullaney and his team schmoozed attendees by the bar. “It was one of the most successful shows I’ve ever been too,” Chipchase remembers.

Mullaney also had a hand in naming the company, which was originally called Shockoe Marketing Group. “He helped rebrand the company to Brandito to give it a unique and more national perspective,” explains Chipchase.

In addition to his energy and creativity, Mullaney brings a great deal of passion to his position. “This kid gets fired up about sales,” says Chipchase. “It really shows when he is in front of his clients and also when he’s working with suppliers.”

In his first six months at Brandito in 2011, he sold \$150,000. By 2015 he had developed an impressive \$1.5 million book of business. “Kevin listens to what is trending and shares these trends with his client base. He has a refreshing energetic vibe about him and pumps up every meeting that I attend with him and his sales team,” says Chipchase.

To others wanting to make a difference in their companies, he advises them to just be themselves. “My boss always tells me, ‘Just be yourself; that is why I hired you.’ If you can be yourself, and do something you are passionate about, nothing can stand in your way.” **PPB**

Tina Berres Filipski is editor of PPB.

PPB Rising Stars 2010-2015

Since the program’s inception in 2010, *PPB* has spotlighted 73 individuals as Rising Stars.

- | | | |
|----------------------------|----------------------|-------------------|
| Derek Adams | Andrea Jaeckles, CAS | Shamini Peter |
| Jill Albers | Christopher Jenkin | Rosanne Riddle |
| Sarabeth Anderson | Ray Jimenez | Jill Rogers |
| Greg Armstrong | Mark Johnston | Sasha Pirrie |
| Rhea Aslin | Michelle Kajan | Andrew Sawczenko |
| Nate Bailey | Matt Kaspari | CJ Schmidt |
| Lori Bauer | Evan Krofchick, MAS+ | Jeff Schmitt, MAS |
| Tim Brown, MAS | Michael Legel | Jim Socci, CAS |
| Amanda Clay, MAS | Jennifer Mamajek | Brandon Stewart |
| Jamie Cohen, CAS | Michael Marias | Adam Taylor |
| Brittany David, CAS | Nikki Maucere | Tiffany Tarr |
| Rich Corvalan | Ashley McCune | Adam Thornton |
| Kamil Dys | Allison McLain | Brian Towne |
| Anita Emoff | Chris McKee, MAS | Tessa Trumble |
| Michael Fields | Russ Mogell | Zachary Tyler |
| Mark Gardyn | Kathleen Milbier | Bryan Vaughn, MAS |
| Jessica Gibbons-Rauch, CAS | Carol Moore | Jim Walrod |
| Matt Gonzales | Kari Moravec | Rosanne Webster |
| Mark Graham | Amanda Nannini | Seth Weiner, MAS |
| Kirby Hasseman | Kimberly Newell | Brad White |
| Marc Held | Jon Norris | Dave Willis |
| Jamon Heller | Ben Norris | Bryony Zelman |
| Glen Hersh | Sean Ono | Megan Zezzo |
| Jessica Hiner | Sarah Parsons | |
| Jessica Hutwelker, MAS | Brittany Pawlikowski | |



During the *PPB* Rising Stars presentation at the PPAI North American Leadership Conference in San Francisco in August, each recipient was presented with a commemorative gift—a personalized Spower Bluetooth speaker and power bank, generously donated by PPAI supplier member Hirsch Gift, Inc. (UPIC: HIRGIFT).



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present big promotional
opportunities. **page 40**



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60**

A Matter of Distinction

19 Ways Your Competitors Are Differentiating Themselves



Open For Business

Small-business clients present big promotional opportunities

From the mom-and-pop sundries shop to the regional chain of family-owned grocery stores, small businesses are a creative marketing goldmine. Encouraging consumers to patronize local establishments is not only the trend nowadays, it's also perceived as good for community morale.

In an interview with *Entrepreneur* magazine, Andy Miller, chief innovation architect for Constant Contact, gave some good reasons for pursuing clients in the small-business market. First, the segment is growing—65 percent of net new jobs generated in the past 20 years have come from small businesses.

Second, these types of businesses overwhelmingly embrace solutions that will help them grow; even so-called mom-and-pop stores are embracing technology, Miller says. Finally, building client relationships in the small-business sector creates a bridge to consumer and enterprise markets.

“You may be able to find the market most in need of your idea by going to your local town center and walking into one of those small establishments,” he says.

How big is a ‘small’ business? It depends on the business, according to the U.S. Small Business Administration. While the retail trade sector lists maximum small-business employee numbers between 100 and 200, employees of manufacturing businesses can be as few as 500, or as many as 1,500 employees. The small business designation also often depends on revenue; agricultural businesses that report a maximum of \$750,000 in average annual receipts are considered “small” by SBA standards.

Operating as a small business in the era of big-box stores and international brands is a challenge, which makes smart, effective marketing all the more crucial. A smart campaign includes promotional products that are relevant to the business, useful to the audience, affordable for the client, reflective of the company’s personality and, once selected, distributed to the right audience.

Help Small Businesses Make A Big Impact With Products Like These



This inexpensive yet effective **smart wallet with mirror** allows recipients keep their cards safe and keep up appearances. The silicone card slot holds up to three cards and sticks to the back of any cell phone using a 3M adhesive backing that is both removable and reusable.

Essef Distributors UPIC: 7414140

www.lincolonline.com

Neoprene **KOOZIE®** **Zipper Bottle Coolers** are perfect for the tailgating season and as giveaways by local bars and restaurants that support local teams.

BIC Graphic USA

UPIC: BIC

www.bicgraphic.com



Help clients get business done on the road, or anywhere offsite, with an **office organizer bag**. Constructed from laminated, nonwoven polypropylene and heavy board for stability and durability, the organizer features two large compartments which can hold both letter- and legal-size folders or binders.

American Ad Bag Co.

UPIC: ADBAG

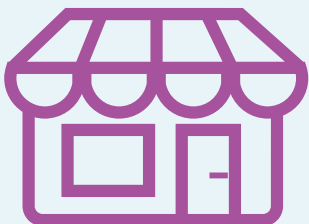
www.adbag.com



Spas, tanning salons and even optometry offices will get glowing reviews when they hand out these **glow-in-the-dark sunglasses** with clear lenses. Available in five neon colors, the glasses feature UV400 protection.

WOWLine UPIC: MANY0002

www.wowline.com



Small-Business Sector Trends

Keep these trends in mind when working with clients and prospective partners



Millennials in management positions



Revenue-focused partnerships



Peer-to-peer lending or crowdfunding



Electronic payment options



Mobile ecommerce



Same-day local delivery

Take note of quality with a **leather folded jotter** that's a handy 3.75 inches by 5.75 inches and holds 10 to-do sheets as well as a pen.

Scully Leather

UPIC: S174962

www.scullyleather.com



Plush toys add dimension to new-business promotions and customer outreach. Choose from more than 2,000 toys in a variety of styles, sizes and colors for a perfect fit.

Artistic Toy Manufacturing, Inc.

UPIC: ARTSTOY

www.artistictoy.com

Case studies from the industry

Real World Solutions

Thumbs Up To Keeping Customers Coming Back

Small businesses usually don't have a large advertising budget, so when they do advertise, it needs to be something that will have a huge impact for a small price. With the advent of online banking, a credit union was experiencing a decrease in the number of customers who actually came into the credit union lobby. They wanted to give out an item that their customers would use while doing their online transactions and keep their name top of mind, so they chose a Thumbs Up phone and tablet holder from supplier Beacon Promotions (UPIC: BEACONP) in New Ulm, Minnesota. It was imprinted with the credit union's logo and a catchy slogan to hand out to new customers.

Source: Beacon Promotions



Start Your Search Engines

VP Racing Fuels, a San Antonio, Texas-based business that provides performance fuels for the motorsport industry, wanted to provide its retail customers and loyal followers with branded merchandise at the click of a mouse. So the 100-employee company partnered with Cheshire, Connecticut-based distributor Barker Specialty Company (UPIC: BARKER) to launch an ecommerce store, VP Performance Gear.

The store serves as a one-stop shop for VP's expanded line of hats, t-shirts, promotional items and more; items include "Mad Scientist" and VP Monster Truck-themed products, including a VP Monster Jam® T-Shirt, a Monster Truck plush toy, Monster Truck pennant and even a Mad Scientist bobblehead.

Source: VP Racing Fuels

Online Orders Are In The Bag



To build sales for its drive-thru service, a restaurant launched a website for customers to order their breakfasts, lunches and dinners online. The fast food restaurant is located in an area that is mainly industrial, with pretty high traffic.

Since most of the customers' purchases were delivered in paper bags, distributor West Coast Promo Resource (UPIC: diaaaa) in Fullerton, California, suggested bag clips imprinted with the restaurant's website address to be included with every to-go order. After three months, the restaurant reported that customers were actually requesting the bag clip and online orders had grown to create long lines at the drive-thru during the lunch hour.

Source: West Coast Promo Resource

MARKET TO MARKET

small-business market



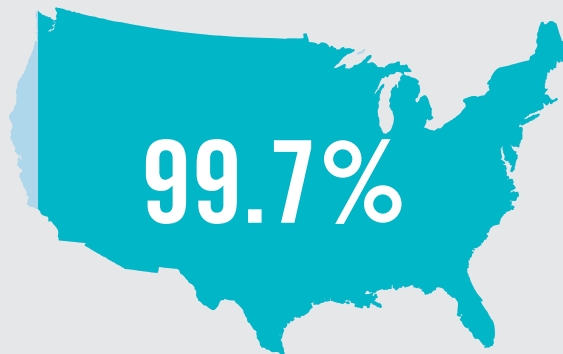
Feeling The Pinch

The National Federation of Independent Businesses (NFIB) monitors the outlook of small businesses in the U.S., and its most recent report—from June 2016—found that the Index of Small Business Optimism rose seven-tenths of a point, to 94.5. The last time the index rose above the baseline of 100 was December 2014.

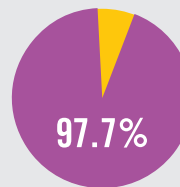
The negligible increase, according to the NFIB, reveals high uncertainty and low expectations for better business conditions and investment opportunities. More than 50 percent of reporting businesses said they were trying to hire or were hiring staff, but 48 percent reported being unable to find qualified applicants for open positions. Additionally, inflation in the U.S. prompted 12 percent of small-business owners to reduce average selling prices over the past three months. **PPB**

Jen Alexander is associate editor for PPB.

Small Businesses Are A BIG Part Of The U.S. Economy



> **99.7%** of U.S. businesses are classified as small businesses



> **97.7%** of exporting businesses in 2013 were **SMALL FIRMS**



> **56.8 million** U.S. employees work for small businesses

In 2013, **SMALL FIRMS** generated **33.6%** of U.S. total known export value



> In 2013 **1.1 million net jobs** were created by small businesses



> **Firms with FEWER THAN 100 EMPLOYEES** employ the largest share of workers



> **Firms of 250-499 employees** reported the greatest gains



> In 2014, **11%** of self-employed respondents identified themselves as **veterans**

Between 2007 and 2012, the number of...

Hispanic-owned businesses grew

46.3%

Hawaiian/Pacific Islander-owned businesses grew

45.3%

African American-owned businesses grew

34.5%

11.5% as **male**



7.1% as **minorities**

7.2% as **female**



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A man in a dark suit and tie is smiling broadly, holding a large gift box wrapped in blue and white striped paper with a blue ribbon. The background is a textured, light brown color.

Expand your existing promotional products business with incentive programs

Employee turnover is expensive—costing as much as six to nine months' salary in recruiting and training expenses according to the Society for Human Resource Management. That's why successful companies know how important it is to keep employees engaged and motivated. Besides providing a great culture and good benefits, an important part of the employee engagement puzzle is an effective incentive program.

From the recruiting process, to onboarding and length-of-service programs, to wellness programs, thank-you gifts and job-well-done rewards, the opportunities are there for promotional products distributors to help their clients better engage their workforces. According to the Incentive Research Foundation, 75 percent of U.S. businesses use non-cash rewards and recognition to motivate and engage their workforce, spending more than \$77 billion annually.

Brand-name products can be an especially effective way to recognize or incentivize employees, something that some distributors avoid due to a lack of knowledge. “Sometimes, I feel we make our channel more complicated than it needs to be—we talk about incentive programs or this program or that program, when it can be as simple as someone is looking for a nice gift and a brand name item would just work better,” says Gary Slavonic, president of Top Brands, Inc. (UPIC: topbrand) in Oshkosh, Wisconsin. “Just as it is in the traditional promotional products space, it’s important to align the branded product with the opportunity,” he adds.

Slavonic’s company recently participated in an event where the audience was comprised of women professionals, and the gifts handed out were Vera Bradley business card cases. “Certainly a traditional promotional product could have worked, but having a brand name item such as Vera Bradley to hand out to the recipients added to the overall quality of the experience,” he says.

And don’t forget about the presentation of your product, says Jennifer McFadden, communications director at BAG MAKERS, Inc. (UPIC: BAGMAKRS). “If you aren’t talking about packaging, you are leaving money on the table.” She says that the easiest way to transform a product from a giveaway into a gift is to package it nicely. “You can use a printed gift bag with tissue paper, or wrap the giveaway and add ribbons and bows that are printed with your logo,” she adds.

Products For Any Program

This **lambskin satchel briefcase** from the **Aero Squadron Collection** has a padded center gusset with a removable laptop shuttle. The roomy rear gusset includes a 13-inch inside zip pocket.

Carry the satchel in comfort with the removable and adjustable shoulder strap with a faux shearling pad. The cotton lining shows schematics of aircrafts.

Scully Leather UPIC: SCULLY

www.scullyleather.com



Stay on trend with a focus on fitness and wellness when you customize this silicone **wrist pedometer** for your next marketing campaign. Both a watch and a pedometer that can record steps, calories burned and distance, the pedometer comes with batteries included and is packaged in a white gift box. These wristbands are great for marathons, gyms, and reward and wellness programs.

Essef Distributors UPIC: 7414140

www.lincolonline.com



Small and compact, the **Bose SoundLink Mini Bluetooth Speaker** gives big sound with deep bass for a full-range listening experience. A built-in speaker phone allows you to take calls out loud with clear sound.

The rechargeable battery plays up to 10 hours and charges with most USB power sources. Choose from carbon and pearl.

Beacon Promotions UPIC: BEACONP

www.beaconpromotions.com

This warm and cozy 58- by 84-inch **single-layer blanket** is made from an eight-ounce cotton/polyester fleece special blend. Colors include carbon, nickel, black, midnight blue, Pacific blue, pomegranate and sea green. A natural-colored draw cord with an antique-finish metal tip is included with each blanket and can be tied around a rolled blanket.

Independent Trading Co. UPIC: Trading
www.independenttrading.com



Charge multiple devices on the go with this portable, water-resistant **solar powered charger**. The shockproof 8000 mAh power bank features a LED torch light, dual USB output, indicator lights to show battery level and carabiner that can attach to your backpack, purse or bag. Its silicone shell makes it shatter resistant and perfect for outdoor activities.

Makana Line UPIC: MAKANA
www.makanaline.com

Promotional Or Brand-Name Product?

CHOOSE A Promotional Product

- To convey a message
- To reinforce the brand name and generate awareness
- To bring a theme to life in a clever way with a target audience
- When a goal is to get someone to an event—having the event name on the gift increases response rates

Source: Incentive Marketing Association

CHOOSE A Brand-Name Product

- To motivate people to do something
- When a primary goal is to have awards and recognition with high-perceived value
- If you want people to share the recognition with their family and friends
- When the budget supports a higher price
- When being associated with brands will reinforce the brand of the sponsor company



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We have **extensive, impressive and effective resources to help you grow your business** and stay ahead of the competition, including: discounted pricing and other benefits from preferred vendors; order financing; order follow-up and back-office support; invoicing and accounts payable/receivable services; sales and marketing support; advanced and constantly evolving technology; virtual assistant program; payment advance program; professional development and networking opportunities to keep you learning and connected; and so much more.

Unlike other industry organizations, with iPROMOTEu there are **no non-compete provision** or other restrictive provisions that prevent you from doing business how you want, when you want, and with whom you want.



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Discover the many ways iPROMOTEu can benefit you and your business at www.iPROMOTEu.com



The **RoxBox™ Duet Bluetooth Speaker** is a sleek and slender speaker that can fit into virtually any space. It turns any mobile device into a portable sound system with a built-in subwoofer that provides exceptional quality sound. This speaker allows you to use it as a hands-free phone and is perfect for conference calls. Make your client's logo multicolor with TruColor™ imprint.

Starline UPIC: STAR0009
www.starline.com



Wirelessly transfer photographic images from any iOS or Android smartphone for instant prints in seconds with the **Fujifilm Instax SHARE™ smartphone printer**.

This little printer produces two-by-three-inch instant prints on the spot. Special features include multiple prints of the same photo, a black and white photo option and special messaging options on each print. Includes a 20-exposure pack of film, lithium batteries and photo album.

Indigo UPIC: INDIGO
www.indigowatch.com

Incentives In Action

Q&A with Johanna Gottlieb, senior branding specialist, Axis Promotions



Q How are generational differences affecting the types of premium and incentive products you suggest to your clients?

