

News & Notes

TRAVEL • MANUFACTURER • RETAIL • ASSOCIATION • TRADE SHOW

TRAVEL

Business is Business

- ▶ Business travel creates 2.4 million jobs nationally. Meetings and events are directly responsible for 1 million jobs.
- ▶ The Department of Labor reported that nearly 200,000 travel-related jobs were lost in 2008, and predicts another 247,000 will be lost in 2009.
- ▶ Business travel accounts for \$39 billion in tax revenue at the federal, state, and local levels.
- ▶ Meetings and events are responsible for 15% of all travel-related spending.
- ▶ Business travel supports more than 200 hotel and convention centers across the country.
- ▶ According to the results of a Meetings and Conventions magazine study, 52 percent of respondents claim that the backlash against meetings has been extremely or moderately influential on their company's decisions to hold events.
- ▶ In a recent survey, 87 percent of Americans say that encouraging people to travel recreationally within the U.S. could improve the country's economic landscape.
- ▶ Each meeting and event traveler spends an average of \$1,000 per trip.
- ▶ According to a recent survey of Fortune 1,000 chief marketing officers, meetings and events provide the highest return on investment of any marketing channel. ■

SOURCE: U.S. TRAVEL ASSOCIATION

Surprise: In the era of cutbacks, hotel guest satisfaction rises

Though lodgings are slashing staff and reducing operating costs, they're satisfying guests more, says the 2009 J.D. Power and Associates North America Hotel Guest Satisfaction survey. Now in its 13th year, the study measures overall hotel guest satisfaction within six segments and four of the six segments covered — upscale, mid-scale full-service, midscale limited service and economy/budget — improved in satisfaction in 2009 vs. 2008. Satisfaction with luxury hotels stayed steady and happiness with extended-stay properties declined a bit.

In addition, hotel guests in 2009 expressed increased desire for comfort and value-related amenities. For the first time since the inception of the study in 1997, bedding and pillow choices and free parking are among the top five "must-have" amenities for hotel guests. Other most-desired amenities include complimentary breakfast, wireless Internet access and pillow-top mattresses. Within the luxury segment, a high percentage of guests express the desire for in-room high-definition flat-panel TVs.

The survey was based on responses from more than 66,000 hotel guests. ■

Poll sees strengths in summer travel plans

An AP-Gfk survey shows that 70 percent of the Americans who are planning leisure travel this summer (a pool with more than four of every 10 of us) plan to hightail it outside their home states. Another 19 percent of those planning travel say they are going international. Where Americans are saving money isn't by cancelling trips but by shortening them. "The real issue . . . is declining length of stay," said Peter Yesawich, chief executive of Ypartnership.

On a related note, the travel agent industry reports that Orlando and Las Vegas remain the most popular summer destinations that ASTA agents are booking, although volume obviously remains an issue. Other top destinations: San Francisco, Los Angeles, Miami, San Diego, Washington, Chicago and New York. ■

Must-See Travel TV

In an effort to spur leisure travel in the United States during the fall and winter months, the U.S. Travel Association is partnering with the Travel Channel to create a week-long primetime promotion. Consumers will be encouraged to experience the many extraordinary destinations the U.S. has to explore. Discover America Week, taking place the week of September 14, will feature episodes filmed in the U.S. from some of Travel Channel's most popular series and hosts, whose unique perspectives on travel will bring the immersive and transformative elements of U.S. travel to life.

In addition, the Travel Channel is supporting Discover America Week with several aids: a schedule of public service announcements promoting the benefits of travel, offering advertising, promotions, events and appearances in support of Discover America Week; online activity, including a Discover America section of TravelChannel.com, banner advertising, dedicated email, sweepstakes promotion, and integration with Travel Channel's services on Facebook.com; and a new Discover America Collection of short-form video, and features on Travel Channel's YouTube.com channel page. ■

Want your customers to return? Bring on the fun

One of the biggest reasons customers do not return is they have no reason to. Sure, they might get what they want but they often get it with no personality, no sparkle and no sizzle. Their experience is a dud, with nothing memorable about it.

Are you leaving the fun and playful part of your personality at the front door each day? For many, work is a place to be serious; fun happens on vacation and away from work. But we need to accept fun as another element of the workplace.

Companies that enjoy tremendous customer loyalty offer their customers something they can't get anywhere else: fun. They provide an unexpected, positive experience. The employees enjoy their work, each other and their customers. They find ways to bring fun and joy into their work and they bring their customers along for the ride.

A few fun facts:

- ▶ Fun increases productivity. Research shows that coworkers who learn how to have fun together increase productivity and performance by welcoming spontaneity. People learn when they are having fun. They will take work seriously, but lighten up on life.

