

# New

# — the Best Brand of All

By Garrett Lai

The most valuable part of attending The Travel Goods Show is the connections you'll make, especially those first-time connections with new vendors.

The most precious thing at The Show is time — you can't possibly see it all, everything and everyone. It helps to pick out what you want to see and who you want to meet beforehand, so you can make the most of your time there.

So, before you hit the floor, here's our low-down on many of this year's new exhibitors — the new names and faces you'll meet on the show floor — so you can figure out who's the best fit for your business and make time for them.

## BedVoyage

**DIRTY SHEETS.** WE'VE ALL SEEN them in our travels. Sharon Stuart decided to do something about them with the launch of BedVoyage (pronounced like bon voyage).

In a nutshell, BedVoyage bed sheets consist of a bamboo-fiber fitted sheet

**BedVoyage's bamboo-fiber bed linens aren't just a sensible travel item — they're a luxury item people employ at home, and take with them on the road.**



with an attached top sheet. It's an elegantly simple design, one that takes advantage of bamboo's natural anti-fungal and anti-bacterial properties.

It's a well thought-out system, consisting of the sheets, matching pillowcases and a housekeeping card to alert staff so they don't change your sheets out. And it's a luxury item, one Stuart claims people purchase for travel, but end up employing at home (she says the attached sheet system means it takes just seven minutes to change the bed — a big plus).

"The sewn-together design at the

foot of the bed makes bed-making so simple," Stuart explained, "and the invisible zippered pillowcases allow you to 'zip out' any odors or bacteria on hotel pillows."

"We've seen travel sheets that resemble cocoons or sleeping bag liners, but they're more cumbersome to get in and out of, they're not as roomy, breathable or anti-bacterial as our bamboo travel sheets."

## Claire Newell Enterprises

**CLAIRE NEWELL ISN'T THE ONLY** new exhibitor launching a luggage line at The Travel Goods Show, but hers



**Claire Newell's messenger briefcase exemplifies namesake Founder Claire Newell's passion for functionally classic designs with great durability.**

comes with a built-in media promotional machine that will see her brand featured on global TV, radio and a six-part PBS television series on voluntourism.

Newell got started in the travel industry 17 years ago when she took her love of travel and launched an agency, Travel Best Bets. It's a successful leisure travel agency, but what's really helped set it apart is her promotional mindset. She started with media outreach her first year in business, and it turns out she's quite telegenic — she's been featured on the "Today Show" with Matt Lauer, did a stint as a spokesperson for Disney Interactive, and is a featured travel writer and intrepid traveler. Newell's endorsement of various travel items over the years resulted in sellouts. So, why not design her own custom items?

Newell is launching two lines: the high-end CN Travel collection, and the value-driven C. Newell line. She wanted "classic designs with great durability," and leverages her personal expertise in the design: "I carry at least five currencies in my travel wallet at any time; my travel wallet lets you organize all that with a boarding pass on the outside. It's something you can use for leisure or business." And every Claire Newell item includes a travel tip card of useful info, which underscores her expertise

and helps build a meaningful customer connection.

## Denco Sports Luggage

**SPORTS FANS — THEY'RE EVERYWHERE.** It used to be a ball cap and matching license plate frame was all it took to express fan loyalty. Now you find sports logos everywhere, including luggage.

Denco Sports Luggage lets travelers show their spirit with officially licensed college and pro team logo'd luggage. It helps make luggage easier to spot, plus it creates an additional purchasing incentive for customers. Denco's two-piece sets include 20- and 28-inch bags.



Show your colors with officially licensed college and pro team travel bags from Denco Sports Luggage.

## DIFRwear

**RFID — RADIO FREQUENCY IDENTIFICATION** — isn't new technology, but it's reaching critical mass, increasingly employed in passports, credit cards, driver's licenses and other information-sensitive documents. But while RFID's non-contact information transfer can be a boon for travel, it's also a terrific theft opportunity, which is where DIFRwear comes in.

