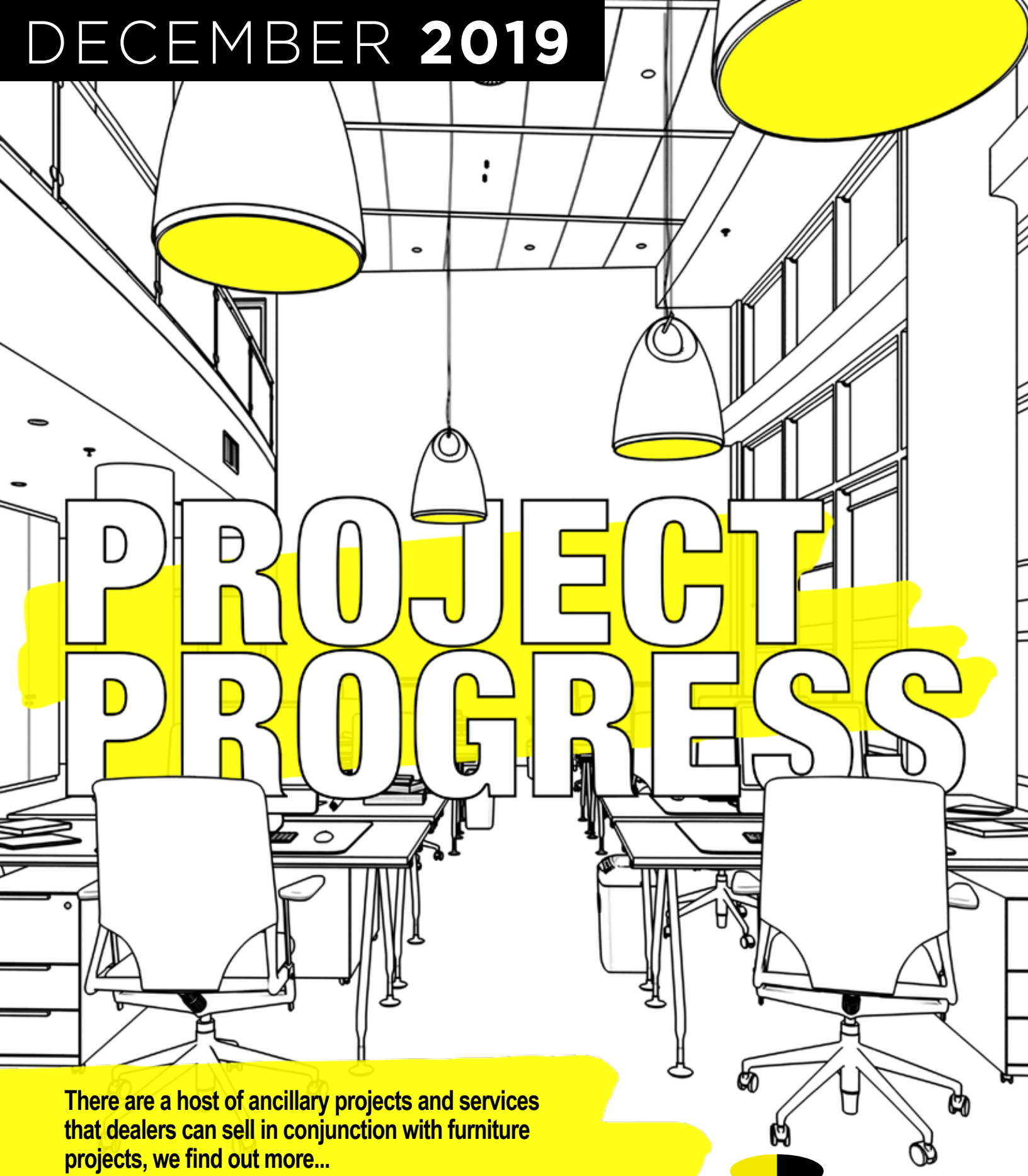
DECEMBER **2019**



PROJECT PROGRESS

There are a host of ancillary projects and services that dealers can sell in conjunction with furniture projects, we find out more...

INDEPENDENT DEALER
The official publication of NOPA

Rowan McIntyre
rowan@idealercentral.com

EDITORIAL

As the year draws to a close it's natural to look back with an air of reflection.

As the year began there was still uncertainty as to whether or not the Staples/Essendant deal would be allowed by the FTC. It was and the world is yet to end, although it's fair to say there are those who are still unsure of the long-term ramifications of one of the IDC's leading wholesalers being owned by one of its fiercest competitors. The firewall remains the subject of intense scrutiny, but as Essendant president Harry Dochelli testified in these pages last month it appears to be something that all parties involved are taking seriously.

Speaking of wholesalers, our thoughts must also turn to all those affected by the terrible fire that destroyed the S.P. Richards facility near Atlanta in July. Thankfully there were no serious injuries or loss of life and the way that the company dealt with the adversity and bounced back has been truly inspirational.

The beginning of the year also saw the other big story of the year breaking: the news that three of the larger buying groups were to merge—a move long overdue for some, but nonetheless welcomed by most, particularly following a successful debut show in Indianapolis and the announcement of plans to resurrect the industry week concept for 2020.

Now, as the year ends, it is good to see that our trade body NOPA is looking forward and Mike Tucker's piece on page 24 explains the organization's priorities for the next 12 months. As ever, I urge you to support him and his team. The strength of the IDC lies in its ability and willingness to work together, sharing ideas and information—firewalls permitting, of course!

All that remains is for me to wish you all a very happy holiday period and a most marvelous New Year.

WINNER'S CIRCLE

After 80 years Chicago's Atlas Stationers pursues retail

Eighty years ago in Chicago, Aloysius Schmidt saw the growing need for office supplies as the economy has started to turn around, so he opened Atlas Stationers. "At the time my grandfather thought companies would need ink—black when things were good or red ink when they were bad. Either way, he thought it would be a good business to get into," said Don Schmidt, current president.

The business was anchored by a retail store in Chicago's loop and that store continues to thrive in today's current business climate. The retail store was remodeled in 2018 and in Don's words has taken on a boutique look with a store-within-a-store feel. "We added manufacturer branding and fixtures," he noted.

This past October, for the first time ever, Atlas Stationers started to open on Saturdays and the move has been successful. Don says in addition to the many corporate headquarters based in the area there »

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is a growing residential population of largely Millennials and Gen Ys. The store has evolved and today offers an eclectic selection of gifts, greeting cards and Chicago-branded memorabilia.

"The younger generation wants items they can use and that sets them apart," says Don. In response Atlas has become the source for fine writing instruments and fountain pens. "We start them with an inexpensive Lami or AllStar and we move them up," he adds. "I think our most expensive pen is $5,000, and we have more than 300 colors of ink."

Last year the store introduced Take Over events and they have become an ongoing activity. A Take Over offers a one-day special event focused around a product line. A desirable product is raffled off and to join the raffle customers enter their email address. "We now have more than 10,000 people on our email list," said Don. When the raffle is completed a photo is taken of the winning customer, which is then posted on Instagram.

Events are normally held in the store between 10:00am and 4:00pm, and a manufacturer's representative is always present. "It has been so successful, we've actually had manufacturers coming in and asking to do the program," Don added.

Since remodeling the store and beginning the Take Over events retail has been a strong focus at Atlas. "Store sales are

up 35 percent this year after a really good year last year," said Don. At the same time, commercial sales were up six percent. "Not as much as retail, but rising tides raise all ships."

This past summer, Atlas Stationers was featured on an episode of "The Carbonaro Effect" on True TV – "Heat-Seeking Sticky Notes Revealed."

"They scouted the location last spring and then filmed here for an entire day over the summer," said Don.

"It gave the store great visibility," said Don. "There have been 100,000 views on YouTube and the store looks great in the video."

California dealer Total Source acquires competitor in Brea and Las Vegas

Total Source Officeworks in Orange, California, has acquired Canyon Business Products in Brea, California, and Las Vegas. Total Source owner Jamie Machado has known the Canyon owners for years and when he learned they were selling he moved right in. "We signed the deal last month and it went into effect December 2," said Machado.

Total Source Officeworks started out as a technology company that only sold IT supplies but added office supplies, janitorial, furniture and printing in 2010. These additional categories have been added to the Canyon offering and going forward two locations—one in Las Vegas and one in Brea—will go to market as Total Source Officeworks.

The number of employees has doubled from four to eight and Machado is excited by the potential he sees in Las Vegas. "It's pretty crowded here in Southern California, but there are fewer strong dealers in Las Vegas," he said.