A When I started at Axis (10 and a half years ago) I sold a lot of padfolios. It was a great item and a staple piece; it still is. However, the world has changed. We live in a world of startups and where the tech industry is booming. Many people do not wear suits and ties to work these days. Many go to work in jeans. We have to cater to current audiences. Sometimes selling a hoodie is more relevant than a padfolio. If someone is set on a padfolio, I like to suggest that it include an iPad holder in it so it is functional for many audiences.

Q Can you give an example of a successful program you've been a part of recently?

A Axis was recently part of the rebrand for TIAA, a 98-year-old financial services company. One of the most memorable projects was producing hundreds of custom Vineyard Vines ties, bow ties and scarves with new branding. They turned out beautifully and CEO Roger W. Ferguson, Jr. has worn the ties during interviews on CNBC.

Q What are some current trends you are seeing in the premium and incentives space?

A A bigger trend we are seeing is not about product but more towards how we work. Our clients want lower quantities and they want them faster. Everything is on demand these days. People want and expect instant service.

Q Do you have any tips for small distributors just entering into this arena?

A All that trends in retail and fashion makes its way to the promo world. Keep your eye on what is trending in retail to be one step ahead of the game for your client. Be aware of what colors are hot in fashion and the latest styles in bags.

The 13.5-inch **pewter gallery tray** is the perfect piece for gifts, awards or recognition. Handcrafted in the U.S. by local metal crafters, the mirror finish makes it ideal for engraved logos, sentiments, years of service or award details. The optional addition of a diamond-tipped engraving pen allows you to make the award or gift extra-special by giving you the ability to sign the piece or add many personal messages.

Salisbury, Inc. UPIC: SALPEWTR
www.salisburyinc.net



Create the instant comfort of a sofa virtually anywhere. **Lamzac™ the Original** easily inflates with a few swings in the air. Then, once deflated, it rolls up and fits into a handy carrying case. Take it on a trip or just lounge by the pool.

Fatboy UPIC: F620443
www.fatboyusa.com



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BAG MAKERS, Inc. UPIC: BAGMAKRS
www.bagmakersinc.com

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Check out the on-demand webinar, "Expo 2016: Incentives 101: An Overview For Promotional Products Professionals," by Sean Roark, CPIM, vice president of Spring, Texas-based distributor PromoPros at PPAI.org/education.



Powered by light, the **Eco-Drive Proximity** is a smarter watch for tech-savvy consumers. With Bluetooth compatibility to iOS and Android, it has a perpetual calendar chronograph, dual time, alarm, power reserve, light level indicator, time and date sync. Additional capabilities include phone search/filter and visual/vibration alerts. For women, the **Citizen L Sunrise watch** features soft gradient dials draped with seven diamonds and three additional diamonds floating along the bezel. Other features include a stainless steel case and bracelet, white mother-of-pearl dial with blue gradation, sapphire crystal, a deployment clasp and water resistance up to 50 meters.

Citizen Watch Company of America
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www.citizenwatch.com



Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

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People, Planet And Profit

The Role Of Procurement
In Doing The Right Thing

by Gill Thorpe, FCIPS

In today's climate, *talking the walk* and *walking the talk* in procurement are not just buzzwords. They are a very real business approach and strategy, for which companies are increasingly being put under pressure to demonstrate within their operations, in partnerships and with the various suppliers they work with, and throughout their global supply chains.

Procurement provides an immense opportunity for businesses to highlight their "right" credentials, while demonstrating their seriousness and commitment to changing their way of working. Ultimately, they know and understand that the "right" approach can achieve positive social impact on people and the planet while delivering a competitive advantage that results in growth, profits and increased shareholder returns.

Doing the "right thing" makes absolute business sense. From embedding ethical business practices and ensuring there is

diversity and inclusion in workforce and suppliers, to carrying out risk and compliance audits with appropriate follow-up processes, and embracing sustainability, businesses can create positive change to deliver real value throughout the global supply chain while safeguarding people, profits and the planet we inhabit.

Ethical And Responsible

The global supply chain does not function in a vacuum. By making supply chains ethical and responsible, businesses consciously own the management of the economic, environmental and social challenges they encounter, while exerting purchasing power to effect positive change. They do this while retaining an ethical, respectful and fair approach and by collaborating and

building strong and transparent relationships and partnerships with their suppliers.

Over the past few decades, we have seen a visible change take place in supply chains. While outsourcing, cost mitigation, globalization and technology have brought the world closer and created the global manufacturing village, concepts such as corporate citizenship, social responsibilities, ethical business practices, sustainability and circular economies have gained strength as many multinationals embraced them. What drove this commitment was the realization that the supply chain cannot be divorced from corporate social responsibility. Neither can the industry ignore concerns about the environment, ethical business practices, and health and safety compliance.

All these issues, including the business risks facing global brands, the reliance by purchasing departments on incessant and expensive audits





The global supply chain does not function in a vacuum. By making supply chains ethical and responsible, businesses consciously own the management of the economic, environmental and social challenges they encounter, while exerting purchasing power to effect positive change.

and assessments, the spotlight on exploitation in the global supply chain and the recent introduction of The Modern Slavery Act in the UK still occupy many corporate agendas. They demonstrate the need for an approach that not only “talks the walk, but walks the talk.”

Tackling Diversity And Inclusion

Multinationals such as Intel that have embraced diversity and inclusion now talk about increased innovation and creativity, new opportunities and a velocity to market. As part of this journey, they have signed up for well-executed strategies which they deployed throughout their workforce and supply chain. They have gained competitive advantages stemming from stronger partnerships, collaborations and market insights that

are caused by diversity in thought and investments in diverse enterprise. They drive transformational change in their total supply chain and in turn, propel economic empowerment in communities and sharpen their own competitive edge to realize growth in profits.

Working with a diverse and inclusive supply chain allows for increased innovation and an opportunity to thrive in the business. The different backgrounds, experiences and cultures all lead to a myriad of perspectives which bring a wealth of ideas to the table, helping to build a better solution. Likewise, diversity in suppliers opens up new routes to markets—for new products, new technologies, new customers and new suppliers. The ability to give equal access to purchasing opportunities across all qualified diverse suppliers empowers the organization which embraces this approach. Whether the suppliers are from a minority group, a women-owned business, those with disabilities or from other diverse groups, they should all be part of the chain that provides capabilities and innovations to all organizations. Such suppliers are agile. They are innovative and they are also flexible. They bring thought diversity to the table, and increase values to the companies that deal with them.

Focused global initiatives such as the Stonewall Equality Index (WEI) and WEConnect International for certified women-owned businesses are all extending their reach as they assist organizations to improve their diversity and inclusion with

advice, guidance, best practices and accredited programs.

Driving Change Throughout The Supply Chain

While supplier audits and assessments are used throughout purchasing to identify ability, compliance and the use of ethical and sustainable practices and processes, the feeling in the industry is that it is too easy to create a climate of audit-fatigue, even when using ethical and sustainable audits. International organizations such as SEDEX (Supplier Ethical Data Exchange) in part have reduced this audit-fatigue, however the overload on suppliers, with requests for multiple audits and assessments, has raised questions as to whether audits are the best tools to mitigate reputation, legal and operational risks.

Many multinationals, including Oxfam, have adopted a more strategic approach, helping to drive change through various mechanisms. They have developed long-term relationships with their diverse suppliers and together work to identify areas where they can eliminate risks and reduce the impact and pressure on the supply chain caused by late orders, late payments and last minute changes.

Ending Labor Exploitation And Unethical Practices

Other corporations have moved beyond their internal corporate purchasing programs and audits to tackle global labor exploitation. Although international mechanisms, such



Regardless of where the corporate operation is located, the supply chain is typically operating within a wider environment that is susceptible to impact caused by that same supply chain.

as The International Labour Organisation Declaration on Fundamental Principles and Rights at Work, have been put in place to safeguard the rights of workers employed within the supply chain, in reality, labor exploitation is practiced under the radar in many countries. In the UK, the Modern Slavery Act, which was recently signed into law, has a much wider impact that extends beyond national borders to tackle slavery in the UK and help eradicate it throughout the global supply chain.

Unethical or illegal practices such as bribery, facilitation payments and corruption may be widespread practices in certain countries and communities operating within the supply chain, but a refusal to pay bribes and operate unethically or illegally shows the integrity which is being demonstrated among brands, both big and small. Engaging in such activity could have costly consequences and may mean getting the wrong suppliers for the wrong reasons, not to mention a loss of confidence in the integrity of the company and its products.

Ensuring A Sustainable World

Regardless of where the corporate operation is located, the supply chain is typically operating within a wider environment that is susceptible to impact caused by that same supply chain. Examples extend from carbon and other greenhouse gas emissions to accidental pollution, damage to biodiversity, water, energy and other resource usage and efficiencies, and waste. The list goes on.

The United Nations Global

Compact, the world's largest corporate sustainability initiative, together with the Sustainable Development Goals that are agreed to by all the UN countries, brings governments and businesses together to align strategies and operations, and demonstrate a commitment to sustainability. In parallel, corporations and businesses worldwide must consider the impact of their activities and take action to minimize their effect.

In such a connected world, businesses must step up. As an industry, there are many forums and meetings taking place to raise awareness, such as discussing how businesses can influence their employees, suppliers, partners and consumers to be inclusive, responsible and considerate. Ultimately they can only succeed and reach their goals with the commitment and real support of governments, business leaders, responsible corporations and businesses, and a cohesive, ethical and sustainable global supply chain.

Managing Your Supply Chain Responsibly

You need a strategic and collaborative approach to manage your supply chain responsibly. Indeed, you cannot do it alone. Collaborate internally and within the industry to build leverage in the supply chain and this will create a ripple effect. These tips will help you develop a plan:

- Take the lead, know your supply chain.
- Understand your business and purchasing drivers.

- Carry out initial audits, reviews and risk assessments.
- Prioritize areas which are of immediate concern.
- Gather information on suppliers on identified risks.
- Develop policies and set targets for improvement internally and within the supply chain.
- Build the capacity of your people—be inclusive and diverse.
- Integrate throughout the purchasing process.
- Report externally and internally.
- Stay engaged, share best practices and back up your claims. **PPB**

Gill Thorpe, FCIPS, is CEO and founder of distributor The Sourcing Team in Wallington, Surrey, UK and has been an active supporter of the industry for 25 years. She is a Fellow of the Chartered Institute of Purchasing and Supply (CIPS) and a Lifetime Fellow of the British Promotional Merchandise Association (BPMA), where she previously served as chair, president and board member. The Sourcing Team is a leading specialist in ethical, sustainable and compliant global sourcing and procurement of promotional materials, is qualified in supply chain management and has 28 years of expertise in managing reputational risk. The company is an established member of BPMA, PSI and PPAI, and holds green credentials which include EcoVadis Gold CSR, CIPS Sustainability Index Rating-Gold, AB Membership of SEDEX and signatories of The UN Global Compact. Contact Thorpe at gillthorpe@sourcing.co.uk.

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Product Search

Should distributor websites feature products and product search, or should they tell your story?

Vs. Storytelling

This article first appeared on the PromoKitchen blog in the point and counterpoint section, Salt & Pepper. It was inspired by a post by Bill Petrie for his brandivate blog about positioning a website. This article features a debate between distributors Dale Denham, MAS+, Geiger, and Mark Graham, commonsku and RIGHTSLEEVE, on how best to utilize the most essential piece of real estate in today's marketing world: the distributor website.

**Dale
Denham**
MAS+

Non-product websites were called “brochure-ware” back in the '90s and were the only type of website anyone knew how to build. Shopping sites came next but were originally available only to businesses with large budgets. Eventually, small businesses were provided e-commerce options to make websites useful. Not too long ago, Google modified default search results to provide shopping results. See the trend?

Searching is what customers want to do online because they want actionable information, not a brochure.

Don't spend limited money and energy on a brochure-ware site or flip catalogs (although both have a place in your marketing arsenal). Instead, spend money and energy on ensuring your clients find what they are searching for. Most visitors are coming to your site to generate ideas, not to learn more about your company (even though that is important too).

Pay attention to your brand as well, but non-product content is far behind the importance of a great product search experience.

You need to have enough products on your site, but not too many. Don't overwhelm your customer with choices and don't include duplicate items. Similar items are good, but duplicate items at different prices are confusing. Focus on keywords in your descriptions and in your e-commerce engine. If your customer uses the term “jump drives” to find “flash drives,” both better be found. If not, visitors will look to Google or your competitor to find what they are looking for despite how wonderful your company appears.

Once the base need of finding product is met, prospects and customers may want to know more about why they should do business with you. Success stories, biographies and a brief overview of why you are different are all very advisable. Good

marketing copy, along with a strong social presence, will also help drive traffic to your site.

The reality for most distributors is that you can't afford to build your own search engine so you will rely on a branded site from a third party. When choosing a site, focus on the product search that returns the best results. Adding your copy is the easy part and while important, it is far less important than having a great product search. If you have to choose, go 100-percent product search. Fortunately, you don't have to choose; you can do both, but product search is where you should focus most of your energy.

Offline, *you* are far more important to the relationship than the product search. This is why your clients email you links to products on your competitor sites. Online, product search is what matters.

*Dale Denham, MAS+,
is CIO of Geiger.*



Searching is what customers want to do online because they want actionable information, not a brochure.

Mark Graham

I believe that product-based websites are a mistake for most distributors. By “product-based website” I mean any website that features a collection of standardized products that any other distributor can access.

Generally speaking, there are two types of distributors in the market today: those who are more product- and transaction-focused and those who are more project- and solutions-focused.

For the distributors in the latter category, projects and solutions are at the core of their offering, not the product itself. As a result, it’s harder to shop their concepts and ideas around because their sites don’t present things in a way that lend themselves to easy comparison. In his article, Bill [Petrie] is making the point that these distributors can get away with not playing the price-and-compare game.

In the good old days of the promotional products industry (pre-Google, fewer competitors, less educated end clients and more territory-centric selling), it was easier to hang out a shingle and collect product orders from end clients.

The challenge with product-based websites is that they create a situation where every distributor looks the same and it makes it very easy to price shop. This leads to margin pressure and creates an unfortunate situation where end clients are

more focused on products than on solving marketing problems. I believe this is also one reason why some end clients refer to our industry as “trinkets and trash.”

If the products are put on the back burner and are replaced with case studies, stories about the distributor’s culture and marketing solutions, then, at a minimum, you’re presenting your business in a different light. You’re now opening up a different conversation with your customer.

The other significant challenge of having a product-based website in 2016 is that you’re not only competing with legions of other small distributors, but you’re now up against well-capitalized e-commerce giants. These big e-commerce players have a large advantage over the small product-based sites in the following areas: e-commerce site design, customer experience, Google AdWords and SEO [search engine optimization] budgets and product pricing.

And we haven’t even talked about Amazon and its plans to grow its promotional products business.

As marketing is all about establishing an edge for yourself, it’s really hard to compete against a well-established player vs. creating your own story and competing in your own space.

Here’s the good news: it’s never been easier to tell your own story with web tools available these days.

It’s never been easier to tell your own story with web tools available these days

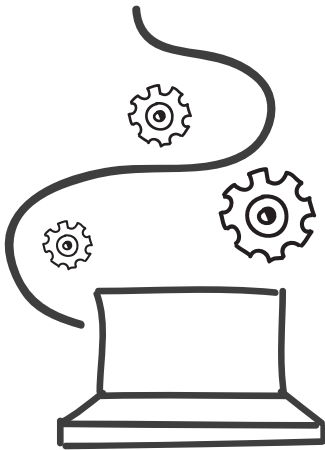
1 Platforms like Squarespace, Wix and Wordpress offer affordable ways for distributors to create sites that tell their own story.

2 Digital photography has never been easier and more accessible. Think about taking your own photographs of products you have produced for clients. Now it’s your product/idea/solution vs. something that can be easily searched on Google Images.

3 Spend some time thinking about what makes you unique, and create copy that reflects this. Google loves fresh copy that’s updated frequently. This will help you in SEO and when your prospect finds you on the web, you’ll come across as unique vs. looking like everyone else. That matters a lot to end clients.

It’s dead simple to look like everyone else, but it requires some creativity and grit to create a unique presence with a different story to your market. The best distributors have creativity and grit in spades. These are the distributors who are creating a moat around their businesses with unique websites that showcase their magic—not everyone else’s products. **PPB**

Mark Graham is the co-founder and chief platform officer of commonsku. He is also the founder of Toronto-based distributor RIGHTSLEEVE.



It’s dead simple to look like everyone else, but it requires some creativity and grit to create a unique presence with a different story to your market



19 WAYS
Your Competitors
Are Differentiating
Themselves

by Tina Berres Filipski

A Matter Of
DISTINCTION



**SHINING
BRIGHT**

There's plenty of wisdom in this saying about competition: "First it makes you sick, then it makes you better." When you have to compete for your clients' business, you can't sit on your laurels. You must continually hone your strengths and spotlight what makes your company the best.

Clients have a lot of choices—including whether to buy from you or someone else. In the crowded promotional products marketplace with more than 21,000 distributors and more than 3,500 supplier companies, it's easy to

be a "me-too" and get lost in the shuffle. The trick is to take on the competition by differentiating your company to make it memorable and notable. Here's how 19 industry companies are accomplishing just that.

GONE VIRAL



IT'S ABOUT LISTENING

When I decided to pursue my degrees in communication studies, I initially thought it was all about learning to speak more effectively. It was not until I was in that space that I learned that communication is actually primarily about listening. Fine-tuning those skills has been our company's differentiating factor. I don't just take orders but instead ask the deeper questions to really discover why my clients are making a purchase. This process leads to result-driven promotional products, additional sales and has been magical for the growth of my business.