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- ▶ Laughing reduces stress. Laughter is a natural stress buster and fun is meant to be part of your life. Learn how to comfortably blend work and fun.
- ▶ Acting silly requires maturity. When you think of great leaders, they all had a great sense of humor. People who can do a serious job and not take themselves too seriously are very mature.
- ▶ Fun is a "natural social glue." Groups that can have fun together are more relaxed, interact better and are more comfortable with each other when problems need to be worked out.
- ▶ Having fun gets the job done. Fun is not the reward; it's the lubricant that gets things done easily and effectively. Make fun a regular part of your daily routine.
- ▶ Have fun with your customers. Your customers will have fun shopping with you and will return more often. Notice that all the new and successful retail concepts are centered around interaction and fun. ■

What's your sign?

"I am continually surprised by specialty retailer's underutilization of in-store signs," says Jay Townley, Gluskin Townley Group. In a recent "Retail Tip: Signs Sell!," written for the Outdoor Industry Association® WebNews, Townley says that the biggest revenue shortfalls of the typical store is sales staff failing to up-sell and to sell add-on items. "A coordinated sign strategy helps correct both shortfalls and contributes to increased transaction value."

TOWNLEY'S TIPS:

There are three types of in-store signs: directional; shopper information and education; and product information.

All in-store signs need to be aesthetically pleasing and coordinated with in-store colors, lighting, design and displays, so no hand lettered or quick signs off the Inkjet printer and only high quality, professional-looking signs should be used.

- ▶ Directional signs assist shoppers in navigating your store, and getting to where they want to go easily and quickly.
- ▶ Shopper information and education signs announce bargains and sales, explain warranty and return policies, and present your store's vision statement and history.
- ▶ Product information signs are incorporated into merchandise displays and present product features, value and price, and also explain the step-up differences between the good, better and best products you offer. Product information signs serve three very important functions: informing and educating shoppers; acting as a sales aid for experienced sales staff; and as a training and education tool for new and part-time sales staff.

A sign strategy is the key, and all three types of in-store signs need to be coordinated with the store marketing and brand message, and specific promotions, sales and displays should be an assigned staff responsibility. ■

Book Sheds Light on 'Retail Superstars'

What are the qualities of a successful retailer? Great location, stellar selection and competitive prices are often cited, but these are not the only forces at work that help a store not only stay in business but prosper. Read retailer consultant George Whalin's new book, *Retail Superstars: Inside the 25 Best Independent Stores in America*, in which he profiles 25 successful retailers and discusses why they've withstood the test of time, some for more than a century. ■


NRF and RILA end merger discussions

After two months of review and deliberation, NRF and the Retail Industry Leaders Association decided this week to drop plans for a merger that was announced this spring. Instead, NRF and RILA issued a joint statement saying the organizations "will devote all resources to continuing the work they are each doing to address the serious issues that America's consumers and retailers are facing in today's economic environment." ■

in THE NEWS

Travelon Announces Exclusive On Your Weigh Luggage Scale Distribution

Travelon now has an exclusive license agreement to serve as sole distributor of the new On Your Weigh Scale, formerly known as the Light Flight Scale. Under this arrangement Travelon will take over the engineering, production and distribution for this new scale.

The On Your Weigh Scale is a compact digital scale featuring a padded two-handle ergonomic design that folds down for easy storage, pops up at the push of a button and alerts users to overweight luggage. Travelon has also reduced the wholesale price by 50% while adding new enhancements such as rounded edges, a more secure hook/spring mechanism, and improved circuitry. 




Travelon's On Your Weigh Scale

Global Solutions 4 heads to the Super Bowl

Global Solutions 4, LLC, has been approved as an "Official Emerging Business" for Super Bowl XLIV, which will be held at Dolphin Stadium in Miami, Florida, on February 7, 2010.

"All of us here at Global Solutions 4 are huge NFL fans," said CEO Jackie Miller. "As Floridians we are proud to be hosting Super Bowl XLIV and now we are even more excited that we will be a small part of this world class sporting event."

A leader of innovative products, the company is now registered to do business with the National Football League, Super Bowl Committee Host Committee and non-NFL purchasing entities. The opportunity was made possible as a result of the company recently becoming a certified member of the Minority Business Enterprise through the Florida Regional Minority Business Council. 

The Big O

Heys USA was featured as part of the highly coveted "O" List from the July 2009 issue of *The Oprah Magazine*, a publication that enjoys a paid circulation of over 2.6 million readers. The "O" List is a regular section of the magazine with items that Oprah and her team think "are just great." The Heys item that found itself in the "O" spotlight: The EcoCase set, photographed in turquoise and a real standout in the spread.

