

## APRO launches its new Web site

# RTOHQ

**I**f there is one thing that's unique about the rent-to-own industry, it is the willingness of its members to share information amongst themselves for the good of the industry. For 26 years, the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations has been instrumental in connecting independent rental dealers and fostering conversation and networking across the country. Now, with a newly redesigned Web site and a new industry portal, APRO is bringing that value to the Internet. ★ If you've logged on to APRO's Web site recently, you may have noticed a few changes. On March 20, APRO unveiled RTO Headquarters, or RTOHQ for short. Beginning in April, traffic from the former APRO Web site, APROvision.org, was redirected to RTOHQ's URL (www.rtohq.org). ★ According to APRO Executive Director Bill Keese, the overhaul of the site is a move toward the completion of APRO's strategic plan. "The new Web site is part of our approach to raise awareness of APRO's Web presence," says Keese. "Most of our visitors may be industry professionals, but we want enough public information on the site so that the public, the press and especially potential customers can understand the benefits of the rent-to-own industry." ★ The new Web site was designed around three key qualities: ease of navigation, breadth of information and timeliness. As a result, RTOHQ features a design that is more user-friendly than its predecessor, APROvision. Drop-down menus offer users more efficiency and every page on the site is accessible from the drop-down menus on the home page or from any other page on the site.

**It's more than a new look. With added content and an emphasis on connecting with members, APRO's RTO Headquarters is designed to be your industry resource.**

**By Shellie Faught**



**B**asically, it's easy to read," says APRO Communications Chair Larry Carrico. "You have all the information you need to navigate the site right on the front page. There's nothing tricky about it. It is based on the needs of the public and our members."

However, RTOHQ isn't about looks alone. APRO's new home on the Web includes E-Communities, a portal that allows users to interact. By logging in to E-Communities, users have the option of subscribing to different groups, or "communities," related to APRO and the rent-to-own industry. Once a user subscribes to a specific community, he/she is given access to the resources contained within that community. Each

community offers employees, vendors and owners access to a wealth of information and rent-to-own resources. For instance, APRO members who subscribe to the APRO member community will have access to APRO member forums, member announcements and documents such as manuals and registration forms.

More important, E-Communities offers a place for everyone in the industry to network and discuss rent-to-own issues with others. The APRO E-Communities section presents the industry with a unique online networking opportunity. On the E-Community forums, participants can discuss industry trends, get advice on issues specific to their store or share ideas about products or marketing.

"Our ability to share information amongst ourselves to better ourselves and one another is something that is specific to the rent-to-own industry," says Carrico. "That's the biggest value APRO brings to its membership."

In addition to the new features, the redesigned Web site offers a change in content. Unlike APROvision, RTOHQ will offer the most important news on the home page of the Web site. Industry news from legislative breakthroughs to new store openings will be available on a daily basis.

As a result of the changes, APRO's *Rental Viewpoint* will be changing as well. Beginning this summer, APRO will send out a collection of the top industry headlines each week. But if you don't want to wait, there's also the opportunity to subscribe to an RSS feed of updated content. This will deliver industry headlines to your news reader service as soon as it is posted on the APRO site.

With the launch of RTOHQ, Carrico hopes to share the good news about rent-to-own with the public. "The main goal is to have the external and internal functions of the site working together," says Carrico. "In today's world, you need both. We need the internal to communicate amongst ourselves and to share tips and foster community. We need the external to show the rest of the world what a great community rent-to-own has." ■