Machado expects the acquisition will add to the bottom line almost immediately. He plans to add another salesperson in Las Vegas and over the next year sales there could increase even more. "We even launched a new Total Source Officeworks website the first week in December," he added.

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 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 4

Kentucky dealer finds success with Saturday holiday sales

One holiday tradition that might not be on everyone's list is opening on Saturdays starting in early November and extending through the holidays. "The whole downtown business kicks off the holiday season with an open house the first Saturday in November," said Charlotte Wallace, owner, Carrollton Office Supply, Carrollton, Kentucky. "We do it every Chnstmas," she added.

The first Saturday, the store sold out on the holiday offering from the Simply Southern Collection, Greensboro, North Carolina. "We have a great base of people on that clothing brand and they follow us on Facebook to see when we get new stock," said Charlotte. Customers were also interested in products from Candleberry Candle.

Weather will largely determine the success of the Saturday holiday sales, but so far the first two Saturdays were strong. "It gives people who work nine to five a chance to shop," Charlotte added.

Chicago area Haworth dealers BOS and Kayhan combine

BOS Holdings has purchased the assets of Kayhan International Limited, a 37-year-old Haworth preferred dealer located in Schaumburg and Chicago, Illinois. Effective immediately, Kayhan's accounts will be serviced by BOS, a 100% employee owned Best in Class Haworth dealership headquartered in Roselle, Illinois. A majority of Kayhan's team members are now part of the BOS organization.

"BOS Holdings continues to grow through the strength of our employee owners and commitment to exceptional customer experience," said George Pfeiffer, CEO of BOS Holdings. "Chicago has been home to BOS for over 70 years. Our continued partnership with Haworth, dedication to our customers and ability to serve our partners and vendors is stronger today than ever. People make all the difference in our business and we have added some incredible talent to the BOS family through this acquisition."

BOS Holdings is the holding company for BOS, Chicago and Roselle, Illinois and Lake Mary, Florida; Affordable Office Interiors (AOI), Roselle, Madison and Milwaukee, Wisconsin; Florida Business Interiors (FBI), Tampa, Florida; and Business Office Systems Installations (BOSI), Lake Forest, Illinois. BOS, one of the leading Haworth dealers in the world, has been in business since 1948.

George dealer VIP Office acquires dealer, expands into Savannah

VIP Office Furniture and Supply, Hinesville, Georgia, has opened a branch in Savannah, Georgia following its acquisition of The Paper Clip, which was located there. Discussions with the former owner Bobbie Frost had been on and off over the years, said Barbara Pilkinton, VIP president, "Everything was agreed upon in 2018; the employees stayed and Bobbie stayed for six months," she said.

The dealerships complement each other in their approach to business, said Barbara. In addition to a retail store front in Savannah, there's the commercial aspect of it, as well as a small print shop. "Having an actual store front that customers can walk into has been a great addition to our presence in the Savannah market," Barbara said

Additional sales volume is expected to come in at 10 to 15 percent, and Barbara is optimistic about future growth. "There is still the opportunity to open more commercial sales in the area and we have hired someone to focus on that," she added.

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California dealer JB Office opens Ohio warehouse

JB Office, Chatsworth, California, has opened up an East Coast distribution facility in Columbus, Ohio. The facility received its first shipment in mid-November and was expected to be fully operational before the holidays.

Business east of the Mississippi has been growing at JB Office for the past year, said Julian de Salay, president and CEO. "A growing number of e-commerce customers are coming to us from all over," he said. "I would say 40 percent of my business today is East of the Mississippi."

De Salay said the facility will enable him to achieve next-day delivery on products across the country. The 10,000 sq. ft. warehouse is sub-leased.

New York dealer FM named to list of fastest growing companies

New York dealer FM Office Express has been named 25th on its list of the Top 100 fastest-growing privately owned companies by the Greater Rochester Chamber of Commerce. The program recognizes the fastest-growing privately owned companies in the region.

Every year the top 100 companies in Rochester are picked based on their revenue growth," said Fabricio Morales, president and CEO at FM. He says that FM Office Express has made the list several times.

"We had growth last year of close to 25 percent," said Morales. It was a combination of organic growth and acquisition. Last year FM acquired Stevens Office Interiors, a Steelcase dealer based in Syracuse. "We also had some larger furniture projects in all three of our locations—Rochester, Syracuse and Albany," he added.

To be eligible for the Rochester Chamber Top 100, businesses must be independent, privately held, headquartered in the nine-county Finger Lakes region and have revenue of at least $1 million in each of their three most recent fiscal years.

Montana dealer honored with humanitarian award

Frank and Kathy Cross have been named recipients of the 2019 Philip N. Fortin Humanitarian Award. The award is presented by the local YMCA in recognition of long-term distinguished volunteer, civic and professional achievement which has improved the quality of life within the Billings, Montana, community.

"360 Office Solutions has grown over the years, but some things remain unchanged—their commitment to philanthropy and to service," according to one of the nominators quoted in a press release from YMCA. "As a partner of 360 Office Solutions, Frank Cross has shown through his actions the commitment to our community."

Another nominator of the couple wrote, "Kathy has pursued civic involvement in Billings, currently serving as board chair for Dress for Success and is the former president of the Billings Public Library Foundation."

Together, Frank and Kathy, both native to Billings, combined their talents to successfully chair local fundraising events.

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 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 8

Wisconsin dealer Office Outfitters acquires promotional products seller

Office Outfitters, Waupaca, Wisconsin, has acquired local firm Northstar Promotions, which offers custom imprinted products. "It is a perfect fit with Office Outfitters capabilities in printing and graphic design," said Bill Zimmerman, owner of Office Outfitters (below center).

Like many dealers, Office Outfitters has seen its core office supply business shrink between five and ten percent a year. "We are working hard to diversify by focusing energies on marketing furniture and Jan/San," said Zimmerman.

Another diversification strategy was to get into promotional products and apparel. Zimmerman had spoken with Northstar several times over the years, but the deal finally came together in October. "When they called it was probably the right time for both of us," said Zimmerman, "We quickly came to terms, and the deal closed on November 1."

Zimmerman has hired someone with a marketing background to manage the business. "After we have some level of comfort we are going to leverage our new employee skills to develop websites and manage social media and offer those services for our customers," Zimmerman added.

Furniture showroom refresh drives sales at Arkansas OP

Arkansas Office Products, Jacksonville, Arkansas, has refreshed its furniture showroom in anticipation of another strong year of furniture sales. "We sold everything on the showroom floor at 50 percent off and replaced it with newer items for the 2020 season," said Steve Pawloski, president.

The new furniture selection includes a Lorell height-adjustable desk as well as a monitor riser. "We tried to bring in some of the items that people might be interested in and that they really need to see outside of the catalog to know how it works," said Steve. The showroom also includes a large selection of office chairs.

The sale to empty the showroom ran from July through September and generated a few additional sales as well. "Something on the floor sparked their interest and then they picked something out of the catalog that was full price," Steve added.

Arizona dealer EVOS supports families in need

It's the season for caring and giving, and for the second year EVOS, Chandler, Arizona, is working in support of A New Leaf, which provides comprehensive foundations for families and individuals who fall on hard times. A New Leaf's domestic violence services offer support to those experiencing abuse, helping all victims find safety and peace.

EVOS is raising money and collecting toys to distribute to New Leaf families.

"This year we added cash to the fund raiser," said Phil Barnette, vice president sales and marketing at EVOS. "They have more children in the program this year and gift cards help those who are trying to do something different besides toys."

The fundraising effort started in early November and by Thanksgiving a considerable amount of toys and monies had been collected. "Typically, first we let people know about the effort through a Facebook post, then we email our customers to make sure they understand what we are trying to do," said Phil. The delivery date to A New Leaf was December 12.

Vermont dealer Magee OP supports area foodbank

Back in October, employees from Magee Office Products, Randolph, Vermont, volunteered at the Vermont Foodbank in Barre, Vermont. "This year we sorted 340 pounds of really good quality apples into small containers; more than 7,200 pounds of frozen meat by product type; and over 8,000 pounds of other donated foods (canned goods, pastas, etc.)," said Joan Davis at Magee.

The Vermont Foodbank provides food to a network of 215 food shelves, meal sites, senior centers and after-school programs. The amount of food sorted by Magee employees represents more than 13,000 meals. "The Magee team effort will ensure that families, children and older adults will receive the food they need for the coming month," Davis added.

