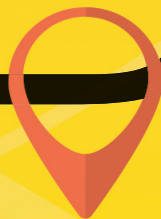


Promotional Products Business

PPPB



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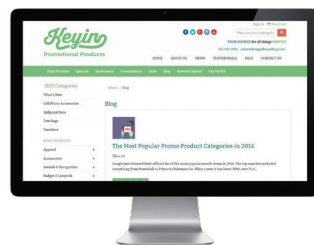
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Promotional Products Business

The Official Business Monthly of Promotional Products Association International



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Ten of the best multi-line reps open up about what it's like inside their businesses.

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Leading The Surge In Industry Data

In January's column, I shared a high-level update on our progress toward implementing PPAI's new mission *to be the trusted leader delivering essential knowledge, resources and community to ensure the success of our members and the industry*. Toward this end, the PPAI Board of Directors and staff are working on numerous strategies to help us deliver on our promise that is further defined by these four goals: drive member value and engagement; advocate for the industry; deliver and leverage strategic foresight; and manage an efficient and progressive organization.

The study also reinforced another key fact: consumers keep promotional products they receive, repeatedly interacting with the brands on them.

Among the strategies is the Association's overarching commitment to provide you with even more valuable, actionable, relevant and user-friendly industry research. Since 1965, PPAI has been committed to being your most reliable research source. To continue our leadership in this area, the Association recently engaged Survey Sampling International, the foremost company in survey sampling and data collection, to help us broaden our areas of research while maintaining the rigorous accuracy standards we've set over the years. For you, this means we'll be providing many more types of studies, and drilling down to give you supplemental

Brand Recall



9 in 10 recall the branding

8 in 10 recall the messaging

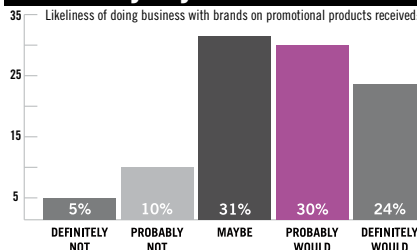
7 in 10 recall the call to action

data and additional insights you can use with clients, in presentations and in your own marketing efforts.

One example is the 2017 PPAI Consumer Study, which was reported in *PPB's* December issue and rolled out at The PPAI Expo in January. This study examines the reach, recall, resonance, reaction and relativity of promotional products using performance metrics to measure the role of our media among consumers. Among

the valuable data this study revealed is that nine out of 10 consumers could recall a brand on a promotional product they received. This finding echoes our previous consumer studies that point toward the overwhelmingly positive and long-lasting impact of promotional products.

Brand Loyalty



The study also reinforced another key fact: consumers keep promotional products they receive, repeatedly interacting with the brands on them. It's a stark difference from other advertising channels where consumers actively avoid advertising by changing the channel or clicking to close an online ad.

Additionally, in this study consumers confirmed they were more likely to increase brand loyalty and do business with the brands on promotional products they received.

When consulting with clients about the effectiveness of promotional products and how they help achieve marketing goals, having powerful research like this at your fingertips is paramount to helping you close the deal.

In the coming months, look for PPAI to deliver more business-building research studies, including our 2017 Buyer Study, which examines buyers' budgets, behaviors and perceptions of promotional products, and the annual Sales Volume Study, which reports and analyzes industry growth in the U.S. based on reported 2016 distributor sales.

Compelling information like this is just one of the ways PPAI works to earn your trust as the No. 1 source for industry research. I encourage you to take a look at the wealth of data and resources available to you at ppai.org/research.

Look for regular updates from me this year as we accomplish the goals within PPAI's Strategic Plan and work to fulfill our mission to you, our valuable members.

As always, please let me know what PPAI can do to help you grow your business. **PPB**

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Delivering Design on a Budget



In Recognition Of Mary Jo Tomasini, MAS

At The PPAI Expo 2017, Mary Jo Tomasini, MAS, took up the gavel as chair of the PPAI Board of Directors for 2017-2018. Tomasini is CEO of distributor CE Competitive Edge, LLC (PPAI 103776) in Stevensville, Michigan, and a 30-plus-year veteran of the promotional products industry.

My sincere appreciation and congratulations to you, Mary Jo, for accepting this position and giving of your time and talents to our organization. I know you will bring all your knowledge and passion to the position and will move our industry forward. I feel privileged to have you in my circle and wish you the very best in this coming year.

ELAINE GRUNDHAUSER

President
One 2 One Marketing
Burnsville, Minnesota
PPAI 164159

Congratulations, Mary Jo Tomasini! You have accepted the reins of a very important position and are to be congratulated, and deeply thanked, for the necessary involvement in terms of expertise and time.

MARGARET CUSTER FORD, MAS

Founder
MARCO Ideas Unlimited, Inc.
Portland, Oregon
PPAI 106680

Above And Beyond

In the February issue of PPB, the penultimate installment of Abigail Tiefenthaler's series on entrepreneurship, "Cultivating Bigger, Better Sales," looked at the right way to approach sales when starting a new business. Tiefenthaler is the founder of Aiken, South Carolina, distributor Sweetspot Strategies, Inc., and is a speaker and consultant helping entrepreneurs run the businesses they really want to run.

I reached out to Abigail after reading this article and she spent an hour with me on the phone helping me with even more great information on kickstarting my promotional products business. She has so much experience and knowledge in the industry and is a great resource. Thanks, Abigail!

SCOTT KOCH

President
PrintWorks Screenprinting
Lincoln, Nebraska
PPAI 701607



Young Professional POV

In February, PPAI Diversity Development and Engagement Manager Seth Barnett joined the Promotional Products Association Southwest (PPAS) in Dallas for a young professional panel discussion. On the panel with Barnett were Mike Eaton, LoriEaton.com; Farrah Vargas, Allied Affiliated Funding, and Sarah Thomas, American Solutions for Business.

Seth and the panel members were terrific. Far from being of one mind, they offered differing views and opinions of industry practices. From marketing ideas to impact other younger demographic buyers to what platform or device to use to reach out, they provided enlightening insights. Seth did a wonderful job in probing for deeper reactions. [It was a] wonderful event.

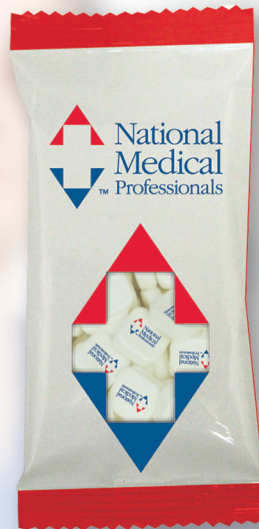
STEVEN MEYER

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Serving Up Style

Venus Williams's tennis and fitness clothing line, EleVen
page 19.

12 **QUESTION**
OOPS, I SPECIALIZED TOO MUCH. NOW WHAT?

22 **MARKETING**
INSIDE THE BUSINESS OF EMOTIONAL MARKETING

Match Point

While sporting these country club fashions, every competitor can serve and swing with style.

page 14



Oops, I Specialized Too Much. What Now?

**Q****A DISTRIBUTOR ASKS:**

You hear the term “niche marketing” praised a lot these days. But what if you’ve gone down that path and specialized in a niche, and now the niche you’ve specialized in is in a down cycle? How do you get out of the tailspin?

A

Look for other opportunities and craft an exit/transition plan. Don’t sink with the ship. Find another niche in a growing market. People want to work with experts, not average providers. Specializing is the fastest way to grow because it allows you to attract the kind of clients that will be most profitable, and simplify product research and fulfillment, among other advantages.

GLORIA LAFONT

Owner / Action Promo / PPAI 656637

The challenge presented here offers a fair warning to all distributors and sales reps not to put all their eggs in one basket. It's a danger to have too much of our business in one account or one industry.

With that said, the solution to finding more sales when your good customers are concentrated in an industry with a down cycle is threefold.

First, assuming you have good customers in a down cycle, I would recommend being honest with them. Tell them your sales with them are down and find out what other products or services they may need to help you increase your sales with them through the downturn. Products they may not know you sell: printing, packaging, banners, uniforms, awards and more. Find out who else in the company may also be making purchasing decisions. Finally, ask your good customer for referrals. They know your sales are down with them and may be motivated to help. Make sure you are connected with your customers on LinkedIn so you can see who they know and be able to proactively ask for referrals to specific people, too.

Second, though this may sound counterintuitive, call on other companies in the same industry that are not currently your customers. They are likely looking for new ways to grow sales and lower costs, and that could include finding new suppliers. Your work with other companies in that industry could help you gain instant credibility and opportunities.

Third, it's time to find new customers. Since you already have customers, you know how to get more. Reflect back on how you found your existing customers and commit yourself to repeating those processes.

GREGORY P. MUZZILLO, SR.

Founder
Proforma
PPAI 196835

Niche marketing, which means appealing to a relatively small and specialized customer base, is popular. However, it can be redefined if market conditions change. Three options come to mind.

Obviously, you can stop being a niche marketer and broaden your approach. Or, you can simply change your niche. A third approach is to create a niche within your existing one.

For example, if apparel is the current niche category you're focusing on, you can become an expert on women's apparel. Great niche marketers strive to become a *category of one*. They master their mini-niche with such excellence that they often become known as the undisputed expert. Their business grows, and so do their margins.

I almost forgot the most important part: Love what you do; there is no substitute for passion. The best niche for you is the one you really want to pursue.

DAVID J. HAWES, MAS+

Brand Architect
Geiger
PPAI 266141

A healthy balance is a diversified client base. While you are developing a specialty (or niche), start the early stages of another from a completely different part of the market.

BOB LEVITT

Owner
The Bob Levitt Company
PPAI 500797

While niche marketing has its benefits, there's always the flipside to consider. Maybe we don't want to put all our eggs in one basket, but rather diversify into other industries. It's about marketing, branding and rebranding when necessary. It's not much different than what we do for our clients, but it's always different when we need to do our own self-assessment.


Logos and taglines can always be

modified to reflect a different appeal, perhaps in a new market segment. This [new market segment] can be incorporated into a separate division of your company with a unique URL. In fact, you can have different specialized divisions under one company umbrella.

Fortunately, the experience and knowledge we have within this industry provides us the ability and flexibility to sell our ideas and products across various industry sectors.

AMY MALLET, MAS

President
Amsley Promotions
PPAI 387542



Do You Have An Answer?

A Distributor Asks: I am a small distributor considering hiring a straight-commission sales rep. I have never done this before. Any tips on how I should structure the arrangement? Should I offer 60/40 to start and then transition to 50/50 at some point? Are there any resources on how to set this up?

What's Your Answer? Email answers along with your name, title and company name by **May 26** to Question@ppai.org for possible inclusion in an upcoming issue of *PPB* magazine.

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.



Match Point

While sporting these country club fashions, every competitor can serve and swing with style.

You can thank 1920s-era tennis champion René Lacoste for sparking the movement toward comfortable athletic apparel. During his 1926 win at the United States National Championship, he wore a short-sleeve starched white button-down shirt instead of a long-sleeve shirt—“a daring evolutionary step toward an archetype of sportswear,” according to contributing writer Troy Patterson in his 2015 *New York Times* article “Unstarched Shirt.” Lacoste had reportedly been inspired by a posh friend who played polo in a similar shirt.

In 1932, Bunny Austin, an English tennis player who for 74 years was the last Briton to reach the final of the gentlemen’s singles at Wimbledon until Andy Murray did it in 2012, decided that heavy white flannel trousers were just too darn hot to play in. So he bravely wore shorts at Wimbledon—

and King George V and Queen Mary didn't object, underscoring the inevitability of a new era in athletic apparel design with the player's comfort playing an important role.

Nearly a century later, today's tennis players and golfers are overwhelmingly looking for dry-wicking fabrics that are comfortable, stretchy and quick-drying, says Steve Pinzon, marketing director for AKWA Apparel (PPAI 205981). "Both golf and tennis involve a lot of upper body and

core rotation. If the shirt doesn't move with the athlete, it's restrictive and it chafes. So, a lightweight dry-wicking shirt with some Spandex is the ideal formula," he adds.

Polyester is relatively affordable, but Spandex is expensive, so if you add a lot of Spandex to a shirt to give it more stretch, the shirt gets quite expensive, Pinzon says. "Also, too much Spandex takes away from the natural drape of a shirt and can leave it limp. At AKWA, we found four percent

Spandex is just right to add a little flexibility to the shirt without taking away the drape."

As for decoration options, Pinzon says that sublimation is ideal for both sports. "Screenprinting and embroidery leave stiff spots against the skin, and these can be uncomfortable, especially when one gets really sweaty. Sublimation dyes the strands of fabric (instead of coating or stitching them) so it has no stiff spots to irritate the skin."

In Praise Of The Modern Polo

The high-end embossed honeycomb design on this **Made in the USA polo** gives it high perceived value, and wearers will love the no-curl collar. At five ounces, this dry wicking poly/spandex shirt has just enough stretch for comfortably swinging a golf club. It's available in men's and women's in black, French blue, navy, charcoal, hunter and red in sizes S-4XL for men and S-3XL for women.

[AKWA](#) / [PPAI 205981](#) / [www.akwa.com](#)



This **women's performance polo** is made with 97-percent polyester and three-percent Spandex jersey using Desert Dry™ moisture-wicking technology. Gradient sublimation print goes from white to color to black and contrast taping complements the print at the inside placket and top shoulder and is finished with matching snaps at the placket. Choose from six available colors and sizes S-XL.

[Antigua Group](#) / [PPAI 133110](#)
[www.antigua.com](#)

"Breaking par" is the inspiration for the new **Greg Norman Sublimation Print Polo**. This shirt has all the features necessary for the links: Play Dry® moisture management system, luxurious stretch fabric and an athletic color combination. Fashion details include a self-goods collar, forward shoulder and shark plate branding on the right sleeve hem. It's available in sizes S-2XL and in white with a sunset and gunmetal heather print. Pair it with the Greg Norman women's Dot Jacket.

[Vantage Apparel](#) / [PPAI 113235](#)
[www.vantageapparel.com](#)



The 6.5-ounce Hanes® X-Temp Blended Pique Polo has an adaptive finish, Fresh IQ odor control and a 40+ UPF rating as well as double-needle hem sleeves, a welt collar and self-fabric neck taping. The women's style has flattering side-seam shaping. Colors include black, blue horizon, charcoal heather, clean mint, deep forest, deep red, deep royal, light steel, navy and white. It's available in S-3XL and in men's sizes up to 5XL.

Hanes/Champion / PPAI 191138 / www.hanesbullseye.com



Dye On Demand

Coloreel, a Swedish technology company, has created a new technology that allows apparel decorators to dye textile thread on demand during the embroidery process. According to Coloreel, Embroline is a unique, stand-alone digital thread-coloring unit that can be used with practically any embroidery machine without modification. By instantly coloring an Embroline base thread during embroidery production, Embroline eliminates any limitations in the use of colors. Color changes on the thread can be made rapidly, from one solid color to another or gradually, to make smooth transitions or virtually any coloring effect.

"This opens up an entirely new world for designers, embroidery manufacturers and apparel customers," says Joakim Staberg, the founder of Coloreel and the inventor of the technology.

Embroline by Coloreel will launch in mid-year. For more information, visit www.coloreel.com.

An all-over embossed tonal tri-blade pattern gives this 100-percent polyester **retail-inspired polo** a sophisticated edge while Dri-FIT moisture management technology delivers breathable performance. Design features include a self-fabric collar, three-button placket and open hem sleeves. A contrast heat transfer Swoosh design trademark is on the left sleeve. Adult sizes include XS-4XL.

SanMar / PPAI 110788 / www.sanmar.com



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Apparel And Accessory Advantages



Serving Up Style

Besides still playing tennis at such a high level that she reached the finals of the Australian Open this year (only to lose to her sister, Serena), Venus Williams is also a successful entrepreneur with a tennis and fitness clothing line: EleVen. She's been running the line since 2007 as a hands-on leader and creator who often takes her sketchbooks on the road with her to tournaments.

According to her website, the company name represents how she approaches her life—without limits. “In our world, ‘10’ is just another number, but EleVen is a lifestyle—it’s about challenging your status quo, embracing positive change, and pushing beyond whatever is holding you back from living your ideal life.” As for what she thinks makes a great tennis outfit, Williams told online shopping publication *Racked*, “Something that’s flattering. And also something that’s fun to wear, something that motivates you to get moving.”

This 5.9-ounce 100-percent polyester **waffle knit Callaway jacket** with fleece back and heather front offers Opti-Therm insulated fabric to withstand the cold and provide a layer of thermal comfort. High-quality details include a full zip with contrast zipper binding and Callaway logo rubber zipper pull. Sizes include S-4X and it's available in blueprint heather, castlerock heather, highrise heather.

Heritage Sportswear / PPAI 177353
www.heritagesportswear.com



Made from 100-percent woven microfiber polyester, this unstructured, low profile **visor** features lightweight microfiber that wicks moisture for more comfortable performance during aerobic activity. With a pre-curved bill, contrast binding and an adjustable hook-and-loop closure, the cap fits most sizes.

Augusta Sportswear / PPAI 187246
www.augustasportswear.com



These pliable **Nike® Solarsoft foam midsole slip-on sandals** are ideal for the country club. Slip them on around the pool or before or after golf or tennis. Available in gray and black.

BIC Graphic USA / PPAI 114187 / www.bicgraphic.com



Cool Towels are individually packaged 100-percent cotton towels that are pre-moistened with an all-natural cooling solution. They combine reusable cooling refreshment and brand awareness with a call to action (on a customized card in each folded towel). Cool Towels are perfect promo items for golf and tennis tournaments. The towel can be embroidered or reactive printed so consumers will be absorbing your client's brand while refreshing themselves between sets.

Cool Towel / PPAI 654022 / www.cool-towel.com



Maximize brand equity with this **custom golf glove**. This premium quality synthetic glove has a leather patch on the palm. The glove is a canvas for a custom design and the price includes up to three colors on the glove and on the raised rubber wrist strap.

Ball Pro Promotional Group
PPAI 112763 / www.ballpro.com



Fast Fashion

Distributor American Solutions for Business (PPAI 253958) has solidified an exclusive partnership with Loft8, an up-and-coming, fashion-forward luxury golf and corporate apparel brand that is already established at more than 700 golf courses throughout North America and has worked with the CGSAA, Toyota, Chevrolet, Mopar, Ralph Lauren and Footjoy.

This unique line of Loft8 apparel is available to order on demand using ASB's proprietary eCommerce technology. The products have been hand chosen and modified after input from American's select corporate and sales associate focus groups. This collection for ASB's Just-In-Time program is a custom line that adds a unique personal touch to its current apparel selection. **PPB**

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.



Sylish and sporty, **Bollé Recoil sunglasses** are perfect for all country club sports. Arched arms and a contoured profile give the frame an attractive and athletic style with a comfortable fit for medium to large faces. Nose padding and a temple lining made with Thermogrip® technology provide a secure and comfortable fit.

Fields Manufacturing / PPAI 111951 / www.fieldsmfg.com

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KOOZIE THE ORIGINAL CHILL™



Inspired To Get In Touch

Inside The Business Of Emotional Marketing

by Bobby Lehew, CAS

Last year, PPAI launched its Get In Touch! campaign, a five-year, multimillion-dollar, industry-wide initiative encouraging advertising buyers to recognize the power of promotional products and to allocate a larger share of their marketing dollars to the promotional products industry.

How do we, as practitioners, fulfill that mission? Through our daily work in the promotional products industry, have we lost touch with how crucial our medium is for conveying emotion? How do we ensure we build campaigns that “get in touch”?

At the recent skucon

conference (an annual educational experience for industry entrepreneurs held concurrent with the The PPAI Expo in Las Vegas), distributor and supplier attendees became our use case for the power of promotional products and the Get In Touch! initiative. Our medium, when treated as a vehicle for conveying emotion, becomes much more than products, and an entire promotional campaign can fulfill a passionate purpose.

Many of us have had it wrong for years. We’re not in the promotional marketing business at all; we’re in the *emotional* marketing business.

As attendees (distributors and suppliers) received their bags of promotional products at skucon, we heard:

“Love!”

“Super cool!”

“Perfection.”

“On point.”

“Stylish.”

“Swag worth stealing!”