Diane Sakowicz, MAS

*President
Service With A Smile
Naperville, Illinois*

For more than seven years now, we've been sending a live chili pepper plant in a self-watering pot to a targeted database of marketing contacts. They're all hand delivered and have an addressed tag with a code. We've set up a website where the receiver goes to log on (we get a notification by email). It has created so much viral marketing within the office, and the stories we have heard from recipients are very impressive.

In 2010, we won a PPAI Silver Pyramid Award for this self-promotion and gained \$40,000 in new business within the first year.

Every year we send these in batches out to our prospects, and to date have distributed nearly 1,000. It fits our brand perfectly.

Andy Galbally

Director | Chillii Promotions | Port Melbourne, Australia

BRAND MESSAGE MARKET VALUE

Our company differentiates itself by focusing on brand,

message, market and value. We believe that promotional items need to help tell a story and engage the audience. To us, it is all about developing creative campaigns that allow clients to be noticed and tie back to their brand.

Promotional marketing pieces that do not reflect a brand and do not have a message that can be relatable and seen as valuable by the specific audience being sought out are useless. They should be a conversation starter and remind people of the client and their story long after they have left the room. The marketing pieces should push people towards the clients' other marketing channels and allow for the conversation to happen. That is what makes us different.

Ben Baker

*President
Your Brand Marketing
Richmond, British Columbia*

THE COMPLETE PACKAGE

One of the main ways we do this is by what we offer. We

started out as a print shop, later bought out a local office supply store, and have since bought an outdoor/gun shop. With the combination of an outside sales force and professional graphic artists on staff we specialize in complete branding rather than just selling out of a catalog. Now, with the addition of the outdoor shop, we are branching out even more in the outdoor products/clothing lines. We just turned 25 years old so the mix must be working.

Terry Lee Cook

*Chief Operating Officer
Eagle Business Products
Louisiana, Missouri*

FUN & FRIENDLY

We recognize that to keep customers engaged and

our brand top of mind, we have to be a bit different. For Goldstar that means fun, partnership and

appreciation. If you are familiar with our VP of Sales Kenny Ved [read more about Ved on page 31], you know he and his team are all about fun. From the custom tailored pink suits to the huge sombrero on Cinco De Mayo, their sales meetings are never a bore. You may have attended an event where you got a bag of candy and a pack of samples that match the brand of candy you are eating. Or, maybe he's treated you to an elementary school throwback luncheon where the menu consists of Lunchables, Capri Sun and cupcakes. We appreciate the partnership we have with our clients and hope they remember us as fun, friendly and easy to do business with.

RJ Hagel

*Marketing Manager
Goldstar
San Diego, California*

IT'S THE LITTLE THINGS

We are fairly active with social media, thank-you notes, email blasts, mailers, reorder reminders and follow up communications. While we do lots of little touches throughout the year, our favorite is keeping clients informed about top trends through a branded, digital catalog-type publication that we develop especially for our clients.

Sonya Beam, MAS+

*Co-Owner
The POP SHOP—A Geiger Company
John's Creek, Georgia*

WE'RE
LIVE!

InkHead is a 21st-century hybrid. We give every client the option of doing their order seamlessly online, via live chat or live consultation, depending on their needs. On thousands of our orders the art has been approved and the order has shipped before our competition has responded.

Jim Franklyn

*VP of Sales & Marketing/Partner
InkHead Promotional Products
Winder, Georgia*

GETTING
SOCIAL

As we grow increasingly dependent on web resources, it's clear that the internet is no longer just an option, but a necessary tool in business and everyday life. For this reason, we have taken a special interest in establishing a unique, relatable social media presence specifically on Twitter (@americanbus) and our blog (www.americanbusblog.com).

Our goal is to represent our company culture through these popular platforms by planning strategic posts about our founder and CEO, favorite promotional items, industry-related articles, fun facts, American's own blog posts, press releases and more. Although American has been on Twitter since 2011, this past year has been pivotal for our social presence. We've organized a group of five people across different departments to help create a positive user experience that communicates

DELIVERING
JOY

Most people will tell you that they stand out with creativity and service. But if most people tell you that, how is it different? At Hasseman Marketing, we have a full-service marketing company that includes in-house video production and graphic design. That allows us to take a thought leadership position on content creation. We create relevant content for our customers and prospects every week (and nearly every day). We create videos, blogs, podcasts and more. This includes the award-winning, weekly *Delivering Marketing Joy* web show that is nearing 100 episodes. By creating content at this rate, we naturally stand out in a marketplace talking about the next special.

Kirby Hasseman

Owner | Hasseman Marketing & Communication | Coshocton, Ohio

our company's personality. Part of our success comes from building a creative team with players who offer different perspectives and interests, resulting in quality posts, organic growth and influential followers online. We're excited to continue incorporating our company's rich history with our technology-driven future to tell the story of American Solutions for Business.

Amy Spychalla

*Director of Strategic
Operations Support
American Solutions for Business
Glenwood, Minnesota*

WHAT'S
IN A
NAME?

This year is my 40th year of manufacturing stuffed animals.

There is a sign on my computer that has been there for 25

years. It says: "I retire when I expire!" I am 73 years old and insist that I will work for (at least) another 15 to 20 years. I love my work. As such, I have come to love my customers too. Whenever I receive a call from a new person, I always ask them: Do you know what your name means?" My hobby is studying the derivation of people's first names. Statistically nine out of

10 people do not know what their name means. I enjoy offering this edification and so do they.

Steven Smith

*President
Steven Smith Stuffed Animals, Inc.
Brooklyn, New York*

Prime Line's Jetline facility in Gaffney, South Carolina, uses its hometown advantage by shipping locally grown peaches to top clients around the country. Gaffney is known for its peaches, from its peach-themed water tower to its annual peach festival. It's a great way to celebrate our hometown and provide a unique gift to our customers.

Eric Levin

*Senior VP
Prime Line
Gaffney, South Carolina*

JUST
PEACHY

SOFT SPOT

As far as we know, no one else produces soft vinyl spot-color products as we do. We imprint our soft vinyl spot-color products with the same material as the product itself and bake the imprint right into the piece, so the logo or advertisement lasts as long as the product. We have had people bring us products that we made for them 35 years ago and the imprint is still on there.

Mike Burns

*President
Quikey Manufacturing, Inc.
Akron, Ohio*

POSITIVE VIBES ONLY

At The Book Company, our positivity is our differentiator. We love our company, the unique product solutions we provide and the work we do every day. From the happy, jumping images on our website and catalogs, to the smile-inducing designs and bright colors of our journal line, to the enthusiastic

helpfulness of our team members, we stand out. We do whatever it takes to ensure that our distributor partners enjoy their experience with us and feel confident that we will support their opportunities and orders with gusto.

Doug Greenhut

*President
The Book Company
Delray Beach, Florida*

HOTLINE BLING

We answer all of our calls in three rings or less. We also never have to transfer a call on product information or customer care because all of our inside sales team and customer care team members—Clickers—have the ability to make on-the-spot decisions for our customers with no delay. It's empowerment to the nth degree.

Reggie Gonzalez

*Vice President of Sales & Marketing
iClick
Seattle, Washington*

KEEP US IN MIND

We differentiate ourselves first and foremost from most traditional distributors by having an absolutely amazing, manicured website with a selection of 13,000 products we can take our customers to, each with accurate descriptions and great images. We have a team of people who work full time accurately writing descriptions and preparing images so that we are explaining and showing the customer the product in its best light. Customers are often at their desks and they want immediate gratification, and the ability to take immediate action. The ePromos site, in its 18th year of development, along with one of our expert brand consultants, is the one-two punch that helps us differentiate ourselves.

Jason Robbins

*CEO
ePromos Promotional Products, Inc.
New York, New York*



A PERSONAL TOUCH

One of the ways that Riteline leaves a lasting impression is through the use of thank-you notes—but not the bland, four-by-six-inch, thank-you card and white envelope. Our customized notes are full-color, showing scenes from the factory and we have four different inserts to use depending on what type of interaction we've had with the customer. A short, hand-written personal note is added and we also include a laser-etched personalized pen as a token of appreciation. All this goes into a bright red foil padded envelope and is sent to the customer.

Steven Meyer

*Riteline USA
VP Sales and Marketing
Dallas, Texas*

SELF-PROMO GIFT



One way that Walker-Clay, Inc. differentiates itself from competitors is through the use of our Large Order Recognition program. For every large order that comes in, we send out a nice self-promo gift with a hand-written note from the rep. We change up the item every quarter and many clients look forward to seeing "what's next." We've used towels (like the one pictured), bags, umbrellas, drinkware—all from our preferred vendors so that we can continue to promote sales with those valued partners.

Michelle Peebles, MAS

*Vice President, Sales & Marketing | Walker-Clay, Inc
Hanson, Massachusetts*

WEB
WIZ

I don't know what my competitors do, but we've always sent an overrun sample to our distributors at no charge. We feel this is a nice "thank you" and keeps our products in their minds and helps in getting other orders. Distributors are so busy, it's "out of sight, out of mind" and we want them to remember us. We recently had a distributor call to say how surprised and happy he was that we sent him a sample, and that in his 15 years in the industry, no supplier had ever sent him an overrun.

John Amsterdam

President
Neat Feet, Inc.
Oceanside, California

CUSTOMER
LOYALTY

Beacon has a program on certain items that rewards distributors for their loyalty. In this program a distributor can order multiple products for the same customer and only pay a set-up charge on the first order. Any orders placed within two years after the initial order with a set-up charge will not incur another set-up charge. The distributor must use the same imprint, but minor art changes are allowed.

Gwen Brey

Marketing Coordinator
Beacon Promotions, Inc.
New Ulm, Minnesota

*Tina Berres Filipski
is editor of PPB.*

**Singular Sensation**

What is your company's key differentiator? Service, accuracy, creativity, community service, the way your company says 'thank you'? Tell us at PPB@ppai.org and we'll include more ideas in an upcoming issue.

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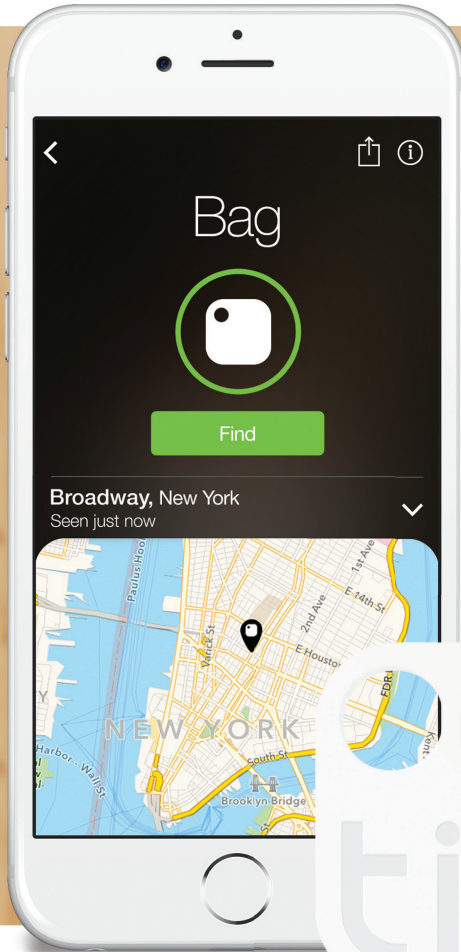
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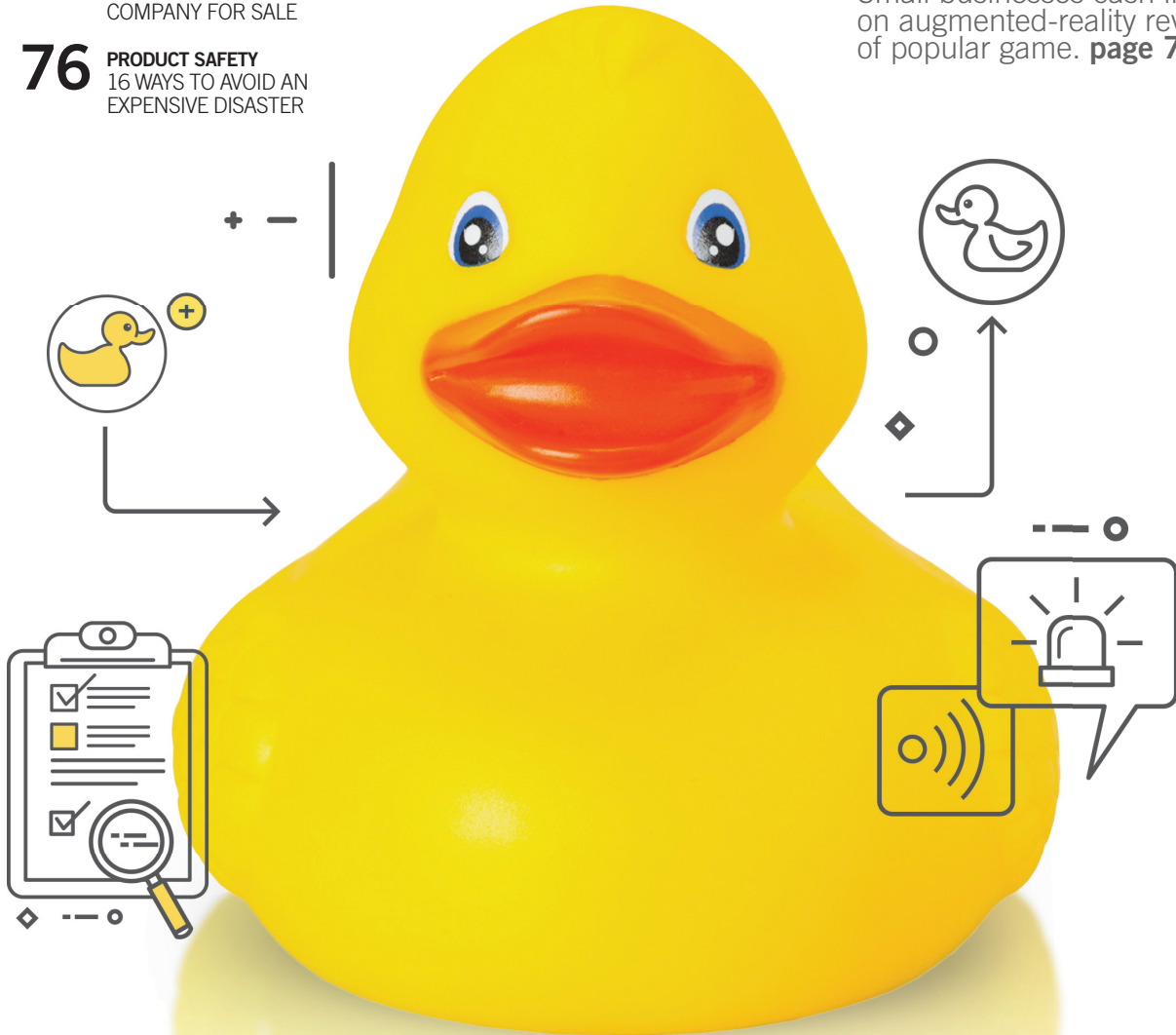
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WATER COOLER

Better Together

Tired of fighting the competition? Embrace 'coopetition'

The promotional products community is a densely populated one, and sometimes it can feel like you're being squeezed by the competition. But what if, instead of fighting over dollars and clients, you could come together to make more opportunities for everyone involved?

Robert Keane has seen and felt the same stresses in the printing industry, so to stay relevant and continue creating revenue, the CEO and president of

Cimpres, parent company of Vistaprint, has chosen to embrace 'coopetition.' What does coopetition look like?

Think about Amazon and Netflix. The product-selling powerhouse supports Netflix with IT infrastructure, even as the two compete in the on-demand video space.

Keane's printing company found itself needing to differentiate and compete in the digital space; as a result, Vistaprint was born. Since then, Cimpres has grown its supply-chain partnerships

for back-end operations, while Vistaprint partners with brick-and-mortar businesses to resell its products.

In the case of promotional products companies, coopetition might be as basic as recommending a competitor to a client when you can't fulfill a particular request for product or decoration, with the understanding that your competitor will do the same for you, all in an effort to keep customers coming back to the industry for years to come.

AD-ITIVES

Family Friendly Football

Advocacy group launches fundraiser to replace beer company as British club's sponsor

Football (or soccer, for us Americans) means big money for sponsors, whose names are plastered on jerseys for fans to see and hopefully remember when choosing which airline to fly, or gasoline to buy, or—in the case of Everton FC, a football club based in Liverpool, England—which beer to drink.

Thailand-based Chang beer has been a longtime sponsor of Everton, which is the only remaining professional club in the English Premier League to have an alcohol distributor for its jersey sponsor. But because Everton FC is loved and followed by fans of all ages, many feel this team deserves a more family-friendly sponsor.

International advocacy group BigAlcohol.Exposed launched an online fundraising campaign in May to help a tiny family-run barber shop, Sean & Sean's Barber Club, outbid Chang beer. The online effort raised just over \$2,100 through an indiegogo campaign (not the \$23 million it would have needed to purchase the sponsorship), but awareness of the dangers of marketing alcohol to youth has echoed around the globe, from a Facebook page to a Twitter campaign to a full-page article in a Sri Lankan newspaper.