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SECRETS of success

Stotz & Fatzinger, Easton, Pennsylvania

Key management team members: Nancy and Bill Regan, and Courtney Millen
Products carried: Office and promotional products, furniture, janitorial, printing, break room and ice melt
Year founded: 1989
No of Employees: 15
Key business partners: S.P. Richards, Essendant, Independent Suppliers Group and their many vendors
% of total sales generated online: 70%

When competition heats up, leading a sales call with office supplies might not always be the best way to attract new business. Just ask Bill Regan, co-owner and vice president at Stotz & Fatzinger, Easton, Pennsylvania. The dealership sells office supplies, furniture, promotional items, printing and business forms, janitorial supplies and break room. "We really try to lead with value-added products like janitorial or business forms," says Bill. "Once you build that relationship office supplies will follow."

Stotz & Fatzinger is situated in a five-county area on the Pennsylvania-New Jersey border. Bill, along with his wife Nancy, who is company president, run the dealership. "We are a one-stop shop for so many different products," adds Bill. He contends that it's product diversification that has kept the dealership competitive. "We are the only local company that remains after all these years."

The dealership sponsors events and works with non-profits to bolster its local identity. "We just did a show with our local chamber of commerce," says Bill. The opportunity was seen as an investment to meet with local businesses and community leaders and also to create local dealer awareness.

Local values can make a difference and salespeople readily adopt the concept. The niche in which Stotz & Fatzinger operates deals with offices of between ten to 100 employees. "It's not a hard sell to get people to say they want to buy local, but you have to give them good pricing and you have to give them service," says Bill.

Numerous competitive challenges face the dealership daily, including online sellers and regional and national players. Salespeople endeavor to level the playing field and are aided by certifications the dealership holds. Stotz & Fatzinger is a Pennsylvania certified Woman Business Enterprise which helps expand the company's visibility among corporate decision makers.

Also adding to the competitive arsenal is participation in Pennsylvania's COSTARS cooperative purchasing program. The program establishes Stotz & Fatzinger as a supplier to entities spending public funds for procurement.

"Now they go to an approved vendor at a predetermined discount and remove the expensive bid process," says Bill.

He relates how, not that long ago, the dealership tried to provide everything for everybody. That position was unsustainable; in response Stotz & Fatzinger reviewed its accounts to determine which to maintain and which to make changes to, based upon a number of variables. "We are not that vendor for every business that's out there, so we tried to target the type of accounts we do really well with. And then just try to find more of them," says Bill.

Much of the growth today comes from sales of janitorial, break room and printing to complement traditional office products. There has been a nice uptick with furniture sales as well. Those are the products that salespeople concentrate on, along with business forms, when they open new accounts.

Bill sees opportunity in the janitorial area and is looking to hire a specialist or possibly identify a small janitorial organization that is ripe for acquisition. Alternatively, he also seeks a business forms dealer that might be looking to sell out. "We want to continue to work for a bit so our goal is to blend those businesses into our business," he says.

As that goal is pursued the next generation of Regan's is making a significant impact on current operations. "Our middle daughter, Courtney, is getting her master's degree from Cornell," says Bill. She works behind the scenes on many operational tasks and concentrates on the S.P. Richards and Essendant pricing matrices to improve margins.

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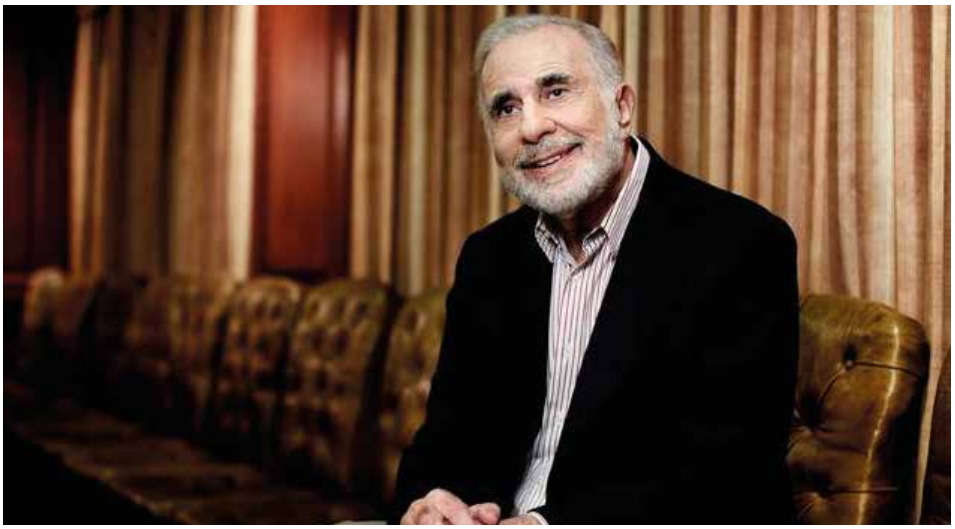
Icahn weighs in on HP-Xerox deal



Investment market heavyweight Carl Icahn has become embroiled in the ongoing boardroom battle between Hewlett-Packard and Xerox, as the fate of both firms remains uncertain.

Icahn, who is a sizable investor in both companies, has written to the HP board in an effort to get them to accept Xerox's offer of a merger. He claims the deal is a "no-brainer".

In early November, Xerox received a $2.3 billion cash windfall following the sale of its stake in Fuji Xerox to long-time joint venture partner Fujifilm. The deal also freed Xerox from a number of intellectual property obligations it had with Fuji, giving it far more flexibility in the mergers and acquisition marketplace and allowing it to open negotiations with HP on a possible acquisition, despite the latter's far greater sales volume and market capitalization.

Xerox duly wrote to HP to request mutual dual diligence to combine the two firms in a $33 billion transaction. HP rejected the offer, claiming it was not in the best interests of its shareholders. Xerox then threatened to sidestep the HP board and take its offer directly to the firm's shareholders, a move that was confirmed at the end of November with the emergence of an offer that would still see HP's stockholders own 48% of the merged entities in addition to pocketing $17 per share in cash.

As *INDEPENDENT DEALER* went to press there was still no indication as to how HP would respond, although Icahn's intervention may spark a response. Icahn owns almost 11% of Xerox shares and about 4.2% of HP stock.

Essendant names Unterberg head of Vertical Markets Group

Essendant has promoted Guy Unterberg to the role of senior director of its Vertical Markets Group (VMG).

Unterberg joined Essendant in 2017 as director of business development, having previously held a number of senior positions at resellers such as Office Depot, OfficeMax and Boise Cascade Office Products. He has been credited with winning dozens of regional and national accounts on behalf of the wholesaler's customers.

As senior director of VMG, he will oversee the unit of Essendant which helps independent resellers gain share in key verticals such as federal and state government, enterprise, education and healthcare. He succeeds David Haugh, who left to join industrial distributor MSC a few months ago.

"Over the past three years, Guy has proven himself as a capable leader dedicated to our customers' growth," said Essendant VP of sales Renee Starr.

"The vertical markets team is a critical component of Essendant's go-to-market strategy and represents a billion-dollar opportunity for resellers. Guy's strong track record for growth speaks for itself and I'm confident his experience within these verticals will lead to success."

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BICRGU11BK	Gel-ocity® Ultra, 0.7mm	Black	DZ
BICRGU11BE	Gel-ocity® Ultra, 0.7mm	Blue	DZ
BICRGU11AST	Gel-ocity® Ultra, 0.7mm	Assorted	DZ

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 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 14

Clover Imaging management take lead in private equity takeover

Clover Imaging Group's executive leadership team has teamed with private equity firm Norwest Equity Partners (NEP) to acquire the aftermarket remanufacturer from 4L Holdings Group.

Speculation has been rife for the past several months about the future of the Clover Technologies Group, following the appointment of strategic advisors to explore its business options. This followed major contract losses that led to a steep decline in the value of the group's debt.

Now, the Clover Imaging entity is to be acquired by its existing management team and NEP after an agreement was reached with Clover Technologies owner, Golden Gate Capital-backed 4L Holdings, and its lenders.

No financial details of the transaction have been disclosed, but it is expected to close before Christmas. The current management team of chairman Jim Cerkleski, CEO George Milton and president Eric Martin will continue to oversee the business, which will remain headquartered in the Chicago area.

"Clover's executive leadership team, in partnership with NEP, will once again control the destiny of the company we built," said Cerkleski, adding: "Under our new, very low debt structure, we have a lot of flexibility moving forward and are well positioned to write the next chapter for Clover Imaging Group."