Starbucks’s Howard Schultz wrote a stunning admission in his autobiographical memoir, *Onward: How Starbucks Fought For Its Life Without Losing Its Soul*. He said the real value of their brand wasn’t coffee: “Starbucks’ coffee is exceptional ... but *emotional connection* is our true value proposition.”

For those skeptics who refuse to believe, Schultz continued, “emotional connection” is “a subtle concept, often too subtle for many businesspeople to replicate or cynics to appreciate.”

All buying decisions (all!) are made emotionally and justified rationally. From the vice president of marketing who decides on a multimillion-dollar promotional budget to your decision about the last car you bought: if you mapped the emotional journey of your decision-making process, you would discover that you made an emotional decision and justified it with reason.

When it comes to building campaigns, particularly our own campaigns, we must map *everything* we sell to an emotion. (If it is good enough for \$19 billion Starbucks, then it should be good enough for us, too).

The promotional products at skucon provide a unique case study into this process, as we have feedback from all attendees involved. We have the customer (commonsku) working with the distributor

(RIGHTSLEEVE) who worked through their supplier partners: RuMe Brandsuite, SanMar, Hit Promotional Products, Redwood Classics, Gemline, BamBams, Maple Ridge, EMT, iClick, NEXT Products, YourCo (A T-Shirt Tycoon Solution), SnugZ USA and Clearmount.

When we at commonsku sat down with RIGHTSLEEVE, the distributor, to talk about product at skucon, what we worked toward was the answer to this question: What emotion do we want to evoke in the hearts and minds of our customers?

The answer was one word: *Inspire*.

Everything from the product selection to the artwork and design, to the imprint styles, to the distribution of product at the event, was tailored with the emotional imperative: *Inspire our audience*. (Even the event was held at the Inspire Theatre in Las Vegas).

But, to truly electrify with emotion, our vision had to be shaped into something tangible, a conduit. Take the skucon t-shirt, for

example. We wanted an iconic piece that would become both inspirational *and* aspirational for attendees. We conferred with Lauchlin Burnett and Stephen Musgrave, both directors at RIGHTSLEEVE who, working with designer Tee Hamilton, set out to tackle the ambitious task. Not only would we need to create a memorable item but we also had to impress the experts—our attendees—which meant producing something extraordinary.

We started with design first. Design is the first emotional touchpoint that catches the recipient’s eye. Design is what drives most of our product decisions.

We’re also firm believers in the idea that creativity is not limited to the sphere of originality;



Products selected for skucon attendees included a custom-packaged brew, essential oils and an iconic pocket tee.



Rather than just dropping the commonsku logo on items, we saw each product as a blank canvas and that every promotional item had a purpose.

creativity is being adaptive. Creativity is not the origination of ideas. Ingenuity—*adapting* ideas—sparks inspired thinking. We came up with the idea to take a stock shirt from SanMar and adapt it to our design preferences by partnering with our friends at T-Shirt Tycoon.

We knew that pocket tees are on trend these days and they also appeal to both men and women, so we came up with an idea for a pocket tee with an all-over print on the pocket.

We loved the idea of this product because there's an element of custom manufacturing that separates this from the regular stock shirt. We knew that our audience—all t-shirt geeks themselves—would

ask how they were made. And with questions, come the opportunity for storytelling; it's exactly the moment we crave as people who sell promotional products for a living.

We also chose to privately label the shirts to showcase the commonsku brand (as well as the brand of our partners in the production process, SanMar and T-shirt Tycoon).

Since we were going to be working with T-shirt Tycoon to private label the shirts, we had to pick a style that would work well with their process *and* a style that would work for our audience. We wanted a fashion-forward style that could also act as a classic go-to piece in the recipient's drawer. We decided on a slimmer cut for the men's shirt and a looser fit for the women. We had done slimmer cuts for women in the past but received feedback that preferences had shifted towards looser, more comfortable, flattering silhouettes for women. We opted for the Men's DT6000 in Heather Charcoal (50/50 blend) and the DM106L in Heathered Nickel. Both shirts gave us more control over shrinkage (due to the poly blend) after the shirts had been decorated.

Next came the difficult part: cutting a pocket and applying it to a stock shirt. To achieve the all-over print, we needed to print onto a bolt of fabric and then cut out the pocket and apply it to the shirt. Since we were working with a stock shirt, we needed to order white XXL shirts that could be cut up into little pockets; this resulted in an exact fabric match when sewn onto the shirt. Ordering

them in white also made the discharge printing easy.

Adam and Brittany Walterscheid and their team at T-Shirt Tycoon then went to work and produced some magic with the pockets. Now that we knew we could pull off the pockets, we brainstormed some pocket design ideas. We wanted to produce something with a step and repeat pattern as we felt that would work best for the all-over print. We also elected not to print anything else on the front of the shirt as we wanted the pocket to stand alone.

From a branding perspective, we chose to print our brand name on the sleeve. It works nicely with the discharge printing because it sinks right into the fabric, so it's not too "in your face."

We also produced a video of the shirts being decorated and made it accessible to recipients so they could see firsthand how the garment was produced. Instead of printing the QR code on the sleeve (lame promo alert!) we chose to print it on the inside bottom corner of the shirt so it would not be visible to others.

We were really pleased with the result. It took a lot of time and care to produce something that we were proud to distribute to skucon attendees.

When the t-shirt project was discussed with RIGHTSLEEVE and with our supplier partners, we never strayed from using the language of emotion. We told our partners, "We want to *inspire* our audience." Though it was important to walk through specifics, the suppliers were brought into the *story* and not merely the project.





Product plus good design communicates emotion (whimsy, fun, excitement, relief, joy). By treating each product as a blank canvas and crafting the design on every product, we mirrored the purpose (inspiration) and sparked a strong emotional bond with the recipient.

Brittany Walterscheid said that RIGHTSLEEVE, “came in with big ideas and a big vision of how they pictured their brand through apparel.”

To achieve something extraordinary, collaborators must sense a larger vision, and they can only do this when we share details of our vision. Twyla Tharp, the celebrated dance choreographer, in her book *The Collaborative Habit*, wrote that “a clearly stated and consciously shared purpose is the foundation of great collaborations.”

And it’s more than just product. We should never just spec an item with our partners when we’re building significant campaigns; we should share the vision of how we want the product to drive the emotional experience. Tharp phrased it this way, “Everything and everyone matters. There are no ‘details.’”

Because of this, T-Shirt Tycoon was able to help shape the design decision while respecting the vision and consciously sharing the purpose. “By collaborating with RIGHTSLEEVE and understanding what commonsku’s ultimate goals were, we used up every part of that shirt ... and it was great to see the end user celebrate the

product,” Walterscheid adds.

Beyond the t-shirt, we felt it was crucial to carry this idea of differentiating by design and evoking emotion through to every product we produced for the conference. Rather than just dropping the commonsku logo on items, we saw each product as a blank canvas and that every promotional item had a purpose.

We created custom “no pair is the same” mitts from Redwood Classics, and unique, custom socks with BamBams. When attendees arrived, we wanted them to connect with their ‘tribe’ so we designed trendy patches through EMT featuring a variety of roles that attendees would identify with (operations, entrepreneur, creative, sales, marketing). So many of our customers say they are fans and they love to collect skubot gear (items with the skucon logo), so we created limited-edition items like our plush skubot through Hit, skubot powerbanks through iClick, SIGG bottles, and on our stylish bags from RuMe Brandsuite, we printed the custom icons of each of our supplier partners’ logos. To top it all off, we had treats for body and soul: delectable goodies from Maple Ridge Farms, skubrew (the official beer of skucon) from A+ Wine Designs, and essential oils from SnugZ USA. For each of our partners, we also created custom logos with skubot that celebrated the uniqueness of each of their lines.

Product *plus* good design communicates emotion (whimsy, fun, excitement, relief, joy). By treating each product as a blank canvas and crafting the design on every product, we mirrored

the purpose (inspiration) and sparked a strong emotional bond with the recipient.

PPAI’s Get In Touch! campaign emphasizes that promotional products are “advertising that lives on.” The play on the language is perfect: “Advertising that lives on” expresses both the longevity of the message as well as the emotional response by the recipient: they cherish the items they receive which then become the advertising that (literally) *lives on* as buyers adopt the gear as their favorite hoodie or water bottle.

The campaign also emphasizes that the products we sell are the vehicle through which an emotional connection occurs as we “touch the hearts of consumers.”

This means it’s about much more than just a product. If emotional connection is the value proposition in a commodity like coffee, then surely the customized experiences that we craft together (that generate surprise and delight to our audiences) are enough to encourage buyers to allocate a larger share of their marketing dollars to promotional products.

Design and purpose determines product selection *and* heightens the emotional experience of every campaign we create. When we see a product as just a product, rather than a vehicle through which magic can happen, then “stuff we all get” is noise; “swag we love” is the signal.

The result? Pure inspiration. **PPB**

Bobby Leheu, CAS, is chief content officer at commonsku. Reach him at bobby@commonsku.com.

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Wearable Tech is the Hottest Trend in Fitness Gear!



+ On The Road Again

Ten of the best multi-line reps open up about what it's like inside their businesses **page 42.**

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THE GREAT OUTDOORS

40 MANAGEMENT
THE LOOMING MIDDLE
MANAGEMENT CRISIS



Professional Aspirations

Trade and professional associations present plenty of promotional possibilities

page 34

Pack Mentality

When Millennials chill out in the great outdoors, these are the products they'll want to hang with.

While older generations tend to see nature as a place to get away from it all and conquer athletic challenges with the best (and most expensive) technical gear, Millennials just want to have relaxed fun with their friends in the outdoors, and share their experiences on social media, according to outdoor industry experts.

In his July 2015 article in *Outside* magazine, "The Outdoor Industry Has a Millennial Problem," Michael Roberts, executive editor, digital development, wrote, "The post-college set in particular is turned off by the go-for-the-summit ethos that defines so many legacy brands."



Many of them camp out mostly at festivals like Coachella or Burning Man. As such, they see the outdoors not as a proving ground to be attacked with ice axes and Gore-Tex, but as a playground to be enjoyed with portable sound systems and beer Koozies.”

A recent study by the Outdoor Industry Association found that, unlike the Baby Boomer generation, “Millennials . . . have a pack mentality. For them, it’s less about ‘I can and you can’t’ and more about ‘I can and you should come along.’”

Or if you can’t come along, you should follow along—on social media. Millennial travel blogger Trevor Morrow said in a 2016 CBS News article that social media is key for Millennials. “We want that photo. For me, I want it for the memories, but of course, I think you

could generally say that we want to post it and share it with our friends on Facebook, Instagram and Snapchat.”

Toby O’Rourke, chief franchise operations officer for Kampgrounds of America, explained to CBS News how brands are adjusting their products to fit a more relaxed approach to the outdoors. “Brands like The North Face that used to focus on technical gear for avid adventurers are now also creating stylish, user-friendly and comfortable products that appeal to Millennials. Ads that once featured extreme athletes at peak performance are now likely to include friends casually gathered around a campfire.”

Read on for our curated group of Insta-worthy products Millennials will want to use—and share with friends.

Social Media Sensations



Absolute adventure. That’s what the **Polaris® ACE®** is all about. The single seat puts the rider directly in the center of the trail. Comfort improvements across the line have made each ACE the most comfortable ride yet. As a showcase item or prize for an outdoor adventure event, or an incentive or recognition product for the right demographic, this four-wheeler is all fun.

Incentive Concepts, LLC / PPAI 212912
www.incentiveconcepts.com



The unique, patented **CreekKooler floating cooler** is the perfect choice to add some fun to outdoor recreation opportunities. Tow the cooler behind a kayak or canoe, fill it with ice and drinks for a cool serving display at a summer event, float it in a pool or hot tub, showcase it as a raffle item at a career recruiting event or auction, offer it to resorts and lake outfitters to use as a boat rental add-on, or target construction companies that specialize in boat docks, lake homes or swimming pools. The possibilities are endless. And it’s made in the USA.

Kanooler Products / PPAI 690429
www.kanoolerproducts.com/custom-products



When paddleboarding, jetskiing, hunting or enjoying any other active outdoor activity, it’s always a challenge to keep a drink nearby—and upright. The **Amazing L’il Sucker** no-spill vacuum holder adheres to surfaces to hold a drink in place and eliminate spills.

Best Promotions USA / PPAI 461689
www.bestpromotionsusa.com



HERO Session packs the power of GoPro into a convenient, grab-and-go, everyday camera. Perfect for the first-time GoPro user or as a second camera, HERO Session is simple to use. Its single button control, stunning 1080p60 video, 8MP photos and rugged, waterproof design make HERO Session the perfect camera to record and share any adventure.

Premco Associates/PISI / PPAI 145323 / www.gopremco.com



This rugged 100-percent recyclable and BPA-free 18/8 stainless double-walled **vacuum insulated canteen** keeps liquids ice-cold for 24 hours with no condensation, or hot for up to 12 hours. A universal wide mouth makes it easy to exchange lid styles and fill the bottle with ice. Pair any bottle with a paracord lanyard, a canteen lanyard, for ultimate carrying convenience or to clip onto a suitcase or backpack.

Xtreme Canteen, LLC / PPAI 691094
www.xtremecanteen.com



Kick Back And Relax

This folding two-position **recliner and captain's chair** in one has mesh backing for laying back and enjoying the breeze. A removable footrest, two mesh can holders and mesh magazine pocket means hours of relaxation. A carrying bag with strap is included.

BIC Graphic USA / PPAI 114187 / www.bicgraphic.com



The insulated **Adventure Wine Tote** has space for two wine bottles and comes with wine and cheese service for two. A portable acacia table folds down for flat storage in the tote's interior. The tote comes complete with two PET stemless wine glasses, a cork screw and a bottle stopper. The exterior is made of waxed cotton canvas with rich brown details, and features a shoulder strap that can be looped through the handle to be worn as a backpack.

Picnic Time, Inc. / PPAI 143980
www.picnicpromotions.com



The patented polyester fleece **TAILGATE Hoody** is a fun twist on an American classic which combines a hooded sweatshirt with an insulated Neoprene pocket that allows wearers to keep their drink cold and their hands warm. The built-in pocket doubles as a padded security pouch that stores a cell phone/MP3, wallet or other valuables. It's available in black, charcoal heather, camouflage, outdoor camo, hydrator orange, hydrator yellow and in sizes S – 3XL.

J. America / PPAI 351699
www.jamericablanks.com



The **Joey camp chair** features a lightweight aluminum frame that is both aesthetically and functionally appealing. With a variety of imprint locations available for silkscreening, the Joey offers a large promotional impact in a compact and engaging design, and includes anti-sink disk feet to prevent sinking into soft ground.

TravelChair Company / PPAI 113178
www.travelchair.com



Five Keys To Millennial-Friendly Outdoor Events



1

Wi-Fi

It's a must. SnapChatting uses a LOT of data.



2

Creature Comforts

They don't call Millennials' version of camping "glamping" for nothing. Millennials like to combine fun with indulgent luxury.



3

Gamification

Include an online competition component to any outdoor activities to appeal to multi-tasking personalities.



4

Exercise

Millennials like playground games (kickball, anyone?) but remember, more "extreme" activities (water-skiing, rock-climbing, zip-lining, kayaking, paddleboarding) make for the best photo ops.



5

Fido

Millennials like taking their dogs with them everywhere, so pet-friendly events and venues are especially popular. (Provide water bowls, pet cleanup stations, promotional pet items, etc.)

Source: National Recreation and Park Association

Case Studies



Get A Grip

Whataburger, a large fast-food chain, needed a unique branded decoration for a corporate golfing event that would work on the golf putter handle they were giving as a gift.

The client chose World Emblem's Flexstyle for its texture, color and ability to capture fine detail. Flexstyle can be attached to hard goods as well as apparel, and the color options are virtually limitless.

Source: World Emblem International, Inc.

Protect And Promote



Made from 100-percent cotton twill, this crushable **pigment-dyed twill bucket cap** offers casual sun protection with style and comes in sizes L and XL.

[Heritage Sportswear](#) / PPAI 177353
www.heritagesportswear.com



Millennials are stewards of the environment and like to engage with brands that share their views. These **floral seed sticks** in a matchbook-style plain paper holder allow brands to promote eco-friendly products and causes or any theme related to growth or flowers. Custom-shape matchbooks are available. Recipients can plant the sticks and watch beautiful flowers grow in outdoor spaces.

[Gempire/Gwi](#) / PPAI 113471 / www.gempire.com



With a wide brim for more coverage and protection, this 100-percent cotton **packable sun hat** has a 30+ UPF rating. A hidden adjustable drawcord at the crown keeps it in place. One size fits most.

[SanMar](#) / PPAI 110788 / www.sanmar.com



Made in the USA, **Swamp Juice** is an all-natural insect repellent that is DEET-free and repels a variety of blood-feeding insects. Pitch this fun and useful product to travel companies, outdoor tour operators, colleges, resorts, marinas, parks and recreation organizations, and all outdoor venues.

[Crown Products, Inc.](#) / PPAI 113430 / www.crownprod.com

Popular for all outdoor activities, this **sunscreen and lip balm combo** unites an SPF 30 broad spectrum sunscreen bottle and SPF 15 broad spectrum tropical lip balm. Clipped together with a carabiner, this combo is a dynamic duo.

[Raining Rose, Inc.](#) / PPAI 232508
www.lipbalmcompany.com



Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

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12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
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Solid Copper Mint Julep Cup

NET PRICING		Part# 800-C / 8oz				
12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
\$7.45	\$7.05	\$6.70	\$6.45	\$6.20	\$5.90	



Mint Julep Cup Polished Finish

NET PRICING		Part# 7300 / 12oz				
12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
\$6.65	\$6.35	\$6.00	\$5.75	\$5.45	\$5.25	

Mint Julep Cup Polished Finish

NET PRICING		Part# 7200 / 8oz				
12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
\$5.70	\$5.45	\$5.20	\$4.95	\$4.75	\$4.55	



Mint Julep Cup Satin Finish

NET PRICING		Part# 7400 / 12oz				
12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
\$4.60	\$4.35	\$4.10	3.85	3.60	\$3.45	



Mint Julep Cup Satin Finish

NET PRICING		Part# 7000 / 8oz				
12	100	250	500	1000	2500	
\$4.10	3.85	\$3.60	\$3.35	3.10	\$2.95	



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Professional Aspirations

Trade and professional associations present plenty of promotional possibilities.

Before “white collar” jobs existed, trades and tradesmen were the professionals of the world. Early trade organizations were guilds, which morphed into today’s trade unions and trade associations. With the evolution of the workforce and the expansion of education across Europe came new groups to foster and encourage professionalism and continuing education—professional societies.

Among the earliest is The Royal Society of London, a national scientific academy founded in 1662 and still active today.

Association membership continues to grow; nearly half the 828 associations that participated in a 2016 Marketing General Incorporated (MGI) benchmarking survey reported an increase in member numbers over the previous year. Additionally, fewer associations reported membership declines from 2015 to 2016.

What drives professionals to join such organizations? Networking. The MGI survey notes that members want to network with industry peers; secondarily, they seek to learn and share best practices as well as pursue continuing education opportunities.

“Promotional products for an industry are always an opportunity for raising awareness,” says Dena Hirschberg, executive vice president for Chicago, Illinois-based supplier HHP/Helping Hand Partners. “They are a great way to leverage a brand. When members use branded products, they are sending a message that the organization is something worth being part of.”

Michael Silverman of distributor SmithBucklin Promo in Chicago,



Illinois, says one of the biggest uses of promotional products by professional groups is for partner engagement. “Often our clients buy products that are sponsored by someone else—perhaps a supplier in that same industry,” he says.

“Whether it’s a conference bag or a lanyard, our clients definitely want products that provide visibility. A quality conference bag that is attractive will prompt attendees to use it beyond the conference, providing maximum brand exposure for the association and its sponsors.”

Silverman, who serves as senior vice president of the association management and services company SmithBucklin, says most of his team’s communication is with the organization rather than the product sponsor, though the indirect process can sometimes mean a project takes longer to get approved. “We need to make the association happy, but we need to make the sponsor happy as well. [Association clients] have to make sure the sponsor is

okay with how a product looks,” he adds.

Other opportunities for product-driven engagement include membership renewal reminders and event announcements, says Silverman. “With respect to a conference or event, they might use a creative product that’s associated with the location where the event is being held to serve as a save-the-date.”