DIFRwear's signature product is wallets, passport cases and badge holders that protect RFID-enabled items from unauthorized electronic snooping, and they've been featured in *The Wall Street Journal*, *The Washington Post*, CNN Business 2.0, *Wired* and other media outlets.



Although whimsically colorful, DIFRwear's passport wallet is claimed to be the only one proven to block low- and high-frequency RFID tags.

"DIFRwear's products are the only RFID-blocking products proven to block high- and low-frequency RFID tags," said DIFRwear's Joey Phelps, "and they've been tested by the U.S. General Services Administration to meet U.S. Military data security standards."

Given the fact that all U.S. passports issued since summer 2006 contain an RFID chip, an RFID-blocking passport wallet sounds like an easy sell.

## Ellington Handbags

**THEY MIGHT BE A NEW EXHIBITOR**, but for well-established Ellington Handbags, The Travel Goods Show is like a trip back to its roots. "In 1986 our founder was studying abroad on a Semester at Sea," explained Ellington Marketing Manager Amanda Carter. "In Sri Lanka she found a handcrafted leather rucksack that was rugged and refined, it was exactly the kind of bag she'd always wanted, and it inspired her to start Ellington when she returned to the States.



Ellington's Amelia Airport Express embodies the company's philosophy of versatility in design — it can be carried horizontally or vertically as a cross-body bag, as a belt bag, or remove the strap and use it as a travel wallet. That's a lot of uses for \$39 MSRP.

"Our company was founded on this idea of travel, but we've never gone after the travel market. We do have some luggage stores and travel stores that tell us they love our stuff, and this spring we're launching Amelia, a travel-specific line — it seemed like a good time to bring our product to more travel-oriented consumers. Exhibiting at The Travel Goods Show's been a long time coming, but it's definitely a place where we'll feel at home."

Ellington's design philosophy says life is an adventure, and a good handbag should carry whatever you need, wherever your adventures take you, whether it's travel or everyday. And they back their items with a lifetime guarantee.

## FAB/Starpoint

**UNTIL RECENTLY, FAB/STARPOINT'S** principal business was as a major supplier of licensed kid's accessories. "We're known for anything a kid takes back to school," explained President and CEO Steve Russo. "Backpacks, lunchbags,



Isabella Fiore's fashion-forward luggage is just part of the game plan for FAB/Starpoint, which is branching out from its core business of licensed children's products to include stuff for grownups like Carlos Falchi and Sharper Image luggage.

school supplies — that's our largest business. We do all the major licenses of boys' and girls' properties, along with private labels for companies like Target and JC Penney."

But in 2008, FAB/Starpoint acquired high-end handbag maker Isabella Fiore — commonly seen at Bloomingdale's and Neiman Marcus — and they were no longer kid's stuff. Since then it added Carlos Falchi to its stable, and took over

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the license for Sharper Image luggage, which it's bringing to The Show.

"The Sharper Image brand has tremendous brand equity centered around quality and innovation," said Russo, "and every year we promise to show you something you've not seen before. They have a fashion twist and a design twist to them, at prices that are competitive."

## Guess Travel

WITH THE SUCCESSFUL LAUNCH and extension of the Guess brand from jeans to handbags, the next logical step was to carry that Guess license over to luggage. "Our customers have been traveling with bigger handbags, so luggage has become a natural progression.

"Guess Travel offers customers fashion luggage with a brand they trust," explained Terry Thomas, sales manager for Signal Products, which licenses the Guess brand. "This is a brand that's been around for 25 years, and customers know they'll get trendy pieces, where the rest of the luggage market offers more conservative styling. Ours are versatile and practical, yet still playful."

Guess Travel's lineup runs the gamut from cosmetic travel cases to large rolling garment bags — it's a full-line travel solution for the fashion forward traveler.



Guess Travel offers customers fashion luggage with a brand they trust.