Jim Cerkleski

NEP managing partner Tim DeVries said the private equity firm would help Clover "leverage the company's strong position in the marketplace and put [its] capital and resources to work to further expand and grow the business".

NEP is no stranger to the print market. Since 2015, it has been the owner of Marco, one of the country's most successful and fastest-growing copier and technology dealers.

No details were given on the future of the Clover Wireless business. »

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S.P. Richards to sell regional distributor

Wholesaler S.P. Richards has reached an agreement to sell its Garland C Norris (GCN) unit to Southeastern Paper Group (SEPG).

S.P. Richards acquired GCN, an established regional wholesale distributor of food service disposables and janitorial and cleaning supplies, in 2014, but continued to operate it as a standalone company. Based in Apex, North Carolina, GCN offers around 400 customers access to more than 3,500 stocked products.

"The sale of GCN represents a step forward in our strategy to optimize our portfolio and strengthen our focus on other growth initiatives in the Jan/San market," stated SPR EVP Steve Schultz. "GCN's rich history in the region makes it a great fit with Southeastern. In addition, we are excited that GCN will deepen our relationship with Southeastern Paper Group."

SEPG is a third-generation family and veteran-owned business headquartered in Spartanburg, South Carolina. It has served the southeastern United States since 1969 as a distributor of facility supplies, food service disposables and industrial packaging equipment and products. With expanding national capabilities, it employs almost 500 staff, operates nine warehouse facilities and offers more than 25,000 products to businesses across the region.

"GCN provides a unique opportunity for SEPG to extend its position in the wholesale distribution market through an established and trusted business," said SEPG CEO Lewis Miller Jr. "It brings deep specialization in the redistribution segment to strengthen our offering, while SEPG's expanding footprint and longstanding vendor partnerships will help deliver value to more customers and drive growth."

The transaction is expected to close on December 13. No financial details were released.

Smead expands manufacturing in Utah and Ohio

Casey Avent

Minnesota-based Smead has announced plans to expand two U.S. facilities as part of what it describes as an "operations efficiency initiative".

The project will see the company create 120 new manufacturing jobs in Ohio and Utah. At the same time, it will close its production and distribution location in McAllen, Texas, and a facility in Reynosa, Mexico that is owned and operated by third-party partner Am-Mex.

"We have the opportunity to continue to invest in and utilize proprietary technology as well as optimize production and distribution in our other facilities," said CEO Sharon Avent.

"While it will be difficult to say goodbye to the many devoted employees we have in Texas and Mexico, we are expanding our operations in Ohio and Utah. Our new manufacturing and distribution structure will ensure sufficient capacity to meet current and future needs, while maintaining our historically strong levels of customer service."

President Casey Avent added: "Once this process is completed, Smead will once again be producing 100% of its paper-based products in the U.S. We believe that this will further establish Smead as the leader in our product categories."

Casey Avent confirmed this project is related to productivity advancements at Smead's U.S. manufacturing sites and that the company's volumes were increasing this year. He said the initiative will result in the net creation of around 100 new jobs.

Willert Sr. joins Static Control

Gary Willert, former CEO of LMI Solutions, has been hired by Static Control in a strategic advisory capacity.

Willert joins his daughter Annie and son Matt, both of whom have been recruited by Static Control since Clover's acquisition of LMI's assets in September. There have been suggestions that these appointments signal Static Control's intent to target LMI's customer base.

Static Control said that the addition of yet another member of the Willert family would be influential in helping it build out its remanufacturing line, while assisting it in "various strategic initiatives".

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New CEO at Navigator

Paper group The Navigator Company has appointed António Redondo its next CEO. He will take up the post on January 1, 2020.

Redondo is currently a member of the executive committee and has been with the manufacturer since 1987. Since entering the management ranks in 1998, he has been responsible for a number of different areas, including pulp and paper sales and marketing, supply chain, logistics, product development, revenue management and corporate communications.

Fifty-five-year-old Redondo succeeds João Castello Branco, the group's chairman, who has been interim CEO since April of this year following the departure of Diogo da Silveira.

Entry wins ISSA Innovation award

The Innovation Award at this year's ISSA North America trade show in Las Vegas was won by a chloride-free de-icer named Entry.

Manufactured by Pennsylvania-based Branch Creek and distributed by Secure Winter Products, Entry is a liquid de-icer that melts ice more quickly than traditional granular alternatives. By lowering the freezing point of water, it also gives more protection against refreezing. In addition, the proprietary chloride-free formula is less harmful to the environment than chloride-based salts that are commonly used in many de-icing products.

Entry was the winner in the Supplies and Accessories category and beat more than 40 other candidates to take the overall top product prize at the event. The other four category winners were:

- Cleaning Agents: Foam Soap by SC Johnson Professional
- Dispensers: foamyiQ by Spartan Chemical Company
- Equipment: Whiz by SoftBank Robotics
- Services and Technology: OptiSolve Surface Imaging Technology by OptiSolve

The 2020 ISSA North America show will take place October 26-29 at McCormick Place in Chicago.

EDmarket Assn. Honors Julie Ryno with Distinguished Service Award

The Education Market Association (EDmarket) has presented its highest honor, the David McCurrach Distinguished Service Award, to Julie Ryno, national sales manager of Diversified Woodcrafts. Ryno received the award at the EDspaces Conference & Expo in Milwaukee in October

"Julie has been a tireless volunteer in her time in the industry for close to 40 years," said Greg Moore, 2019 EDmarket chair of the board, during the presentation. "She is always the first to volunteer and remains focused on a creating a brighter future for the association."

Ryno recently completed her second term on the board of directors and has served on the EDspaces planning committee, equipment manufacturers council, and young executives committee.

In accepting the award, she remarked: "I was fortunate early in my career to have amazing female role models in the education market. Those women mentored younger women and showed us how important it was to be involved in our association. It is a great honor to be recognized by the industry that I love. I stand on the shoulders of giants in our industry."

Julie Ryno also encouraged the women in the audience to gather, network and support one another at the new Bold Women/Bold Coffee event held later that week. 2019 AASA President Deb Kerr and 2020 EDmarket Chair Angela Nelson shared their leadership journey and encouraged those in attendance to build their networks and serve the industry.

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Integra Seating debuts new Tide Metal Series

Wisconsin-based Integra Seating introduced a new seating option for healthcare environments at this year's Healthcare Design Expo & Conference in New Orleans.

The Tide Metal Series, part of Integra's Coastal Collection, consists of four seat widths of 22", 27", 32" and 42"; three back heights: low, high and patient; and an orthopaedic/hip seat height. All seating options are bariatric weight-rated, certified Clean Air Gold and compliant with the Healthier Hospitals Initiative of Safer Chemicals Challenge.

The steel arms and legs are available in several powder coat finishes and solid surface arm caps. The series can be upholstered with an expansive selection of graded-in fabrics from leading textile distributors. A unique tablet option with a 300 lb. static capacity is also available.

Low Tide seating includes a wall-saver design, while all seating options come standard with clean-out design, along with a wear-point seat rotation, a unique function Integra builds in that keeps the seat looking and performing longer. An island seat option, which allows for clean-out on all sides, is also available. Tide components, including the seat, back, leg and arm, can be easily replaced, further extending the lifecycle of the product and reducing a facility's cost for a total product replacement.

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Metrofuser releases online HP laser printer tech assessment tool

Laser printer parts manufacturer Metrofuser has introduced a free online printer tech assessment tool developed for printer service providers.

Called the HP Printer Service Pro Challenge, it can be used in a number of ways. The 22-question quiz allows printer service technicians to see how they compare with other HP printer techs nationwide. In addition to testing current team members, some are using it for job applicants and new hires.

Questions were curated from Metrofuser's 16-year history of providing printer service training and 40,000 technical support calls. The questions were further vetted by two industry veterans with a combined experience of 60 years. The Printer Service Pro Challenge tests skills in the following areas:

- Error code familiarity
- Image defect troubleshooting
- Paper jam diagnostic abilities
- Printer network knowledge
- Color printer understanding
- Firmware problem-solving

Downloadable and sharable certificates are available for users who receive passing grades. Confidential results will be shared with participants only. Take the test at the link here.

Configura releases CET Designer 10.5

Swedish technology company Configura has released the 10.5 version of its CET Designer space-planning software.

CET Designer 10.5 includes a set of construction tools, Photo Lab updates and an improved interface for keyboard shortcuts.

The set of construction tools in CET Designer 10.5 consists of three tools to help users reference points in their drawings and to measure distances from a set baseline.