Hirschberg says in addition to typical marketing strategies that focus on recruitment and retention, professional associations also look for ways to give back, and as a result are giving ethically sourced, socially-conscious gifts and giveaways—items that are a hallmark of HHP’s work, she says. “As a 501(c)(3) nonprofit, our mission is to provide sustainable livelihoods and job opportunities to people with barriers to employment. Socially responsible products boost brands exponentially, and what makes us unique as a supplier is what makes our clients unique as distributors.”

Hirschberg says one of the most important things a distributor can do when working with a professional organization is to become educated on the values and ethics of the group. Knowing this can help distributors differentiate themselves by offering promotional solutions that align with those values, she adds.

Silverman adds that many associations and professional groups may not have their own marketing professional, so it’s important for a distributor to come to the table with ideas. “We bring a lot of creativity and a lot of options to choose from,” he says. “It’s also important to understand—really well—the client’s in-hands date, because so much of what they do is event-related.”

Silverman says distributors need to make sure they can deliver on time; otherwise, “not only is the product unusable, you might also upset the client or the product sponsor.”



There’s no time like the present to give members a unique desktop gift like this magnetic sand **hourglass timer**. Flip the six-inch-tall timer and the fine metal filings work their way down to the genuine wood base with a magnetic disc, creating a uniquely striking, fuzzy-looking shape each time. Each timer is individually packaged in a clear display gift box.

[Jornik Manufacturing](#) / PPAI 111065 / www.jornik.com

Recipients of the retail-inspired **Ame & Lulu day tote** won’t want to put it down. Made with 100-percent, 18-ounce cotton canvas that’s treated to repel water, the tote features a zippered main compartment with an interior and back zippered pocket. The roomy bag is available in eight patterns.

[Kati Sportcap](#) / PPAI 113758 / www.katisportcap.com



MARKET TO MARKET

professional
organizations &
associations

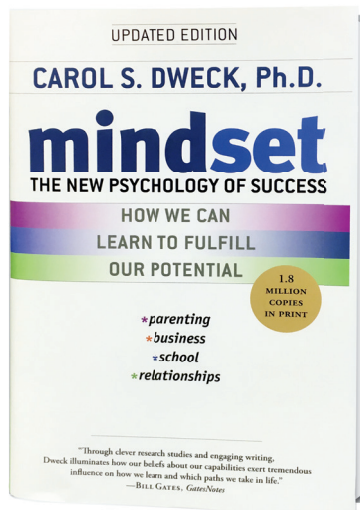
Case Studies From The Industry

Real-World Solutions



HYPE (Helping Young Professionals Evolve) is an organization created by local chambers of commerce to welcome and support new and current young professionals in their communities by building relationships, gaining skills and knowledge and giving back to the community. One such branch was looking to add more members and held a recruitment event. During the event, the branch gave out the Ezra Canvas Media Case from Beacon Promotions to guests who renewed their membership or joined for the first time. The unisex, trendy media case with its combination of canvas and leather was well-received and is often seen being used by HYPE members.

Source: Beacon Promotions



Help young professionals realize their potential with a copy of **Mindset: The New Psychology of Success** by Dr. Carol Dweck. Dweck, a Stanford University psychologist, discusses how our mindset affects how we approach success—at home, at school and at work.

[The Book Company](#) / PPAI 218850

www.thebookco.com

Help members keep track of luggage while they're away at events with a colorful **luggage strap** that secures with a black snap buckle.

[Fields Manufacturing](#) / PPAI 111951

www.fieldsmfg.com



Say you'll be there for your members for years to come with the tear-resistant, water-resistant **stone paper notebook**. Made of a cardstock cover and filled with stone inner sheets—made from mineral powder mixed with a small amount of high-density polyethylene—the notebook cover can be customized with a full-color image.

[Promobilia Corp.](#) / PPAI 210715

www.promobilia.com

There's A Group For That

If a profession exists, chances are you'll find an association for it. Some of the world's lesser-known professional organizations include:



National Association of Tower Erectors



Potato Association of America



American Association of Candy Technologists



Can Manufacturers Institute



International Association of Youth Hypnotists



Reach for the stars with the **COSMIC Poly Fleece quarter-zip**. Made in unisex and ladies' companion styles, the pullover is made of seven-ounce, 100-percent spun polyester fleece with a self-fabric collar and cuffs, side gusset panels and side-entry pockets. Choose from several color options and sides S-3XL.

J. America / PPAI 351699
www.jamericablanks.com



Give sweet memories with **premium chocolates or fresh-roasted nuts**, packaged in a tastefully decorated gift box. Choose from five colors and 15-plus gourmet treats.

Maple Ridge Farms / PPAI 114165
www.mapleridge.com

Professional Organizations In The U.S.

Nearly 100,000 trade and professional organizations, classified as 501(c)(6) organizations, operate in the U.S.

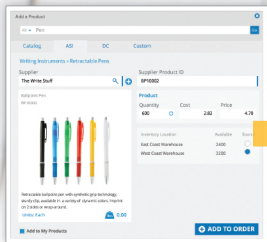
Top 5 Professional Associations By Size

(Approximate Total Membership, 2016)

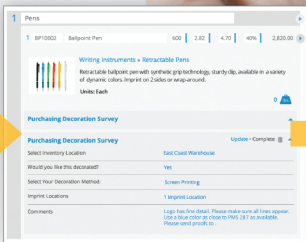
1	2	3	4	5
1.2 million	420,000	412,000	400,000	250,000
National Association of Realtors	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers	American Institute of Certified Public Accountants	American Bar Association	American Medical Association

Essent[®]One[™]

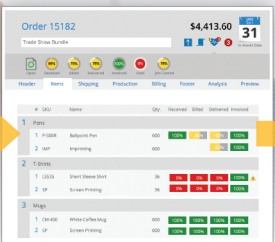
Business Management System



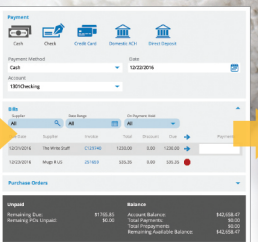
Research



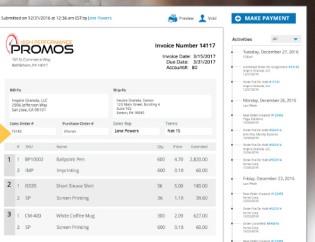
Quote & Configure



Order Status



Purchasing & Payables



Invoicing & Job Costing

Distributor, Decorator, or Supplier

Managing your business is easier than ever.

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professional
 organizations &
 associations

You're How Old?

Founded
1750

Halifax Board of
 Trade (Canada)

Founded
1768

Chamber of
 Commerce, State
 of New York

Founded
1839

American
 Statistical
 Association

Founded
1852

American Society
 of Civil Engineers

Founded
1876

American
 Chemical Society



The good eggs in an organization deserve a quirky, fun-filled plush toy like this **egg**. It's unique and unforgettable, and oh-so-huggable.

Artistic Toy Manufacturing, Inc.

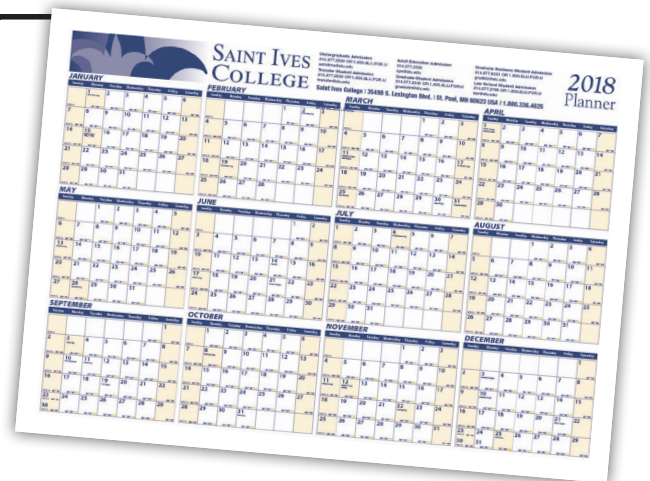
PPAI 110753 / www.artistictoy.com

Take stock of the year ahead with a Year-In-View® horizontal format **calendar planner**. The calendar is made of heavyweight paper stock and gloss coated with a write-on/wipe-off surface.

It comes with dry-erase markers and can be customized with two PMS colors.

TruArt Calendar Co. / PPAI 113720

www.truart.com



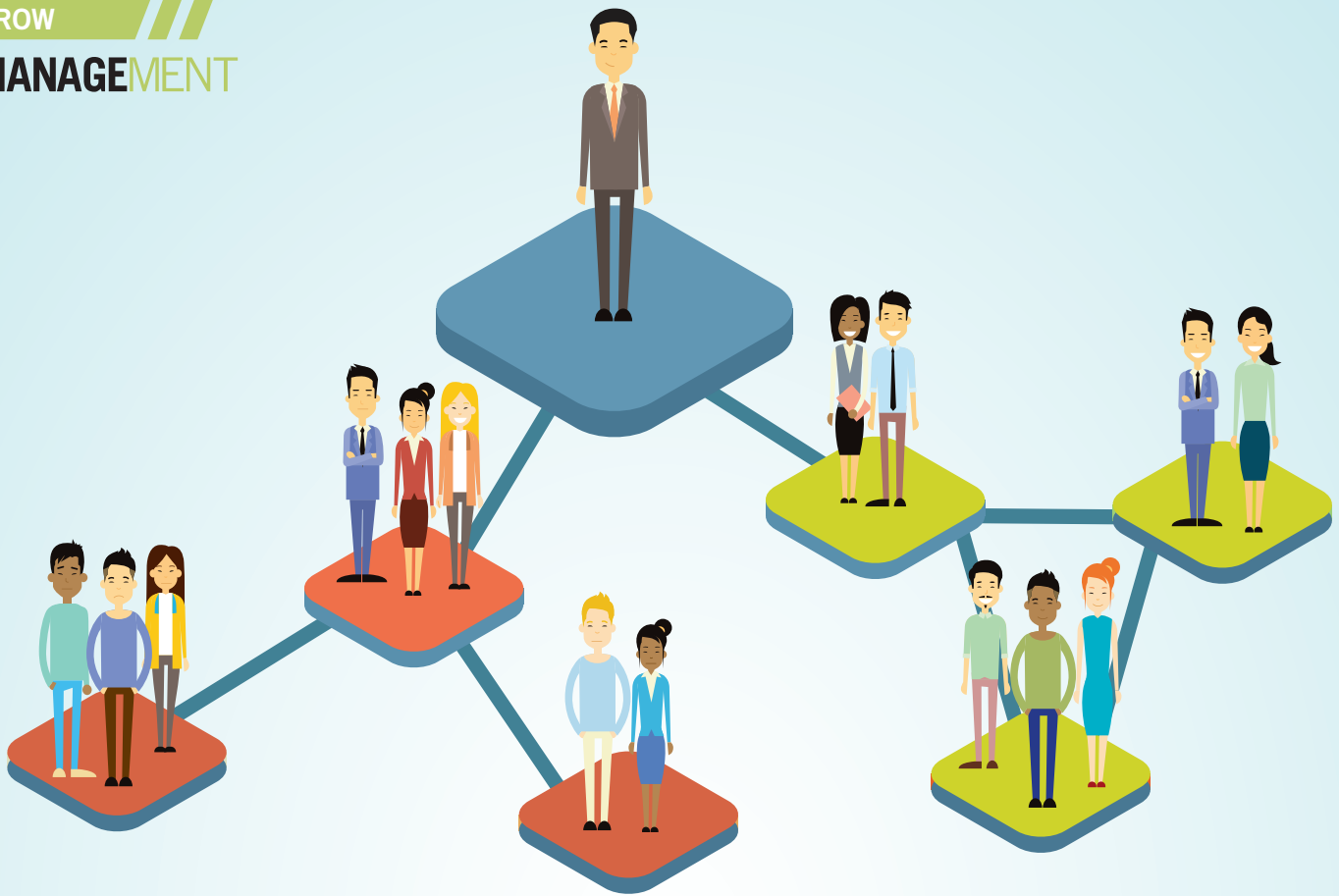
The **Virage Rollerball pen** is elegance defined with a matte finish barrel and polished silver accents. The subtle flares at each end make this black-ink pen stylish enough for any runway. Choose matte black or matte silver.

Cosmo Fiber Corp. / PPAI 111334 / www.cosmofiber.com

Set the mood with a **clean-burning soy candle** packaged in a sturdy zippered travel pouch. The travel pouch and travel case are produced by individuals in underserved Chicago neighborhoods. Choose from lavender, sea salt, citrus and mint varieties.

HHP / PPAI 370596 / www.helpinghandpartners.com





The Looming Middle Management Crisis

Here's how to keep your manager candidate pipeline full and thriving.

by Michelle M. Smith,
CPIM, CRP

Miscast and disengaged employees are a problem wherever they're found in an organization, but when middle managers join those ranks it's especially troubling because of their broad sphere of influence on so many other employees.

The Gallup Organization warns us just such a problem is brewing within our management ranks—their research found that 82 percent of managers are “miscast in their roles” and 25 percent are “dangerously lousy.”

So what can we do to better identify, support and retain managers so they will be successful in the role?

The Plague Of Responsibility Without Authority

No matter how talented and engaged managers may be when they enter their role, one of most destructive factors causing frustration and derailing their success is being given responsibility without also being given full authority. Authority is the ability to make decisions without asking someone else's permission.

Really good managers won't stay if you won't let them lead.

How To Unleash Your Managers

Tim Stevens, author of *Fairness*

is *Overrated: And 51 Other Leadership Principles to Revolutionize Your Workplace*, suggests doing these six things to create a great culture in which managers remain engaged and thriving:

- 1 Train them so their blood pulses with the mission, vision and values of the organization.
- 2 Set them up to succeed and tell everyone they have your full confidence.
- 3 Give them the authority to make decisions and set direction for their areas of responsibility.
- 4 Get the heck out of the way and let them lead.
- 5 Be available as a sounding board to help them determine the right course of action.
- 6 Celebrate their wins publicly and reward them with greater responsibility when appropriate.

Identifying New Managers

The other half of the solution is to establish a pipeline of new managers-in-waiting to keep your leadership bench strong and spur your company to new heights. Your organization is probably full of “hidden leaders” who are committed to their jobs and to the organization.

In *The Hidden Leader*, authors Scott Edinger and Laurie Sain have developed four key indicators to help you identify the hidden managers in your organization or on your team.

- 1 **They demonstrate integrity,** consistently displaying a strong ethical code of conduct that’s focused on every employee’s welfare. Their consistent adherence to their beliefs makes them predictable and dependable, and they have the courage to do the right thing even when it’s difficult.
- 2 **They lead through relationships.** They get along with and value others. They lead and inspire because of who

they are and how they interact with others and they don’t depend on their position to influence the actions of others.

- 3 **They focus on results.** The hidden leader maintains a wide perspective and acts with independent initiative. They use the end to define the means, which can mean working outside of strict processes to achieve

results. They aim for their goals and feel responsible and accountable for achieving them.

- 4 **They remain customer purposed.** This is different than customer service—it’s an awareness of how an action in a specific job affects the customer. It’s a big-picture focus and having a deep understanding of the customer value promised by the company. **PPB**

Michelle M. Smith, CPIM, CRP, is vice president, marketing at supplier O.C. Tanner. She has been named as one of the Ten Best and Brightest Women in the incentive industry, a Change Maker, Top Idea Maven and President’s Award winner, and is a highly accomplished international speaker, author and strategist on performance improvement. A respected authority on leadership, talent and employee engagement, she’s a trusted advisor to many of the world’s most successful organizations and the governments of the United Kingdom and the United States. Smith was the founder and chair of the editorial board for Return on Performance magazine, and has been featured on Fox Television and the BBC, and in Fortune, Business Week and Inc. She contributed to the books Bull Market, Contented Cows Still Give Better Milk and Social Media Isn’t Social. Connect with her via LinkedIn or Twitter

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OR BE WISHING YOU WERE.”

Nicole McNamee
Sales Professional since 2014

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PPAI #267078



ON THE ROAD AGAIN

Ten of the best multi-line reps open up about what it's like inside their businesses.

by Tina Berres Filipski

Being a multi-line rep is not a job for just *anybody*.

Multi-line reps spend countless nights away from home. They must recall and explain details on dozens of products within multiple lines. They are constantly feeding suppliers information in an effort to improve the company's business processes and sales but have little control over the companies they represent and the business decisions made. Their job is to make sure both suppliers and distributors are happy. They start every month with no guarantee of income—but recognize that the opportunity to expand their income is almost limitless.

They are exceptional communicators, and they must be highly organized and self-motivated because the work they do is critical to supplier sales.

This is the bold and brave life of a promotional products multi-line rep. And most of them would not have it any other way.

In the following profiles, you'll meet this year's *PPB* Best Multi-Line Reps—10 individuals nominated by their suppliers and distributor customers for their superb performance, and selected by *PPB* in our annual tribute to these hard-working souls who keep the gears of the industry moving perfectly in sync.

WALTER BRZYSKI



Sales Liaison / Team WalterB

Walter Brzyski, or WalterB as his friends call him, got his first taste of the promotional products industry while attending college—he worked part-time packing orders and stacking shelves at one of the industry’s top suppliers. After graduation, it was an easy choice. He went to work for the company, moving up through the ranks to national sales manager before launching his own rep company in Lincroft, New Jersey, in 2003. Today, with 28 years in the industry under his belt, he looks back on his decisions and is sure he got it right.

Being an entrepreneur has its ups and downs but his favorite part of the job is running his rep agency and implementing all the aspects of sales, marketing and customer support. The most difficult part? “Having the time to run a business and implement strategies when I’m constantly in the field selling,” he says. Still, Brzyski has made it work—and has turned many clients into fans in the process.

Among those fans is nominator Bill Alonge, MAS, marketing manager at distributor On Target Impressions, LLC, who is impressed with how quickly and seamlessly Brzyski makes things happen for his clients. Alonge met Brzyski at a trade show and talked to him about one of his clients. “Walter said, ‘Send me their logo; I’ll make up samples for you.’ The samples sold the job,” recalls Alonge. “He remembers my clients from show to show and suggests something for them by mentioning them each time I see him.”

Nominator Lisa Pine, VP of sales and marketing at distributor Axis Promotions, Inc., praises Brzyski’s ability to make every client feel important. “He’s present. He knows his audience. He’s available. He knows the product and how to support creative projects,” she explains. “He cares, offers incentives and has a team behind him and a well-rounded product line.” Her teammate and fellow nominator Sandy Poster, sales executive at Axis, says Brzyski also offers ease of contact, quick responses and understands the importance of free samples and spec samples to get orders.”



One On One With Walter Brzyski

On the exclusiveness of his lines: I feel you need a portfolio of lines to keep your business afloat, have resources to invest in your business and maintain or increase momentum year after year. Having lines with products that are mutually exclusive of one another is challenging as lines often diversify into other overlapping segments, so you must look at the fundamentals of what that line developed, brought to market and is known for, such as apparel, writing instruments, etc.

On giving equal attention to all lines he reps: With top industry promotional suppliers that have several/multiple lines, you must “read” your clients to see where the selling opportunities lie, formulate a presentation to satisfy those needs, secure the line/client connection and dovetail other aspects of the lines once the initial contact has been established.

On how multi-line reps can stay relevant in a changing industry: Top distributors prefer to see a multi-line rep, as they offer more than one category of product, more new products (not just from one vendor but from several) and new ideas from new companies. MLRs are the first line of introduction for new firms entering the market with fresh ideas and products. Many suppliers start with MLRs, then hire factory reps once the volume grows.

However, they often go back to MLRs after they review the ROI, especially when they look at sales comparing the MLR to a factory rep. With MLRs, they can reap the sales performance benefits while reducing their cost per client.

On what motivates him: Being commission-based (versus salary-based) we “eat what we kill,” so if you don’t sell, you don’t eat. That’s a huge motivator to get out there and seize every opportunity available, make every call, return every email and service every account. It’s not only how we take care of our families, but we have the overhead of covering all our costs: lodging, health insurance, support staff, gas, tolls, meals, shows, etc.

On how distributors can help him serve them better: Choose the ‘uncola.’ Since we’re all creatures of habit (myself included), many of us just go with what we know. So even though I may have the greatest and newest widget or service since sliced bread, when my clients go back to their desks and receive a widget request, they simply default to their habitual widget since it’s what they know. Give your MLR the chance to make it easy to break this habit, which may increase your profit, enable you to offer newer products and ideas, and expand your product assortment. A three-second email is all it takes.