The EcoCase set by Heys USA



cinda b Collection Accessorizes Jillian Harris on ABC's "The Bachelorette"

A variety of cinda b bags adorned Jillian's shoulder throughout the latest season of "The Bachelorette." Viewers caught sight of The Weekender, Super Tote, Garment Bag, Cosmetic Set and the Flat Iron/Curling Iron Cover, all in an array of cinda b's sassy patterns and colors.

"We are so thrilled to have collaborated with "The Bachelorette," said Cinda Boomershine, founder and designer of cinda b. "Understanding that bachelorettes these days must greet their potential beau with the utmost class and style, cinda b is the perfect fit for Jillian and other women alike!"

Zoobie zips up awards

Parenting Media, a Disney Interactive Media company, has awarded Bubba the Black Bear by Zoobies as a 2009 Excellent Products Award Winner. Bubba the Black Bear racked up a 2009 "Top Fun" award from Tillywig, which derives its Top Toy list from testing conducted during a series of focus groups that evaluate a given product's entertainment and/or educational value. The item also got a nod from Dr. Toy as one of the Best Products for Summer 2009, citing its adorability factor as well as its versatility and comfy quotient.




"This cuddly, adorable Zoobie is the perfect teddy bear for any child," Dr. Toy's review noted, "and will soon become your child's best friend. Perfect for road excursions or just cuddling in bed."

Bubba's not the only big shot at Zoobies: Calyx the Caterpillar won the 2009 Kids Product of the Year Award from *Creative Child* magazine.

Baby Sherpa lands important listing in Consumer Reports, 2009 Edition

Consumer Reports, the leading authority on consumer testing and advice, has included award-winning Baby Sherpa®, a 4-in-1 diaper backpack, in its 2009 Best Baby Products edition.

"As the source for unbiased testing and buying guidance, we are truly honored to be included in this important publication for parents," said CEO Heather Campbell-Dewar. "Given the myriad of baby products in the market, this review will help parents make informed decisions when it comes to gear for families on the go."

Multi-functional and ergonomically designed, the revolutionary hands-free performer combines superior construction with high tech innovation. It features four bags in one that provide one-stop storage solutions for everything from food and diapers to medicine and gear for the most active of families. Because of its unique ability to out-pack the competition, Baby Sherpa® has traveled the world with active parents, from the Great Wall of China to the Pyramids of Egypt. It has also become a favorite with Hollywood and set new track records for efficiency at NASCAR. 

Eagle Creek One of America's Best Places to Work

Eagle Creek was named to *Outside Magazine's* second annual "Best Places to Work" list. Out of hundreds of companies considered, Eagle Creek was ranked in the top 20. The full list and related story was published in the magazine's May 2009 issue.

"We're honored to be included in this short list of great companies," said Steve Barker, founder and president of Eagle Creek. "It's the dedication and passion of my fellow Creekers that makes Eagle Creek such a good place to come everyday."

Outside's "Best Places to Work" list was compiled with the help of the Outdoor Industry Association and Best Companies Group, which selected the 30 companies that best enable employees to balance productivity with an active, eco-conscious lifestyle.

Eagle Creek's company perks include paid volunteer opportunities and unique social activities, including an annual horseshoe tournament, cook-offs and various other events throughout the year.

"These 30 companies share a common belief: that the secret to success in any economy is empowering employees to live balanced lives and remain committed to their communities and the environment," said Michael Roberts, executive editor of *Outside*. "Our winners know that happy workers are good for the bottom line." □

Employees show why Eagle Creek is one of America's best places to work



A Match Made in the USA

Miss USA loves Heys USA's Britto Collection, a four-piece luggage set featuring the optimistic and colorful images of renowned pop artist Romero Britto. In fact, Kristen Dalton, the North Carolina beauty crowned Miss USA 2009, likes the collection with its iconic art so much she autographed her picture accordingly: "Thank you so much for my Britto luggage." □



Miss USA strikes a pose with Tom Nebeling, national sales manager at Heys USA

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Joining Forces — NLDA and ALDA to Merge in 2010

In July, the National Luggage Dealers Association and American Luggage Dealers Association announced that the two organizations will become one. The change will formally take place January 1, 2010, when ALDA members will officially become NLDA members. The new association — representing over 250 retail locations — will operate under the NLDA name, and operate from NLDA's current Chicago offices.

Although informal merger discussions have taken place over the years, NLDA Executive Director Marilyn Murray said “we’ve been working on this in earnest since February.” Merger committees from each side met — with NLDA’s Murray, President Jeff Izenson, and Vice President John Mori representing NLDA and ALDA Executive Director Frank Fine, President Jay Friedman, and Tim Bleish representing ALDA.