#OutbidChang



FIVE MINUTES WITH Howard Schwartz *founder and CEO of distributor HDS Marketing*



Going The Extra Mile For Clients

HDS Marketing embodies the consultative approach to build long-term relationships with corporate clients

PPB *What's the story behind the HDS tagline: Merchandise As Media?*

Schwartz This is actually an adopted tagline from the company I purchased; they were in the sports merchandise world, but it fits [with what we do] because the media industry is exactly what we're in; we just communicate with promotional products.

Media is anything that tells a message, and "Merchandise As Media" portrays what we do. We've also used the tagline "Our business is promoting your business." But we've changed that to "Ideas. Innovation. Integrity."

PPB *What misconceptions does your team encounter when pitching premiums as custom/promotional items?*

Schwartz Cost is one misconception. People think they can buy one piece at a time at retail pricing, but that's impossible. Take the cost of headphones, for example. We can't compete with Best Buy on a single set of headphones, but when you want 40 pairs, we are going to be competitive. We also provide personalization, tracking, individual drop shipping—Best Buy can't do all that.

Additionally, the margins on premiums, particularly electronics, are much narrower. Interestingly, many clients ask for discounts on gift cards, but the only way money is made on gift cards [with cash value] is to charge a service fee on the administration of a gift-card program.

PPB *You work with a group of "preferred" suppliers. What's the strategy behind selecting suppliers to include in this group?*

Schwartz It's a multi-pronged approach. Obviously there's a financial component, but the three things we're looking for are price, quality and service. You have to figure out what's best for your clients, and you need to gather metrics on suppliers so you can figure out what's going to fit.

PPB *Your clients include regional and global brands; what common pain points and challenges do they present, and is there a universal 'solution' that you use to address them?*

Schwartz No client is exactly the same. Their pain points are different, but you can look at similarities based on budgets, for

example, and craft a solution that's going to work for them.

PPB *What qualities and work habits of your team elevate HDS from 'distributor' to 'promotional consultant'?*

Schwartz We want to be somebody who goes the extra mile. A distributor, to me, is someone who is just trying to sell you something. We do it in a consultative manner, so it's a partnership. We are looking for repeat clients and long-term partners, so we provide a value proposition.

Promotional consultants will also make sure mistakes are mitigated as much as possible. I once heard a presentation on 'ding happens' (a substitute for the more common saying), and it was based on a premise that I always tell my salespeople: 'Ding' is always going to happen. But when the job is hard, that's what sets you and your value proposition apart from another distributor.

We want to become an extension of our clients' organizations, so that we can make their jobs easier.

TECH TALK

Two Thumbs Up

New mobile app aims to improve real-time customer feedback

You want to know what your customers think about your business, but do they want to fill out an online form the size of *War and Peace*? Of course not. That's why Digital Marketing Sapiens in San Antonio, Texas, created a customizable mobile app that asks customers just one question about their experience.

One. That's it, you ask? Yes! The beauty is in how the response is handled; if feedback is positive, respondents can post it to social media and boost exposure for a brand. If it's negative, the response is forwarded directly to the business so the issue can be addressed immediately.

While the company's initial target group is hospitality businesses such as hotels and salons, the medical sector is also ripe for opportunity: patients will often switch providers after experiencing poor service at infrequent visits. The app's analytic reports can be delivered on a schedule, and it also can record on-the-spot video and audio reviews that are housed on a micro-website.



MARKET SHARE



Pokémon GO Fans: Catch 'Em All

Small businesses cash in on augmented-reality revival of popular game

The launch of Pokémon Go as a mobile game this summer sent millions of players into the streets and beyond in search of characters to “catch” on their phones, and local businesses saw the sudden boom in foot traffic around town as an opportunity to capitalize on the trend.

Speaking to *AdWeek*, Jamie Gallo, president of digital advertising agency Wunderman, said, “Pokémon Go essentially breaks down the wall between technology and real-world experience, so as brands drive people into new locations, there’s a real opportunity for them to do more ambient marketing.”

Not only could store owners purchase game features called Lures to bring customers in, they also developed special offers exclusively for players. CitySen Lounge in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and IconoCLAD in Salt Lake City, Utah, were among the small businesses seeking to make bank off dedicated Pokémon players. The town of McKinney, Texas, even went so far as to educate local businesses on using the app to boost traffic.

In a blog post in July, Kate Masewich of commonsku shared three ways for distributors to take advantage of the recent craze by offering products to clients that help connect them with Pokémon Go players and, hopefully, their business.

- 1 Offer products with a relevant tie-in.** Portable chargers and power banks are perfect for players whose phones are sapped by the game, and clients will appreciate the apropos offer.
- 2 Pick a side and cater to it.** Incentives for teams, which you must join to play, cater to the demographic as a whole by appealing to loyalties. Give one team a discount on a certain day, and another team the same discount—or a different but equal incentive—on the next day.
- 3 Publicize participation.** Show your involvement in the trend through social media sharing, including photos of game characters in and around your place of business.

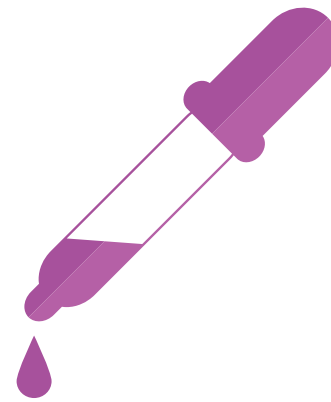
/ BRANDABLE

A Dose Of Ingenuity

Want better results from your B2B branding efforts? Inject innovation into your marketing.

With manufacturing and creativity at the heart of the promotional products industry, it seems logical that B2B marketing efforts should reflect the same level of ingenuity. Take a look at your brand. Does it need a shot of innovation? Take your cues from GE, which is rebuilding its reputation by taking the same no-holds-barred approach to its marketing as it does to research and development.

1 Take Risks. You probably go to great lengths to create genius campaigns for your clients; why not do the same for your own company? GE eschewed traditional marketing tactics, producing a *National Geographic* TV series and launching out-of-the-box social media campaigns to reach an audience it believed would respond favorably to the company's renewed focus on industry and innovation.



2 Treat Branding As A Behavior. Taglines, logos and catch-phrases aren't enough anymore. Brands should do more than bring customers to the table; they should engage customers throughout the life of the transaction.

3 Give Your Brand A Job. If your company is all about products, the brand you present will be rather one-dimensional. You're a firm that engages in

transactions, and that's okay. But if you want to build long-term relationships with consumers, your brand should further your company's mission. GE challenges students to describe experiments using the company's technology that can disprove the scientifically or technologically "impossible." It's not the product itself that sells best, but rather what the product can do for the customer.

4 Fine-Tune Your Target Audience. Don't aim for the most customers, aim for the right customers. If they truly believe in your company's mission and the value proposition you preach, the right customers become brand ambassadors for life. **PPB**

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A blueprint for selling your company and managing the common issues.

Prepping Your Company For Sale

by Jamie D. Watson,
MAS, CPA

Third in a series
on acquisition
preparedness

In the article *Positioning Your Company For Sale* published in the July issue of *PPB*, Jeff Meyer, MAS, CEO of Certified Marketing Consultants, discussed a variety of key factors buyers look for in a company they want to acquire. In the subsequent article published in the August issue, *How to Determine What's A Good Deal*, John Schimmoller, COO of Certified Marketing Consultants, discussed the common points that arise when negotiating a deal. Both articles serve as a guide to maximizing value both

before and during the process of selling a company. This third and final article in the series will discuss the common do's and don'ts when selling a company and how to guide your company to a successful closing.

DO know your company's value. This doesn't mean that you should assume your company will sell at the same multiple as your friend's company, and it doesn't mean you should

Google "company value" and use an online formula to try to figure out what your company might be worth. It does mean you should gather up your information and find someone who understands your industry to place a value on your company. In fact, don't wait until you are ready to sell to go through this process. Your company is quite possibly the most valuable asset you own and taking the time to understand and maximize its value will only benefit you—especially if the long-term plan is to sell your company.

If employees know the company is for sale they can get anxious and sometimes even leave their jobs. It may take years for the company to sell and no one knows what the buyer's intentions will be with employees.

If buyers see a well-run company with a knowledgeable owner, they will have more confidence and a higher inclination to purchase it.

DON'T

tell everyone you are thinking of selling your company. If word gets out that you are thinking of selling your company it can be bad for business. Keep this very confidential matter private. If you have a trusted group of advisors, then it is okay to share your plan and gather feedback from that group of people. Just be sure those advisors understand and value confidentiality as much as you do. Further to this point, *don't tell your employees*. This is one of the most common mistakes business owners make. They think they have an obligation to tell their employees if the company is for sale but they are doing their employees a disservice. Knowing the company is for sale is meaningless unless the employees can do something productive with that information. The truth is, it just causes worry. If employees know the company is for sale they can get anxious and sometimes even leave their jobs. It may take years for the company to sell and no one knows what the buyer's intentions will be with employees. Do yourself and your employees a favor and keep it quiet until the purchase documents are finalized.

DO **prepare yourself for candid financial questions from buyers.** If sales have decreased over the past few years be prepared to explain why. If your margins have dropped a few points make sure you understand

whether the decrease is due to pricing or cost. The truth is the only reason a buyer is looking at your company is because it might be a good financial investment. Most buyers are working on a $1 + 1 = 3$ formula. Your financial statements tell buyers a story. Be sure it's a story you know well, and have the data to back it up. Most buyers will expect a full set of financial statements including a balance sheet and income statement for three years. It is also helpful to have interim statements or at least interim sales numbers for buyers to consider. If you don't have this information available hire an outside accountant to help you prepare it. Many owners run personal expenses through the company. Be sure to have these carefully documented so you can show buyers the true earnings of your company. There is no substitute for giving buyers a solid financial picture of your company and it is best to get yourself in the habit of keeping accurate monthly financials long before it is time to sell. If buyers see a well-run company with a knowledgeable owner, they will have more confidence and a higher inclination to purchase it.

DON'T

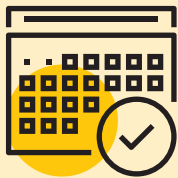
assume your real estate will be part of the deal. Whether you own or lease a building it is best to be flexible with your facility when the time comes to sell the company. Buyers may or may not need a building but the best way to maximize the buyer pool is to have the ability but not the need

to include it in the purchase. If you purchased a building, you have entered into the real estate business and that investment should stand on its own, which means you should be able to sell or lease it outside the company. If you lease your building you should not sign long-term leases, especially as you get closer to the time when you expect to sell the company. Many owners take pride in their beautiful facilities but the truth for buyers is they need to find ways to decrease overhead, and consolidating operations is the best way to do that. Two rent or mortgage checks dramatically reduces the return on investment, which reduces the amount buyers are willing to pay for your business.

DO **establish a relationship with an attorney who understands your goals.**

Attorneys can be valuable assets when they understand the long-term goals and work according to those goals. Some attorneys are deal makers; others are deal breakers. Sometimes attorneys can be rigid and focus on the small picture. Others work according to their own timetable and cause unnecessary delays. Some business owners are scared of their attorneys and/or the issues they are facing and let their attorneys run the show. An attorney works for you and should work according to the schedule you give him or her. It may take some sifting to find the right fit but once you find that fit it will be well worth the time. Always remember that attorneys are there to give you

Sell Smart



Start planning early.

It is best to start the process at least five years before you plan to sell.



Stay flexible.

Be prepared for a buyer to relocate or make other changes to the business.



Know your value.

Get a business valuation and know what drives/subtracts from value.



Keep accurate financials.

This is important for all business but especially when you want to sell.



Hire a professional.

The right representation will make the deal flow better and increase the likelihood of closing the deal.

Whether your goal is to sell next year or 10 years from now it is never too early to begin planning for a sale.

their counsel but at the end of the day the decisions are yours to make because the consequences of those decisions fall on your shoulders.

DON'T

forget to run your business. It is common to feel a financial and emotional pull between running and investing in the company and deciding any issues that come up will be someone else's problem. The truth is that until you sign closing documents the company is your responsibility. Continue running the day-to-day operations just as if you were going to own the company for 10 more years. Most purchase agreements have a clause that stipulates the owner will run the company in the ordinary course of business. That doesn't mean you have to go out and buy a brand new piece of equipment but it does mean that you should continue filling orders and treating customer matters with the same diligence as you always have. You want to close your chapter of the business with the same positive energy that you opened it with and ensure the buyer has a strong start to giving your customers the same positive experience you did.

DO

start planning early. Whether your goal is to sell next year or 10 years from now it is never too early to begin planning for a sale. Most of the strategies to building a valuable company

should be implemented long before you sell it and will make your company more successful. Much like selling a house, there is constant maintenance that should be done to ensure the company is strong and healthy for a potential buyer. Unlike selling a house, many of these maintenance items are behaviors that cannot be implemented overnight. Establish a succession plan and revisit the plan annually to be sure it still coincides with your long-term goals.

DON'T

turn down the first offer just because you think you might get a better one. The best buyers are motivated to move quickly. It may be the best and/or only offer. There is a list of sellers who regret losing good deals because they waited too long for others. A bird in the hand is truly worth dozens in the bush.

DO

enjoy the fruits of your labor. If you are a business owner, then you are a risk taker and an entrepreneur. You have provided yourself and most likely others a job. Take pride in knowing you have built something of value and take time to enjoy the reward for the efforts you have put forth. Good luck. **PPB**

Jamie D. Watson, MAS, CPA, is a financial analyst with industry business services company Certified Marketing Consultants in Hometown, Indiana.

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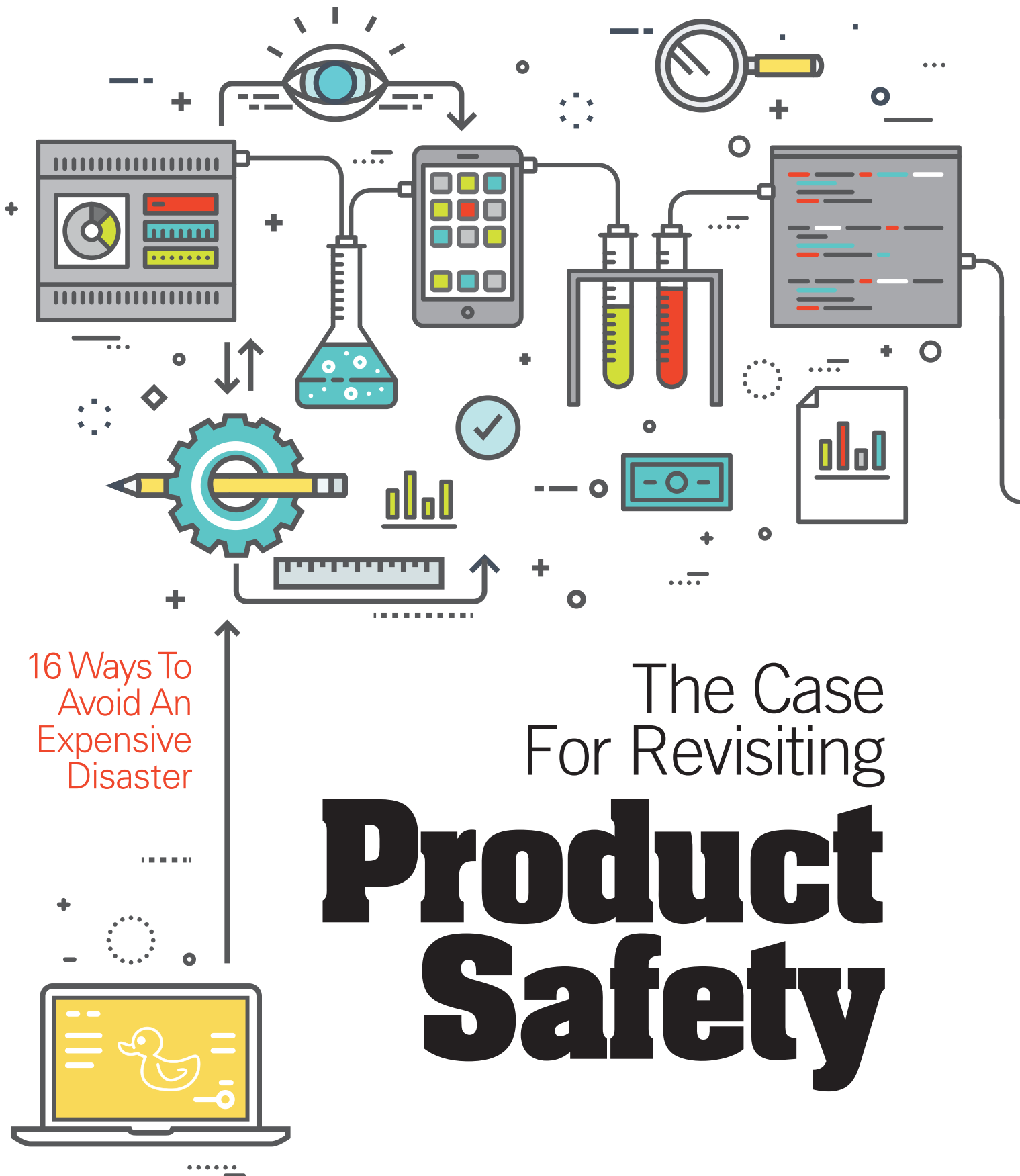
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16 Ways To
Avoid An
Expensive
Disaster

The Case
For Revisiting

Product Safety



by Rick Brenner, MAS+

Yikes! We're barely past the halfway point of 2016 and already a whopping \$25 million in civil penalties has been assessed against businesses this year for product safety violations. A civil penalty is a fine levied by a regulatory agency of the federal government—in this case, the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC), the agency charged with protecting consumers against unsafe products.

