

PROMOTING YOUR WEB SITE ★ WHERE'S THE QUALITY SERVICE? ★ A PROFILE: LISA NEYHART

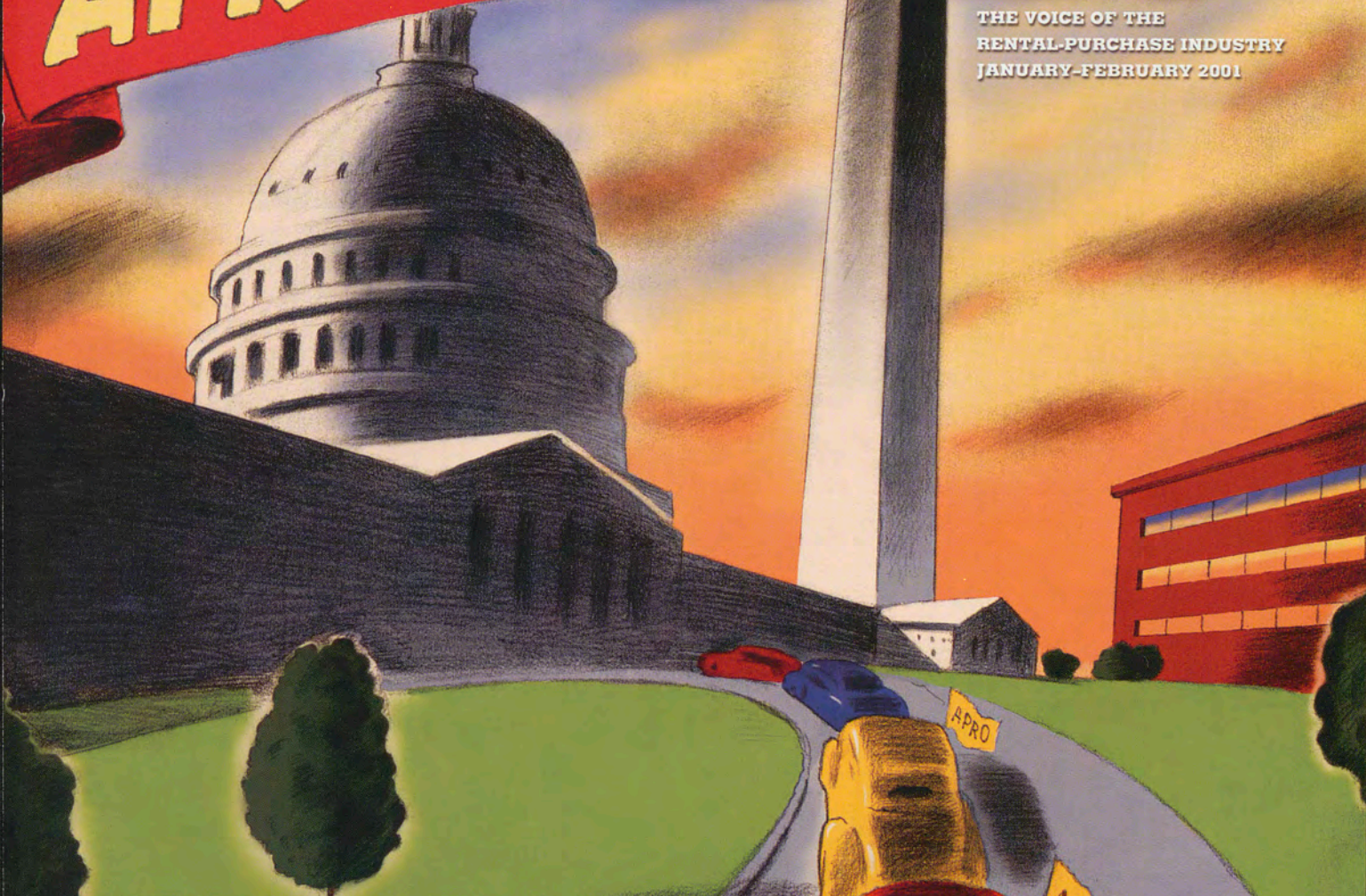
PROGRESSIVE

Rentals

APRO LEGISLATIVE CONF



THE VOICE OF THE
RENTAL-PURCHASE INDUSTRY
JANUARY-FEBRUARY 2001



APRO GOES TO WASHINGTON

APRO'S 2001 DAVE EGAN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE ★ MAY 9 & 10



quality connection

Your customers want to connect. So hook them up with the best: a PC rent-to-own program from HP and Alliance Computing Technologies (ACT).

Renting to own is an easy, affordable way for families to get on the 'Net—and a fast, profitable way for you to build your business. ACT takes the hassles of renting to own off your hands through comprehensive dealer training, end-to-end customer service and support, and an exclusive product replacement policy. All you do is put the PC in your customer's hands. ACT does the rest.

Your rent-to-own customers deserve the best. And there's simply no better choice than HP Brio PCs. With their proven technologies—including Intel® processors and fast Internet access—HP Brio PCs are second to none in quality, reliability, and customer satisfaction.

All this makes ACT and HP the best connection for your customers—and your growing PC rent-to-own business. To learn more, call ACT at 1-888-615-5228.