DALE JOHNSON CORNELL

Owner / Dale B. Johnson (DBJ) Associates

When Dale Johnson Cornell answered a help-wanted ad in *The Boston Globe* for a New England territory manager, she had no idea that she was breaking new ground. (“The ad had the word ‘advertising’ in it so I thought it would be right up my alley,” says the former broadcast advertising sales pro.) But that move into the ad specialty division of Sheaffer Eaton won her the distinction of being the first woman hired in the division and, in 1985, she became the first female multi-line rep in the promotional products industry when she opened her own rep firm. Today, from her home base halfway between Boston and Cape Cod, Massachusetts, she covers a territory from Maine to Washington, D.C., traveling approximately 35,000 miles every year.

Her more than 30 years of expertise in the field, and a solid reputation based on performance, give her suppliers a much-needed boost of reassurance and peace of mind.

That experience is most often appreciated when problems arise. Nominator Tami Wainscott, MAS, national sales manager at supplier The Allen Company, recalls this example. “There had been an order gone awry and Dale reworked her entire sales week to fly to the distributor’s warehouse and personally inspect the products. Due to Dale’s quick action and proactive resolution, we were able to immediately make it right for one of our top distributors, who in turn created a win for their top client. We have had multiple reorders ever since.”

She also says The Allen Company personally travels with its multi-line sales representatives to see what they are up against out in the field. “I have never experienced any negativity in working with Dale and Cheryl [Wainscott also nominated Cheryl Lickteig at DBJ Associates—see page 48] in our travels together. Their schedules can be truly hectic at times, with back-to-

back trade shows, sales calls, etc., but these professional women go at it from sun up ’til sundown without hesitation, because they feel it in their bones—they love this industry. They are passionate about the opportunities that come their way daily in helping our promotional professionals find solutions to their clients’ needs and helping them grow their business.”

Nominator Lisa Antinelli, vice president at supplier Diamond Cosmetics, Inc., says Johnson Cornell contacted her company asking to represent it because of its unique, niche product line. “Her input is invaluable as she has her hand on the pulse of the market and assists us in creating new products by bringing us new ideas and insight,” adds Antinelli, who also nominated DBJ Associates rep Cheryl Lickteig. “Dale and Cheryl are true professionals. They are our biggest and best advocates, and we would not be doing the amount of business we do without them.”

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Dale Johnson Cornell

On the part of the role she likes best: I totally enjoy the diversity of working with multiple suppliers and many creative distributors. Every meeting and trade show is open to new opportunities. If one product line does not fit well into a customer’s program, I’m sure we’ll find something from one of the other product lines. I love being a very organized and self-motivated individual.

On managing the challenges: She says asking family and friends to coordinate their schedules around hers is difficult, as is scheduling and coordinating appointments with distributors, plus the constant follow-up with both suppliers and distributors. “And in-between, the frustration of not being able to work while driving,” she adds.

On maintaining the exclusivity of her lines: As a multi-line rep it is very important to represent product lines that do not compete in a single category. Representing non-competing suppliers allows me to present multiple ideas in a short period of time. As a multi-line sales

representative, my job is to educate, and help market and increase sales for each company I represent.

On how reps can remain relevant in a changing industry: Multi-line reps are not always affected by the mergers and acquisitions in our industry unless there is a conflict with the product category. It is often a win-win situation for all. Many of these supplier companies recognize and appreciate the relationship the multi-line rep has with the distributor firms. In order to remain relevant in today’s industry, a multi-line rep must be service-oriented as well as sales-oriented. Understanding and working with the challenges of a changing and growing market place is essential.

On how distributors can help her serve them better: I would love to have more distributors ask for assistance with their projects. For example, ask for ideas, creative applications of existing products and assistance in acquiring unique products through the companies I represent.

MATT CARTER



Territory Manager / Flanagan And Associates

Matt Carter grew up with unique exposure to the world of promotional products. As a child, he often helped his father, who owned a distributorship, package products for clients. “I can recall helping him fulfill projects over the weekend when I was a child,” he says. “He would have all the items spread out in the kitchen and we would package them up like an assembly line.”

With this hands-on perspective, it was only natural that, after college, he joined his father in the family business. “It’s all I’ve ever known,” says Carter. From there, he met Tom Flanagan and eventually moved to the supplier side of the industry as a multi-line rep.

“Working for Tom Flanagan [who was named a *PPB* Best Multi-Line Rep in 2014] and the suppliers we represent is something I am grateful for every single day,” says Carter, who covers Alabama and Georgia from his home base in Atlanta. “We are so fortunate to represent the supplier leaders in their respective categories and the teams at each of those companies are very special.”

He says working in this industry is also extremely rewarding. “It’s a wonderful feeling when a customer calls, texts or emails to let us know that our ideas helped secure the order,” he says. “To see an order start as an idea or a conversation, and move through the process to the end result, is what makes our jobs so much fun. I say ‘our’ because my inside sales teams are second to none. Their dedication, professionalism

and attention to detail provide the support I need to best serve my customers. It truly is a team effort.”

His distributor clients also value the strong commitment to teamwork he brings to their relationships. “Matt just does an excellent job,” says client and nominator Chris Clark, CAS, managing director at distributor Radius Marketing Solutions. “He’s very responsive; he returns calls and responds to emails quickly. He gets involved whenever there’s an issue with an order. He does an excellent job of communicating to us any current promotions or deals. He visits regularly and leaves behind plenty of samples and sales tools. He does what he says he’ll do. He’s also served on the Georgia Area Promotional Products Professionals (GAPPP) board of directors and he advocates for GAPPP on his sales calls.”

Clark jokes, “His only downfall is that he’s an Ole Miss alum, but thankfully his daughter is going to [the University of] Georgia so he gets a pass there.”

Clark is also impressed with the way Carter exceeds his expectations. “We had an opportunity to sponsor the name badges and lanyards for one of our clients’ annual conventions,” Clark recalls. “We called Matt to find out what our self-promo pricing would be. He asked what we were doing and then paid for the order for us. He didn’t have to do that—we didn’t ask him to—but he did and that was a good demonstration of going the extra mile for us.”

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Matt Carter

On the challenges of being a multi-line rep: Not surprisingly, Carter cites the delicate balance of work and family life. “We all work long hours, travel frequently and are always ‘on call’ via phone and email. It is a blessing to be busy, though, so I do my best to balance it all.”

On the exclusiveness of his lines: As multi-line reps, we try to look for suppliers that focus on specific products that don’t overlap with our other suppliers. Sometimes it’s almost impossible to avoid a little overlap. However, our suppliers hired us for a reason and know we have their best interests at heart. Flanagan and Associates has the longest tenure with our suppliers of any other multi-line rep group in our territory. Our reputation is extremely important and our bond between us and our suppliers is very strong. They are family. We try to give all our suppliers equal time by scheduling our meetings and seminars a bit longer than most because we have so many solutions and case histories to share with our distributors.



MLR Hiring Checklist

If you are thinking about hiring a multi-line rep to service your supplier company, consider these tips:

On how reps can remain relevant in a changing industry:

Company acquisitions are making our job a little bit harder in regard to the fact that all suppliers want to grow in this industry and an acquisition sometimes can create somewhat of an overlap of the products we represent per supplier. At the end of the day, distributors go to specific suppliers for specific items that they manufacture and decorate better than the other supplier. That won't change, unless the supplier goes all in and buys the same high-tech machinery to either produce a better product or be able to decorate it better. It definitely can be challenging. Thank goodness our loyal distributors really try to sell the lines we represent because they know we give them multiple suggestions and solutions for each project.

On how distributors can help him serve them better:

Reach out and ask for help more often. I try to be as proactive as I can by asking questions during my office visits and asking for artwork so that I can forward it to appropriate suppliers for virtual samples. These lead to specs, and specs typically result in orders. It's all about getting the ball rolling—as we all know, time can kill deals.

- ✔ Plan to provide ongoing training on products and production on all lines.
- ✔ Keep reps in the loop whenever there are challenges with inventory, product quality, customer service, etc., so they can be prepared when meeting with distributors.
- ✔ The sales agreement must include specifics about the territory covered, a description of job responsibilities for both parties, and clearly defined sales expectations, compensation, and show and sample budgets. If there are house accounts, be clear about them. Also, include a termination notice of, ideally, 30 days in the first year and 60 days in the second and subsequent years on orders placed.
- ✔ Give your multi-line rep the authority to make sales decisions.
- ✔ Recognize that the rep wants to be an integral part of your company.
- ✔ Include reps in industry trade shows and distributor events.
- ✔ Don't expect skyrocketing sales increases in the first six months—good things take time.
- ✔ Ask the rep for a business plan that clearly maps out the rep's strategy.
- ✔ Find a rep who is responsive. Don't pinch pennies to lose dollars.
- ✔ Don't ask for call reports. If these are needed, consider a full-time factory rep instead.
- ✔ Pay the multi-line rep for all orders that come in from the states he or she covers including national accounts if they have offices in that territory.
- ✔ To find good reps, query distributors in that territory. Ask which multi-line reps are working the territory and who they would recommend.
- ✔ Be respectful and thoughtful about when and how often you travel with a multi-line rep. One or two trips per year may be sufficient.
- ✔ Be careful about taking multi-line reps off the road for long sales meetings. Not making calls costs them money.



CHERYL LICKTEIG

Account Manager / Dale B. Johnson (DBJ) Associates

Cheryl Lickteig first fell in love with promotional products while managing a high-tech company's marketing group. "I occasionally purchased promotional products," she says. "My promo distributor rep introduced me to so many interesting products that could be used to promote our brand and reward our customers that I was intrigued and excited about the possibilities in this industry." She later went to work as an account manager for a supplier and then a distributor before joining Dale Johnson Cornell at DBJ Associates.

The job checked all the boxes for Lickteig, who has since spent the past 25 years helping her clients solve their problems. "I like the opportunity to work with my distributors to solve their customers' challenges by offering a variety of products and decorating solutions," says Lickteig, who is based in Groton, Massachusetts, and covers New England and Upstate New York. "I also enjoy working with such diverse distributor companies that range in size, organization and business approach."

Among those who nominated Lickteig is Sharon J. Walsh, president of distributor Sun

Specialties, Inc., who notes her rep's honesty and integrity, and her willingness to consistently go the extra mile. "She has driven to my office with samples for a rush presentation," says Walsh, "and supplied no-charge spec samples on a brand name line that does not usually offer that. It resulted in an order!" She was also impressed with the extra product education that resulted when Lickteig brought supplier company executives to some of Sun Specialties' meetings.

Nominator Tami Wainscott at The Allen Company, who nominated Lickteig along with DBJ principal Dale Johnson Cornell (see page 45), adds, "... your immediate sense of knowing you are working with and speaking to a class-act multi-line representative team is more than reassuring. It's peace of mind and that is what you will experience in working with Dale and Cheryl."



One On One With Cheryl Lickteig

On the difficulties of the job: Capturing the distributor's time and attention is a huge challenge. Our distributors are extremely busy trying to service their customers, stay ahead of their competition and compete with the internet. Hopefully they learn to value our help and support.

On maintaining exclusivity of product lines: It has become more difficult to have lines that are focused only on one product category. We have worked to maintain suppliers who have one major category so we can give them strong product and line recognition. We educate our distributors on how each of our suppliers offers the best products to fill their needs for specific opportunities.

On keeping multi-line reps relevant: We work with both our distributors and suppliers to make sure we are on top of current promotional product and retail business trends. Reading industry updates, attending educational opportunities and checking the competition are important as well.

On how distributors can help her serve them better: We are partners working to gain more business—so put us to work.



STEVE DONLIN

Owner / Team Donlin

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Steve Donlin

On maintaining the exclusivity of his lines: I find suppliers who manufacture or have single-mindedness in one category because they are experts at one thing. They aren't going to add powerbanks to a glove line. It really is about finding suppliers who are very focused.

On giving equal attention to all lines: I'm a heavy project-based guy. If someone sends me artwork and says there are 1,000 employees, I'll take that artwork and route it to all my suppliers and get them involved. Then, I'll come back to that distributor with vinyl graphics for a trade show, recognition products and a bunch of different things that they've ever thought about showing their client. Over the years, distributors have learned to lean on me. They may not have time to [think through all the creative]—they'll say, "Let's throw this to the multi-line rep." You can 'wow' them with ideas they've never thought of before.

On how reps can remain relevant in a changing industry: We've all had to change over the years. I've lost more lines to acquisitions than to anything else. Again, I go back to working with suppliers who are experts in categories—they might be smaller suppliers who need help growing their business. You need to be looking out for the next company that needs help. Be willing to understand the distributor salesperson and the clients. Build a level of trust. If a distributor trusts you to handle artwork and work on projects, then that would keep you relevant. Building those relationships is something that no acquisition can ever take away.

During his senior year of college, Steve Donlin jumped at a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to play football for leagues in Italy and England. He says a year immersed in the sport was a great experience, but he knew his future was back home in the promotional products industry. After all, it was the family business. Donlin had grown up working summers with his father, Dick Donlin, who opened a multi-line rep firm in 1982. "Dad hired me when I got back for \$500 a month and sent me to parts of the Midwest that most people would never dare to go to," he says with a chuckle. "He handed me samples and catalogs and told me to get out there and call on people." Twenty-six years later Donlin is running the company based in Chanhassen, Minnesota.

What keeps him coming back every day is the enthusiasm he's able to bring to his distributor clients. "When you are presenting products and ideas to distributor salespeople and they light up as they understand what you are presenting and where it applies, it's the coolest thing in the world," he says. "That's what I enjoy doing the most—bringing new and different ideas to people."

It's evident that his clients feel the same way about Donlin—four nominated him for this year's recognition. Among them is Dan Livengood, CAS, VP of marketing and business development at 2020 Brand Solutions, who appreciates Donlin's genuine interest in the business. "Steve has always been responsive to whatever my or my colleagues' needs are," he says. "Steve is a relationship person who not only values the business side when interacting but, most importantly, the human side. He's insistent in connecting the dots and making introductions to strengthen relationships inside and outside of the industry. In short, Steve cares about the industry, the people and making sure everyone has a voice, a place and a chance to prosper."

Other nominators are Mike McElligott, president of MEM Advertising Co.; H.A. Gross, sales manager at Plaza Printers; and Paul Hohenwald, owner of Spartan Promotional Group. "Donlin is always on top of his game," says Hohenwald. "Out of all the multi-line reps out there I feel like a partner with him, not just a sales number." McElligott says he also appreciates the training Donlin provides on his lines. "It's very educational and packed with samples and specific ideas." Gross agrees adding, "Steve shows me how to sell the lines and products that he represents. I liked his approach from the beginning. I also like the way he thinks of me and my company when he talking to the suppliers he works with—that makes me feel valuable."



LORI EATON

Owner / lorieaton.com

“Lori is as creative as she is supportive,” says client and nominator Rachael Wahlgreen at Boundless Network. “She’s always proactive and looking for ways to better serve our account—and you would think that each line is her only one.”

That personal touch, honed through years of customer relations experience in the wholesale apparel business and then within the promotional products industry since 2001, is what attracts and keeps her clients happy. From her home base in Trophy Club, Texas (located in the Dallas-Fort Worth area), she covers the state as well as Oklahoma for several apparel and hard goods lines and racks up more than 35,000 miles every year to call on customers.

Eaton started her career with a company that developed and produced private-label apparel for distribution primarily to middle-tier retailers. The company, seeing a decline in their overseas sourcing business due to acquisitions, moved into the promotional space as an alternate outlet for their golf shirts. “I got the job of calling on promotional products distributors

directly and immediately fell in love with the customers,” she says, adding that she didn’t know at the time how perfect a match the job was for her skill set. “I spent years honing the craft of communicating about all aspects of developing product with customers and the overseas factories.”

That dependable and clear communication is one characteristic that won over client and nominator Julie James, corporate branding rep at HALO Branded Solutions. “Lori is top-notch in customer service and follow-through. You can take her word to the bank,” she says. “Lori truly cares about her customers and will go out of her way to get what we need—after hours, weekends, you name it. She offers suggestions too.”

James says she often asks Eaton for customer ideas—and gets plenty, plus virtual proofs. “Lori works hard to give us good, quality offers that have a good value for potential sales, and she will even go to the client with me if needed to help close a deal. She’s friendly, professional, easy to work with and I think she rocks!”



One On One With Lori Eaton

On what she likes most about being a multi-line rep: Generally, I like getting to help people; specifically, I like the variety of solutions and resources I have when my customers have a need.

On the challenges: There is the two-pronged challenge of keeping my sample line pristine, fresh and up to date with current specials and removing out of stocks, and keeping all the printed materials organized and accessible. There are also the little nuances to each supplier’s often-changing go-to-market strategy that can also take time to master. This has also made me very empathetic to the distributors’ hardships and, I think, made me understand what I need to do to keep things simple. I know that my suppliers hear from me a lot about how to improve our customers’

experiences. I’m very fortunate to work with suppliers who are open to feedback and really want to improve the customer experience.

On how she manages her lines: I have lines that have products in the same category but they fit a different customer profile (either by price or design) and I tailor my presentations or product solutions to the audience. For the most part, my meetings will cover each supplier’s best and trending best sellers, as well as that supplier’s strengths. I do not think the information I provide should only be about product.

On the future of multi-line reps: To remain relevant, I utilize my vantage point to observe market trends, and I have positioned myself as a consultant. The lines I represent offer alternative

solutions to the mainstream, and I tend to attract and be attracted to customers who are also trying to be different and/or ahead of the curve. I have also hired my son, Mike, a Millennial, to help me and my clients with ideas to reach a younger audience.

On how her customers can help her serve them better: Let me assist you with product ideas. This is my favorite part of my job and too often, the only time when I get to develop case history experience. Also, please let me know about problems you have with products or procedures. Please don’t assume someone from the factory told me about the problem you had or are having. I may be able to see a solution that the people in the middle of the problem don’t see, or I may at least be able to address it so it doesn’t happen again to you or someone else.



JAMIE HUDSON

Owner / Hudson Marketing

In 2001 Jamie Hudson took the plunge into the promotional products industry and became a multi-line rep after many years as a sales rep and district manager for Energizer Battery Company. He owes the decision to the recommendation of his good friend and fellow multi-line rep Bill McDonald, principal of the McDonald Terry Group in Athens, Georgia. McDonald was right; the industry has been a great fit for Hudson, who enjoys representing several lines with different products and working with multiple suppliers.

Among the lines Hudson represents is supplier LarLu. In the three years he's repped the company, it has shown significant sales growth, a trend his nominator Joe Durand, LarLu senior vice president of sales, attributes in part to Hudson's hard work. "I believe his best asset is in the number of sales calls he makes," says Durand. "He is always in some city within his region making calls. This is a tough business because each distributor salesperson is like an individual company; being face-to-face within distributor offices is key to for multi-line reps for being in the right place at the right time."

Durand also praises Hudson's quick follow-up on emails and phone calls—a key to winning the business—and his natural ability for putting others at ease. "He always has a way of making people feel comfortable around him," adds Durand. "He is very approachable for distributor salespeople and always shows respect."

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Jamie Hudson

On the difficulties multi-line reps face: We have no control over how long we represent a line—even if our sales are up they sometime make a change.

On how reps can remain relevant: We have to be able to adjust as this business changes year to year. Reps are very important because distributors need to see the quality of the product and new ideas that are coming into the market. Also, if a distributor has an issue, multi-line reps can help them out. It is all about relationships.

On how distributors can help him serve them better: They should always send us artwork for virtual and/or spec samples. Those two things really help them close the deal. Also, they should try to give multi-line reps their full attention during presentations so they don't miss any new ideas or products.

10 Questions Suppliers Should Ask When Hiring MLRs:

- 1 How many lines do you currently represent?
- 2 Do you have any competing product lines?
- 3 What can you do for us and what are your expectations for my product line?
- 4 Do our territories match up geographically?
- 5 How many lines have you lost in the past five years and why did that happen?
- 6 Who are your 10 biggest clients and can I speak with them about you?
- 7 What will you need from us to do your best job?
- 8 How knowledgeable are you about the promotional products supplier arena?
- 9 Have you worked for a factory directly? In sales? Management? Production?
- 10 How are you reaching out to distributor clients other than through personal visits? (For example, social media, digital marketing, websites.)