The magnitude of these penalties should not be a surprise to PPAI members. In his keynote address at

PPAI's 2015 Product Responsibility Summit, CPSC Chairman Elliot Kaye told our attendees that we should expect to see the commission assess significantly higher civil penalties in 2016 than in the past because, as Kaye sees it, it is the only way some companies will get the message that the agency is serious about protecting consumers. CPSC has shown the same enforcement resolve in the constant stream of recalls it announces each week, many relating to lithium ion batteries, a component found in dozens of promotional products. On July 6, the commission ordered 10 companies to recall a combined 500,000 lithium ion-powered hoverboards because of the risk of overheating, fire and explosion. If the

In this challenging regulatory environment, it is prudent for all suppliers and distributors to redouble their efforts to educate their employees on safety and compliance basics.

companies involved had to refund the retail price of all those hoverboards, the total cost would be more than \$100 million.

In this challenging regulatory environment, it is prudent for all suppliers and distributors to redouble their efforts to educate their employees on safety and compliance basics, and to verify that their company has a sensible compliance program in place for all of its supply chain activities, whether you work for a direct importer or are simply a sales rep selecting products from your favorite supplier. If you sell promotional products, the rules apply to you no matter what your role is in the stream of commerce.

Here is a glossary of definitions, tips, guidelines and best practices to use in your review and training. Treat it like a checklist to evaluate your own practices and to identify areas for improvement. Product safety is a process, not a destination. You and your team can use this list to trigger conversations and make sure that your processes are keeping up with your fast-growing company.

Definitions

Product Safety vs. Regulatory Compliance—both are equally important. *Regulatory compliance* refers to meeting (and, ideally, exceeding) standards required by regulators—the rules, laws and standards that apply to the products we manufacture, decorate and sell. Standards can either be mandatory, such as those referenced in state and federal law, or they can be voluntary standards developed by industry consensus at organizations like UL and ASTM International. Both types are important and both are used by regulators in their enforcement efforts. The Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act of 2008 (CPSIA) is an example of a federal law that contains many regulations. For example, it mandates that children’s products be tested annually at a recognized third-party laboratory and that children’s toys must comply with the ASTM F963 Toy Safety

Standard. The law makes it illegal to sell children’s products and children’s toys that do not meet these requirements.

Product safety goes beyond regulatory compliance in dealing with whether a product is safe to use, even if it meets every applicable rule or it is one of the many products for which there are no mandatory or voluntary rules. The hoverboard recall is an example of a product for which no safety regulations were violated but the product was deemed by CPSC to be unsafe anyway. The commission has statutory authority to recall any product it deems unsafe, no matter what. Period.

Mandatory vs. Voluntary Standards—both are equally important. Whenever a standard or rule is incorporated into a law, that standard is mandatory. The Toy Safety Standard F963 is a good example. Originally a voluntary standard, it became mandatory after the Mattel Barbie Doll recalls in the summer of 2007, when an angry Congress chastised industry for not policing itself. There are thousands more voluntary standards than mandatory standards as it benefits everyone—consumers, business and government—when business and industry polices itself. At PPAI’s 2015 Product Responsibility Summit, Marc Schoem, then CPSC’s long-term deputy director of compliance (now retired) stated unequivocally that the agency considers voluntary standards to be the minimum acceptable—the least a company should comply with. So be sure to always find out, usually by speaking to an expert at a testing lab, if there are voluntary standards applicable to the product you are selecting and then verify that the product complies.

Best Practice Tips

1 You are responsible! No matter who you buy from, no matter how long you have done business with that supplier or factory—no matter what, you are ultimately responsible for the quality,

safety and compliance of every product you sell. Your customers don’t know your factory or supplier. They’re doing business with you because they trust *you*. Of course you will entrust a great deal of faith in your reliable, high-quality suppliers. But remember, even the largest and most trustworthy brands on the planet—Apple, Sony, Disney, Fisher Price and Johnson & Johnson to name a few—all have had major product recalls and serious quality gaffes, so you can be sure that even the most reliable companies in our industry have quality and compliance issues. Don’t take anything for granted and don’t assume anything. Suppliers have hundreds and, in some cases, even thousands of products on their websites. No one has the resources to be an expert in everything.

2 Nurture a product safety culture in every aspect of your work so that you automatically think of safety and compliance with each project you work on, with each product you select, with each order you take, with each supplier or factory you work with and with each client presentation you make. Always assume responsibility for the safety, compliance and appropriateness of the product you are selling. You are 100-percent responsible for making the right product decisions for your clients.

3 Learn the industry products that are subject to compliance requirements. Anything used by a child heads the list since the major focus of the Consumer Product Safety Improvement Act (CPSIA) is children’s products and children’s toys. Children’s apparel and sleepwear are both regulated by CPSC as are art materials such as highlighters. Food, and all products that come into contact with food, are regulated by the U.S. Food and Drug Administration (FDA). In addition to mints, chocolate and other common promotional foods, this category includes all types of promotional water bottles, tumblers, lip balms, hand sanitizers, sunscreens, lotions

and cosmetics, sunglasses, first aid kits and more. Learn the key considerations for each of these products. For example, food containers, like drinkware, need to be tested to verify that chemicals from the container will not leach into the food or drink. This list is just an overview. You can get a more complete list, category by category, from any of the major testing labs.

4 Develop a standard checklist of questions to ask every client for every project you work on. For example:

What kind of event is the product for? How will it be used? Who is the intended audience? If there are children, what are their ages? In which states or countries will the product be distributed? Does the client have any compliance requirements that exceed mandatory requirements? Then, use the information you learn to help you select the most appropriate products and to properly advise your supplier.

5 If you find out that the intended audience includes children, make sure the products you select are age appropriate, even if there are no specific compliance requirements. There is no mandatory regulation to prevent you from selecting a string backpack for a pre-school camp event, but a corded product for very young children is probably not the most prudent choice. Similarly, don't select a product that would break into shards if a six-year old threw it on a cement floor, because sooner or later that's probably going to happen. Common sense is the best rule here.

6 If children are involved, always require CPSIA compliance no matter the children's ages. CPSIA is a complicated law that doesn't always make common sense. For the most part, as noted earlier, CPSIA focuses on children's products, which it defines as products primarily intended for children 12 years of age or younger. The CPSC has issued guidance as to what "primarily intended" means but you should ignore it. If children

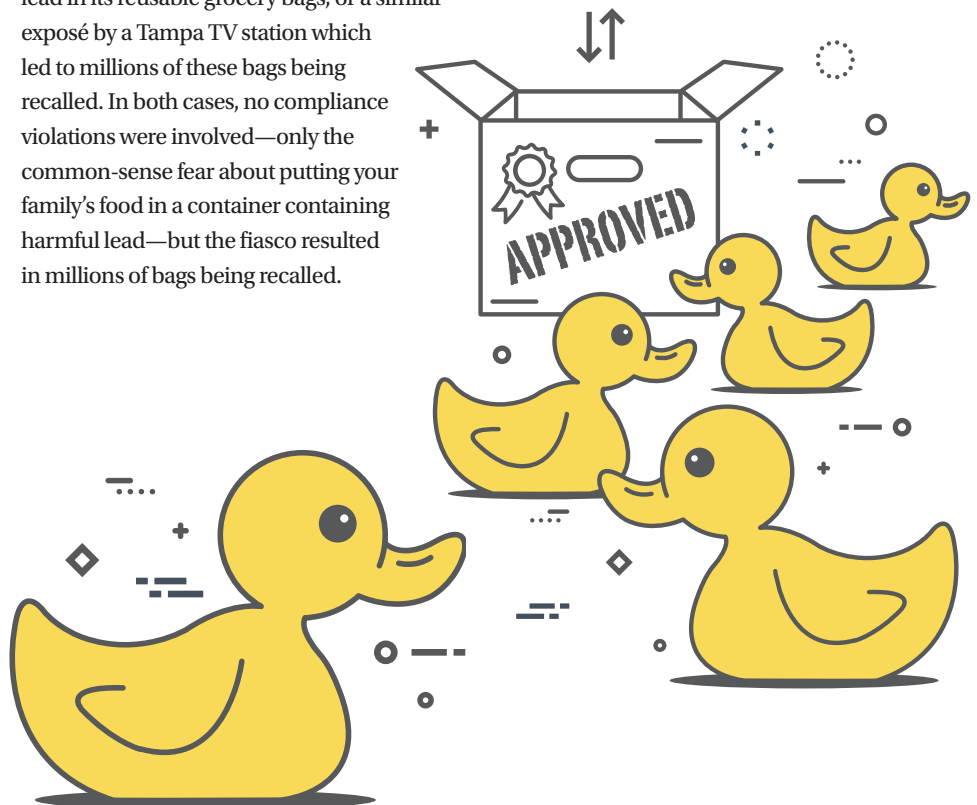
are involved, don't try to figure out if the law technically applies—just make sure your product complies.

Let's say you pick a product like a sports water bottle for a PTA fund raiser and the imprint is not something obviously juvenile like Elmo or Winnie the Pooh. Since the product has equal appeal to all ages, including young children, CPSC might say that the bottle is a *general use item* not subject to CPSIA requirements. Now assume that bottle is decorated with a lead-containing ink and a well-meaning consumer advocacy group finds out about it and issues a news release criticizing your client for distributing leaded products to children. Is your client going to want to stand up at a news conference and say, "Well, our vendor told us the bottle isn't technically covered by the lead rules." Of course not. At that point, it is a public relations nightmare for your client and the damage has been done, regardless of whether the product is technically compliant.

If you think this example is far-fetched, search Google for the Wegman's grocery bag recall after a consumer group found lead in its reusable grocery bags, or a similar exposé by a Tampa TV station which led to millions of these bags being recalled. In both cases, no compliance violations were involved—only the common-sense fear about putting your family's food in a container containing harmful lead—but the fiasco resulted in millions of bags being recalled.

More Resources Available

The PPAI website is a well-stocked source of product safety information, tools, links and articles including compliance manuals, federal standards and regulations, webinars, FAQs, information on tracking labels, UL test protocols, a list of accredited testing labs and PPAI TurboTest, an online tool which guides users through required compliance testing by product. Find these resources and more at www.ppai.org/inside-ppai/corporate-responsibility.



7 Don't assume that products you select for children have been tested to CPSIA requirements.

If you learn that the intended audience includes children, you should always select products that are fully CPSIA-compliant. In the promotional products industry, that can be a challenge. Most items used for children's events are imported as general use items that are appropriate for all ages and not subject to children's product regulations. They only become "children's products" subject to CPSIA *after* they are decorated with juvenile art. So it's very possible that the supplier may not have incurred the expense to have the general-use product tested to children's product standards. As a best practice, whenever selecting products for children or family audiences, always verify that the products have been tested to full CPSIA compliance at a CPSC-certified third party laboratory within the past 12 months. If the supplier claims that the product has been tested, ask for the test report and see for yourself.

Similarly, you should personally verify that the item is manufactured with the level of fit, finish and quality that a safe children's product requires. Always devote your highest degree of scrutiny when children are involved.

8 Always ask where the products you sell are going to be distributed. Why is this important? Many states have laws that layer on top of federal law, and most countries have different product safety requirements than here in the U.S. Chemical regulations are a good example. In recent years, many states have passed chemical

legislation regulating children's products and children's jewelry, and some have rules that apply to all consumer products. California, for example, has a chemical labeling law commonly known as Proposition 65 which is intended to warn consumers about products that contain carcinogens. Because of high testing costs, most companies opt to comply with Proposition 65 by affixing a warning label to each product stating that the product contains chemicals known to the State of California to cause cancer. But since it's not generally desirable in the promotional industry for companies to hand out free gifts with a warning about cancer, some choose to avoid the warning labels by testing for the most common carcinogens. It's not a fail-safe strategy and it's not inexpensive. California's carcinogen list exceeds 900 chemicals so there is no affordable testing protocol to test for all of them. When selecting products for California, work closely with your suppliers to learn their practices and to determine the best strategy—testing, labeling or a combination of both—that works for your risk tolerance and that of your clients. Illinois, Maine, Washington, Massachusetts, Vermont and Connecticut are among the other states that have passed chemical regulations in recent years.

Speaking of chemical legislation, you should be aware that Congress has just passed and President Obama has just signed into law the Lautenberg Chemical Safety Act, a major revision to the existing Toxic Substances Control Act of 1976. Over the next several years this updated law could impose significant new chemical restrictions for products in our industry.

The best strategy for complying with chemical regulation is to develop a relationship with one of the nationally recognized labs. PPAI members can take advantage of discounted testing rates with our affiliate partner UL as well as having access to a trove of educational materials and webinars through PPAI's product responsibility initiatives.

9 Learn the questions to ask your supplier or test lab for every product you sell, until the answers are



second nature to you. What voluntary and mandatory standards apply to the product? When and where was it tested? What was it tested for? CPSIA? Prop 65? Phthalates? Toy Safety? UL2056 (for lithium ion)? Is it UL certified or certified by another Nationally Recognized Testing Lab (NRTL)? Ask to see the full copies of test reports and give them to a person qualified to understand what they say. Are they current? Are they thorough? Were tests for all seven phthalates conducted? Which toy safety (ASTM F963) tests were conducted? Does the test report include color photos of the products tested? Do the photos match exactly with the product you plan to buy? Get an actual sample of the product and hold it in your hand. Does it seem well-made? Is the fit and finish that of a quality product? Can you easily pull it apart? Are there sharp edges? Is it a product you have experience with and knowledge of its material, design and construction? Are you aware of the technology used and the key quality differentiators with that product? Would you be able to differentiate between a high-quality, well-made, safe product and one with lesser quality? Sometimes the differences are hidden inside, especially with electronics where the protective circuits need the highest quality components that won't fail under stress.

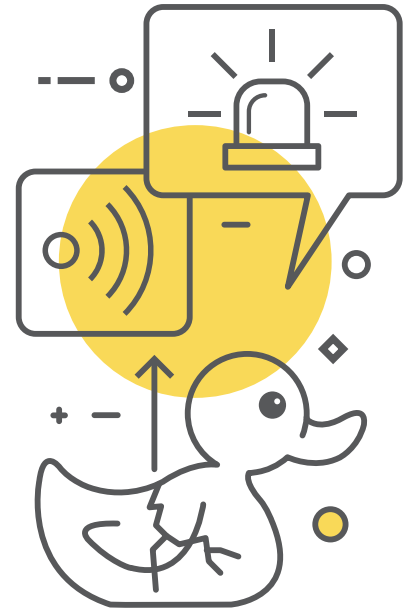
These are just some of the questions you should be asking yourself for every product you sell. Remember that when you select a product for your customer—particularly one that will be decorated with your client's brand or logo—your client is trusting that you have the professional skills, knowledge and experience not to put their brand and logo in harm's way by selecting an inappropriate, unsafe or non-compliant product. Of course you wouldn't do that intentionally, but once you develop a true product safety culture you will begin thinking of that responsibility differently, as if you were deciding on a toy for your own newborn infant. That's the level of

caring and diligence your clients deserve. Buy from the most reliable factories and suppliers you can find but don't put blind faith in anyone.

10 **When you speak to your supplier about safety and compliance, speak to the person in charge of safety and compliance, not a customer service rep or a salesperson.** Compliance can be complex and nuanced based on the particular circumstances, even for those of us who deal with it every day. Over the past nine years, I have conducted dozens of workshops and training classes throughout the industry to educate and raise awareness on the basics of product safety and compliance in the promotional industry. But merely attending a class like mine or reading from a website description or an FAQ doesn't qualify anyone to give advice. Always speak to an expert when seeking actionable information about product safety and compliance.

11 **Regardless of the job title of the person you speak to, do not rely solely on what that person tells you or what you may read on their website.** As noted, *you* are ultimately responsible.

12 **Learn how to read a test report.** Speaking about test reports, this is a good time to reiterate a topic that has caused more misunderstandings and "gotchas" than anything else in the promotional world: worthless test reports. Here's what happens: You ask for a test report and your supplier or factory sends you what they have. It might be for the product you are considering, or it might be for a similar one or for a different product altogether. The test may be from a CPSC-certified lab or not. The report may be complete or not—with some tests covered and other ones not. Or, it could be for European standards instead of U.S. It may include a photo and may not. The point is, tests are expensive and most of the people handling these reports are not experts. So buyer beware. Learn how to read a



test report and know what you're looking for. Or find someone in your company who is an expert and verify that the tests are complete, in date and applicable to the specific product and color you're purchasing. PPAI has presented webinars on this topic which are available online to members. There's also a monograph to accompany the webinar that explains step-by-step how to read a test report.

13 **Adopt a sensible risk management strategy.** Quality and compliance is critical but it isn't your only job. You have to find a way to manage this risk within the context of your time available. You already do this in your everyday family life without thinking about it as a formal strategy. You probably devote much more time selecting healthy foods for your children than you might spend deciding what outfit to wear in the morning. One has a much higher risk factor than the other. Similarly, when you don't have extensive time to research a particular purchase, you probably pick the brand with which you've had the best experience. So you already know a lot about risk management. How does that translate to our industry? Devote the most time to the highest-risk products and the

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highest-risk situations. Children's products, children's jewelry and children's toys all have significant compliance and safety implications, so you should naturally devote greater scrutiny to these products. Food products, food containers, hand sanitizers, lip balms, sunscreens, skin lotions and sunglasses are all regulated products with significant safety and compliance implications. And, of course, the single most dangerous product in our industry—lithium ion batteries—which power portable phone chargers, Bluetooth speakers and a wide range of other electronic products, deserve your greatest scrutiny. Learn the key safety and quality differentiators for each of these high risk products and then choose carefully. Very carefully.