Photo Lab updates include several new panorama backgrounds and optional sky background in the Lighting & Shadows section of Photo Lab. (For more information about Photo Lab updates click here.) New search and sorting functions should make it easier for users to find the shortcuts that they're looking for.

NOPA News

The history and future of NOPA

By: Mike Tucker, president and CEO of NOPA

Founded in 1904, NOPA has been around for over 100 years. It all began when a group of 80 office product, equipment and furniture dealers gathered in Chicago to lay the groundwork for what became the National Association of Stationers and Manufacturers. For 80 plus years the association grew and prospered as the ranks of office products dealers in the industry swelled to over 12,000.

In 1986, Office Depot and Staples came on the scene and the industry was changed forever. Dealer acquisition and aggressive discounting kicked into high gear and the number of dealers declined drastically. Today, the number of independents is estimated at 1,200-1,500.

Into the mid 90s NOPA's membership continued to be inclusive of independents and national chains. However, in 1994 the NOPA board, led by David Guernsey, decided that the dealer's interests and needs were being compromised and voted to exclude Staples, Office Depot, Corporate Express, etc. and focus exclusively on the needs of the independent dealer community.

Things were relatively stable for a while, but the last 10 years has seen a steady increase in disruption. Office product sales have been in a downward spiral. Dealer consolidation and acquisition are rampant, and Amazon is challenging the survival of independents regardless of industry.

Despite these challenges, NOPA continues to be a valuable resource for the IDC. Over the last two years NOPA has developed and delivered valuable education and training for dealers on:

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- How to educate their customers and protect their business from Amazon
- Major changes and opportunities in the federal government marketplace
- Financial and sales compensation benchmarking
- Cybersecurity and ways to protect your business

In the first week of December the NOPA board met to discuss its strategic plan and consider how to best serve the industry for 2020 and beyond. Data was collected from online surveys as well as through ballots collected at the recent Prevail show. Scores of interviews were conducted, by phone and in person, with industry leaders and business owners around the country. What did we learn and what is our plan?

1. **Amazon**: The online giant continues to be a major concern for most of our members; we will therefore continue to provide Amazon training and advocacy to help dealers compete effectively.
2. **Government advocacy**: Dealers want NOPA to continue their work at the federal and local level to protect the interests of independents.
3. **Data gathering**: We have identified the need for an information clearinghouse for manufacturer marketing assets and other important industry topics. NOPA is forming a committee to implement this program.
4. **Partnerships with other industries**: We will develop strategic alliances with ISSA, BSA, Synnex and others to participate in existing and established programs that can benefit our members.
5. **Industry Week**: We will continue to work with industry leaders for support of a 2021 NOPA show.
6. **Intern program**: We will look at the creation of a program to bring new and young talent into the industry. We have already identified a federal government program for veterans returning to the civilian workforce that our board believes has tremendous potential for our industry.

As you read through these topics, I hope you see things that are important to you and your business. If you have other important issues you believe we should consider I hope you will share them. Our Vision is:

"To be the indispensable resource and voice for Independent Workplace Suppliers, driving growth and innovation."

If you have questions, comments or suggestions please send them to me at mike@iopfda.org.

Thank You for your support of NOPA!

NOPA Partnership Gives Members Free Access to Data to Help Win Public Sector Business

NOPA recently entered into a partnership with Bid Desk Analytics in order to give NOPA members a distinct competitive advantage in gaining more, and more profitable, public sector bid business. The partnership will allow NOPA members to have free access to valuable, hard-to-find competitor pricing data for the top 20% of U.S. state, local, K-12 school and higher education public sector contracts.

In addition, members will receive 20% off full access to the Bid Desk Data Platform and support team services to dig even deeper into the data, maximizing their competitive advantage in the public sector market.

"NOPA's mission is to provide independent office products and furniture dealers, as well as manufacturers, the information, knowledge and tools they need to help them be successful in today's ever-evolving business environment," said NOPA President and CEO Mike Tucker. "Bid Desk's data is a critical tool they can use to successfully compete in the public sector market, which can be a very lucrative source of additional revenue. We encourage members to take advantage of the unique opportunity to leverage this data that they would otherwise not have access to."

To learn more, contact info@iopfda.org

PROJECT PROGRESS

By Michael Chazin

There are a host of ancillary projects and services that dealers can sell in conjunction with furniture projects, we find out more...

When the majority of project sales involved systems furniture with workstations as far as the eye could see, accessories and ancillary products were well defined. At the most basic level every employee needed a chair mat, monitor arms, task lighting, a waste basket, wire management and sometimes a keyboard tray.

Things have changed just a little bit since then. In today's business environment, projects frequently go beyond a systems approach and sometimes avoid it entirely. New products have popped up to join the list of potential ancillary products. "Sit-to-stand options have become a daily part of our business," says Tommy Sansom, managing partner, Officewise Furniture and Supply, Amarillo, Texas. "Benching and sit-to-stand have replaced much of what used to be casegood sales," he adds.

"When you have a good year with project sales, you don't always do as good a job selling accessories," says Sansom. "High priority is selling the installation service," he adds. The installation is presented as a separate offering from the furniture sale and is detailed out so customers know what to expect. "We break out that cost on large projects," he adds.

Project sales are changing

At Citron Workspaces, Denver, the majority of project sales involve a height-adjustable desk surface, some kind of storage and a task chair. "Many times we're not even selling the power and data delivery system which used to be a panel system," says Steve Manhart, vice president. "Today it's often a power strip they buy from Office Depot or maybe a beam system."

In the mid-market space, where Citron does the majority of its business, the buying process has remained relatively stable, says Manhart. The lead buyer ranges from an office manager to the business owner and all decisions are arrived at with little or no input from outside consultants such as architects or designers. "Customers are looking for something simple, quick and very affordable," says Manhart.

In addition to monitor arms and chair mats, Citron offers coat racks, meeting room reservation systems and sound mitigation, as well as built-in cabinetry and millwork for copy centers and storage rooms. Partners such as Great American Art, Canton, Massachusetts, make it easy to sell artwork. Movable walls are also available and are a big part of the offering. Walls range from low-end product without many options to more expensive systems from Teknion and Trendway, which make up the majority of what's sold. "The money that used to go into workstations and private offices is now going into collaborative areas with coffee bars and soft seating," says Manhart. "It's the Starbuck's feel where you go in and don't sit at a desk."

At Tallgrass Business Resources, Coralville, Iowa, the project sales process has evolved and now includes what the dealership refers to as "discovery exercises". "We perform them at every level—at the leadership level, at the management level and the user level," says Tom Vander Vaart, director of furniture sales. At each level customers are questioned about what they like and don't like about their current space.

The goal is to engage the customer in the process and develop a new space that eliminates any pain points. "We let customers know upfront everything we do—from furniture and to supplies to promotional items and branded environments—so we get a feel if that's something they want us to present," Vander Vaart explains. "The ancillary items we address most on project sales are monitor arms, task lighting, wire management and plug-and-play capability," he adds. "It's the little items that people don't always think about."

Sound masking is another popular offering. "We have a couple of different sources; one of them is through our primary manufacturer—Steelcase," says Vander Vaart. As workstations get smaller and more open areas are created, more people congregate in them so sound masking is desired. This approach integrates sound masking within the building as units »

typically installed in ceilings. "You don't even notice that it's there," says Vander Vaart. "If you turn it off you definitely notice the ability to hear other conversations."

Tallgrass partners with signage and graphics companies to create unique spaces that tell a company's story with the branded graphics it offers. Graphics are frequently installed in reception areas but could be found anywhere within an organization—the cafeteria, open meeting areas, conference rooms or other spaces. This offering has been implemented on a handful of projects over the last several years. "In a few instances it's the reason we won the project because we differentiated ourselves," says Vander Vaart.

Customers don't know what they need

Environments Denver, the furniture division of EON Office, Denver, is part of another full-line dealership which offers both office furniture and office supplies. Customers don't always recognize the need for ancillary products at the time a furniture order is placed. "You can increase the value of a sale 30 percent just by offering something that the customer doesn't know they need at that time," says Van Young, vice president of furniture at EON.

Corporate moves and reconfigurations are a major offering at Environments Denver. What drives move services is the fact that when customers need to move they deal with furniture people. "Most moving companies don't employ office furniture specialists who know how to take systems apart and especially how to put them back together," says Young.