SETH FRIEDMAN



Owner / Friedman's Corporate Apparel

After managing a college bookstore and spending 11 years as a multi-line rep in the golf, resort and college bookstore industries, Seth Friedman was offered a job with supplier Cutter and Buck when it formed a promotional products division in 1996.

"I took a chance changing markets with a company that had no exposure in this industry," he explains. "Twenty-one years later it was the best move I ever made. This is a wonderful industry."

From his home base in Chalfont, Pennsylvania, he reps Cutter and Buck, Ahead and Logomark in Pennsylvania, New Jersey, Delaware, Maryland, Washington, D.C., and Virginia, logging about 38,000 miles every year.

Not only does Friedman enjoy working in the promotional products industry, he also likes being an entrepreneur and working with other entrepreneurs. "I love to travel and not being tied down to an office," he says. "No day is ever the same and waking up at the beginning of each month with no income is highly motivating."

One of his nominators, Kevin Mullaney, partner and vice president at distributor Brandito, explains why he calls Friedman an outstanding rep. "I've always made time for Seth because he always makes time for me," says Mullaney. "If I reach out to him via text, phone or email, he is extremely responsive, which is extremely important to me." He also notes that Friedman reps a number of different lines, and

doesn't push any of them. "Instead, he starts with 'What's up, how are things going?' He is fantastic at listening, asking the right questions, and then listening more. He takes all these notes in his head, and then when he starts walking you through his line, he hits on every pain point you expressed."

Mullaney says when he calls Friedman, he is always willing to move mountains for him and his team. "Just recently he worked up a quote on back-ordered inventory to meet my end-of-year budget, helping to close a \$30,000 order. Seth just gets this industry and is pretty much a part of the Brandito team."

Nominator Andrea Coffman, account manager at McClung Companies, says Friedman is one of a handful of multi-line reps who consistently reaches out to provide samples, catalogs, ideas and suggestions to grow sales. "He has a fun sense of humor, is respectful and professional," she says, "and he has always stood out with my clients who have met him at end-user shows and events."

Nominator Bob Lowy, branch manager at Proforma Spectrum Graphics, adds, "Just in the past month and as recently as today, whenever I've asked Seth for most anything—whether to provide a clear path to a problem at the home office, provide a creative selling solution or even lend a hand in a client visit—Seth always goes the extra mile to provide customer and sales support."

ONE ON ONE

One On One With Seth Friedman

On the challenges multi-line reps face: Being away from my home and family is the most difficult thing. Changes in sales management at my lines from time to time have been very challenging. Traveling in lousy weather to meet with clients is no fun at all. The absolute biggest challenge currently is getting enough time with your clients to be effective for them and your suppliers.

On giving equal time to all of his lines: Equal attention is relatively easy, as your clients look at you as being a resource, rather than a rep for a particular company. I help them find solutions for their clients across a very broad spectrum of products, categories and companies. I like to equate it to being a "lending library" of experience and solutions.

On how distributors can help him serve them better: Tell us what your expectations are up front, and how you see us fitting in. Let us know if we are doing a good job and, if we aren't, tell us how we can better serve your team's needs. Realize that we truly are entrepreneurs just like you.



GREG JACKSON

Founding Partner / Northwest Reps

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Greg Jackson

On what's most difficult about being a rep: Not making the cut with suppliers. We are huge team players; we like being part of the team and when the coach/supplier decides to cut us, it hurts, not just monetarily but to the core. It's like we're not adding enough value to make the team.

On exclusivity and giving equal attention to each line: We try not to overlap but it happens. Most of our lines specialize in one category but when you have a great line like Starline, it's hard not to overlap. They hit multiple categories so there's bound to be an overlap here or there. Equal attention, that's the great part about being a multi-line rep. We have some awesome lines, and because of that we can book appointments when others can't. We try to get in at least two appointments minimum per season and feature half of our suppliers at each presentation. We always take our line card and a smattering of the other line samples with us to remind distributors of what we have.

On multi-line reps remaining relevant: If your line is affected by a supplier's acquisition, you have to remain positive; there will always be acquisitions. You have to continue to add value to the supplier and value to the distributor. The multi-line is the buffer between the two, the advocate for both.

On how distributors can help him serve them better: There are many things we can do to help them, they just have to ask.

There was a time when Greg Jackson made his living as a bartender and Santa Monica lifeguard. In 1983, he started repping a line of recreational marine products. Life was good. But it got even better in 1990 when one of his marine lines came out with a bomber jacket; it opened an enormous new sales area for Jackson.

"I sold a mast to a distributor who was having a custom sail boat built," he says. "He saw the bomber jacket, asked how much, and said he had a 100-piece opportunity; did I have a sample? My reply was, 'A 100-piece opportunity? I only have this one, take it!' His name was Greg Murdock and we sold about \$30,000 through him that first year. I was hooked."

What's kept him motivated in the years since is the ability to pick the suppliers he wants to work with and to be more than a one-product source for his distributors. Today, from its home base in Seattle, Northwest Reps consists of three full-time reps who cover Washington, Oregon and Idaho. "We like to think we are different," says Jackson. "We give it our all every time. And I include our suppliers as part of our team. We can't do it without them—and we don't think they can do it as well without us."

"Greg Jackson and his team are always thinking of creative ways to separate his lines from their industry counterparts," says nominator Teddy Scott, vice president, sales at supplier AZX Sport. "Jackson is always on the road making sure his lines stay front of mind with distributors in the area and he does whatever it takes to ensure our customers are pleased with their orders even if that means delivering orders himself. Jackson is a fantastic partner and hands down one of the best reps in the business." Among the unique features Jackson brings to his customers are good-quality videos that showcase new product ideas for all of his lines, says Scott, and the weekly barbecues held at the company office/showroom for top distributors. "Sometimes a boat ride on the lake is also part of the event."

DANIEL SACHS



Owner / West Coast Branded Solutions

Fresh with a marketing degree from California State University-Chico, Daniel Sachs was eager to find a job where he could apply that education and, even more importantly, gain additional knowledge and contacts upon which he could build a strong and sustainable career.

He got his first break at supplier Castelli Diaries where he spent two years as a sales executive right out of college, and then at supplier Prime Resources/VisionUSA/Graphic Vinyl where he was senior regional sales manager for almost four years. Those experiences proved the right mix to take the next leap.

In 2003 he launched Global Product Source LLC, a multi-line rep agency, which he still operates as West Coast Branded Solutions, with a team of four marketing specialists.

Over the past 10 years, Sachs has established a solid reputation among the suppliers he represents and distributor clients alike. One of his eight nominators, Les Dorfman, executive vice president at supplier High Caliber Line, says, "I have been working with multi-line reps for close to 30 years and I have never met a MLR who treats each line like he is a factory rep. Daniel follows up on everything from a quote to once it becomes an order. He's a great communicator as well as a good listener. He's always thinking out of the box and is always selling."

Nominator Craig Hughes at distributor Geiger likes the way Sachs handles preparation on the front end. "He always comes to our meetings with a plan and totally prepared with all materials and samples to make a great presentation," he says.

Nominator Jim Conway at distributor American Solutions For Business is keen on Sachs's strong follow-up skills. "Daniel is the best at communication back to his factories with whatever we discuss after a meeting. If we asked for samples or marketing materials, he sends communication the same or next day to his factories." That way, he says, when the samples arrive, what they discussed is still fresh on their minds regarding the product and the end-user solution.

ONE
ON
ONE

One On One With Daniel Sachs

On the difficulties he faces as a rep: Each supplier handles our communication and needs differently, making it challenging at times. Having strong communication is a must have.

On maintaining exclusivity of his lines: We try to minimize the amount of like product categories, but there are some categories where it's almost impossible to do so. We've done a good job of partnering with suppliers that are leaders in their category—who own their market. Our presentation is less about product, and more about telling a story. We give distributors a reason to partner with us.

On how industry acquisitions are affecting the future of multi-line reps: For us, our suppliers have been the ones acquiring companies, so it's been a positive thing. Acquisitions give us more tools in our tool chest, and always turn into increased sales. We remain relevant by watching retail and industry trends, and capitalizing on those trends.


On how his clients can help him do a better job: Pay attention to what we say, as we have knowledge that can directly affect distributors' sales growth. We are the eyes and ears in the industry, having access to both suppliers and distributor trends—we know what's hot, and what's not. **PPB**

Tina Berres Filipski is editor of PPB.

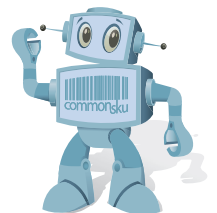
The Mark Of Excellence

Each of this year's recipients receives a custom, silver-plated lapel pin that identifies them as a *PPB* Best Multi-Line Rep. The pin is generously designed and donated by Harvey Mackler, MAS, president of PPAI supplier member Gempire/gwi (PPAI 113471).



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Flying High

Pioneer Balloon Company celebrates a cool century in business

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Why Email Marketing Outperforms

It's still the killer app to beat for promotional products businesses

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WATER COOLER

Waiting Is The Hardest Part

Tired of waiting for the phone to ring (or that email to pop up in your inbox)? Don't sweat it, says marketing expert Elliott Bell. You can, and should, follow up. As many times as it takes, in fact. The trick is knowing the right way to follow up on any conversation—be it an interview or sales pitch—to help you get your answer and get on with your life. Check out these five tips for fuss-free follow-up.

1 Stay Civil

Even when it's not personal, being made to wait on an answer feels personal. Rather than letting those feelings come out in your follow-up message, keep a friendly tone and use language that plainly shows you understand how busy your contact is, and you appreciate them giving their time to you.

2 Be Persistent, Not A Pest

Avoid the urge to check that pot of boiling water constantly. Waiting one week between contacts is a good rule of thumb where tighter deadlines aren't in play. After a couple emails are sent weekly, switch to one every two weeks until you get a response or a decision notice.

3 Cease Fire On Command

If those polite, well-timed follow-up messages aren't being reciprocated, take the direct approach. It's okay to ask

outright if you should stop contacting the other party. This way neither of you is experiencing wasted time and long stretches of awkward silence.

4 Try A Little Creativity

Whether your follow-up email contains a little useless trivia or some appreciated insights, adding something unique to the standard follow-up message can get you noticed.

5 Mix Things Up

Are you in the habit of leaving messages at the same time, on the same day? So are millions of others. It's good to be consistent, but automating those messages makes you seem like you're just hedging your bets. Try sending an email at 3:30 on a Friday afternoon, or at 7:45 on a Tuesday morning. You never know when you'll catch someone with a moment to spare.

AD-ITIVES

Advertising In Disguise

Native video follows in the footsteps of advertorials and product placement to reach online consumers in a subtler way.

If you ask the folks who created the classic print advertorial Guinness Guide to Oysters, they might tell you that the best form of advertising never looks like advertising. Rather than an in-your-face proclamation, native advertising seeks to blend in with its surroundings. Online campaigns often pop up in one of two forms: sponsored content and native video. It's the latter that is seeing the most potential for long-term success.

The numbers support the strategy: \$4 billion is spent on mobile video ads in the U.S., including native ads. For inspiration, look to Red Bull. This energy drink giant is considered a pioneer in modern native advertising, and its Chain Reaction video ad is a prime example.

Native video, like other forms of native advertising, is focused on providing relevant information to a specific audience that accesses a particular channel. Native video may play halfway through an article on a website, pop up in a Facebook news feed, or it may bookend streaming video content. What makes the video content native, and therefore subtle, is that the content fits the mold of the channel through which it is being delivered.

What's more, the content of native video isn't focused on overtly promoting a product or service, but rather showing how that product or service has been integrated into everyday situations. And when the consumer can more easily imagine living and interacting with a brand, they are more likely to engage.



FIVE MINUTES WITH Jennifer Wolanik

Marketing Expert at Quality Logo Products



A New Dimension

Looking for a way to kick its supplier awards up a notch, distributor Quality Logo Products in Chicago, Illinois, broke the mold with custom 3D-printed trophies. Jennifer Wolanik, QLP's resident marketing expert, explains the process of bringing the company's mascot to life as an award trophy.

PPB What prompted the idea to produce your company's supplier awards as 3D-printed statues?

Wolanik Our company culture is one of always pushing internal projects to the next level in terms of creativity, method and uniqueness. Our president, Bret Bonnet, and I had discussed the initial possibility of 3D printing with our trophies as the next step in the evolution of our annual Supplier Awards trophies.

We started with our in-house design team, producing several sketches based on a group brainstorm. This option allowed for our sketches to be almost limitless with our

The trophies for the Supplier Awards ranged from six inches to more than 10 inches tall.



creative team unleashing all possibilities for a new trophy design—not that we've ever made anything “standard” in the past.

PPB How many did you commission, and what was the time frame for production, from illustration to delivery?

Wolanik We commissioned a local printer to produce a total of 10 trophies, first through 10th place versions. The sizes ranged from six inches tall to more than 10 inches tall, which did restrict us a bit in finding a printer that could accommodate the largest size.

The time frame for having the final products delivered was about two weeks, from the initial sketch to receiving the 3D-rendered files to the final pick-up from the printer. The trophies were printed with white PLA (polylactic acid) plastic, which we then painted in-house in the final colors for each trophy placement.

PPB What has been your company's experience with 3D-printed promotional items, if any? How did you come to connect with your local printer?

Wolanik Prior to this experience, we had never commissioned or had direct experience with 3D-printed items. We do have some resident hobbyists who have experimented with this technology on different scales, but never to this level or size.

We connected to a local printer through 3DHubs.com, a website that helps connect over one billion people worldwide with 3D printer technology. This allowed us a personal experience and the opportunity to ask questions versus ordering through a standard, detached website.

PPB What did you learn about the process that you found fascinating and/or surprising?

Wolanik The most intriguing part, to us, was seeing our 2D design transform into a molded 3D shape in preparation for the printing. The printer did notify us after receiving the files that some of the elements extended past a 30-degree angle and would therefore need some support scaffolding, which would be removed after the print was finished.

The scaffolding is extra meshed structure extending from the base to the bottom of these angled parts. As the plastic cools down, the support scaffolding helps to hold the printed shape and stop any sag that may occur with larger shapes. It was such an unfamiliar process to us at the beginning but we honestly felt like pros learning about the lingo and process along the way.

PPB Do you have plans to offer 3D merchandise to clients in the future, or have you already begun offering any items?

Wolanik Though we do not currently offer 3D-branded merchandise to our customers,

Quality Logo Products commissioned trophies to represent first through 10th place for its annual Supplier Awards.

it's not entirely off the table. This was such an interesting process to go through from beginning to end that it opened up a new category

as a possible future offering. It's an intricate process with hundreds of options, so we would need to be able to optimize for a streamlined process in our e-commerce world before it is officially folded in as an option on our website.

PPB How can distributors incorporate or suggest 3D-printed promotional items for campaigns?

Wolanik If you have a client that is looking for promotional items that are customized on an individual level, then 3D printing is a viable option. With the vendors and designers readily available, anything is possible. The application of 3D-printed items really falls into the opportunity to personalize on a micro scale. It gives the space to think past creating a custom mold for a stress reliever. It's the ability to offer an intricate, personalized item on an individual scale, plus print in a wide variety of materials.

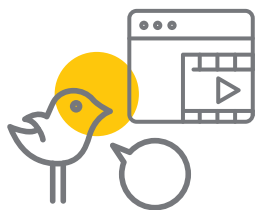


MARKET SHARE

Rise To The Challenge

Take note of these marketing challenges and how you can overcome them.

We're already four months into 2017, but it's not too late to bolster your marketing efforts for the year. Take stock of these four challenges and how you and your team can tackle them.



Diversify skill sets. Marketing decision makers can't afford to focus on a single silo—they, and their teams, must be able to craft sustainable strategies for digital and social media outreach, and business growth.

Put customers first. A growing preference to be courted by a brand, rather than be bombarded with “best-in-

class” rhetoric, is a hallmark of consumer behavior in 2017, according to PR and communications executive Manita Dosanjh. Leveraging social media to nurture customer relationships helps marketers mine data to help refine their strategies and



create a substantial cache of ideas for maintaining contact throughout the customer journey.



Learn to balance analytics with creativity. While obtaining and analyzing customer data is crucial to fine-tuning marketing efforts, Rich Honiball says the creative aspect of marketing shouldn't take a backseat. The award-

winning chief marketing officer of Navy Exchange says teams must keep the vein of creativity open to feed delivery channel selection as well as the crafting of the messages themselves.



Think mobile. Mobile experiences are the first stop on the road to B2C connection.

Marketing strategies that aren't built on a mobile-first foundation are destined to lose out on a large share of their target market. **PPB**



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Raise Your Defenses

Data safety starts with a security mindset.

by Lesley Fair

For businesses in the promotional products industry, the watchword is safety. But there's one product that can never be effectively "recalled"—sensitive account or employee information that ends up in the hands of hackers or fraudsters. The Federal Trade Commission has practical suggestions for companies of any size and in every sector about what they can do to help protect themselves from the risks of data theft.

Start with Security: A Guide for Business, a nuts-and-bolts brochure from the FTC, offers advice on raising your defenses. Share the publication and its accompanying videos with your staff, but if you're pressed for time, it boils down to these 10 steps:

1 Start with security. Your business needs to maintain certain sensitive information. But in an era of cyber threats and hack attacks, collecting confidential data "just because" isn't a sound business strategy. If you haven't recently evaluated the customer and employee data you ask for, think it through with 21st-century risks in mind. Hackers can't steal what you don't have. And remember that the best defense against data theft is a workforce trained to start with security.

2 Control access to data sensibly. Not everyone needs a backstage pass to all confidential data your company maintains—for example,

customers' financial information or employees' Social Security numbers. Limiting access on a "need to know" basis reduces the risks that an ill-intentioned insider could pose.

3 Require secure passwords and authentication. It's impossible to be 100-percent hacker-proof, but at a minimum, you can implement free or low-cost methods to make it harder for them to sneak onto your network. Insist that your employees and affiliates use strong passwords and defend against "dictionary attacks"—programs that systematically try to guess passwords—by locking people out after a reasonable number of unsuccessful access attempts.



4 Store sensitive personal information securely and protect it during transmission. Keep confidential information safe when you store it and when you send it elsewhere. Consider whether encryption is an appropriate option.

5 Segment your network and monitor who's trying to get in and out. Tools like firewalls can segment your network, thereby limiting access between computers on your network and between your computers and the internet. That can reduce the impact if a hacker makes it past your preliminary defenses. Another useful safeguard: intrusion detection and prevention tools to monitor who's trying to get into your network.

6 Secure remote access to your network. For members of the promotional products industry, business on the road is business as usual. But like a raincoat advertised as waterproof, the weaknesses in a company's security setup sometimes can show up at the seams. If you give employees, clients or service providers remote access to your network, protect your system by shoring up those entry points. Ensure that those security standards remain high when your staff members work from home, attend trade shows, or are out and about in the course of business.

7 Apply sound security practices when developing or introducing new products. Internet-connected

items are hot sellers in the promotional marketplace. But do the manufacturers you work with make it a practice to build security in from the start? Once a product has been distributed to thousands of consumers, it can be difficult to graft security on after the fact.

8 Make sure your service providers implement reasonable security measures. Keep a watchful eye on service providers. Spell out your security expectations in your contracts and monitor that they're meeting your requirements.

9 Keep your security current and address vulnerabilities that may arise. Security isn't a one-and-done box to check. Two ongoing tasks: Keep third-party software updated and patched, and move quickly to address credible security warnings.

10 Secure paper, physical media and devices. Maintain high security standards for devices, flash drives and plain old paper. With all the attention on network security, some crooks do business the old-fashioned way. In those cases, old-fashioned security methods—a locked file cabinet, a shredder by the copier or a clean desk at the end of the day—can help keep sensitive data secure.

The FTC's Business Center, at business.ftc.gov, has more tips for companies, including to-the-point publications to help train your staff on how to start with security. **PPB**

Lesley Fair is senior attorney in the Bureau of Consumer Protection at the Federal Trade Commission.



Flying High

Pioneer Balloon Company celebrates a cool century in business.

by Julie Richie

By the late 19th century, Ohio had become a bedrock of rubber production in the U.S., with Akron aptly nicknamed the “Rubber Capital of the World.” B.F. Goodrich Company, the Goodyear Tire and Rubber Company and Firestone Tire and Rubber company were just some of many large-scale rubber producers with area factories.