14 **Include safety and compliance requirements on your purchase orders.** Compliance and product safety in the promotional industry require clear communication and a strong partnership between the distributor and supplier. All the information you learn in

your client meeting—the intended audience for the promotion, the ages of any children involved, the states or countries where the product will be distributed—should all be written on your purchase order. Don't assume anything. It doesn't matter if you mentioned your requirements to a customer service agent or wrote them in the email with your purchase order (P.O.) attached. Suppliers get many hundreds of calls and thousands of emails every day. The only document that is certain to travel with your order from start to finish is your P.O., and it is also the contract between you and the supplier. If the product must comply with CPSIA, Prop 65 or the Illinois Cadmium-Safe Kids Act, include that as a special instruction on your purchase order. It's also a smart idea to ask the supplier to specifically confirm that they can comply with these instructions.

15 **If you hear of any safety or compliance incidents, report them to your company immediately.** If your client emails you about an incident—perhaps that a glass tumbler broke and someone's hand was cut—report it to your company and investigate immediately. Do the same for a compliance violation if you find out after the fact that a product your company shipped was not compliant. CPSIA contains strict reporting requirements that start the moment you learn of an incident. The single biggest reason for the civil penalties stated earlier was failure of these companies to notify CPSC in a timely manner. Always let your compliance team know of any incidents reported to you.

16 **Find a compliance/product safety advisor or mentor to help you learn to make the right decisions.** Even

the most knowledgeable and experienced compliance practitioners have colleagues and consultants they rely on for expert advice and second opinions. No one is an expert at everything, especially in a field as broad and complicated as compliance. There are notable experts in our industry—at PPAI and its Product Responsibility Action Group—but the most reliable sources of compliance expertise are major testing labs, professional consultants and experienced product safety attorneys.

So there you have it—16 ways you can protect your clients and your business. Post these on your refrigerator. Pass them around your office. Make them part of your DNA. They will make you more valuable to your clients and to your employer, and they will help distinguish you in an industry of commodities. They are the essence of PPAI's Product Safety Aware initiative and they will make you a worthy product safety ambassador. But most of all, they're the right thing to do. **PPB**

Rick Brenner, MAS+, is president of RFBrenner LLC, a management consulting firm. He coaches CEOs and advises industry firms on growth, strategy, finance, acquisitions, operations, product development, supply chain, improving profitability and developing wealth. Brenner also heads Product Safety Advisors LLC, which helps firms and implement product safety, compliance and social responsibility programs. He is the immediate past chair of PPAI, president elect of ICPHSO, the International Consumer Product Health and Safety Organization, and an 18-year industry veteran, 12 of which were spent as CEO at supplier Prime Line.

Where Will You Be September 18-20?

Reserve your seat at PPAI's Product Responsibility Summit in National Harbor, Maryland, September 18-20, and educate yourself on all things relating to product safety, responsibility and compliance. Speakers include two CPSC commissioners as well as experts inside and outside the industry who will teach the latest developments and best practices. Get details and register at www.ppai.org/education/productresponsibilitysummit.

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PPAI Launches #GetInTouch

PPAI's #GetInTouch campaign targets buyers with a five-year, multimillion-dollar branding initiative designed to increase awareness and improve the overall perception of the promotional products industry. **page 87**



Close Up

Read how Harry Rosenberg, CAS, has had a front-row seat to change during his extraordinary 64-year career. **page 90**

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Product Responsibility Summit To Bring Industry, Regulators And Experts Together In D.C.

Industry leaders are traveling to Washington, D.C., this month for the PPAI Product Responsibility Summit, to be held September 18-20. Originally branded as the Product Safety Summit, the Association's long-running corporate responsibility and compliance event delivers education and resources to address the five pillars of product responsibility—product safety, social compliance, environmental sustainability, supply chain security and product quality.

The Summit's schedule is designed to bring product responsibility neophytes up to speed on product safety challenges and best practices while delivering the deep

dive on compliance issues industry experts are looking for. Facilitated by industry thought leaders, representatives from product safety labs and product certification groups, the event's sessions explore a diverse, comprehensive gamut of the latest developments in product responsibility.

PPAI and the promotional products industry have established strong relationships with industry regulators, including the Consumer Product Responsibility Commission (CPSC). CPSC commissioners have been an active presence at PPAI product responsibility events for a number of years, and 2016 is no exception. Commissioners Robert Adler

and Joseph P. Mohorovic are the luncheon speakers on September 19 and 20, respectively. Adler and Mohorovic will deliver their perspectives on CPSC priorities and their impact on the promotional products industry.

CPSC staff members past and present are also on the Summit agenda. John "Gib" Mullan, chief counsel to CPSC Commissioner Ann Marie Buerkle, will lead a panel discussion on how voluntary standards impact safety and considerations when selecting products that may not have established voluntary standards. Tanya Topka, Fast Track team lead in the Defects Investigation division of the CPSC's Office of Compliance and Field Operations, is joining

SnugZ USA's Richard Massey in a breakout session on what to do when a field investigator shows up. Carol Cave, current deputy director of the CPSC's Office of Compliance and Field Operations, is holding an interactive simulation of a national product safety recall with summit attendees, giving them an up-close look at crisis management from regulatory, legal and public perception perspectives. She will be joined in the panel discussion by Cheryl Falvey, co-chair of Crowell & Moring's Advertising & Product Risk Management Group and member of the firm's management board, and former general counsel of CPSC. Product safety attorney Neal Cohen, who previously served as the small

business ombudsman for the CPSC, will share advice for small businesses on remaining on the right side of compliance.

For the first time, the Summit welcomes a representative from Health Canada, a department of Canada's federal government, to its speaker lineup. Carlie Watson, regional manager for Health Canada's Product Safety program, is joining Tabitha Bauer of Staples and Chuck Samuels of Mintz Levins to deliver an overview of Health Canada reporting requirements as well as a case study of a cross-border recall.

The Summit's agenda also features subject-matter experts addressing topics such as the challenges of shipping products worldwide, mitigating the risks associated with shipping electronics and lithium-ion batteries, emerging regulatory issues, social compliance hot buttons, and patent infringement and intellectual property issues. All Summit attendees will also receive an updated sourcing and compliance manual created with the specific needs and challenges of the promotional products industry in mind. Along with addressing the five pillars of compliance, the manual includes guidance and examples within each area, as well as best practices, compliance templates, sourcing guides, audit and corrective action guides, and resources, education and training opportunities.

To learn more about the Summit visit <http://www.ppai.org/education/productresponsibilitysummit/>.

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PPAI To Launch #GetInTouch Campaign At Advertising Week 2016

PPAI returns to Advertising Week this month to launch the Association's Industry Branding Initiative, the #GetInTouch campaign. PPAI has been an active participant of Advertising Week for a number of years and is rolling out the #GetInTouch campaign at an event in New York on September 27.

Seth Godin, who spoke at The PPAI Expo 2016 and Expo East 2016, and joined PPAI on stage at Advertising Week in 2015, will make an encore appearance to present "Getting In Touch with The Work That Matters" at 11 am on Tuesday, September 27 at the B.B. King Blues Club & Grill. PPAI members are welcome to attend this event by reserving tickets in advance.

Originally introduced at The PPAI Expo 2016 as the Industry Branding Initiative, the #GetInTouch campaign targets advertising buyers with a five-year, multimillion-dollar branding initiative designed to increase awareness and improve the overall perception of the promotional products industry while communicating the importance of the promotional consultant, resulting in a larger share of advertising dollars for the promotional products industry.

"We're trying to elevate promotional products advertising in the minds of advertising buyers and tell the story of how promotional products enhance the lives of consumers—every day—in almost every way," says Paul Bellantone, CAE,

PPAI president and CEO. "More than a new ad campaign, it is the first time we've told the advertising community how promotional products affect consumer behavior and directly benefit advertisers and marketers."

Alongside its message about the power of promotional products and the importance of the promotional consultant, the #GetInTouch campaign highlights unique aspects of promotional products as an advertising medium: they are advertising that live on; they are tangible representations of a brand; they create excitement, surprise and delight; they impact buying decisions and have staying power; they become part of everyday life; and promotional products are the only advertising medium for which the customer says "thank you."

The campaign's paid, earned, shared and owned (PESO) strategy will include major media buys in publications like *Advertising Age*, digital strategies and possibly an industry spokesperson. The #GetInTouch campaign will also include member kits available for download and customization. These kits will include print advertisements with several versions of copy along with various digital elements that members will be able to immediately incorporate into their own marketing efforts.

Industry members can get involved in the #GetInTouch campaign by providing case studies, a key component of the initiative. For more information or to reserve Seth Godin Advertising Week session tickets, contact Kim R. Todora, PPAI public relations and buyer outreach manager, at KimT@ppai.org.



Four Candidates Vie For PPAI Board Seats, Class of 2021

This month, PPAI member companies are voting on the four candidates for the PPAI Board of Directors Class of 2021. Selected by the PPAI Elected Directors Nominating Committee, the candidates are distributors Mitch Rhodus, CAS, of HALO Branded Solutions, and Danny Rosin, co-owner of Brand Fuel, Inc.; suppliers Andrew Spellman, vice president of corporate channels at Victorinox Swiss Army, Inc., and Sharon Willochell, chief operating officer of Leed's.

One candidate from each category will be elected by the membership and will begin their four-year board terms immediately following The PPAI Expo 2017. The PPAI board election runs from August 29 to September 19, with results announced in early October.

Mitch Rhodus, CAS



Mitch Rhodus, CAS, is president of WIT Promotions, a HALO Branded Solutions distributor. Rhodus is an industry veteran who has served on PPAI's Government

Relations Advisory Committee (GRAC) and on the board of his regional association, TSPPA. In addition to his industry work, he volunteers with several community organizations including Rotary Club, Fairfield Christian Leaders, the YMCA and Boy Scouts of America. Rhodus also leads an annual trip to Haiti with medical personnel and non-medical volunteers to deliver medicine and services. Rhodus' non-industry work experience includes time at GE and Procter & Gamble. He and his

wife, Lois, have two children—Brad and Katie—and twin grandchildren.

Danny Rosin



Danny Rosin is co-owner of Brand Fuel, Inc. He is a longtime industry professional who has served on a number of PPAI committees and presented at the North American

Leadership Conference as a featured speaker. Rosin is a co-founder of PromoKitchen and has served as president of CAAMP, his regional association. In his community, Rosin volunteers with the Jamie Kirk Hahn Foundation, Operation Smile International, and Band Together, of which he is a co-founder. Additionally, he has been a speaker at the North Carolina Emerging Issues Discovery Forum and a member of the NC State University Centennial Campus Vision Project. Rosin and his wife have two daughters.

Andrew Spellman



Andrew Spellman is vice president of corporate channels for Victorinox Swiss Army, Inc. He has also worked in the promotional products industry with International Merchandise

Concepts, Hazel and Magnet, Inc. Spellman is an active volunteer leader for PPAI, serving on committees as well as judging PPAI Pyramid Awards and acting as emcee for PPAI Expo awards ceremonies. He

has also worked with numerous regional associations. Outside the industry, Spellman donates his time and service to community organizations such as the Guardian Angel Settlement Association and the St. Vincent DePaul Society. Spellman and his wife, Paula, have two daughters, Mia and Macy.

Sharon Willochell



Sharon Willochell is president of Trimark Apparel at Leed's and has worked in promotional products for nearly 20 years. She is a longtime volunteer with

PPAI, having served on the Women's Leadership Conference Work Group and as a speaker for WLC and for the North American Leadership Conference. Willochell has been a speaker for the Promotional Product Professionals of Canada and several PPAI panels. In her community, Willochell has served on the board of directors for Leadership Pittsburgh and on committees for the American Heart Association and Strong Women, Strong Girls. Her previous work experience includes stints at Deloitte & Touche and Alcoa. Willochell and her husband, Ron, have a nine-year-old son, Jonah.

The board election will be administered electronically by a third-party election administrator and by paper ballot as required. To vote, each PPAI member company's designated voter can visit the PPAI voter site and click on the "VOTE" button to learn more about the candidates and cast their ballots. **PPB**

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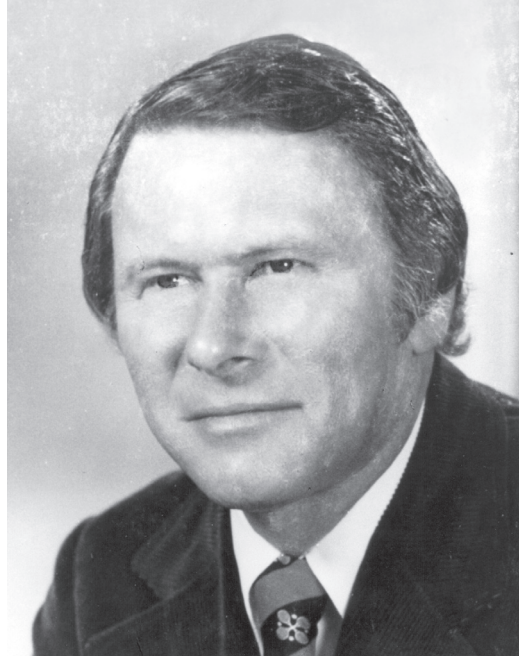
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A Promotional Life

Harry Rosenberg, CAS, has had a front-row seat to change during his extraordinary 64-year career

by Julie Richie

You might think that after such a lengthy career as an industry supplier, consultant and Association volunteer, Harry Rosenberg, president of Specialty Advertising Consultants, Inc. (UPIC: SPEC0026), might want to take it easy. Maybe relax a little. Even retire. But at age 89, Rosenberg isn't ready to give up on his passion for promotion: he still has a foot in the industry as a part-time consultant and he has an office at distributor Advertising Premium Sales, Inc. where he "sells an order now and then." Then there are the writing projects he's working on as well.

As a self-proclaimed history buff, Rosenberg knows a lot about history—and wants others to share in his passion. "I wrote a book called *Ameriquiz #1*. It has questions about the U.S. history, the flag, famous people, scenic areas and international questions as well," Rosenberg says. He is hoping it will sell to an industry supplier, and in the meantime he's writing *Ameriquiz #2*. "It's a unique puzzle that contains 2,508 words or more

taken from state names. Would you believe that I found 18 words from the letters in Texas alone?"

Rosenberg's other passion is his family. He and his wife, Virginia, or "Ginny," as he calls her, have been married for 66 years. "I knew her from grade school. Her folks and my folks were friends. I think it was a setup!" The Rosenbergs raised two children, Harry, Jr. "Buzz," 63, and Ellen, 61, and they have six grandchildren and one great-grandchild.

What was your first job in the industry and how did it come about?

My family had a company called Universal Match Corporation. My uncle, I believe, had the original idea for designing on a matchbook back in 1922. We had salesmen all around the country and we made wood matches during World War II. My uncle created waterproof wood matches for the military. When I first started working there after a semester at Washington University, I was thrown on the printing press. Then I went into the advertising

department for a while. Then in 1950, the company was sold.

My dad and I were looking for something new to take up. We found 30 acres in a suburb of St. Louis. On that 30 acres was a company called Ritepoint. Ritepoint was for sale, as was the 30 acres. We bought the 30 acres and then I, along with two associates of mine, Robert Hurwitz and Jerry Spitzer, who were brothers-in-law, bought Ritepoint. The company manufactured writing instruments such as ballpoint pens, plus coasters, cigarette lighters and a number of different things made from molded plastic and some metal. The company had been in business for a number of years and had a very good reputation in St. Louis and around the country as a writing instrument manufacturer. I became the vice president of sales and when we sold the business in 1976 and my partners left, I became president. I stayed until 1980 when I subsequently retired as a supplier.

How did you first get involved with PPAI?

Rosenberg's other passion is his family. He and his wife, Virginia, or "Ginny," as he calls her, have been married for 66 years. "I knew her from grade school. Her folks and my folks were friends. I think it was a setup!"

One of the things we did was create *PPB* magazine [then called *Specialty Advertising Business*] because we were growing and we needed a better publication.

A good friend of mine, Jack Wright with Vitronic, was on the PPAI Board of Directors and wanted to quit because he had other business interests and the board was taking too much time. He recommended to the board that I replace him. And for some crazy reason they agreed. I got in there and then at the end of my four-year term, I ended up being chairman from 1975-76. At that time, the president of the Association, Bob Rollings, and I became very good friends and we did a lot of things together. One of the things we did was create *PPB*



Harry Rosenberg with PPAI President and CEO Paul Bellantone, CAE, (right) and 2004 Hall of Fame Inductee Bill Bywater of Bankers Advertising Company (left) at the 2013 PPAI Chairman's Leadership Dinner at The PPAI Expo in Las Vegas.

magazine [then called *Specialty Advertising Business*] because we were growing and we needed a better publication. It worked very well and it grew as the Association grew. For a year, I wrote a monthly article in the magazine critiquing company catalogs that I thought needed help. Some people still call me today to critique their catalogs, which I do for free. The other thing [Bob Rollings and I did] was planning to move the Association

from Chicago to Irving, Texas. We ended up finding the property that they built the first building on. [Rosenberg was inducted into the PPAI Hall of Fame in 1983].