Officewise is selective on which moving jobs it takes. Scheduling is a big determinant of which moving jobs can be accepted. Sansom suggests it would be beneficial to have a separate staff for moves and intermarket work. "That would really be a good growth area for us," he says.

At Apex Facility Resources, as the size of workstations has been reduced, there has been concomitant changes in moves, says Matt Watson, co-owner and vice president of business development. In his view corporate moves have become far more technical than physical. "We're not moving as much but what we move needs to be disconnected and reconnected with accuracy and integrity," he says.

Monitors and docking stations need to be set up correctly to avoid extended employee downtime. In large office environments the loss of productive time due to inexperienced movers could be considerable. "Time is their number one commodity and we can save them time and money with our services," says Watson.

Apex takes time upfront to meet with potential customers and educate them on the extent of products and services that are available. "We offer clients a completely integrated solution," says Watson. Most mid-market customers don't have project delivery teams, which feeds into Apex's integrated approach. "We sell deeper on every commercial deal that we do," he adds. "We focus on services because that's where we see growth and the sustainability of our organization.

The service mindset

"Most dealers are there to sell product," he continues. "It's very much a product delivery mindset while at Apex we have more of a services solutions mindset." Offerings include data cabling, relocations, reconfigurations, lease surrender services and workspace refresh services. Right now the dealership targets small remodel projects for tenants with 10,000 to 50,000 square feet. Watson doesn't see the business as either furniture or services. "It's an integrated solutions partnering," he says, "We listen for the need and tailor a solution to answer it."

Services currently account for 40 percent of revenues at Apex, and an effort is underway to raise that to 50 percent. "Selling services really comes down to selling trust and confidence," says Watson. "Really what we have to »

 CONTINUED FROM PAGE 28

do is build levels of trust and deliver on confidence. Our services have carried us through every downturn we've gone through," he adds. "So it is a defensive position as well as a core cultural aspect of who we are."

Three designers on staff at Environments Denver, along with Young, take the lead on selling services. "Reps don't have to know how to quote moves, they just need to know to ask the question," says Young. When a need for moving services is uncovered, Young or a designer will accompany the sales rep to cover service options.

Malone Office Environments, Columbus, Georgia, would rather dedicate its moving and installation personnel to product sales as those activities are far more profitable. "We do a fair amount of services because people ask us to but I don't target that," says Sam Buracker, owner and president at Malone. "The same men that do that labor can make the company more money on furniture installations."

A separate division sells floor coverings at Malone Office Environments and has operated since 2003. Like other furniture dealers Malone operates with discretion when it comes to floor covering sales, or any ancillary products that might fall under the design umbrella. "Architects typically have a design team so if we discuss design options we might cut into their ability to charge for design," adds Buraker.

When it makes sense Malone Contract Floor Covering will do measuring and pricing, and then a floor-covering line item is wrapped into the total furniture charge. "We are really trying to ramp up that division in the next couple of years because we think there are more opportunities out there," he says.

All on one P.O.

Environments Denver has sold floor coverings for the past ten years, but rather than offer products itself it works with outside sources. "One of the details that helps us close deals is we keep everything on one purchase order," says Young. Environments Denver gets an invoice from floor covering suppliers and then invoices the customers for everything. "We don't want the customer to leave our office and go to the carpet guy's place to get their carpet done," he adds.

When ancillary products including floor coverings get wrapped into one invoice it makes financing easier, says Young. "We offer leases on every project we sell because it make it easier to sell ancillary products if you can wrap them into the lease." Design and installation charges can also be rolled into a lease.

A variety of ancillary design-type products are available from Environments Denver. "We do wall coverings, accent wall paintings, flooring and a lot of rugs," says Young. One recent ancillary product that's just starting to take hold are decorative pillows to go with seating throughout corporate offices in reception areas, collaborative meeting areas and executives offices. A lot of manufacturers have started to offer pillows. "Global has started to sell pillows," he says. "Accent pillows are available in any of the upholstery fabrics Global offers."

Furniture dealers that are not backed up by a supplies division may find themselves at a disadvantage if they don't have access to that one-stop wholesale shop. "The wholesale level really helps us provide products on a timely basis without having to set up multiple vendors," Young says. "We place one order with the wholesaler and we deliver it on the furniture trucks with everything else."

"You can't go into business anymore and just sell furniture," says Watson. "It's commoditized." He says that a growing number of his dealership's tech customers have started to buy furniture and accessories online. "I walk into my customers' offices all the time and they just bought three more sit-to-stand tables without even talking to me," he adds. Increased commoditization makes the brand experience less relevant; hence Apex remains unaffiliated because Watson contends that stance provides greater flexibility to provide furniture solutions for customers.

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Competition is formidable

When it comes to selling the most basic ancillary products, online competition can be formidable. Online suppliers have picked up a good deal of ancillary product sales. On a recent sale of 150 workstations at Apex, the client decided to purchase monitor arms from Amazon. "They didn't see a large difference between the products we offered and what they ended up buying," says Watson. "We had coached them to test the product on the mock up we had done for them, but they didn't do that." The arms purchased online worked but only after trial-and-error efforts enabled the customer to discover how to jury-rig the attachments.

Another new market that full-line dealers can readily pursue is servicing restrooms in new office construction. Often when architects specify restroom products they do so without a specific idea as to where those products can be obtained. "They don't usually have relationships with Jan/San distributors like they do with furniture dealers," says Sansom. "We have discussions with them upfront to have them specify our dispensers."

As workstations shrink in size and customers seek furniture with smaller footprints, one solution that comes up more frequently is quick-ship furniture solutions typically found on the internet. "Everybody is in a hurry, so traditional long lead times from furniture manufacturers don't work well with a lot of clients," says Sansom. His primary furniture suppliers Herman Miller, National and HON all have quick-ship options.

Customers who don't buy furniture that often can have some misconceptions. "They think because they can see furniture online, we should be able to get it delivered to them in a day or so," says Sansom. He believes this quick-ship market will continue to grow. "The biggest challenge to growing sales of ancillary products and services is retraining existing sales reps," he adds.

Citron has a sales staff split between older and younger salespeople. Some of the old-school folks have a harder time selling accessories, especially any that are more tech-oriented. One up-and-coming ancillary product is the M/Connect docking station from Humanscale, which provides a USB port to connect laptops to monitor arms. The system combines technology with ergonomics and eliminates cable clutter. "The younger reps love it," says Manhart. Instead of attempting to sell the docking station they present it as a cool alternative to connect monitor arms and it practically sells itself, he reports.

At Apex Facility Resources, Watson goes outside the industry to hire salespeople as he contends that the typical furniture salesperson doesn't get services. "They don't feel comfortable or confident having that conversation," says Watson. "Dealers who aren't replacing those salespeople with young, smart people and training them to handle the modern customer will get left behind."

Michael Chazin is a freelance writer specializing in business topics, who has written about the office supply business for more than 15 years. He can be reached at mchazin503@comcast.net.

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IT'S TIME TO SELL JAN/SAN

Frank Hoard explains why

By Lisa Veeck

With a strong facility supply background that includes everything from frontline sales to management with the likes of Staples and Corporate Express, Hoard joined ISG as Facility Supplies Channel director in January. He was hired based on the realization that the time for Independent dealers to expand into Jan/San has never been better—or more necessary.

Why diversify, why Jan/San, why now?

"Diversification is necessary to survival," Hoard says. "The growth in traditional office supplies is not there; they are more commoditized than ever and freely available online. We've seen many Independent dealers successfully expand into office furniture; now is the time to do the same with Jan/San and facility supplies."

Hoard believes the timing for this expansion is ideal for several reasons: "The biggest hurdle for Independents entering the Jan/San market has long been the idea that they need to have chemical expertise. Today, however, most chemicals share a similar base, such as hydrogen peroxide. This trend means the chemical world is more homogenized. There are only so many ways you can formulate the same ingredients. In short, the manufacturers have removed much of the expertise needed to sell these chemicals. Also, there are fewer chemicals being used; there is probably about 20 percent of the floor finish sold today that there was 10 years ago, thanks to the use of different floorings such as vinyl, safety concerns and the trend toward smaller spaces."

Hoard believes that Independent dealers are uniquely poised to take on this market. "The larger national firms like Staples and Office Depot look away from things that aren't shiny—like Jan/San. They are also leaving the smaller regionalized areas where independents live and thrive, which makes it one of the best times to be a member of the IDC."

Given his background, Hoard is well aware of the so far sluggish movement within the Jan/San industry to infiltrate the office products sector. However, he is confident the IDC is far better equipped to sell Jan/San than vice versa.