*Shellie Faught is APRO's communications director.*

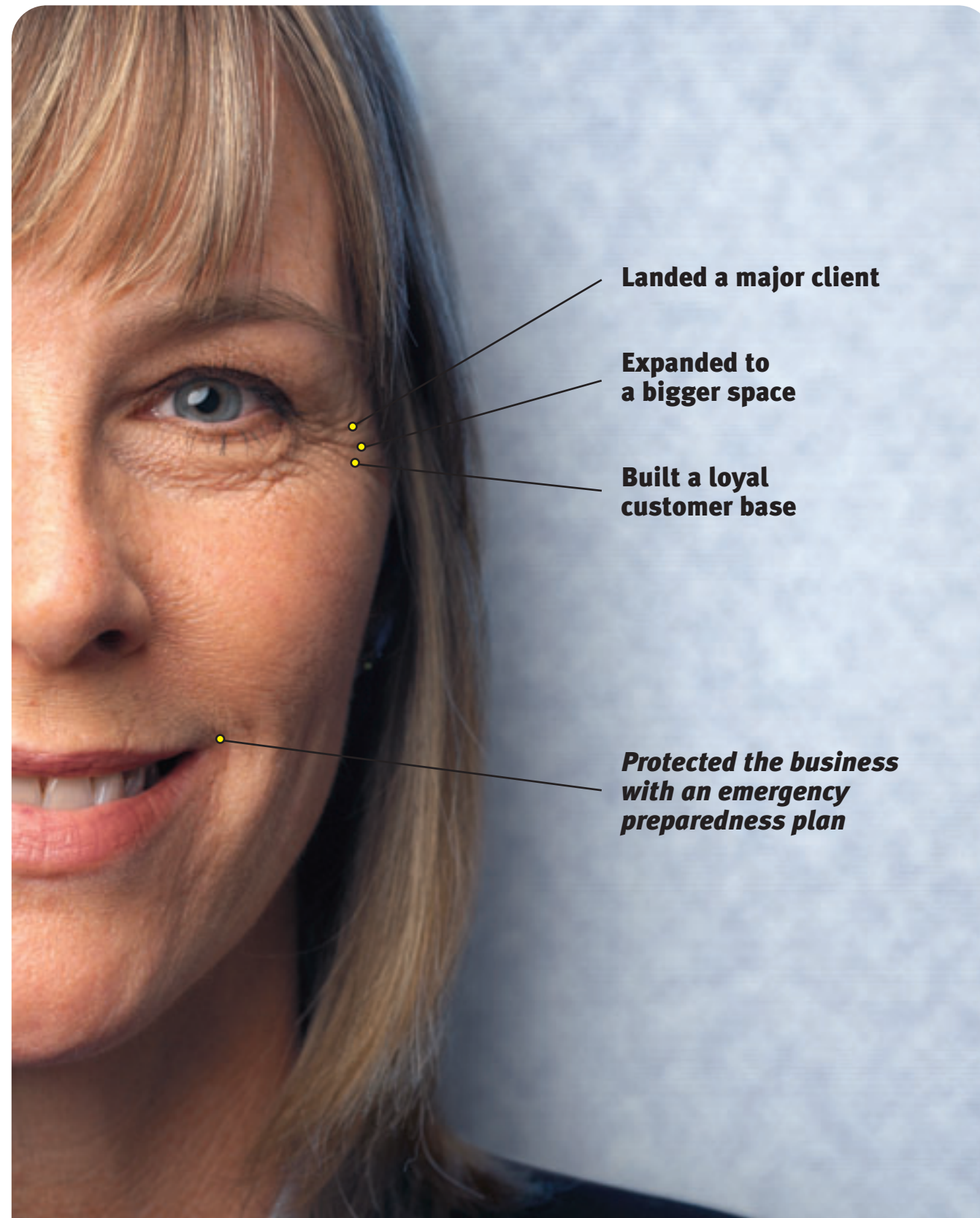
### E-Communities

- E-Communities announcements: welcome new members, find out what the hot topics are within each community.
- Discussions: Ask questions and get answers. Share tips and swap stories with rental dealers across the nation.
- Documents: A wide variety of rent-to-own printed resources and entry forms are just a click away. All you have to do is log on and download.

### RTOHQ's improvements

- Easier navigation—every page is accessible from any other page on the site.
- Timely industry news on the home page.
- A searchable news database—find news archives on a particular topic.
- More industry statistics and links to in-depth reports via the E-Communities section.
- More state association resources, including rent-to-own's economic impact by state.
- Enhanced education resources, including easier access to information about APRO's year-round education opportunities and seminars.
- Information for APRO advertisers.
- RTO-related PDF documents available for download.
- Enhanced search functions. RTOHQ's database-driven design allows for easier searching of the site content.

We're open to suggestions. Do you have an idea or suggestion for the site? Please send your feedback to [sfaught@aprovision.org](mailto:sfaught@aprovision.org), or call 800/204-2776, ext. 105.



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