Later on, George Matteson (who had a playing-card company in Kansas City) and I got together and were teachers in the CAS certification program. He taught about money and I taught about sales, and we traveled for four or five years as CAS educators. It was great. We had a number of sessions during the year all over the country that lasted about a week at a time.

How did trade shows evolve during your career?

From the early 1940s to the mid-1970s, the main show of the year was at the Palmer House Hotel in Chicago. My company, Ritepoint, and Skinner & Kennedy, Vitronic and Len Bray were all St. Louis companies and we all had one section of the hall on the seventh floor. We had a room where we could set up a bar and have food and when a distributor walked in you could close the door and talk to them for an hour. It was really great. Of course now you can't do that, you've got eight million people running around the floors. We kept outgrowing the venues, first in Chicago, then in Dallas. When the show moved to Las Vegas, the first year we went, the parking lot hadn't even been finished yet.

What did you do after you sold Ritepoint?

I became a consultant to industry suppliers. I created Specialty Advertising Consultants and I was one of the first

consultants in the industry so I was in a very good position. I helped a lot of companies—at least 30 or 40 suppliers—start out in the industry. They would pay me \$500 for a booth and I got them their tables and their locations and everything they needed. They would bring their stuff and show. They had an area when it was in Dallas that was limited to the new suppliers since new suppliers didn't yet have points [for booth locations] if they weren't yet members of PPAI. New suppliers could come to three shows and then they had to decide if they were going to be members or not.

I really started building up a trade. When the PPAI Show was in Dallas, they had a lower level at the convention center and they put us down there. The second year on the lower level, I had 42 booths. I was right below the area where the escalators came down and went up. So as the show got bigger, some of the suppliers who were members started yelling because I had points but my people didn't and we were right at the bottom of the escalator. So they insisted that we move. They moved me to the far end of the lower level, so we started a new area down there. But they forgot that the parking lot was at that end. So people would walk in from the parking lot right into our area, so the upstairs was vacant for the first hour or so because these guys were coming to our area. Guys from about five or six big companies came downstairs and said, "Harry, can we get into your area?" because that's where the action was for the first hour of the show. **PPB**

Julie Richie

Promotional Top Guns

GD Sharma's team at Indicusbag aims high with pledge to deliver perfect products on time, every time.

by Jen Alexander

After serving as a fighter pilot in the Indian Air Force for 15 years, GD Sharma was ready to set his sights on a new challenge. So he started a factory in India and launched supplier Indicusbag (UPIC: INDICUS) in Chesterton, Indiana, in 2000, where he serves as president.

Like many of his industry peers, Sharma has placed an emphasis on meeting customer needs and exceeding expectations—building a team of like-minded employees in the process. “Each and every employee relates to the company philosophy of putting the customers first and considers delivery of perfect products on time as the basic requirement,” he says. “Once the order is written, it is our job to ensure that it is delivered as promised, no matter what needs to be done.”

Sharma and his wife have raised two daughters in Chesterton, and he spends his free time playing the occasional golf game and traveling in Asia. Read on to learn more about a day in the life for Sharma as president of Indicusbag.

What do you love about your company?

Our company has always delivered what and when promised without exceptions. The company commands the highest ratings in the industry. Every employee at Indicusbag

is dedicated to delivering exceptional service to all its customers. Our products are second to none in the industry and we have state-of-the-art decorating facilities. With total control from product manufacturing to decorating and deliveries, we are proud to say that we are never uncertain of our commitments. We pay attention to details, no matter how big or small the order is. We never go back to customers once the order has been accepted. We do not do many things, but we are the best at what we do. Our customers love us for our philosophy of setting new standards in customer service and product quality, and our commitment to deliver.

Describe your office atmosphere.

The office atmosphere is great, with self-supervision at every level. Our employees love their jobs and have stayed with the company for as long as they have for that reason. The newest employee in the company has worked here for eight years.

What kinds of projects or tasks might you tackle on a given day?

Apart from fulfilling regular orders, we work on custom projects for our customers. We aim to respond to any customer questions



within a few hours. Since our company was built from the ground up, we do not depend too much on outside sourcing. We work with a long-term view in mind. Generally, we avoid short-term arrangements and look forward to making long-term relationships with our customers as well as with our support system.

How do you collaborate with co-workers?

Every employee in the company takes his or her responsibility seriously. Since the company works in a transparent and ethical way, there is no ambiguity in employees' minds. That helps immensely in creating an environment of trust.

How does this job challenge you?

We live in changing times. Easy access to suppliers for buyers, and easy access to

“Once the order is written, it is our job to ensure that it is delivered as promised, no matter what needs to be done.”

Sometimes you face a nonexistent 'virtual' competition because some buyers will use that to compare and drive down the prices without evaluating the risks involved with no recourse. In this age of technology and information flow, the business world has grown yet become smaller at the same time.

buyers for the overseas factories, bring significant challenges for established companies. Sometimes you face a nonexistent 'virtual' competition because some buyers will use that to compare and drive down the prices without evaluating the risks involved with no recourse. In this age of technology and information flow, the business world has grown yet become smaller at the same time. Under these circumstances, it is a challenge to keep your place intact.

What changes or improvements have you recently implemented, or are you planning to make in the future?

We have tried to make our company autonomous yet

dependent within our resources, and we try not to depend on any outside source for daily requirements. We have also taken the first step of focusing on products made in the USA and are continuously trying to expand on the idea of making our products here as much as possible.

There are big challenges in doing this for all our products and we have to evaluate each and every aspect about this process. Therefore, it will take time but we will get there. Another major step is to offer custom orders within 30 to 45 days while remaining competitive. We have been very successful in delivering these orders because of our vertical integration with the manufacturing facility, which was started by

us in India a long time ago.

What makes your company a valuable member of the promotional products community?

Indicusbag is a name associated with unmatched commitments to our customers. Be it the quality of products or completion and delivery of time-sensitive projects, we have never failed even a single customer during the entire lifespan of our company, and that is the reason our customers love us. Our motto: We will deliver what and when promised without exceptions. Once you have the written order, it is our job to deliver. There is no need to follow up. **PPB**

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The AAF-SC's education event brought together community leaders from inside and outside the advertising industry. Barnett spoke on the shifts in the workforce and the workplace culture the Millennial generation has brought with them, and how to connect with and engage with this segment of the market.



In the UK, Barnett paid a visit to the offices of Wallington, Surrey-based distributor The Sourcing Team, a PPAI member for more than 20 years, and met with CEO Gill Thorpe (right) and Client Services Director Becky Fleury. Barnett says, "The UK faces many of the same challenges that we do in the U.S. pertaining to creating a more diverse marketplace. This collaboration is one of many that will help ensure PPAI maximizes its diversity efforts and keeps the global market in mind."

PPAI's Barnett Connects With Members, Regional Associations And Industry Groups While On The Road

PPAI Diversity Development and Engagement Manager Seth Barnett was on the road this summer, meeting with members in the UK and speaking at industry events. Barnett met with the staff of long-time PPAI distributor member The Sourcing Team while in the UK, and, back in the States, spoke at PROMO University—an industry education series produced collaboratively by the Georgia Association of Promotional Products Professionals (GAPPP) and the Carolinas Association of Advertising and Marketing Professionals (CAAMP), in Greenville, South Carolina. He also spoke at a professional development session hosted by the American Advertising Federation-Space Coast (AAF-SC) in Melbourne, Florida. At both events, he shared the latest findings and best practices on engaging with and selling to Millennials.

Facilisgroup Members, Suppliers Meet At Annual Summit



Facilisgroup held its 2016 Partner Summit & Supplier Showcase June 21-23 in Clearwater Beach, Florida. The event brought group members together for education, networking and relationship building, and drew more than 400 attendees, including member owners, 154 of their top-performing sales reps and 108 supplier reps.

◀ The Facilisgroup's Partner Summit featured opportunities to learn about new software and connect with like-sized companies to network and share business practices.

Red Cross Recognizes BIC Graphic With Outstanding Blood Drive Sponsor Award

BIC Graphic's Sleepy Eye, Minnesota, facility was a recipient of the 2016 American Red Cross North Central Blood Services Region's Outstanding Blood Drive Sponsor Award. The award recognizes the Clearwater, Florida-based supplier's staff at the facility for more than 20 years of donations to Red Cross blood drives. On behalf of BIC Graphic, Donna Dewanz, blood drive coordinator, accepted the award at the regional Red Cross Volunteer Recognition and Annual Meeting on June 28.



From left: Phil Hansen, regional CEO, American Red Cross Minnesota Region; Tami Murphy; Donna Dewanz, Site Bloodmobile Committee chairperson; Warren Harris; JoAnn Schmidt, Site Bloodmobile Committee member; Kerry Cipra, account manager, American Red Cross North Central Blood Services; Betty Jensen.



YOUR PHOTOS HERE Send us your company or industry organization photos for possible inclusion in Snapshots in an upcoming issue. Email high-resolution images to *PPB* News Editor James Khattak at JamesK@ppai.org and be sure to include a description, plus your name and contact information.



compiled by James Khattak

See who has moved in—and up—in the promotional world



GOT NEWS?

We'll share it. Send your people news, including high-resolution images, to *PPB* News Editor James Khattak at JamesK@ppai.org

DISTRIBUTORS

Elevate Brand Marketing (UPIC: WEELEVAT)—**Mike Tarter**, promoted to senior account manager

HALO Branded Solutions (UPIC: HBS)—**Amy Roller**, sales support supervisor, and **Tommy Lewis**, vice president, enterprise and program sales

MULTI-LINE REPRESENTATIVES

Linda Misorowski & Associates—**Ben Black**

SUPPLIERS

Cedar Crest Manufacturing (UPIC: CCM)—**Ken Cecco** of Kenneth Cecco & Associates to represent the company in Delaware, Maryland, New Jersey, New York, Pennsylvania, Virginia and Washington, D.C.

Charles River Apparel (UPIC: CRA)—**Will Cropper**, vice president of sales operations and business development

Discount Labels (UPIC: DISC0002)—**Rob Koller**, director of marketing

IDProductsource (UPIC: idpaspin)—**Nolan Cowser**, promoted to senior customer service representative

Halls & Company (UPIC: IDLINE)—**Colin Johnson**, digital marketing specialist

The Murphy Group (UPIC: tmgimp)—**Mike Hershey**, promoted to president

Pinnacle Designs (UPIC: Pinnacle)—**Monique Nigorizawa**, director of sales and marketing



Mike Tarter



Amy Roller



Will Cropper



Nolan Cowser



Colin Johnson



Monique Nigorizawa



Paul Schmitt



Walt Greene



Matt O'Connor



Paul Tomiuk

Pro Towels (UPIC: PROTOWEL)—

Paul Schmitt, controller

Quinn Flags (UPIC: Quinn)—**Walt**

Greene, new product development specialist.

RiteLine (UPIC: RiteLine)—

Kim Lehere, vice president of marketing; **Lori Arrigunaga**, director of marketing; **Carol McCullough**, customer service supervisor; and **Tonya Moore**, customer service specialist

S&S Activewear (UPIC:

SSAC8463)—**Matt O'Connor**, vice president of sales

Sonoma Promotional Solutions

(UPIC: SONOMA)—**Jacob Powell**, business development manager

Spector & Co. (UPIC:

SPEC0038)—**Paul Tomiuk**, account manager for Alabama, Arkansas, Colorado, Georgia, Louisiana, New Mexico and Tennessee

STORMTECH Performance

Apparel (UPIC: slabster)—**Patrick Reinecker** and **Chris Haynes** of Reinecker Marketing Associates (UPIC: Reine231) to represent the company in Oklahoma and Texas

Vantage Apparel (UPIC:

vantage)—**Ben Roberson**, regional sales representative for the Carolinas, Tennessee, and West and southern Virginia territories

IN MEMORIAM Christa MacPherson

Christa MacPherson, a sales rep with Vancouver, British Columbia, distributor Image Group, Inc. (UPIC: IMAG0001), passed away on July 14. She was 55.

MacPherson's career included time with Xerox and training as a Royal Canadian Mounted Police (RCMP) Special Constable, and she also worked at the Edmonton International Airport. She became a partner in Vancouver's Art Works Gallery and started her own custom corporate art and gifts business, Corporate Impressions. She later sold the business to Image

Group and continued to work for them.

Outside the office she was an active skier and snowboarder, owning a second home in Whistler to pursue these interests.

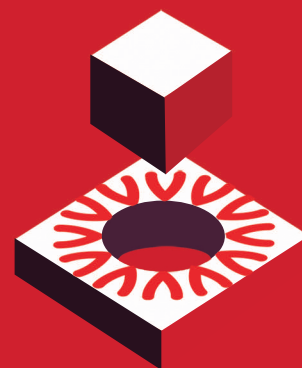
MacPherson is survived by her mother, Erika Sperlich; brother, Peter Sperlich, and his wife Margaret; sister, Ingrid Young, and her husband, Brian; five nieces and nephews, one grandnephew and her faithful dog, Teva.

Services were held at Pleasant Valley Funeral Home in Vernon, British Columbia, on July 24. Donations in her memory may be made to local SPCAs.

WE'RE REINVENTING THE INDUSTRY & FINDING A BETTER WAY.

As a Top 20 distributor, we use our patented technology to deliver customized products to the changing buyers of today. We know that one size does not fit all so we provide every client with a uniquely branded solution, acting as their go-to promotions partner.

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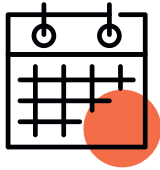
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PPAI #267078

The important events shaping the promotional industry.

compiled by James Khattak



PUT IT ON THE SCHEDULE

To scope out other events, visit www.ppai.org and click on the industry calendar

SEPTEMBER

September 1

SAGE Show

SAGE

Irving, Texas

www.sageworld.com/tradeshov

September 7-9

SPPA Fall Showcase

Sunbelt Promotional Products Association

Baton Rouge, Louisiana; Jackson, Mississippi, and Birmingham, Alabama

www.sunbeltppa.org

September 13

PAPPA Fall End-User Promotions Expo

Philadelphia Area Promotional Products Association

King of Prussia, Pennsylvania

www.mypappa.org

September 13

GAPPP Holiday Showcase

Georgia Association of Promotional Products Professionals

Atlanta, Georgia

www.gappp.org

September 13-14

OPPA Holiday Client Showcase

Ohio Promotional Professionals Association

Cleveland and Columbus, Ohio

www.oppagroup.com

September 14

PPAW Fall Flavor End User Tradeshow

Promotional Products Association of Wisconsin

Kimberly, Wisconsin

www.ppaw.org

September 15

CPPA Fall Expo

Chesapeake Promotional Products Association

Rockville, Maryland

www.cppa.biz

September 15-16

NWPMA Fall Showcase

Northwest Promotional Marketing Association

Bellevue, Washington

www.nwpma.org

September 18-20

PPAI Product Responsibility Summit

Promotional Products Association International

Washington, D.C.

www.ppai.org/education/productresponsibilitysummit

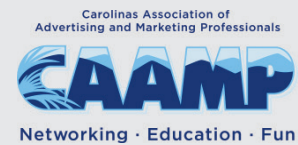
September 20

SAAGNY Fall Showcase

Specialty Advertising Association of Greater New York

Newark, New Jersey

www.saagny.org



September 20-22

CAAMP Traveling Holiday Showcase

Carolinas Association of Advertising and Marketing Professionals

Raleigh and Charlotte, North Carolina, and Columbia, South Carolina

www.caampers.org

September 20-23

PPAS Holiday Review

Promotional Products Association Southwest

Tulsa and Oklahoma City, Oklahoma, and Grapevine and Austin, Texas

www.ppasw.com

September 21

PMANC Holiday Tabletop Show

Promotional Marketing Association of Northern California

Livermore, California

www.pmanc.org

September 21-22

NEPPA Fall Expo

New England Promotional Products Association

Providence, Rhode Island

www.neppa.org

September 21-22

(Tentative dates) RMRPPA Mile High Expo

Rocky Mountain Region Promotional Products Association

Denver, Colorado

www.rmrppa.org

September 27, 29
PPAM Fall Holiday Showcase
 Promotional Products
 Association of the Midwest
*St. Louis, Missouri, and
 Lenexa, Kansas*
www.ppam.org

September 27-28
VAPPA Fall Showcase
 Virginia Promotional
 Products Association
*Hampton Roads and
 Richmond, Virginia*
www.whymappa.org

September 28
MiPPA Promotions That Roar!
 Michigan Promotional
 Professionals Association
Detroit, Michigan
www.mippa.org

OCTOBER

October 6
GCPPA Fall Holiday Harvest Show
 Gold Coast Promotional
 Products Association
Ft. Lauderdale, Florida
www.gcppa.org

October 14
PPAW Fall End User Show
 Promotional Products
 Association of Wisconsin
Wisconsin Dells, Wisconsin
www.ppaw.org

October 17-21
PPAI Leadership Week
 Promotional Products
 Association International
Grapevine, Texas
www.ppai.org

October 18
Regional Boot Camp
 Promotional Products
 Association International
Grapevine, Texas
www.ppai.org

October 18-20
PPAI RAC Leadership Development Workshop
 Promotional Products
 Association International
Grapevine, Texas
www.ppai.org



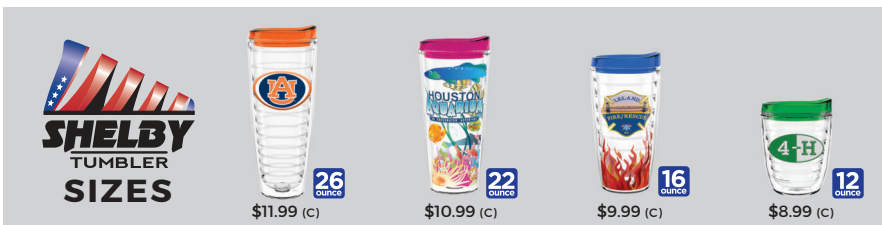
October 19
SPPA Holiday Showcase
 Sunbelt Promotional
 Products Association
Pensacola Beach, Florida
www.sunbeltppa.org



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 On Your Next Order
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ASI: 73871

SAGE: 67367

PPAI: 255687

UPIC: NEXTPRO

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New PPAI Members Joining In June 2016

Business Services

ExtendTech

PPAI# 678500 UPIC: E678500

Distributors

1338Tryon

PPAI# 649357 UPIC: 1338TRYO

1St Impressions

PPAI# 451856 UPIC: fid

420 Trade Group, LLC

PPAI# 674215 UPIC: 4674215

92 Threads

PPAI# 674217 UPIC: 9674217

Absolute Graphix

PPAI# 483189 UPIC: 1graphix

Admar Promotions Group, Inc.