## Intelligent Luggage

WEIGHT COSTS — ASK ANYONE who's been hit by an overweight baggage fee. And while there are numerous luggage scales on the market, and some cases and bags with scales built in, none

have been so easy to use as Intelligent Luggage's line of self-weighing luggage.

While other self-weighing bags require you to lift the bag to weigh it, Intelligent Luggage's bags weigh themselves at the push of a button, just sitting on the ground — you don't need to lift the bags at all.

Intelligent Luggage was founded in 2007, and while it's already a success in the UK, The Travel Goods Show is its first foray into the U.S. and the global market. And with the addition of TSA-friendly locks built into its bags, they're weight-friendly and security-friendly, too.

## Kobold International

KOBOLD MIGHT BE NEW TO THE Travel Goods Show, but it's hardly a new company, having gotten its start in Solingen, Germany, in 1855. Kobold is still very much in the umbrella business — CEO and owner Max Wang (who acquired Kobold in 2006) is quick to point out "Kobold owns the most umbrella patents in the world."

For The Show, Kobold will introduce its Zenith line of umbrellas, as well as its Zendo collection of computer briefs, casual bags and luggage — a natural extension of the Kobold name from protecting people from the elements to protecting computers and other personal valuables.

Kobold's luggage is very design-driven, aiming to eschew the typical boxy, rectangular shape for more esthetically pleasing curves and shapes. Zendo pieces range from \$50 to \$600, with high-end design touches like Zendura fabric, which changes color with viewing angle, yet still provides the protection and durability of ballistic nylon.

## LAT56<sup>®</sup>

LAT56<sup>®</sup> IS A DESIGN COMPANY first, and a luggage company second. Founders Lawrence Broadley and Kevin Fox are Scottish designers who met at CalPoly Pomona, hit it off over their love of design and adventure sport, and founded LAT56<sup>®</sup> (short for Latitude 56 Degrees).

The duo brainstormed "around 40 different ideas for products in the area of adventure sport and travel," said Broadley. A friend mentioned the trouble he had traveling with suits — and

that was the genesis of LAT56<sup>®</sup>'s Urban Warrior line, built around what the company calls its TPS Torso Protection System. "When we started this project we spoke with a number of tailors, and they said the most fragile part of a suit is the shoulder region. We started out building something to protect that, and it evolved into a system."

The Rat Pak carry-on and its overnight-size companion, the Red-Eye, look like something out of a "Batman" movie, which may account for their appeal and positive reception among retailers. But we're betting it's the ultra compact form factor, and the way it coddles suits without crushing those delicate shoulder pads.

## Naftali

MOST OF THE TIME, THE BAGGAGE carousel is too much of a scavenger hunt — or resembles a rugby game, as you push through the scrum to try spotting your bag. We're adults, after all, and outgrew these types of games long ago. Which is why Naftali's Easy 2 Pick wireless luggage finder is so slick.

The Easy 2 Pick consists of a luggage tag transmitter and matching key fob-like receiver. When you activate the receiver it flashes, beeps and vibrates when your bag gets within 60 feet so



The Easy 2 Pick Wireless Luggage Finder ends the scavenger hunt at the baggage carousel.

you'll know when it's arrived on the carousel.

The Easy 2 Pick Flashing adds flashing LEDs to the luggage tag, making it that much easier to spot at baggage claim areas like cruise ship terminals, airports and the like.

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## Oxford & Wells

AS A FREQUENT BUSINESS TRAVELER, Oxford & Wells Founder Ken Swenke knows it's important to look your best on a business trip, and that sometimes those hotel room irons and ironing boards just can't cut it on their own.

"Hotels don't typically provide starch, and those big cans of aerosol starch are poor quality, and not a good solution for travelers," Swenke said. "So we developed the finest ironing starch in the world and packaged it in 2-ounce non-aerosol packages so travelers can quickly get that back-from-the-cleaners look before a meeting."



High-quality spray starch makes it easy to look snappy and crisp during business travel. Its small pump package makes it TSA- and airline-friendly, too.