In 1917, Pioneer Rubber Company opened its doors in Willard, Ohio, about 70 miles west of Akron, and began manufacturing various rubber products including latex gloves and balloons. The company grew by investing in engineering teams to advance its technologies and procedures to maximize quality



The company's original factory in Willard, Ohio.

and production efficiency. In 1970, Sherwood Medical Products, interested in Pioneer's production of surgical and medical exam gloves, purchased Pioneer Rubber. But the balloon portion of the business was not in the new company's wheelhouse and in 1979, Betty and Ted Vlamis acquired that part of the company and its 85 employees.

The couple still owns Pioneer Balloon Company (PPAI 113823) and this year they are celebrating its centennial anniversary.

Today the company has over 1,000 associates worldwide. Headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, Pioneer Balloon produces and markets balloons in many configurations for both domestic and international

markets. Its primary printing and U.S. distribution facility is in El Dorado, Kansas, though the balloons are manufactured in several other locations.

"We produce approximately 1.5 billion balloons per year collectively in our Dallas, Texas; Ashland, Ohio; and Toronto, Canada, manufacturing facilities," says Mark Jenkins, MAS+, managing director, promotional markets. Jenkins, who was destined to join the balloon business after growing up in Ashland—which he says was the "balloon capital of the world" in the 1960s and 1970s—was happy to find his place at Pioneer Balloon.

"I work in the same office and building I walked into 30 years ago," says Jenkins, who served as chair of the 2014 PPAI Board of Directors. "That kind of longevity can only come from a sense

Pioneer Balloon celebrated its 100th year anniversary at The PPAI Expo 2017 with this impressive balloon "cake."



of ownership in the company, product, work and passion for the customers we serve."

He attributes reaching the centennial mark to the teams that have been assembled throughout Pioneer Balloon Company. "There is definitely a family atmosphere here that promotes and honors creativity, hard work and excellence. We have a large number of associates who have been part of the team and our success for decades," Jenkins adds.

Part of the reason Pioneer's employees enjoy being part of the team is the company's creative and empowering approach to people management, such as offering "flexible" job descriptions.

In a 2013 article in the *Wichita Business Journal*, Pioneer CEO Ted Vlamis said, "Where many companies have 'boxes' into which they try to fit an employee to perform a certain job, Pioneer Balloon takes talented employees and creates jobs that fit them. We want people to take ownership of what they're doing. By giving them that kind of latitude, we enable them to grow."

Pioneer Balloon has led the way in both retail/wholesale

The Microfoil balloon printing press is one of the many manufacturing technologies the company has created.

and custom print markets, says Jenkins.

"As leaders, we have been able to grow both our business and the marketplace for our products. We have been at the forefront of manufacturing technology and have, in fact, created and perfected many of the processes for manufacturing and printing balloons. As balloon industry pioneers, we have been able to drive our own success as well as the success of the product category. In promotional markets, we have changed the way distributors and clients look at balloons," he says.

No longer just a traditional giveaway, balloons are now used most successfully as a cost-effective signage solution.

"The large everyday orders that really drive our custom print business, for both Pioneer and our distributors, are used to sign events, places of business, in-store products and promotions. It's not as much about a keepsake promotional product. Multiple impressions for our medium are driven by a bold, attention-getting and very visible product

to the multitudes—or masses—each time balloons are inflated and displayed,” he says.

The company continues to perfect its product and processes. This year, it is touting a new Suprafoil™ material for its Qualatex Microfoil® balloons, which, when inflated with helium, float for 30 days, making them an even more cost-effective signage solution. The company has also added both indoor and outdoor products that help promote businesses and events in a big bold way, including flags, tents, table covers and indoor banner systems. “These are all designed to complement our core balloon product and provide a one-stop solution for our distributors,” adds Jenkins. “We will continue to expand that product offering, as well.”



Latex balloons in production.

Pioneer kicked off its year-long celebration at this year’s PPAI Expo in Las Vegas, but that was just the beginning. “We will have a large, more formal 100th anniversary event at our Wichita, Kansas, headquarters in September, along with a milestone planning meeting that will include our international

teams from across the globe,” he says. “Company-wide we are celebrating our history and accomplishments, but are also taking a fresh look forward to the next 100 years.” **PPB**

*Julie Richie is
associate editor for PPB.*



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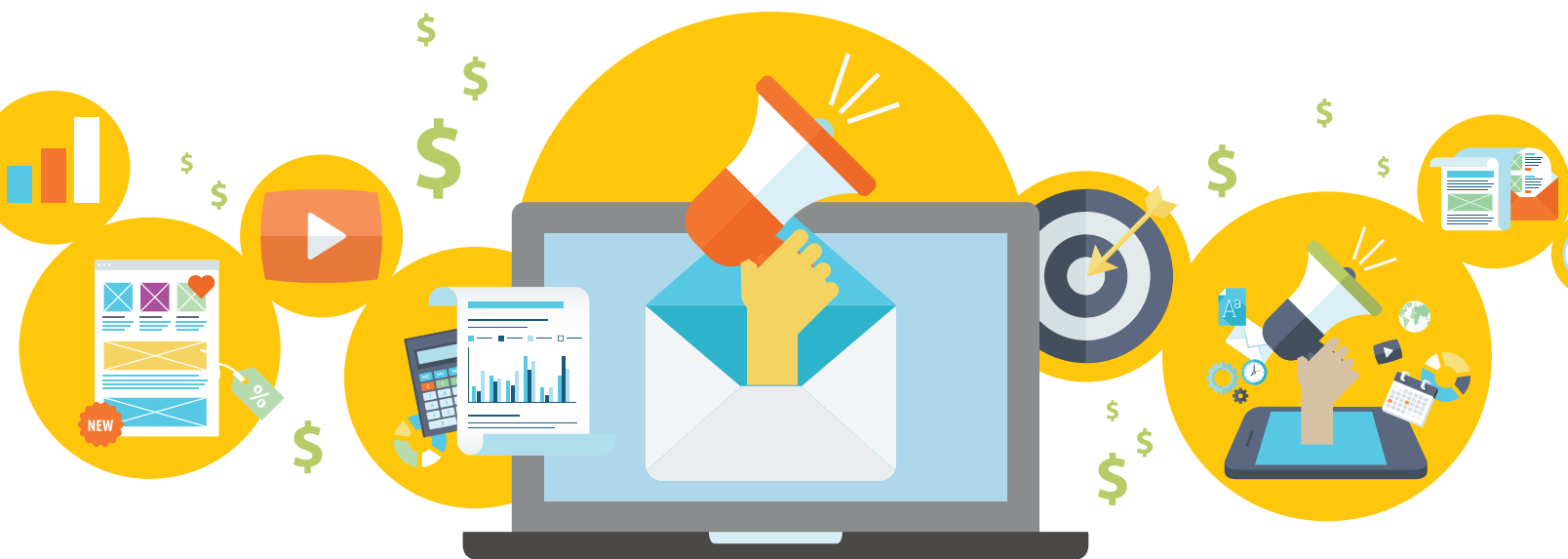
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Why Email Marketing Outperforms



It's still the killer app to beat for promotional products businesses.

by Joe Dysart

While many businesses today are guilty of chasing the latest digital marketing craze, good old email marketing still wins hands down when it comes to return on investment.

"Email is still the most direct way to get to most buyers, especially when it comes from a known, trusted source," says Gene Geiger, MAS+, CEO at distributor Geiger. "We use a weekly 'Click Marketing' program, where our customers get offers, and idea and trend information from our sales partners' email addresses.

"We can see open rates and resulting orders, allowing us to get a good feel for ROI," he adds. "It is vital to have a social media effort as well because that is where so many people

live. But it serves a different purpose, and the ROI is much less measurable."

Tiffany Price, vice president, marketing at distributor Boundless, says, "When it comes to email, it is still one of the strongest channels and can be a great way to drive more urgency and immediate benefit. It can also serve more of a direct sales role and push products and promotions, which can sometimes be frowned upon in social channels where content marketing is expected."

Indeed, a 2016 study released by marketing consulting firm Clutch found that email marketing still has the highest ROI of any marketing channel. Eighty-three percent of the companies Clutch surveyed said

they are using e-newsletters to make new sales, and more than 70 percent were using stand-alone emails and follow-up emails to nurture nibbles of interest from customers.

A similar study released last year by email marketing firm Campaign Monitor found that businesses can look forward to a \$38 return for every dollar they invest in email marketing.

And Henry Hyder-Smith, CEO at Adestra, an email marketing service provider and consultancy, confirmed the trend yet again in a study his company conducted with Econsultancy. Those researchers found that 73 percent of 1,100 marketers interviewed said email was their No. 1 marketing channel in terms of ROI.

Hyder-Smith says the study

points out that companies investing at least a fifth of their marketing budgets in email are eight times more likely to see sales attributable to it in excess of 50 percent.

The reason behind email's potency? Despite all the buzz over social media, 58 percent of internet users say the first thing they check on their device each morning is email, according to a study by Exact Target.

"Here's the truth: When you have someone's email, you're allowed to communicate with them when you want, how you want," says Derek Halpern, owner of Social Triggers, an online marketing consultancy.

Halpern says he conducted his own informal test recently, pitting email against Twitter. He sent out a post on Twitter with a link on which he wanted prospective customers to click. Then he sent out the same post and link via email.

The result? Fifty of his Twitter followers clicked on the link, while 1,200 of his email subscribers clicked on the same link. "Yes, my email list might be twice as large as my social media following, but it generated about 24 times more clicks," Halpern says. "That's the power of email."

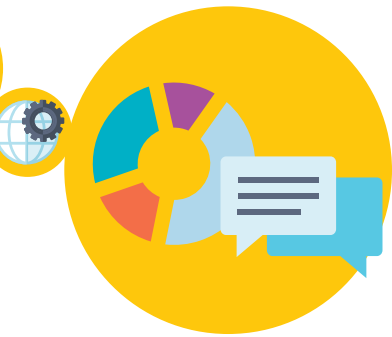
Also helping email's cause is the work IT departments have been doing to block spam from getting to company email boxes. Overall, those safeguards have significantly decreased the amount of spam businesses get as compared to just a few years ago.

Consequently, email open rates are looking healthy. On average, 17.6 percent of emails are now being opened by recipients, reports IBM's

2016 Email Marketing Metrics Benchmark study.

Of course, getting email marketing right for your promotional products business involves more than simply knowing it works. Here are the 10 most popular best practices for email marketing, based on insights from the Econsultancy/Adestra survey:

- 1 **Engage In Basic Segmentation:** Seventy-eight percent of companies said they're doing basic segmentation with their email marketing. Essentially, this means they're creating slightly different versions of the same email marketing message to cater to different segments of a company's customer base. Some of your customers in the Southeast, for example, might get a slightly different message than customers in the Northwest. "The advances in technology that allow more personalization and dynamic content are great enablers to help companies differentiate themselves in an inbox," says Boundless's Price.
- 2 **Optimize For Mobile:** Sixty-four percent of companies said they're ensuring their emails are optimized for mobile. In practice, this translates into using single column email designs that allow for easier resizing, using responsive design that automatically resizes an email based on screen size and eliminating content in mobile emails that is ordinarily displayed on full-
- 3 **Clean Your List Regularly:** Fifty-four percent of companies surveyed said their email marketing success also hinged on ensuring they purged their mailing list regularly of addresses that bounced back as no longer valid. They also are quickly removing email addresses from the list when customers request it.
- 4 **Encourage Email Sharing On Social Networks:** Forty-seven percent of customers surveyed said they got more mileage from their marketing emails after asking their customers to share those emails on Facebook, Twitter, Instagram and other social media networks.
- 5 **Use Your Transaction Emails For Marketing:** Forty-three percent of companies said they had a standard practice of inserting marketing messages into transaction emails. In practice, a promotional products business might pitch another product or upgrade when confirming a deal by email.
- 6 **Include Video Content:** Forty-two percent of companies said adding video content to their email was critical to the potency of those marketing messages. Given that YouTube is the second most popular



The reason behind email's potency? Despite all the buzz over social media, 58 percent of internet users say the first thing they check on their device each morning is email, according to a study by Exact Target.



Forty-two percent of companies said adding video content to their email was critical to the potency of those marketing messages. Given that YouTube is the second most popular site on the web, the move sounds like a no-brainer.

site on the web, the move sounds like a no-brainer for promotional products businesses, which could easily post a video about one of their recent promotions, new product line, etc.

7 Do Remarketing: Forty-one percent of companies surveyed said they regularly use emails to remarket to customers. For example, a web visitor who fails to confirm their new subscription to your e-newsletter, for example, might be prodded again by email to confirm that sign-up.

8 Personalize Your Email: Thirty-seven percent of companies surveyed said personalization of emails was also key to their marketing success. The personalization went beyond simply addressing a person by first name. Instead, other personalized data was included in the email, such as the person's birthday, acknowledgement of previous goods and services purchased by the recipient and similar qualifiers indicating the company truly knew who they were emailing when they put together the message.

9 Use Emails For Lead Nurturing: Thirty-five percent of companies said once they received a nibble on an offer by email, they regularly followed up with additional emails to try and close the deal.

10 Combine Email With Multichannel Triggers: Thirty-one percent of companies said once contact was made by email, they followed up by reaching out to the customer via other channels, including Facebook, Twitter, telephone and old-fashioned snail mail. **PPB**

Joe Dysart is an internet speaker and business consultant based in Manhattan. Reach him at 646- 233-4089, joe@joedysart.com and www.joedysart.com.

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Driven To Lead

How the industry's youngest supplier president—a Millennial!—set her own course for success.

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A Stand-Up Success

Tribal Boards makes waves with inflatable paddleboards and kayaks for the promotional industry.

by Jen Alexander

Seven years ago, Rob Russakoff was leading a company that sold personal cooling products at retail, but he saw sales quickly heat up when the team decided to move the product into the promotional industry.

“We experienced tremendous growth and built mutually beneficial relationships with distributors—we knew we’d made the right choice,” says Russakoff. “In 2014 we sold that company, which is still a PPAI member, and we began to make customized inflatable paddleboards.”

Atlantic Beach, Florida-based supplier Tribal Boards (PPAI 645271) manufactures three sizes of inflatable boards, two sizes of inflatable kayaks, and three sizes of inflatable and solid resin boogie and skim boards. The company includes the necessary accessories, such as paddles and backpacks for toting the boards,

with each order as part of a complete package, says Russakoff.

To ensure consistent product quality, Tribal Boards instituted a 90-day training program two years ago that every new employee is required to complete. “Each of the six processes needed to create a board has its own program, and employees are cross-trained after six months of employment,” he adds.

In the early stages of production, the team was only able to add a single logo to the deck of the board, “which in our opinion just wasn’t enough of an impact,” says Russakoff. “We felt we had to find a way to utilize more of the 60 square feet of space on each board. We failed many times to discover how to print on various materials that would withstand wear and tear.”

Success came when the team found a way to customize Tribal

Board products with a full-color digital printing process on military-grade PVC treated with a UV coating. “This allows us to create anything a customer can imagine,” he says. “In addition, we now include screen print on our paddles and backpacks.”

Russakoff says despite the rapidly growing popularity of paddleboarding, paddleboards were unknown in the promotional products industry when Tribal Boards was launched. “Having a new and unique product for distributors to present to their clients is truly exciting for us,” he says.

“Our original 11-foot inflatable paddleboard remains our top product; however, the five-foot inflatable and resin boards are quickly catching on,” he says, adding that the smaller boards take up much less space when used for display.

Read on to learn how Tribal Boards paddleboards are constructed.

About Tribal Boards

Founding date

June 2014

Principals Rob

Russakoff and

Glenn Connelly

Number of orders filled

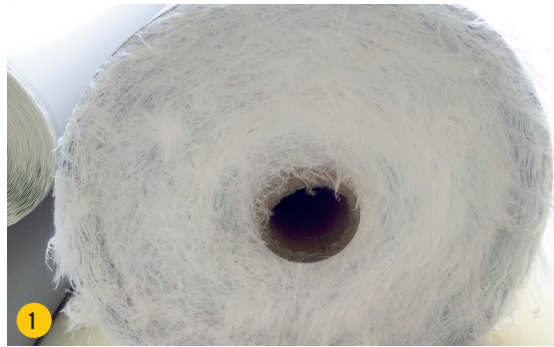
per year 175

Size of production facility

20,000 square feet

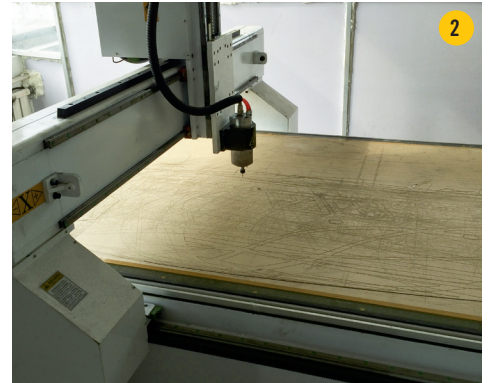
Number of employees

15 year-round, with an additional 20 seasonal employees



1

1 Employees drop stitch material and PVC, which is sourced from one of the world's leading manufacturers of military PVC.



2

2 Materials are precision-cut to exact specifications based on the size of the end product.



3

3 Constructed boards, without graphics, are tested for seam strength and air tightness according to ISO 6185.



4

4 Any residual bubbling between layers is removed.

5 Each of the three handles, and at least four to as many as eight d-rings, are heat sealed onto the board.



5



6

6 The side rail is customized and then added for a finished appearance.



7

7 Each board is tested for air leaks and kept inflated for 48 hours, followed by a pressure retention check.



8

8 Warehouse employees finally get to have some fun while they perform weight-bearing tests.

Driven To Lead

How the industry's youngest supplier president—a Millennial!—set her own course for success.

by Julie Richie

Mary Ellen Harden, president of Versailles, Kentucky-based Wall Street Greetings, LLC, (PPAI 469710) has always known she wanted to work in the greeting card industry. During her senior year at the University of Kentucky she learned about Wall Street Greetings and scheduled a meeting to visit the local card company.

“Tim [Voss, the co-owner of the company along with his wife, Laura] and I immediately connected when I passed his test, picking out the 10 bestselling cards from a mix of designs. The Vosses asked me to join their company upon graduation and started referring to me as ‘the triple threat’ because I was an artist with business and sales/marketing skills,” Harden says.

She started as manager of product development, then moved to director of marketing and art before being named president in 2013. “This year I celebrate my 10th year with the company,” she says.

Harden grew up in Lexington, Kentucky, the same city she lives in today; “home to Thoroughbred horse racing, bourbon and strong-willed women,” a club of which she is emphatically a member. Growing up with a psychologist mom and educator dad, she says that she and her sisters



were “raised on topics of social interaction and self-improvement.”

Those early words of wisdom seem to have inspired the accomplished Harden, who, in addition to her leadership role at Wall Street Greetings, is also the mother of two girls, Rory, two and a half, and Betty, eight

months, with her husband, Jay, a consultant at a software company. While her family is first on her list when she’s not at the office, enjoying time with friends over dinner or brunch is second. “I prioritize exercise, rest and getting outdoors. A day on the lake is my favorite way to relax,” she says.

Who or what has had the greatest influence on your career and why?

I once read a Vera Wang quote on the value of learning from someone already doing what you want to do. Tim and Laura Voss have been most influential in my success. They identified my potential from the first time we met, offering me, a recent college graduate, a job when there really was not an open position. I worked my way up in the company and after seven years was named president. In general, the Millennial instinct is to please and “collect gold stars,” but I feel I’ve learned much more from the challenging times, the failure points. You make a mistake, correct it, learn from it and move on.

In general, the Millennial instinct is to please and “collect gold stars,” but I feel I’ve learned much more from the challenging times, the failure points. You make a mistake, correct it, learn from it and move on.

What do you enjoy most about your work?

The creativity. I enjoy bringing ideas to life—whether that’s designing a best-selling card or an inside verse sentiment, or instituting a production strategy or a new-product launch. The start of every year is most exciting as I anticipate the opportunity that lies ahead.

What was your first job, and what lessons did you learn?