"Despite the fact that office supplies are more commoditized, independents have the advantage," he says. "They are more advanced; they have a culture of online ordering, electronic billing, business reviews, cost comparison and just-in-time delivery. In the Jan/San world, one out of many may get it, but most don't live in today's business world. Many of those looking to get into the office supply business will have to do a lot of catching up; backend investments and a culture change takes time."

Ready, set, get going

So how do independents who want to carry Jan/San get started?

"The number one thing that keeps Independent dealers from moving forward is fear," Hoard says. "They need to stop projecting the hurdles of 20 years ago that kept them from carrying facility supplies and take advantage of today's market. If you are just entering the market, you need to be able to make customers aware that (1) you carry Jan/San and (2) you do it well. If you don't feel comfortable doing this, you need to find someone to work with—a group like ISG, a local Jan/San house or some may even buy a Jan/San company. However you do it, you need to find someone you trust."

You also need a plan. "You can Frankenstein a facility supply program together, but it is not sustainable," Hoard says. "You need a three-to-five-year vision and the right people. Someone who can sell toilet paper is different from just supplying what a customer asks for; you can't just sell from a list and make money as the margins aren't there."

To stock—and what to stock—that is the question

"One dealer told me he had an order for 50 cartons of bowl cleaner," Hoard says. "I asked how long it was going to last the customer, which makes a difference. He could buy it and deliver it direct or he could stock it. The dealer said he only stocked items where he realized a 20 percent cost savings, which is fine, in some cases. But salespeople prefer to sell stocked items. I asked him 'What if you saved only 15 percent in cost by stocking it but could sell $3 million instead of $2 million just by having it on hand?' This is where flexibility is needed."

While stocking certain items can drive sales, having too many similar products can just as easily reduce margins. »

"The main thing many independents do wrong when entering Jan/San is putting too much weight on brand names," Hoard says. "Many office product dealers equate brand names with higher quality, and while that may sometimes be the case, they need to stop and consider what they are selling and standardize their offer. One dealer I talked with carried 14 types of multifold towels. I advised the dealer to rein it in to two to three types, and the cost and margins would be better; you don't lose customers switching brands at that level of product."

> "If you want to be a general office supplier, and you are not selling Jan/San products, you'd better have a good plan in place on how you are going to grow your business because independent office supply dealers that don't start making a concentrated effort to put facility supplies in their front lines will be treading water—at best."
>
> **—Frank Hoard, ISG facility supplies channel director**

A Helping Hand

ISG believes so strongly that a good future for the IDC includes facility supplies that in addition to bringing Hoard on board, the organization has initiated several programs aimed at helping Independent dealers enter the market.

"In 2020, we will be offering webinars in a roundtable format featuring dealers who have gone through the growing pains and are willing to share their experiences and answer audience questions," Hoard says. "We also do cost comparisons. If dealers tell us what they bought in the last six months, we can cross reference usually up to 80 percent of the goods as well as figure in rebates, etc. Our analysis usually results in a 17-25 percent savings."

Hoard recommends using these resources as well as the ISG website—and him. "If you are trying to do it on your own, I'd ask you why," he says. "Why not use all the resources you are paying for as a member, including me? I can't sell for you, but I can teach your salespeople to sell Jan/San. I can do sessions on site. Every member has access to me through the website; my cell phone number is on my business card along with my email address. If you need help, contact me."

Choosing a direction

"The biggest threat for the IDC is inaction," Hoard says. "You have to invest in the category. If you think you can just stock a few towels and tissues and sell from a list, you're only going to lose money. It may not cost you now, but in one to two years, it will be harder to catch up. However, independents willing to make the right investment—hire people with the right knowledge base and take advantage of the resources available to them—can easily go from zero to $1 million in facility supply sales in 18 months." And from there, Hoard says, the proverbial sky is the limit.

Lisa Veeck is owner of Clean Communications, a full-service content, social media and website auditing provider. She can be reached at Lisa@cleancommunications.biz; phone: 773-484-7412.

FIVE EXCELLENT EMAIL MARKETING TACTICS THAT WIN CUSTOMERS IN THE INBOX

By Kevin Rehberger

Emails are among the best marketing tools at your disposal, since they're great for building strong relationships with your customers. The big issue is that people receive dozens, if not hundreds of emails each day, so it's easy for emails to get lost in the shuffle.

The trick is to craft emails that give a strong impression right away, so people will want to open them and click through to your site. Give your email strategy a boost by using these effective marketing tactics.

1. Personalize your emails

According to a report from Yes Lifecycle Marketing in 2017, personalized email subjects lead to 50% more open rates. This shows that companies can make their emails more enticing by personalizing them when possible.

Before you do anything, go through your old data to learn more about your customers. Learn about your customers' interests and buying habits, and assign each one a buyer persona. With this information, you can learn how to personalize each of your emails.

Include a customer's name in the subject line so the email feels less robotic and more personal. Use a customer's purchasing history to find products that they would be interested in buying. Small steps like this go a long way towards improving open rates.

2. Optimize for mobile

With each passing year, more and more people are checking their emails on phones and other mobile devices. If your email looks like a mess on mobile, few people will be able to navigate it and find your website. This is why mobile optimization for emails is crucial.

To start, make sure your subject line gets to the point so important information doesn't get cut off inside the inbox. It would also be wise to partner with an email service provider that focuses on responsive design. By using this design, emails will be formatted to account for any screen, regardless of its size.

Finally, make sure the call to action you include in your email is nice and big so anyone can find it right away. Not everyone has a device with a large screen, so you need to account for these people when you design your emails.

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3. Focus on list segmentation

You have many buyer personas to focus on, so you need to send content that is relevant to each of them. Clients won't open your emails if the content within seems to be irrelevant to their interests. Take some time to segment your email list if you haven't done so already.

You can segment your email list by industry, purchase history, location and company size, among other things. Start with a master list based on industry and create dedicated sub-lists for each of them, based on the categories listed above. This will make it a lot easier to send targeted emails that appeal to specific clients.

4. Spam-proof your emails

There's nothing worse than spending hours designing an email, only to discover it's gone into a customer's spam folder. Spam filters keep an eye out for suspicious emails that could cause a lot of harm. Through the CAN-SPAM Act, people can stop you from sending emails if too many are viewed as spam. This is why you should always take extra precautions with how you write your email copy.

First, you need to disclose that your email is an advertisement from an official company. Add your logo, and disclose your physical address at the bottom of the email for extra verification. Include an option to unsubscribe from your emailing list, and make sure you honor any opt-outs promptly.

Filters also look for red flags in the subject line, so try to avoid them when you write your copy. "Click here" is a big phrase to avoid, and other phrases like "don't hesitate" and "you" are also caught by filters often.

5. Know when you should send

Knowing when to send out your emails is also important. Even if you follow all the tactics mentioned above, clients may not open your email if it was sent at a bad time. While you may not be able to find an exact time that always works, there are ways to develop a good timeframe for sending emails.

Send emails to clients at different times of the day and pay close attention to their open rates. Take notes over the next few weeks, and see if there are any major differences in how many people open your emails. Use the information you gather to develop an ideal timeframe for sending emails to your clients.

On a side note, be mindful of clients stationed in other time zones, since you will need to plan around that. Also, try to send your emails during the week, since fewer people check their inboxes over the weekend.

With these tactics, you will be able to craft quality email campaigns that will foster strong relationships with your clients.

Kevin Rehberger is a content strategist for Fortune Web Marketing. To learn more, visit https://www.fortunewebmarketing.com.

By Krista Moore

MAKE IT HAPPEN!

As the end of the year approaches, it can be very frustrating when sales people or teams are not hitting their projections and expectations. There are always excuses and blame placed on things such as the economic downturn, lack of price competitiveness or time management issues. But what are the root causes? What is a sales leader to do?

It may be difficult to decipher what is real versus what is claimed; it's challenging to self-diagnose and really understand what needs to change or be done differently to achieve projections.

Let's look at two of the most common issues behind lack of sales success and how to address them, so you can manage yourself and your sales reps to get back on track.

1. Not setting appropriate sales activity goals.

It is imperative that everyone is clear on what is expected of them in terms of sales and activity goals to reach projections and annual quotas. You can set a sales rep's goal of $500,000 a year in revenue, but if they are not clear on how much time they need to spend on which sales activities to reach those goals, then it is likely that both of you will be disappointed. If you're getting lackluster performance, there is likely a misunderstanding between the quantity of proactive sales activities, time allocation and focus necessary to reach the projected goal. Recognizing and addressing this early can ensure the success of most sales reps. The question is, is the effort commensurate with the results?