## Planet Earth Eco-Friendly luggage

THE BBC'S "PLANET EARTH" MINISERIES was a television phenomenon, with a worldwide audience of over 100 million, and hitting at just the right time to ride the growing wave of public environmental awareness. And now it's a luggage brand.

"The plan is to design and produce eco-friendly fashion travel goods," related Sean Shalam, national account manager of Shalam Imports, which has acquired the Planet Earth license from the BBC.

"We've developed a fabric that's ROHS-compliant — very low chemical, low- or no-lead so it doesn't harm the environment when it's recycled," explained designer Phil Myers, who added that the Planet Earth line will include luggage, duffels, backpacks, totes, cooler bags and "pretty much all kinds of travelware, trying to keep

everything under \$100."

With such aggressive pricing, and use of eco-friendly materials like sustainably grown cotton and bamboo, Planet Earth lets consumers get fashion-forward, eco-friendly and value-oriented all at once.



With nature-inspired design cues and heavy use of sustainable fabrics and recyclable materials, Planet Earth's luggage line brings together affordability, eco-friendliness and trendy fashion in a single package.

## Relief Pod International

WITH THE RECENT EARTHQUAKE in Haiti foremost in people's minds, the timing of Relief Pod's Travel Goods Show debut couldn't be more fortuitous. The company's motto, "Preparedness on Demand," couldn't seem more timely.

Relief Pod's signature item isn't something you'd find in a travel store — it's for large-scale, government-level emergency preparedness, the kind of thing you airdrop to provide food, shelter and medical care (it even turns into



Relief Pod's portable, personal-size kits are personal survival units, designed to get you through that critical 24- to 72-hour window it takes for help to arrive. That's peace of mind while traveling — or at home.

a stretcher) to provide basic survival elements, the kind of thing you'd need to survive that critical 24- to 72-hours after a big disaster.

"We took that same concept and expanded it into the mass market, on an individual scale," said Relief Pod's president, Debbie Coleman. "Everything is organized and color-coded — first aid is red, tools are yellow, food and water are blue, etc. These kits organize and guide you through an emergency, whether it's natural disaster, fire, or terrorism; in these situations there's something that prepares you for individual self-sufficiency."

With Relief Pod kits small enough to fit in a file folder for the workplace; to travel-size kits that go in a suitcase or car, the company is really living up to its motto — preparing the world one kit at a time.

## Return If Found

SOONER OR LATER, IT'S INEVITABLE — you're going to lose something. Return If Found's mission is to help you get that something back, by helping you label those valuable items before you lose them.

Return If Found's Label and Tag system sets travelers up with 57 labels in eight sizes, including key tags and luggage tags that make it easy for people who find lost items to report them through an 800-number or website.

"When an item is found, Return If Found will call up to three telephone numbers and email the owner with details on the location of their found item," explained CEO Andrew Levine. "The found item reporting center is never closed, 24 hours a day, 7 days a week."

Granted, a Return If Found label alone doesn't guarantee a lost item's return. But it can't hurt, and adds an additional level of security for cautious travelers.

## SPibelt

THE SPIBELT — FOR SMALL PERSONAL item belt — was originally conceived by athlete Kim Overton as a way of carrying essentials while running and working out. Think of it as an ultraminimalist fanny bag, or an elastic belt with a miniature pouch sized for an

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iPhone, passport, ID and keys.

"We're well established in the running and athletic community," SPIbelt's Bobby Overton said, "but we're receiving more and more comments about how our users are using the product to travel the world."

In addition to the signature SPIbelt, there's the Solo Pocket which attaches to any belt and provides the same small-item carrying capacity, like a passport wallet you wear around your waist.