I worked in a gift boutique in downtown Lexington. I remember my first large sale: It was a piece of nice jewelry that sold for about \$150. The owner praised my good work, but I remember thinking how easy it was to just be friendly and helpful. I didn’t realize I was “selling.” I stocked shelves of invitations and greeting cards

and that allowed me to study the retail-card industry. Every receipt was hand signed with a “thank you”. For me that was an early lesson in good customer service.

What motivates you in business and in life?

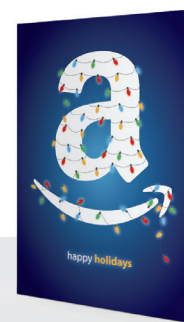
A commitment to being my best self in order to impact others for good. I want to use my talents and circumstance to make a difference where I can. I am passionate about small businesses; the opportunities it can offer for individuals, families and communities. I am also motivated to be an example to young women looking for role models in leadership.

What is your greatest professional accomplishment?

After completing a presentation in college, I overheard one of my most accomplished professors make a side comment to a fellow student, predicting that I would run a company one day. I am competitive and driven; hearing that professor’s confidence in me set my course in action. When I became president, at just 29 years old, I smiled at my college self. I’m very proud to be a young woman leader.

What’s it like being one of the youngest (or the youngest?) presidents of an industry supplier, and what is your management style as a member of the Millennial generation?

It’s great! We work with some of the best distributors in the industry, and my age has never



Mary Ellen Harden’s Tips For Selling Greeting Cards

We’re surprised at how many distributors have overlooked the potential of greeting cards—an \$8 billion industry. Most likely, your client is buying cards, but they don’t know they can do so from you.

- Just ask, “What are you doing for holiday cards?”
- Do not wait for October; start asking about holiday cards now.
- Every e-store should include a branded note card.
- Don’t carry a heavy sample book of cards; everything is electronic now.

For more helpful tips, visit www.wallstreetgreetings.com/distributors/.

been an issue. If anything, it’s a benefit to be an innovative young leader. I’m also very fortunate to have a great support team, so I never hesitate to ask for help. I try to manage as I would want to be managed, giving everyone the opportunity to blast it out of the park with a winning idea or job well done. Leading by example, expecting efficient, productive work habits and teamwork brings success. I want my employees to

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I try to manage as I would want to be managed, giving everyone the opportunity to blast it out of the park with a winning idea or job well-done. Leading by example, expecting efficient, productive work habits and teamwork brings success.

feel fulfilled in their work and the impact they make.

Why are paper greeting cards so important in business, and how do they fit into a relationship management strategy in this digital age?

A greeting card is the simplest yet most meaningful gesture to show others their importance. The stories we gather from our customers about hearing from long-time clients, or securing large deals based on a return phone call after receiving a card, are testaments to their success. The digital age has only increased the popularity of card sending; the value of a handwritten note

is on the rise. It is the most cost-efficient way to stay top of mind and show that you care.

Tell us about Wall Street Greetings's commitment to the environment.

This question is very timely for us as we are launching a new line of customizable stationery and note cards that will provide funding to the National Forest Foundation. We have supported this cause for several years but feel compelled to do more. A portion of sales from these cards will go straight to the Foundation, which offers our buyers the opportunity to do good with their purchases. We expect this to be popular for bulk corporate orders;

Fortune 500 firms are looking for these types of products. All of our cards and envelopes are U.S.-made on FSC-certified stocks with recycled content.

What are your plans for Wall Street Greetings this year and next?

To grow our distributor business, of course! We are focusing on new print technology, website capabilities and new product offerings to meet customer demands. We are outgrowing our office space, which is a good problem to have, so expansion is on the horizon. **PPB**

Julie Richie is associate editor for PPB.

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"This type of business transaction was completely foreign to me so it was invaluable to have The Distributor Exchange take us through the process step by step. They went above and beyond in all regards. I couldn't be happier with their efforts to make this a win win for all parties involved." – Cindy Gibbs - Big Fish Branding



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All inquiries are strictly confidential.

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



Katie Fagan



Elizabeth Boothby



Donna-Jean Plante



Charles Cochran



Michael Zingale



Jasmine Ventura



Ryan Schafman



Alicia Dierking



IN MEMORIAM **Nicholas G. Len**

Nicholas G. Len, the former president of Allentown, Pennsylvania, distributor Waitz Corporation (PPAI 109387), passed away on January 31. He was 66.

Len worked for the company's founder, Jack Waitz, from 1973 to 1988, when he and Glenn Wampole purchased the distributor. Len became president of the new corporation.

In a statement, Waitz said: "Under his leadership, Waitz Corporation grew to become a leader in both the promotional products industry and the awards and nameplate industries. His knowledge and experience will be greatly missed, but more so we will miss him personally in our everyday lives."

Len is survived by his wife, Connie, and his two children, Daniel and Kristy.

DISTRIBUTORS

The Creative J (PPAI 276178)—Rachel Valdez, CAS, sales

Elevate Brand Marketing (PPAI 409232)—Katie Fagan, manager, creative services

REGIONAL ASSOCIATIONS

The Promotional Products Association of Wisconsin (PPAW)—Elizabeth Boothby, executive director

The Specialty Advertising Association of Greater New York (SAAGNY)—Donna-Jean Plante, executive director

SUPPLIERS

AAkron (PPAI 111082)—Charles Cochran, Southeast regional sales manager, and Mike Zingale, promoted to strategic accounts manager

Chocolate Inn/Taylor & Grant (PPAI 111662)—Ryan Schafman, Midwest regional sales manager

Chameleon like, Inc. (PPAI 209189)—Jasmine Ventura, promoted to national account executive for key and national accounts

Goldstar (PPAI 114031)—Alicia Dierking, southwestern regional sales manager

Mike Brothers Emblematic Solutions (PPAI 342444)—Kurt and Kyle McGovern of McGovern Marketing Group, Inc. to represent the company in Indiana, Kentucky, Michigan and Ohio

**GOT NEWS?**

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

IN MEMORIAM / Bob Cornell

Robert G. (Bob) Cornell, founder of industry supplier Cornell Concepts, passed away on February 20. He was 83.

Cornell founded Cornell Concepts in the early 1970s, and designed and produced molded plastic products for the promotional products industry. While Cornell had retired several years ago, his wife, Dale Johnson Cornell, remains active in the industry and heads the multi-line rep firm Dale B. Johnson Associates (PPAI 110660).

Alongside his work in the industry, Cornell had a number of hobbies, including music, the outdoors and architecture. He designed and built more than 40 homes, and renovated a number of others.

Cornell is survived by his wife; his children: daughter Karen White and her husband, Greg; daughter Nancy Mussi; and son, Stephen; his brother, David, and his wife, Joann; seven grandchildren, one great-grandchild, and a number of nieces and nephews.

A memorial service was held for Cornell at St. John's The Evangelist Episcopal Church in Duxbury, Massachusetts. In lieu of flowers, donations may be made in Cornell's memory to the Alzheimer's Association.



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"You have exceeded my expectations regarding this process. Thanks for being so efficient, attentive and supportive. What else can I say . . . a dream come true!" – Barb Feyka - Capstone Promotions



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All inquiries are strictly confidential.

Product Responsibility

The Path Forward

Supply Chain Security, Social Compliance And More. A Global Road Map.

PPAI will host its seventh annual Product Responsibility Summit, September 17-20, 2017. An in-depth education conference, The Product Responsibility Summit will help you understand the current landscape in supply chain security, social responsibility and much more.

Summit will also highlight the growing importance of social compliance audits and ethical sourcing and manufacturing practices. Facilitated by industry leaders, this eye-opening event will address the ways many industry professionals have turned a cost burden into a strategic advantage.

This year's event will be held at the Duke Hotel in Newport Beach, CA. The two-day conference will run Monday, September 18 and Tuesday, September 19. To kick off the event, there will be an opening dinner Sunday, September 17, as well as an optional tour of the Port of Long Beach on Wednesday, September 20.

Register Today!



PPAI PRODUCT RESPONSIBILITY™
SUMMIT

September 17-19, 2017 • Newport Beach, CA

ppai.org/summit

Datebook

compiled by James Khattak

The important events shaping the promotional industry.

APRIL

April 6-7

HPPA Cool Stuff Show
Houston Promotional
Products Association
Houston, Texas
www.houstonppa.org

April 24-28

Promotional Products Work! Week
Promotional Products
Association International
www.promotionalproductswork.org

April 26-27

PPAI L.E.A.D.
Promotional Products
Association International
Washington, D.C.
www.ppai.org

June 12-14

Expo East
Promotional Products
Association International
Atlantic City, New Jersey
www.ppai.org



MAY

May 1, 3

Southern Showcase
LDK Marketing
Albuquerque, New Mexico,
and Denver, Colorado
www.ldkmarketing.com/southern-showcase.htm

May 4-5

PMANC Expo Showcase
Promotional Marketing Association
of Northern California
Monterey, California
www.pmanc.org

May 15

UMAPP Room Show
Upper Midwest Association of
Promotional Professionals
Bloomington, Minnesota
www.umapp.org

May 18

MiPPA Ideas In Bloom Show
Michigan Promotional
Professionals Association
Grand Rapids, Michigan
www.mipppa.org

JUNE

June 1-3

The NBM Show
National Business Media
Indianapolis, Indiana
thenbmshow.com

June 7

SAAGNY Summer Showcase
Specialty Advertising Association
of Greater New York (SAAGNY)
New York, New York
www.saagny.org





June 26-28
 Women's Leadership
 Conference
 Promotional
 Products
 Association
 International
Scottsdale, Arizona
www.ppai.org

JULY

July 11-13
 ASI Chicago
 Advertising Specialty Institute
Chicago, Illinois
www.asicentral.com

July 20-22
 The NBM Show
 National Business Media
Long Beach, California
www.thenbmshow.com

August 16-17
 GCPA Summer Showcase
 Gold Coast Promotional
 Products Association
Location TBD
www.gcppa.org

August 28-29
 AzPPA Expo
 Arizona Promotional
 Products Association
Phoenix, Arizona
www.azppa.net

August 17
 UMAPP Holiday Showcase/
 End Buy Expo
 Upper Midwest Association of
 Promotional Professionals
St. Paul, Minnesota
www.umapp.org

August 29
 HPPA Hot Stuff Expo
 Houston Promotional
 Products Association
Houston, Texas
www.houstonppa.org



**PUT IT ON
 THE SCHEDULE**

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

AUGUST

August 8-10
 PPAMS Road Show
 Promotional Products
 Association of the Mid-South
*Memphis, Nashville and
 Chattanooga, Tennessee*
www.ppams.org

August 13-15
 PPAI North American
 Leadership Conference
 Promotional Products
 Association International
Austin, Texas
www.ppai.org

August 16-17
 PPAI Tech Summit
 Promotional Products
 Association International
Austin, Texas
www.ppai.org

August 17-19
 The NBM Show
 National Business Media
Secaucus, New Jersey
www.thenbmshow.com

August 22-23
 SAAC Show
 Specialty Advertising
 Association of California
Long Beach, California
www.saac.net

August 23
 TRASA Fall Showcase
 & Client Show
*Three Rivers Advertising
 Specialty Association
 Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania*
www.trasa.net

August 29-30
 PPAF Expo
 Promotional Products
 Association of Florida
Orlando, Florida
www.pfaf.com



August 30-31
 SAGE Show
 SAGE
Irving, Texas
www.sageworld.com/sageshow



The **Best**
Exit Strategy
IN THE INDUSTRY

Getting into the Specialty Advertising/Promotional Marketing Industry is pretty easy today – it's getting out that is a lot harder! Without a great strategy and the best help, you will never get the full value from your distributorship.

We have the best **Exit Strategy** bringing you the most value and it has worked for many others for years and years. Don't get fooled by ads pretending to want to buy your business. If they have to trick you by hiding behind made up business names, why would you trust them?

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Let us show you how you can get substantially more for your business, receive additional bonus revenue from K&B and have fun while you are making the transition.

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Contact us in complete confidence to learn how lucrative our exit strategy will be for you. Our experienced executives welcome the opportunity to speak to you. Personal private meetings are available at all major industry shows. Complete confidentiality is always maintained.

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➤ The 2017 PPPC National Convention's show floor opened with a ribbon-cutting ceremony. Joined by PPAI Board Chair Mary Jo Tomasini, MAS, (second from left) and President and CEO Paul Bellantone, CAE, (third from left), among others, PPPC Board Chair Alain Gravel (center) cut the ribbon and welcomed attendees to the exhibit floor.

✔ Attendees take the opportunity to unwind at the National Convention's axe-throwing party, sponsored by the PPPC Board of Directors and BIC Graphic.



➤ The 2017 National Convention drew more than 2,600 attendees, including 1,259 end buyers who attended with industry distributors.

PPPC's 2017 National Convention Draws More Than 2,600 Attendees

The Promotional Products Professionals of Canada's 2017 National Convention, held February 12-14 at the International Centre in Mississauga, Ontario, drew exhibitors and attendees from across Canada and beyond. The three-day event featured networking and education opportunities, an extensive trade-show floor and presentation of the PPPC Image Awards.

BIC Graphic Red Wing Donates \$5,500 To Local Sheriff Department

BIC Graphic (PPAI 114187) donated \$5,500 to the Goodhue County Sheriff's Office in Red Wing, Minnesota, in support of founding a water rescue and recovery team. In 2015, the Red Wing area was struck by the tragic loss of a young mother of two when her vehicle went into the Mississippi River. As a result, the local sheriff department prioritized the need for a water rescue and recovery team.

➤ Deb Fleming, Linda Huppert (holding the check) and Cassie Otto of BIC Graphic Red Wing visited the Goodhue County Sheriff's Office to present them with the donation on February 2.



GIFT WITH A PURPOSE



ANTI-LEAK SYSTEM

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DETACHABLE WATER COMPARTMENT

KEY HOLDER



The Outdoor

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UK's PPEXPO Draws Strong Crowds, Introduces New Format For 2018

On January 25, the Promotional Products Expo, formerly the Trade Only National Show, kicked off at the Ricoh Arena in Coventry, UK. Now in its 11th year, the two-day show featured trade-show, education and networking opportunities. In 2018, PPEXPO will be replaced by a new show, Resellex, which will run January 14-16. The new event will see several additions to the PPEXPO format, including an extension to three days to allow for an industry conference and more education.

◀ The Promotional Products Expo drew more than 2,000 attendees to its trade-show floor and its 200-plus exhibitors.



▶ PPAI Diversity Development and Engagement Manager Seth Barnett's (right) panelists at the PPAS event included (from left) Mike Eaton, lorieaton.com; Farrah Vargas, Allied Affiliated Funding, and Sarah Thomas, American Solutions for Business.

PPAI's Barnett Joins PPAS For Young Professionals Discussion

On February 7, PPAI Diversity Development and Engagement Manager Seth Barnett joined Promotional Products Association Southwest (PPAS) to facilitate a young professional panel discussion. The event also included a tabletop show and luncheon.

Barnett was joined on the panel by Mike Eaton, lorieaton.com; Farrah Vargas, Allied Affiliated Funding and Sarah Thomas, American Solutions for Business. Their discussion explored what it means to be a young professional in the industry and the nuances of doing business in an environment that consists of a primarily older demographic. The conversation also turned to consumerism from the Millennial point of view including technology integration, use of social media for promotion and sales, as well as how young professionals identify trends and industry best practices.



▶ Jerry Russo, Prime's vice president, finance, and Gaffney Mayor Henry Jolly cut the ribbon for Jetline's facility expansion.



▶ Prime Vice President Jeff Schaffer, MAS, gives visitors a tour of the facility.

Prime Expands Jetline's South Carolina Facility

Supplier Prime Line (PPAI 112744) hosted a ribbon-cutting ceremony in February at its Jetline (PPAI 113558) plant in Gaffney, South Carolina to mark the facility's expansion. The event was attended by employees, distributors and members of the Cherokee County Chamber of Commerce. The company undertook the expansion to stay ahead of demand, and the facility now features additional manufacturing and warehouse space and includes upgrades to its silk screen, embroidery and multicolor drinkware areas.

Take Note Of Expo East 2017's Extensive Education Lineup



Long a favorite presenter, Cliff Quicksell, MAS+ shared his expertise at last year's Expo East and will be teaching four sessions at the 2017 show.

Expo East 2017 is bringing the high quality, diverse education opportunities to the Atlantic City Convention Center that industry professionals have come to expect from PPAI's trade shows, conferences and events. With 30 sessions to choose from, Expo East attendees can pick the right classes to expand their professional playbook, explore new opportunities and move their careers ahead.

The education programming at Expo East tackles a number of issues, both established and emerging, that industry practitioners are facing, such as digital and generational marketing. Lance Bachmann, founder and president of digital marketing firm 1SEO.com Digital Agency, takes a crack at the first topic in his session, "The New, The Now, The Next Digital Marketing Strategies" (June 12, 4:30 – 5:30 pm; Level 4, Room 410). Through organic search, paid advertisements and re-targeting, email marketing and social media, Bachmann will explain the best practices to reach a wider audience in the digital landscape.

Several of Expo East's sessions explore the opportunities and challenges in working with different generations, but Lori Garland, owner of distributor New Adventure Design, takes a look at Generation Z, the demographic cohort that follows Millennials, in "Social Responsibility and Generation Z" (June 12, 4:30 – 5:30 pm; Level 4, Room 414). In her session, Garland examines how to make a connection with Generation Z through solutions that create, connect

and make an impact on the world.

Education at Expo East is also designed to expand attendees' business practices and expertise. In his session, "Creating Positively Outrageous Customer Satisfaction" (June 13, 12:45 – 1:45 pm; Level 2, Show Floor PPAI Education Area) business speaker Steve Klein takes his audience through the art of satisfying customers and clients to make them loyal for life and advocates who will spread the word. Customer and client satisfaction efforts can affect profits, and Klein's session stresses the value in prioritizing and focusing on top customer and client expectations.

Carletta Clyatt, senior vice president at management consultancy The Omnia Group, turns the focus inward in her session, "What Behavioral Insight Can Really Do for Your Business" (June 12, 1:30 – 2:30 pm; Level 4, Room 410). She covers the real costs associated with a bad hire, and offers solutions to improve the hiring process while maximizing staff potential.

Expo East also equips attendees with the tools to expand their businesses and seek opportunities in new directions. The session "Embroider Athletic Wear and Pump Up Your Decorating Profits" (June 13, 9 – 10 am; Level 4, Room 414), presented by Colleen Hartigan, a consultant for Madeira USA and Madeira Germany, opens the door to new products that help improve the look and feel of embroidery on the lightweight, breathable fabrics often used in athletic wear.

In a pair of sessions, "Niche Marketing:

Registration Now Open For PPAI's Product Responsibility Summit

On September 18-20, PPAI is hosting the seventh annual Product Responsibility Summit (PRS) in Newport Beach, California. An in-depth education conference, PRS will explore the current landscape in supply chain security, social responsibility and much more.

The summit will also highlight the growing importance of social compliance audits and ethical sourcing and manufacturing practices. Facilitated by industry leaders, PRS will address the ways many industry professionals have turned a cost-burden into a strategic advantage. This year's event will be held at the Duke Hotel in Newport Beach. Kicking off with an opening dinner on Sunday, September 18, the conference offers two days of insightful education and networking opportunities as well as an optional tour of the Port of Long Beach on Wednesday, September 20. Find details and register at www.ppai.org/events.

Finance And Technology Sector" (June 6, 2 – 3 pm; Level 2, Show Floor PPAI Education Area) and "Be The Expert! Niche Market Training in the Healthcare and Education Sectors" (June 7, 10 – 11 am; Level 2, Show Floor PPAI Education Area), sales trainer Danny Friedman looks at two niche markets and the opportunities available within them.

Expo East begins with a day of education on June 12, and exhibits are open June 13-14. For more information and to register, visit expoeast.ppai.org.

COMING JUNE 2017

PROMO MARKETING POWER MEETINGS

CO-LOCATED WITH PPAI'S WOMEN'S
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IN SCOTTSDALE, AZ

**Women's Leadership
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JUNE 26-30, 2017



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PPAI recognizes outgoing volunteer leaders during the Volunteer Recognition Luncheon at The PPAI Expo in January.

PPAI Names Committee And Advisory Group Chairs, Liaisons

PPAI has announced new volunteer committee and advisory group chairs and liaisons for the 2017-2018 term.