Recommendations:

- Meet with the sales rep and review the type of sales activities that they are performing in a given day.
- Determine if these activities are proactive and intentional or passive and reactive.
- Use the following example to ensure understanding of the activity numbers that are needed to align and reach the goal.

Goal: Three new accounts per month averaging $12,000.
Activity needed:
____# of calls to talk to someone live
____# of calls to make an appointment
____# of appointments to close an account
____# of calls to get _____ amount of appointments, to get _____amount of new customers
Consider this approach for all sales activities; not just prospecting.

2. Not identifying and dealing with developmental needs.

For most of us, it's a challenge to accurately assess developmental needs, create an effective developmental plan and transform our low achievers and poor performers. Each situation is unique; there are no easy answers or one-size-fits-all solutions. Just know that regardless of your sales reps' experience and tenure, if they are not finding challenge and motivation through education, growth and development, it will be all too easy for them to get complacent, bored and subsequently unproductive.

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Recommendations:

- Understand what the core competencies are for successful sales reps within our industry, then benchmark your sales reps against these core competencies.
- Understand the changing environment, customers' needs and procurement processes so that you can ensure everyone is up to speed and well-rounded.
- Spend quality time observing sales reps' behaviors in the field to assess, provide feedback and address their developmental needs.

Core competency examples:

- Closing skills
- Persistence
- Dependability
- New business development
- Sales ambition
- Technology focused
- Business and industry knowledge

Areas for development examples:

- Uncovering needs and selling total value rather than just price.
- Networking, getting referrals and being active in the community.
- Demonstrating strong financial acumen; understanding of profit margin, contract reviews and their responsibility for them.
- Demonstrating proficiency in technology, social networking, internet marketing and knowing how to use these tools to build relationships.

In order to meet expectations and develop business, your sales reps need to clearly understand what's expected of them, be held accountable for those activities and given the resources and culture to learn and develop to their highest potential. Without the right amount of sales activities and professional quality salesmanship, it's hard to achieve more than lackluster results. Commit to assessing the current situation for those that are not meeting your expectations and determine if any of the above recommendations could help their performance.

Krista Moore is president of K.Coaching, Inc., founder of IDGrowth Solutions and creator of the IDGrowth Sales Vault, a learning management system utilized by hundreds of independent dealers to enhance their sales strategies, training and leadership development. For more information, visit the IDGrowth web site at www.idgrowth.com.

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By Ed Katz

NETWORK ERROR? HOW TO MAKE THE MOST OF INDUSTRY SOCIAL EVENTS

What is networking? Most people would define it as the opportunity to unearth new leads (or cultivate existing ones) at an event, either real or virtual, because either your fellow attendees need your products or services, or they know of someone who does. Unfortunately, no one taught me how to network properly, so I learned the hard way by attending the terrible school of hard knocks.

Since my business was in the moving industry, I was told the best way to get leads and customers was to join BOMA (Building Owners and Managers Association) and the local Chamber of Commerce—their memberships would automatically get us more business. So, I joined both. Several months later, after sending my two salespeople to BOMA's monthly luncheons and the Chamber's "Business after Hours" events, I asked them if they got good contacts and referrals from attending. I was shocked when they replied, "Nope, none!"

I was upset because I had made a huge investment in both memberships and paid extra for their meals, cocktails and parking. Curious as to why I got no ROI, I went to the next BOMA luncheon without telling my sales team.

The doors opened at 11:20 a.m. and between then and noon, I met and exchanged business cards with six building managers. When it was time to eat, I chose a seat where there were several people I didn't know so I could introduce myself to them during the meal. As we started to eat, I saw the reason we hadn't gotten benefits from our memberships. At exactly 12:10, my two salespeople—not seeing me—rushed in and sat by themselves together and looked like they had a great time talking to each other while they at their meal.

And there it was…how could they get leads if they were networking with themselves? I was furious, of course, but instead of confronting them at the event, I went back to the office and put together a plan to fix the problem.

Here's what I did. At our next weekly sales meeting, I told my salespeople that I saw them at the last BOMA luncheon and that it was my fault for not teaching them how to network. "From now on," I said, "this is how you'll network:

1. You are to arrive at a networking venue at least a half hour before it begins.
2. You are not permitted to talk to or "hang" with each other.
3. You are to introduce yourselves to other attendees you don't know.
4. You are to empty one of your side pockets to make room for the business cards of the contacts you make.
5. You are to keep a stash of your business cards in the other pocket to hand to the contacts you meet.
6. When asked about what we do, you will respond by saying: We're the only office mover in Atlanta that offers the "boxless" move. When pressed further to explain what you mean, you will reply: We're the only company that moves your furniture without having to shut down and empty and pack up what's in the drawers before the move.
7. You are not to spend more than eight minutes with each contact. To end your conversations in a timely manner, shake the person's hand and say, I know you're here to meet as many people as you can, so it was nice talking to you, as you move onto another contact."

To reinforce my new action plan, I role-played with both several times until they mastered the "drill". The results were amazing. Once they adopted these techniques, we no longer wasted their time or my money. Instead, we succeeded in getting great results from our networking memberships. We made tremendous contacts, got great leads, and ultimately won more business.

Knowing that I couldn't manage what I didn't measure, I had my sales team give me copies of the contacts' »

business cards at our weekly sales meeting. (They complained and said I didn't trust them. I told them not to take it personally because as their "sales manager," I was personally responsible for their performance and behavior, as well as their ultimate success.)

You, too, can use networking to get phenomenal leads. Before participating in a networking event, determine whether the event and attendees are the right fit for your product or service. For example, as office movers, we rejected an invitation to sponsor and meet monthly with a group that promoted tree planting in Atlanta.

Once you find the right group to join, develop an "elevator speech"—a differentiator that describes your unique product or service in 25 words or less. Use one like our "Boxless Move" pitch that will provoke a dialog. Our contacts always asked, "What's a Boxless Move?

Here are some other pointers for successful networking.

- Buy your own name tag instead of wearing the one they give you at the door. The labels they issue generally have too much information on them and are not user-friendly for other attendees. Their event name tags typically include your company's name in large bold font and both your first and last names in mice type thereby making it difficult for people to read your name. Instead, wear a metal or plastic name badge that attaches to your clothing with a magnet that has just your first name in at least 48 point font. This size badge will make it easy for people to read your name. (They'll get your last name and company information when you give them your business card.) Wear your badge on the right front side of your torso. For example, attach it to the right side of your jacket lapel or the right side of your shirt or blouse. When you meet and greet contacts and shake hands, their eyes will be able follow up your right arm to see and read your name tag in the event they didn't hear your name clearly when you introduced yourself. This size badge and placement also eliminates their potential embarrassment of not hearing your name or worse, not remembering you from a previous encounter.
- Arrive at least half an hour early to the venue to enable you to meet people who are standing alone and not already talking and networking with someone else.
- Try to meet the singles who are standing in the four corners of the room instead of the center. Research has proven the people you want to meet—the real power brokers who are the best contacts, generally stand in the four corners. Therefore, try to meet them before moving on to people in the center of the room.
- Never, ever judge a person by his or her looks. It's easy to do in industries that are dominated by one gender—men! Don't assume that a pretty, young lady is merely someone's assistant, and, therefore, skip the chance to meet her. Dara Nicholson was the Senior Vice President of Cousins Properties in Atlanta. She managed hundreds of thousands of square feet of office space in Atlanta. Passing her by because you thought she was someone's assistant would have been a terrible mistake—don't prejudge.
- When your contact hands you a business card, pick it up with both of your hands, raise it up so you can read it and say his or her name and title immediately. Then ask what he or she does at the company (if the title isn't completely obvious). This way you'll be sure to get the name correctly.
- Don't spend more than eight minutes with anyone. You're not networking to make new social pals. You're there to meet as many people as you can who either need your product or service or know of people who do. If you "work the crowd" for 45 minutes, you should expect to meet between six and eight people.
- Follow up after the networking event by contacting the people you met who might know of others who need your product or service. Instead of asking them to give you leads, try to pull them into your deals or give them leads. They'll appreciate your help and pay you back by doing the same for you.
- Follow up with the prospects who need your products or services by requesting an opportunity to meet with them.

Networking at events like the Chamber of Commerce will help you generate great leads and quote more jobs.

Ed Katz, president, International Office Moving Institute (IOMI®)
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