PPAI# 217013 UPIC: ADMA8591

Advance Printing

PPAI# 675735 UPIC: A675735

Allegra / Brooklyn Park

PPAI# 674221 UPIC: A674221

Allegra / St. Louis

PPAI# 674388 UPIC: A674388

Allegra / Tampa

PPAI# 674017 UPIC: A674017

All-Pro Business Services

PPAI# 675641 UPIC: A675641

Aloia Promotions and Apparel

PPAI# 370078 UPIC: AloiaPro

American Solutions for Business

PPAI# 674231 UPIC: A674231

American Solutions for Business

PPAI# 674390 UPIC: A674390

ANYPRINT

PPAI# 639402 UPIC: A639402

Apparel 1

PPAI# 674392 UPIC: A674392

Aurora Imprints Custom Apparel

PPAI# 678584 UPIC: A678584

Bell Embroidery, Inc.

PPAI# 568659 UPIC: 4624824

Best Judaica, LLC DBA Just Perfecto

PPAI# 674287 UPIC: B674287

Bhowlin Graphics

PPAI# 411535 UPIC: Bhowlin

Blu Fiz Marketing Group

PPAI# 678656 UPIC: B678656

Blue Advertising, Inc.

PPAI# 675772 UPIC: B675772

Britt's Promotional Products

PPAI# 674009 UPIC: B674009

Bryant's Enterprises

PPAI# 536592 UPIC: B536592

CHK Enterprises, Inc. DBA Bright Ideas Promotional Products

PPAI# 102932 UPIC: BILEZ

Clean Your Artwork

PPAI# 670468 UPIC: CYA

CNY Racing

PPAI# 677123 UPIC: C677123

Compass Business Solutions

PPAI# 674026 UPIC: C674026

Corporate Ideas

PPAI# 287685 UPIC: CORPP042

Creative Coup Trading

PPAI# 675653 UPIC: C675653

CUSTOM DESIGN GROUP, LLC

PPAI# 678470 UPIC: C678470

Custom ImageWear

PPAI# 353633 UPIC: kl5mcgim

Cybercomm Signs

PPAI# 675747 UPIC: C675747

Daniel's Advertising Specialties

PPAI# 285580 UPIC: secretar

Data Processing Resources, Inc.

PPAI# 675848 UPIC: D675848

Design Outlet

PPAI# 625384 UPIC: DOprint

Discount Distributors

PPAI# 678668 UPIC: D678668

DLM Designs

PPAI# 675854 UPIC: D675854

DRG Print Services

PPAI# 678478 UPIC: D678478

Embroidery Classics

PPAI# 511105 UPIC: E511105

EmbroidMe/Virginia Beach

PPAI# 619906 UPIC: E619906

Embroidme-Clovis

PPAI# 455190 UPIC: E455190

EmbroidMe-North Phoenix

PPAI# 408819 UPIC: 7885800

Embroidme-San Antonio West

PPAI# 455552 UPIC: E455552

Enterprise Print Media

PPAI# 674408 UPIC: E674408

Equus Design Print

PPAI# 669343 UPIC: E669343

FastPromos

PPAI# 677033 UPIC: F677033

Fastsigns

PPAI# 675897 UPIC: F675897

Fastsigns

PPAI# 674021 UPIC: F674021

FASTSIGNS

PPAI# 678624 UPIC: F678624

Fastsigns – Vista

PPAI# 597995 UPIC: F597995

Fat City Screen Printing & Emb.

PPAI# 402399 UPIC: F402399

Fine Promotions, Inc.

PPAI# 675737 UPIC: FINEPRO

G Media, LLC

PPAI# 673979 UPIC: G673979

Gary Bushell Enterprises

PPAI# 264212 UPIC: G264212

Glitter City

PPAI# 674794 UPIC: G674794

Contact Sandy
Mendoza at
972-258-3019 or
SandyM@ppai.org
with any changes.

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NEW MEMBERS

Go Modern, LLC

PPAI# 675884 UPIC: G675884

Gotham Color

PPAI# 668585 UPIC: G668585

Graphic Barn, LLC

PPAI# 619043 UPIC: G619043

GRAPHIC SERVICES

PPAI# 636287 UPIC: G636287

GRAPHICS 4U

PPAI# 608998 UPIC: G608998

Gregson Advertising

PPAI# 676991 UPIC: G676991

Harbour Graphics

PPAI# 674447 UPIC: H674447

High-5 Sports And Logos

PPAI# 534853 UPIC: H534853

Hook Your Brand

PPAI# 676965 UPIC: H676965

Hoosier Schoolmaster Supply

PPAI# 675826 UPIC: H675826

Idea Printing & Graphics, Inc.

PPAI# 317551 UPIC: rom828

Image Promotions, Inc.

PPAI# 379561 UPIC: ImgeProm

Impression Paragraph

PPAI# 479091 UPIC: I479091

Impressions MarketingPPAI# 102784 UPIC:
IMPR0004**Imprinted Gems**

PPAI# 353538 UPIC: 1989525

Independent Printing Service

PPAI# 678476 UPIC: I678476

Instant Imprints

PPAI# 642432 UPIC: I642432

**IPromoteu/Hold That Thought
Productions, Inc.**

PPAI# 522402 UPIC: I522402

**Ipromoteu/True Grit
Branding, LLC**

PPAI# 676957 UPIC: I676957

Island Printing

PPAI# 674249 UPIC: I674249

IU Creative

PPAI# 629909 UPIC: IU2015

Jaco

PPAI# 673971 UPIC: J673971

**Jaren, Inc. DBA
Minuteman Press**

PPAI# 387487 UPIC: Jaren

JFC Enterprises LTD

PPAI# 675871 UPIC: jfc-ente

JK Branding

PPAI# 582558 UPIC: JKBrand

JNJ Apparel

PPAI# 675874 UPIC: J675874

Joy, Peace And Love

PPAI# 677141 UPIC: J677141

KMD Sales, Inc.

PPAI# 677070 UPIC: K677070

Knoxville Graphic House

PPAI# 675664 UPIC: K675664

Leisure Time Awards

PPAI# 265354 UPIC: LTAwards

Lindsey Dawson

PPAI# 678606 UPIC: L678606

Logomaniac

PPAI# 677143 UPIC: L677143

LogoVision GroupPPAI# 362479 UPIC:
HOTLOGO**M&M Designs**

PPAI# 648865 UPIC: MandMD

**M.A.P. Promotions
& Marketing**

PPAI# 587070 UPIC: M587070

Makeda Group & Associates

PPAI# 638568 UPIC: M638568

**Marketing Trends &
Custom Screens**

PPAI# 583748 UPIC: M583748

Maximum ROI

PPAI# 652226 UPIC: M652226

MDC PromotionsPPAI# 254569 UPIC:
MDCPr365**Merchandise Made EZ**

PPAI# 677096 UPIC: M677096

Minuteman Press

PPAI# 676615 UPIC: M676615

Minuteman Press

PPAI# 676931 UPIC: M676931

Minuteman Press – Glenside

PPAI# 675770 UPIC: M675770

MJT Promos

PPAI# 674426 UPIC: M674426

MM2 Creative, LLC

PPAI# 669554 UPIC: M669554

Monograms By Trish

PPAI# 408145 UPIC: M408145

MRB Enterprises, LLC

PPAI# 673973 UPIC: M673973

MRC Business Solutions

PPAI# 678654 UPIC: M678654

Mudd Print & Promo, LLC

PPAI# 675881 UPIC: M675881

N Zone Sportswear

PPAI# 276072 UPIC: 1044201

Name Street Gifts

PPAI# 620384 UPIC: N620384

National Quality Products

PPAI# 286949 UPIC: tscarry

NC Direct

PPAI# 669564 UPIC: N669564

OK UniformPPAI# 283732 UPIC:
OKUNP001**One Source Print & Promo**

PPAI# 508434 UPIC: 508434ee

Originells Design Associates

PPAI# 412789 UPIC: 0412789

Paradigm Print & Marketing

PPAI# 668024 UPIC: PARAPM

Personaliteez

PPAI# 403201 UPIC: P403201

Pes

PPAI# 454067 UPIC: P454067

Play It Again Sports

PPAI# 675859 UPIC: P675859

Porath Print Source

PPAI# 675672 UPIC: P675672

Presents of Mine, Inc.

PPAI# 176055 UPIC: GiftofMi

Printed Promotionals

PPAI# 675674 UPIC: P675674

Printing on the Mark

PPAI# 675789 UPIC: P675789

Prints Café

PPAI# 675676 UPIC: P675676

Promo Buzz

PPAI# 676971 UPIC: P676971

Promo N Stitch

PPAI# 600364 UPIC: P600364

Promotional Advertising Concepts

PPAI# 558294 UPIC: P558294

Quantum Printing

PPAI# 677113 UPIC: Q677113

R.K Business Solutions

PPAI# 673983 UPIC: R673983

Radical Graphics

PPAI# 583990 UPIC: R583990

Real Deal Promotions, LLC

PPAI# 552135 UPIC: R552135

Red Hot Enterprises, LLC

PPAI# 421425 UPIC: R421425

Retro 101

PPAI# 674489 UPIC: R674489

Ryan Family Engraving

PPAI# 675779 UPIC: R675779

Sew Many Designs

PPAI# 396595 UPIC: S396595

Shining Star Promotions

PPAI# 676612 UPIC: S676612

Show Stock Outfitters

PPAI# 650187 UPIC: S650187

Southern Barn

PPAI# 675783 UPIC: S675783

Southern Branders

PPAI# 675810 UPIC: S675810

Southern Press Printing & Signs

PPAI# 534252 UPIC: S534252

Southmark Design

PPAI# 678631 UPIC: S678631

Spark Promos LLC

PPAI# 675626 UPIC: spark9

Spectrum EnterprisesPPAI# 216312 UPIC:
SPEC8539**SPEEDY TEES NY**

PPAI# 597533 UPIC: S597533

INTRODUCING
ALL NEW

Stainless Drinkware!



see more in our
Simply Gifts
Catalog!



BW6806
Daniels Hip Flask
starting from **\$5.99 (R)**
MOQ 100

BW6805
Jack Hip Flask
starting from **\$5.99 (R)**
MOQ 100

TM5502
Edmonton Stainless
Steel Tumbler
starting from **\$4.99 (R)**
MOQ 100

TM6009
Sedona Stemless
Wine Tumbler
starting from **\$9.49 (R)**
MOQ 50

TM5008
Denali Stainless
Steel Tumbler
starting from **\$7.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

BC6005
Mount Fuji 20 oz.
Stainless Steel Tumbler
starting from **\$10.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

TM6010
Gully Stainless
Tumbler
starting from **\$9.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

BW6801
Shots in a Bag Gift Set
starting from **\$7.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

BW6802
On the Rocks Stainless
Whiskey Stones Gift Set
starting from **\$9.49 (R)**
MOQ 50

TM6008
Cape Cod Short Tumbler
starting from **\$9.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

BC5002
Tundra 20 oz. Bottle
starting from **\$13.99 (R)**
MOQ 50

Sportswear & Associates
PPAI# 286069 UPIC: SPORP027

Stat Index
PPAI# 675422 UPIC: S675422

Steve Zahirsky Consulting
PPAI# 675861 UPIC: S675861

Stock Glass/ Graphic Gallery
PPAI# 675682 UPIC: S675682

T Shirt Expressions, Inc.
PPAI# 676967 UPIC: T676967

Tampa Bay Trophy
PPAI# 589196 UPIC: TBTrophy

Ten Jeep Industrial Co., Ltd.
PPAI# 177033 UPIC: TENJ0001

The Cross Works Embroidery
PPAI# 673619 UPIC: T673619

Think It Then Ink It
PPAI# 568508 UPIC: thinkit

Twentystar
PPAI# 673957 UPIC: T673957

Type On Things
PPAI# 256541 UPIC: T256541

Typhoon Promotions, LLC
PPAI# 395381 UPIC: Typhoon

UMA Print
PPAI# 673959 UPIC: U673959

Vivid Promotions
PPAI# 654457 UPIC: vividpro

Vox Promotions, Inc.
PPAI# 225696 UPIC: VoxPr221

Wave Promos
PPAI# 677126 UPIC: W677126

Why-Steria Marketing, Inc.
PPAI# 438564 UPIC: Steria

Worldwide Merchandising
PPAI# 675828 UPIC: W675828

Xplor, Inc.
PPAI# 675852 UPIC: X675852

Zachs Apparel
PPAI# 613021 UPIC: ZACHSAPP

**ZAG PROMOTIONAL
MARKETING**
PPAI# 647593 UPIC: Z647593

Representatives

NVL & Associates
PPAI# 183107 UPIC: LEPO0001

Suppliers

Can-Do Printing, LLC
PPAI# 675786 UPIC: C675786

Etching Wines & Spirits
PPAI# 335914 UPIC: Etchwine

Fan Fave, Inc.
PPAI# 654868 UPIC: F654868

First Displays, Inc.
PPAI# 675749 UPIC: F675749

FluidNMotion
PPAI# 676964 UPIC: F10wz3r

Hester and Cook Design Group
PPAI# 678596 UPIC: H678596

MICARGI BICYCLES, INC.
PPAI# 674100 UPIC: M674100

Pinnacle Textile Industries, LLC
PPAI# 677022 UPIC: P677022

SPOKE Custom Products
PPAI# 678489 UPIC: S678489

Taiga Coolers
PPAI# 676623 UPIC: TAIGA

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT

How did your company get its start? Our company is more than 60 years old. My grandfather started it in his garage in 1952. Printing, exporting, importing, making sales; he did everything. When my father came into the business, he brought in a lot of new technology. He has a patent in the U.S. for a semi-automatic silk-screen printing process for balloons that he invented.

Today we have a young and dynamic team, and we continue to pursue new technologies and refinements. Our latest machinery can print 3,000 balloons an hour. In my grandfather's day, one machine could barely print 500 balloons per day!

What led your company to enter the promotional products market? With balloons, you won't find a promotional product that's cheaper in cost and has a bigger impact. It's publicity. Businesses put their name on a balloon and the people they give them to walk around with them and everyone can see it.

What's your favorite thing about being in the promotional products industry? Being able to sell in volume. Distributors bring the right connections to produce big runs. I want them to be aware that we are working to produce in the best products in the market, and we're doing it here in North America.

Why did you join PPAI? My father used to be a member of a number of associations. In talking to other suppliers, we became interested in becoming part of PPAI. We're growing, bringing in new technology, and we want to build our business in the U.S. And we want to find good people to work with. The right fit. I want to make sure that we work hard for people who respect that we work hard.



**Nicolas
Santorineos**
President
Granger Balloons
Champlain, New York
PPAI# 674108
UPIC: GRANGER

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7
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24 ^
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November

8
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24
Thanksgiving Day

December

Food Service Safety Month

Safe Toys and Gifts Month

4
National Cookie Day

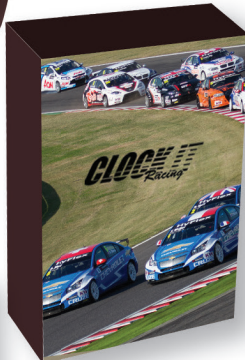
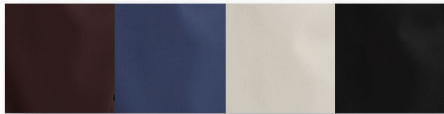


10
Human Rights Day

< 25
Christmas Day

If this calendar is helpful or if you have ideas for way in which we can better provide this information, email the editors at PPB@ppai.org.

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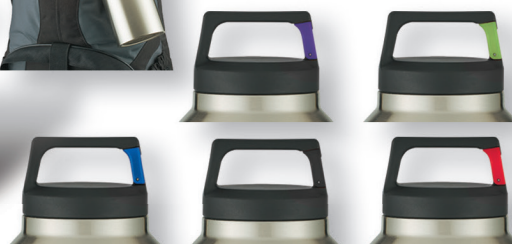
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609

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1305



985

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