The committees and advisory groups are comprised of volunteer representatives from the Association's membership including distributors, suppliers, business services partners and representatives, who work together to promote, protect and grow the promotional products industry and the Association.

PPAI volunteer committees address ongoing and essential strategic missions important to the Association and the industry. PPAI advisory groups are focused on specific strategic and tactical assignments and offer flexibility with time commitments, meetings, group size and multiple volunteer opportunities.

Awards & Recognition Committee

Chair: Tom Donlin, ADG Promotional Products; PPAI Liaisons: Carol Gauger, MAS; Christina Sanders

Certification Committee

Chair: Peggy Dixon, MAS, Gemline; PPAI Liaison: Julie Levay

Distributors Committee

Chair: Deanna Cross, Cross Promos/Division of CarCross Company, Inc.; PPAI Liaisons: Tina Filipski, Sandy Mendoza

Government Relations Advisory Council (GRAC)

Chair: Dale T. Denham, MAS+, Geiger; PPAI Liaisons: Anne Stone, Joseph Landeros

Leadership Advisory Committee

Chair: Nikki Stella, *Promo Marketing*; PPAI Liaisons: Lisa Beck, Paul Bellantone, CAE

Marketing Information & Research Committee

Chair: Kaettie Wenger, CAS, Specialty Incentives, Inc.; PPAI Liaisons: Keith Vincent, Mo Das

Membership Services Committee

Chair: Nate Robson, Raining Rose, Inc.; PPAI Liaisons: Natalie Clark, Kari Banner

PPB Editorial Advisory Committee

Chair: Carrie Laufenburg, MAS, The Magnet Group; PPAI Liaison: James Khattak

Promotional Products Education Foundation (PPEF)

Chair: Lori Bauer, BIC Graphic USA; PPAI Liaisons: Sara Besly, Bob McLean

Product Responsibility Advisory Group (PRAG)

Co-chairs: Gene Geiger, MAS+, Geiger, and Leeton Lee, Leeton Lee dba ComplyBox Consulting; PPAI Liaison: Anne Stone

Professional Development Committee

Chair: Marc Held, Hit Promotional Products; PPAI Liaison: Stacy Riddler

Public Relations Advisory Group

Chair: Chris Piper, Boundless; PPAI Liaisons:

Kim R. Todora, Gretchen Demke

Regional Association Council (RAC)

President: Janet McMaster, MAS, Geiger; PPAI Liaisons: Melissa Weber, Seth Barnett

Suppliers Committee

Chair: Pierre Martichoux, Chameleon like, Inc.; PPAI Liaisons: Alan Peterson, Ellen Tucker

Technology Committee

Chair: Mike Knapick, SanMar; PPAI Liaisons: Paul Elfstrom, Vicki Sypien

PPAI volunteer opportunities bring together industry leaders, from all levels, to explore the many facets of the promotional products industry. In most cases, the time commitment consists of monthly conference calls and input on topics as assigned. Committee and advisory group work is essential to PPAI, and the chairs routinely report to the executive team and the board of directors. PPAI relies on its members to provide volunteer leadership and support for its programs, events and services.

More than 15 different volunteer opportunities offer flexibility with time commitments, meetings, group size, projects and strategic focus. PPAI invites all Association members to complete a personal profile for volunteer service. To complete a volunteer application, or get more information about PPAI volunteer leadership opportunities visit www.ppai.org/association/volunteer. **PPB**

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New PPAI Members Joining In January 2017

Business Services

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PPAI 669328

CDW
PPAI 695434

Digital Print Innovations, LLC
PPAI 701105

Robert W. Baird & Co.
PPAI 699483

Distributors

360 Services, LLC
PPAI 703100

361 Advertising
PPAI 699554

3R Sports
PPAI 703726

4G Specialties, LLC
PPAI 438153

707 Promotions
PPAI 695745

A & J Star Promotions
PPAI 699095

AAA Garments & Lettering
PPAI 703569

Absolutely Creative Promotions
PPAI 598003

Absolutely Promotional
PPAI 629164

Accent Group
PPAI 532786

ADV CREATIVE SERVICES
PPAI 650564

Advanced Impressions
PPAI 382548

Advancement Promo Ink
PPAI 701402

All Union Signs and Promos, LLC
PPAI 401996

Allegra / Altamonte Springs
PPAI 266703

Allegra Marketing & Print Services
PPAI 446796

American Solutions for Business
PPAI 703010

American Solutions for Business
PPAI 703075

American Solutions for Business
PPAI 703170

American Solutions for Business
PPAI 697854

American Solutions for Business
PPAI 492729

Apex Apparel
PPAI 697953

APLATICBAG.COM
PPAI 360083

Arpine Media Group, LLC
PPAI 667786

ArtWorks Custom Graphics and Apparel
PPAI 700296

Aspen Designs
PPAI 527822

Atlantic Promo
PPAI 699227

AutomotiveHeroes.com
PPAI 572387

Avid Promotions
PPAI 700380

B & R Promotions, Ltd.
PPAI 278184

BAMF SIGNS
PPAI 592622

Bat City Awards & Apparel
PPAI 497472

Baudville, Inc.
PPAI 276488

Bear Creek Image
PPAI 701769

Beeze Tees Screen Printing
PPAI 703685

BenCom Enterprises, LLC
PPAI 565471

Benefit Marketing
PPAI 604217

BIDPRESS, LLC
PPAI 654083

Big Brand-Aid
PPAI 598466

Bluegrass Girl Marketing
PPAI 691128

BPWorks, Inc.
PPAI 701371

Brand Aware Marketing, LLC
PPAI 695472

Brand Owl Promo
PPAI 634768

BrandMe
PPAI 699926

Brewery Outfitters
PPAI 440039

Bright Ideas
PPAI 637768

Budd Bay Embroidery & Specialties, Inc.
PPAI 288401

Business Gift Concierge
PPAI 703041

Cascade Imprints Ltd.
PPAI 703716

Chaz Consultants
PPAI 703338

Chickasaw Supply
PPAI 304140

Ciambotta, LLC
PPAI 433902

CLASSIC DESIGNS
PPAI 502708

CLI Printing
PPAI 693479

Concept 3, LLC
PPAI 702683

Conprisa S.A.
PPAI 205363

Coyote Blue Promotions
PPAI 696688

Cripple Creek Designs
PPAI 279145

CUMBERLAND SIGNWORKS
PPAI 581306

Custom Advertising, Inc.
PPAI 337792

Custom Ink & Thread
PPAI 459647

Custom Stitch & Print
PPAI 695702

DALX, S. A.
PPAI 396056

DaWi Trading & Company Limited
PPAI 696692

Decorative Design Works
PPAI 538290

Deer Valley Graphics
PPAI 703342

Delta Marketing Group
PPAI 279442

Design Marketing Center
PPAI 701934

DIGITAL PROMOTIONS, LLC
PPAI 700759

DK UNLTD
PPAI 702280

DNA Swag
PPAI 701916

Document Solutions
PPAI 661498

Donovan Monograms & Logos
PPAI 660459

DREAMCATCHER SPORTS, LLC
PPAI 496287

East Coast Swag
PPAI 703652

Embliss Embroidery
PPAI 583343

Embroidery Chimp, LLC
PPAI 703458

Embroidme Fruit Cove
PPAI 703688

Embroidme of McAllen
PPAI 455236

Embroidme of Naples, FL
PPAI 702157

Embroidme of Slidell
PPAI 520177

Embroidme of Westminster
PPAI 683388

Embroidme-San Diego
PPAI 373011

Embroidme-Webster
PPAI 396326

Envision Graphics
PPAI 657883

Eureka Shirt Circuit
PPAI 703275

Fairly Pink
PPAI 514355

Fast Print & Marketing
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PPAI 700054

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- Forward Promotional Group**
PPAI 703316
- Four Star Printing, Inc.**
PPAI 698865
- Furst Printing and Promotional Products, LLC**
PPAI 637841
- Fusion Uniforms & Linens, Inc.**
PPAI 659908
- G & L Printing and Promotional Services**
PPAI 608378
- Got Your Back Shack**
PPAI 701522
- Graphic Stylus**
PPAI 700056
- Graphics Edge**
PPAI 636294
- Griffin Screen Printing**
PPAI 438557
- H. Gilstrap @ Associates, Inc.**
PPAI 513537
- H5 Custom Apparel**
PPAI 701678
- HALO**
PPAI 703402
- HALO**
PPAI 703538
- HALO**
PPAI 703718
- HALO**
PPAI 703368
- HALO**
PPAI 701493
- HALO**
PPAI 701536
- HALO**
PPAI 695517
- HALO**
PPAI 696606
- HALO**
PPAI 698555
- HALO - E. Thompson Promotional Products**
PPAI 656964
- Harry Hoffer Advertising Specialties**
PPAI 281132
- Heilemann Schreibgeraete GmbH&Co.KG**
PPAI 699099
- Henan BSN Bags Manufacture Co., Ltd.**
PPAI 698872
- High Desert Promotions**
PPAI 262415
- HomePlates Worldwide**
PPAI 675585
- Hungry Promotions**
PPAI 701277
- I DO SIGNS, LLC**
PPAI 636600
- Idegy**
PPAI 288480
- Image Apparel Hawaii**
PPAI 693171
- Image Realm**
PPAI 550701
- Imagen Line SA CV**
PPAI 702980
- Imagineering**
PPAI 105820
- Impact Production**
PPAI 700709
- Impact Promotions Niagara**
PPAI 702129
- Imprint by Kerri Bridges**
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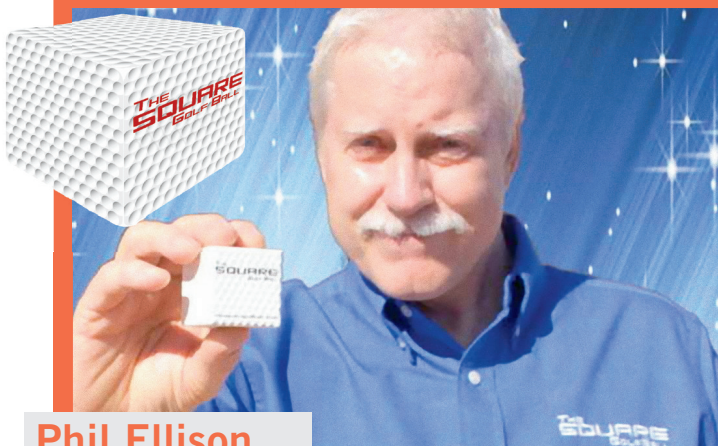
Spry Sports/Marma Sports
PPAI 315178

Square Golf Ball & USA Custom Imprint/Bright Valley Enterprises
PPAI 669521

Tree-Free Custom
PPAI 703503

Tribal Boards
PPAI 645271

NEW MEMBER SPOTLIGHT



Phil Ellison

President
Square Golf Ball & USA Custom Imprint/Bright Valley Enterprises
Corrales, New Mexico
PPAI 69521

How did your company get its start?

In 1995, I thought of the concept for a square golf ball. I enjoy unique items and felt certain that this type of novelty item was available. In 2000, when the internet really became mainstream, I searched globally, but could not locate the item. In 2012 after another exhaustive search, I

decided to make the product myself. After a year of hard work, trial and error, and much lost sleep, the square golf ball was born.

I had a very difficult time locating a company to imprint messages and logos on the square golf ball, so I ended up purchasing a high-end professional UV ink printer. This was an excellent move, and it opened my eyes to other possibilities. I purchased this printer for one purpose, but quickly found that I could imprint on all types of products. Two years into the square golf ball process, I had built up a good assortment of products which I could custom imprint and sell directly via my website.

All of this time I was thinking retail, direct-to-consumer. In 2015 I began to get inquiries and orders from companies wanting to imprint their logo on the square golf ball, and over the course of the year my activity switched from retail to corporate sales as the bulk of my orders grew. My imprint business was built on no minimums and no setup fees, as this type outlet was very much in the minority.

What led your company to enter the promotional products market?

I have 15 years of experience in broadcast TV promotions. Throughout those years, representatives would come to me, and this is how I secured promotional items for the TV station. I am keenly aware of marketing and promotional opportunities. This background knowledge provided a level of confidence that I knew if I created the square golf ball, I could market it. I began marketing to retail outlets, corporate and direct to consumers—everybody. I knew the corporate door would be the hardest to open and my efforts netted only a few corporate clients. In 2015 enough square golf balls were in the right hands, I suppose, that they received greater corporate interest, although I still had difficulty opening doors with new clients.

What's your favorite thing about being in the promotional products industry?

I currently maintain a direct-to-consumer website where I fill very small orders, as in one to five items. I'd like to phase that out. In all honesty it requires the same amount of effort to create one item as it does to create much larger volumes of the same thing. I would much rather deal with distributors who open doors at a corporate level, and take orders for 50-500 at a time instead of one or two at a time. I deal with distributors who understand promotions.

Why did you join PPAI?

With my promotional background, I decided to seek out a venue where promotional items were offered. One of my clients suggested I explore PPAI. This was the organization I had been looking for. I had exhibited at several trade shows previously, but quickly found that I wasn't involved with the right audiences. PPAI allowed me to speak directly to distributors within the promotional world. These representatives "got it" and understood the value of this new product.

That audience belongs to PPAI and another similar organization. I researched both plus asked my client for a pros and cons list comparing the two organizations. In every area compared, PPAI seemed to afford a better opportunity for me and my business. I came to PPAI to get exposure to large volumes of distributors. What I found was that PPAI offered many more tools that I could pick and choose from to assist with my own business development.

SAVE THE DATE

For The PPAI Expo 2018



JANUARY 2018

SUN **MON** **TUE** **WED** **THU** **FRI** **SAT**

					5	6
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The PPAI EXPO
Jan 14-18
DO NOT MISS!

ppai.org/expo

PPAI EXPO

January 14-18, 2018 • Education January 14-15 • Exhibits January 16-18 • Mandalay Bay Convention Center • Las Vegas

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PPB (ISSN 1072-3293) Volume 41, Issue 4 is published monthly by Promotional Products Association International, 3125 Skyway Circle North, Irving, Texas 75038-

3526. Periodicals postage paid at Irving, Texas, and additional mailing offices.

Postmaster: Send address changes to *PPB*, 3125 Skyway Circle North, Irving, Texas 75038.

PPAI members receive *PPB* as a membership benefit paid for by membership dues. \$48 of dues is allotted to *PPB* and is nondeductible therefrom. Nonmembers may subscribe to the publication for \$72 annually. To order subscriptions and to request advertising rates, call 972-258-3044. Copyright © 2017 Promotional Products Association International. All rights reserved. Printed in U.S.A.

**GET IN!
TOUCH!**
ADVERTISING THAT LIVES ON

This year, PPAI and the entire promotional products industry will celebrate the fifth anniversary of Promotional Products Work! Week. During this five-day event, we will reach out to buyers in our local communities to increase visibility and good will. Get In Touch! today with these five fun and festive advocacy and awareness activities. Get involved and get started by downloading the tool kits at ppai.org/ppweek

GET THE TOOL KIT ► GET INVOLVED ► GET IN TOUCH!

Celebrate ► 5 Days ► 5 Ways

- 1 Open Your Doors
- 2 Advocate For Your Industry
- 3 Reach Out For A Good Cause
- 4 Get On Your Soapbox
- 5 Thank Your Customers

Promotional
Products
Work!

WEEK

April 24-28, 2017



the Creative Calendar

SPECIAL OBSERVANCES
CALL FOR EXCEPTIONAL
PROMOTIONS.

USE THESE DESIGNATED MONTHS AND DATES TO IGNITE YOUR IMAGINATION FOR RELEVANT—AND DISTINCTIVE—CLIENT PROMOTIONS.

May

Jewish-American Heritage Month

Mental Health Month

Skin Cancer Prevention
and Detection Month



14-20

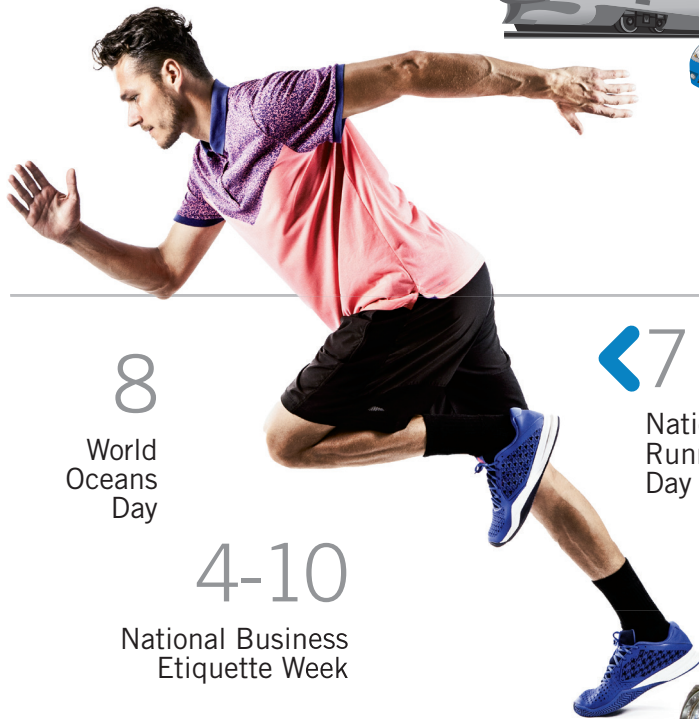
National
Transportation
Week

5

International Day
Of The Midwife

8

World Red Cross
Red Crescent Day



8

World
Oceans
Day

7

National
Running
Day



June

Adopt A
Shelter Cat
Month

LGBTQ
Pride Month

4-10

National Business
Etiquette Week

July

Cell Phone
Courtesy Month

Disaster Education
And Awareness Month

10-16

Nude Recreation Week



14

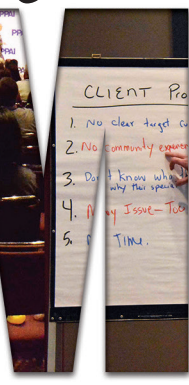
National
Motorcycle Day

27

National
Chili Dog Day

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Expo East is



Education sessions to help you build your business:

Getting Past The Gatekeeper

Mary Ellen Sokalski, MAS

1 CAS • New To The Industry

Naming Your Price and Getting It!

Troy Harrison

1 CAS • Sales and Service

The New, The Now, The Next Digital Marketing Strategies

Lance Bachmann

1 MAS • Marketing and Advertising

Niche Marketing: Finance and Technology Sector

Danny Friedman

1 MAS • Sales and Service

Packaging, Fulfillment, and Creative Distribution

Cliff Quicksell, MAS+

1 CAS • Marketing and Advertising

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Expo East is returning to Atlantic City in June

and bringing along 35+ dynamic education sessions. Be inspired by listening to top industry professionals share their experiences, opportunities, and success stories while earning credit toward your industry certification. Build on your foundation by networking with big names in the industry. Connect with top suppliers and experience the energy of 350+ booths on the show floor. 12 hours of exhibit hall time means you have access to all the fresh ideas, new products, and face-to-face interactions you need to make your business an even greater success.

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Registration & Housing Open



Atlantic City, NJ • June 12-14, 2017
Education Day June 12 • Exhibits Open June 13-14

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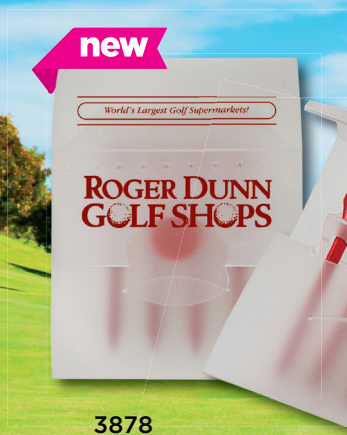
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EXPIRES
6.30.17

Drive Your Sales with Tee-rific Golf Products From Evans!



3878



3965



3924

3878 Mirage Driver Tee Pack

\$1.79(R) Min. 500

Die/Set-up: \$55(V) per color/position

3924 One More Round Beverage Wrench

\$1.70(R) Min. 500

Die/Set-up: \$55(V) per color/position

Made in the USA

3965 Tournament Tee Dispenser

\$1.86(R) Min. 250

Die/Set-up: \$55(V) per color/position

Made in the USA

Make it Happen. Make it Evans!

We are proud to offer a broad array of high value promotional products delivered with consistency and reliability that become the gifts that leave a lasting positive impression.

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