Both sides are enthusiastic about this new opportunity to help member retailers. “It benefits specialty retailers in both organizations to get together in one strong unit,” said Murray. Izenson agreed. “There are some cultural differences, but both sides saw the benefits outweighing the negatives. Everyone decided to be somewhat flexible, and that’s what made the merger possible,” he explained.

“We currently duplicate a lot of the same functions,” Murray noted, especially with regard to production and distribution of holiday catalogs and sale flyers, one of

the major services currently performed separately by both associations. “Our holiday catalogs are different — some manufacturers participate in one and not the other, but we’ll accommodate with swing pages as needed, selectively bound into some catalogs.”

Additionally, Fine noted that “as a combined association you have more buying power for merchandise programs, better negotiating position with vendors, and great opportunity to truly represent the bulk of better travelware and leather goods companies in the country,” a sentiment that was echoed by Murray.

On the direct-import front, NLDA and ALDA currently represent 11 brands. “We’re not doing away with any particular brands for now,” said Fine, who noted that the new organization will consolidate styles and eliminate overlap while keeping existing brands, which enjoy a following from dealers and consumers alike. Helping this transition will be ALDA’s Merchandise Program Director Scott Niekelski, who will be the sole carryover from ALDA’s management team when he becomes an NLDA employee after the merger takes place.

It’s exciting news, with a definite impact on the travel goods retail landscape. Operationally, it’s business as usual for both groups through 2009, but come January 1 it’s going to be a whole new year, with a new, more powerful NLDA to represent the country’s retailers. ■

NLDA News

The National Luggage Dealers Association (NLDA Associates, Inc.) held its Annual Summer Meeting at the Hotel Intercontinental in Chicago, Illinois, in June. The pending merger of NLDA and the American Luggage Dealers Association (ALDA) was discussed at the General Membership Meeting with total support being promised by the NLDA shareholders and was ultimately approved. ALDA will cease to exist and their members will be able to join NLDA. Each member in NLDA is a shareholder and pays dues. This will

cost the ALDA members more, so the coffers of the old ALDA will help with the cost. ALDA as a co-op must remain open for a couple of years; their offices will be closing.

Also at the General Membership Meeting, the NLDA advertising committee presented the 2009 Holiday Catalog, purposely geared to appeal to the buying public in this difficult economy. The presentation was loudly applauded by the membership.

On Friday, June 26, NLDA welcomed ALDA to their evening reception

for the purpose of getting to know each other better in a relaxed social situation. The resulting energy in the room clearly showed the synergy that will result in this merger.

The private NLDA showroom was, once again, held in the Seville Ballroom of the Hotel Intercontinental Chicago. Members viewed product that will be in the holiday catalog as well as other merchandise selected by the merchandise committees for store consideration. Product from the South American divi-

Continued on next page



Stephen and Susan Silver of Silver of Westport work with their rep at Victorinox



Shelley Norcross looking at colorful wallets shown by Kristin Morris of MyWalit



David Niven, Ned and Jerry Pearson look at new product from Tumi



Marty Reiningger, Fred Ebert and Randy MacKenzie working with Tom Rushton, toy company representative for Discovery Bay Games, Find It, Front Porch Classic Games and Jishaku



Three generations of the Brenner Luggage Family: from left, Ryan, Sig and Bob Brenner



A view from above on day one of the Summer Show



From left, TGA Treasurer Ed Gerch of Kingport Trading LLC, TGA President Michele Marini Pittenger, and ALDA Executive Director Frank Fine touch base at the TGA booth



Retail Specialist and Summer Show Speaker Doug Fleener (in flowered shirt) joins Jeff Izenson (left) and Marty Reiningger (right) of NLDA and Richard Krulik of Briggs & Riley

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sion of the worldwide program was also presented for fall delivery.

The Sixth Annual Summer Luggage, Gift & Travel Goods Show was held at Navy Pier in Chicago, Illinois, June 25 and 26. One hundred four exhibitors displayed their product to attendees from NLDA Associates, Inc., ALDA and many independent buyers in the industry. The exhibitors were extremely pleased with the traffic on the show

floor, with attendees working both days right up to closing.

Doug Fleener, retail expert and motivational speaker, presented "Got Momentum? Creating Everyday Success in Retail" before the show opened on the second day. Fleener elicited some excellent participation with the audience during the presentation and a spirited Q&A session with retail attendees and exhibitors alike. This event was co-sponsored by Briggs & Riley and NLDA

Associates, Inc.

NLDA sponsored the daily coffee, tea and water stations, the exhibitors' lunches both show days, the Thursday evening cocktail reception and trolley service to and from the Pier and the two show hotels.

The dates for the Seventh Annual Summer Luggage, Gift & Travel Goods Show will be June 23-24, 2010 at Navy Pier. ■

SOURCE: NLDA ASSOCIATES, INC.