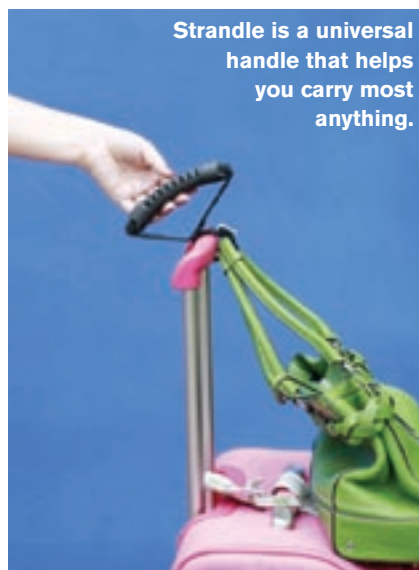


**The SPIbelt is the ultra-minimalist fanny bag.**

### Strandle

THE STRANDLE IS ONE OF THOSE super-simple, super-useful items you see and go, "Gee, why didn't I think of that?" The Strandle is a universal handle — part strap, part handle (hence the name) that helps you carry most anything. The company website shows it being used to tote grocery bags, clothes-laden hangers, paint cans, or even luggage.

Cleverly, attaching the Strandle to rolling luggage handles lets you cock your wrist at a more natural angle. Or you can use it to bundle together a couple of handles, like those on a computer brief and rolling bag, making it easier to



**Strandle is a universal handle that helps you carry most anything.**

schlep your bags through the terminal.

The Strandle is almost too simple a problem solver. But its potential usefulness almost makes it too good to pass up as an add-on. Can you say "impulse buy?"

### Topzip International

IT'S A RARE, RARE PERSON INDEED who travels without electronics. And that presents a problem, not with the electronics, but with what they need — juice. Just look in any airport terminal, and you'll see travelers clustered around 110-volt power outlets like kitens around a bowl of milk.

Topzip aims to relieve a little of this electronic stress with its signature item, a sub-\$100 solar backpack



**Topzip's philosophy of building a backpack outward, starting from the wearer's back, helps give it top-level fit and carrying comfort, while the patented solar array lets travelers charge cell phones and MP3 players on the go.**

that will charge most cell phones and music players, including the near-ubiquitous BlackBerrys, iPhones and iPods that have become standard travel gear. Next up, chargers for portable gaming devices like Nintendos and PSPs, to be followed by packs capable of charging laptops sometime in 2011.

There are other solar bags on the market, but Topzip has a couple of key innovations. One is their solar bag patent, which governs the angled mounting for the solar array. "Other bags, when you're carrying them, the panel points straight behind you, at the guy standing

behind you," noted Topzip's President Jon Bihn. "Ours points it up at maybe a 30-degree angle, for better aim at the sun and it works better."

Another advantage for Topzip is its pack design philosophy, which starts with the wearer's back and moves outward from there. "The back, what touches your back first, that's the most important — the front, the part people see, that's just the pretty face. Our packs fit properly, and they way these bags wear and carry makes a big difference for the consumer."

### VinniBag by Ellesco

THANKS TO THE PHENOMENON of FoodTV, "Iron Chef" and the like, the world is a more gastronomically enlightened place. Culinary travel is a growing travel segment, as budding gourmards and oenophiles venture to locales like France's Burgundy region, or Italian Tuscany, hoping to sip wine and try their favorite foods in situ. Of course, no tourist jaunt is complete without souvenirs, which is where Ellesco's VinniBag comes in, to help bring those precious bottles of vino and high-grade olive oil home.

The folks at Ellesco seem to have thought of everything. "It started with one part wine industry veteran, one part biotech executive, a small slice of investment advisor and a chunk of engineering," said Ellesco owner and CEO Elizabeth Scarbrough. VinniBag's inflatable compartments shape themselves to the bag's contents to suspend a bottle using air, which protects it from



**The VinniBag by Ellesco helps to transport liquids of fragile items that can break or leak.**

impact and also provides thermal insulation. Its roll-up closure is leakproof, and it packs flat when empty.

"Our customers keep adding to the list of uses — perfume, shampoo, maple syrup, grandma's preserves, Hummel figurines, antique tea cups, medications..."