Intel is a U.S. registered trademark of Intel Corporation. © Copyright Hewlett-Packard Company 200

APRO Associate Member since 1994



january february



20

Win friends and influence Congress

Most rental dealers consider an industry-friendly federal law to be the most significant issue facing our industry today. To secure legislation, the industry must have people who are willing to work. That is where the annual Dave Egan Legislative Conference comes in. Scheduled for May 9 and 10 in Washington, D.C., the 2001 conference is where rental dealers can make things happen.

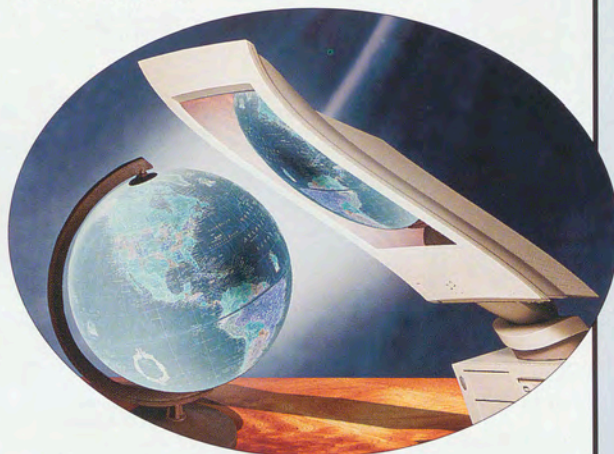
> BY LYN LEACH

28

Promoting your Web site

Web fever has many rental-purchase stores examining whether or not to commit to cyberspace. However, Internet marketing consultants warn that without proper marketing and promotion, Web sites can quickly become cyber elephants. Learn a few tricks of the trade in creating and engaging online traffic.

> BY JOE DYSART



34

You want service with that?

In medium- to low-wage environments, everything has to function flawlessly for quality service to come through. Otherwise, people are so bogged down in the process that they lose sight of the objective. In case anybody doesn't know by now, the objective is to provide total customer satisfaction, even in the face of adversity, time constraints or personal inconvenience. > BY BUD HOLLADAY



40

The personal touch: An APROfile of Lisa Neyhart

When Lisa Neyhart started out in the rental-purchase business in the mid-'80s, she was a \$4-an-hour sales representative. Today, she owns her own company. The key to her success is a combination of good communication skills, enthusiasm and energy—not to mention delivering great customer service. > BY THOMAS G. DOLAN

DEPARTMENTS

5 | NEWS BREAK

APRO to offer online education program; Rainbow Rentals increases ad revenue; PR Watch; APRO at the Inaugural; Rent One Christmas spirit shines; and more.

14 | PRESIDENT'S VIEW

APRO President Gary McDougal is ready to move forward in 2001.

16 | RTO PERSPECTIVE

APRO Executive Director Bill Keese talks about the favorable political climate for the industry.

18 | THINKING RTO

Ed Winn III on workplace stress.

46 | WHO'S WHO IN MANAGEMENT SERVICES AND MISCELLANEOUS

An annual listing of management services companies that supply the rental-purchase industry.

48 | ON ETHICS

RentWay's Greg Ochocki writes about recruiting fellow rental employees.

COVER ILLUSTRATION
BY A.J. GARCES

Schorsten & Associates

INVESTMENT COMPANY

ATTENTION PARTNERS AND RTO MANAGERS who have successfully operated a RTO chain or store and desire to become a part owner and, over time, increase their personal net worth (excluding salary) by \$1 to \$2 million: these limited geographical chains are expected to grow to annual revenues in excess of \$10 million. Individuals must desire to improve their life and break free from present limitations. Significant experience and success in RTO industry necessary. Locations east of the Mississippi River only. Contact George Schorsten of Schorsten & Associates at (888) 232-6755, or fax inquiry to (888) 232-6760.

LET OUR INVESTMENT COMPANY INVEST IN YOU!



COLORTYME

RENT • TO • OWN™



Capital Financing

100% Inventory Financing

Purchasing Power of 2,500 Stores

Comprehensive Advertising Programs

Employee Training Programs

Site Selection and Development

Employment Opportunities

**ColorTyme is
your ticket to a
great future!**

ColorTyme is for everyone. You might already be the owner of a store, an employee looking to take that next step toward ownership, or perhaps you are simply looking for a new career. No matter who you are, ColorTyme is for you!

Whether you have experience opening and running your own store or have never before considered owning your own company, ColorTyme is ready to help you get started. We have laid the foundation for you in the form of our proven operating system, making it exceptionally simple to convert or open your store and get your business growing!

**Call Our Franchising Department
(800) 411-TYME or (972) 608-5376**

Making a career move?

If you are thinking of a new career with us, please email your resume to Steve Arendt at: steve@colortyme.com, or fax us at (972) 403-4936

ColorTyme, Inc. ranked 8th in Success Magazine's Gold 100 for 1999 and is a subsidiary of Rent-A-Center, Inc (Nasdaq: RCL). Check out our website at www.colortyme.com.

PROGRESSIVE Rentals

PUBLISHED BY THE
ASSOCIATION OF PROGRESSIVE RENTAL
ORGANIZATIONS

EDITOR

Julie Stephen Sherrier

ART DIRECTOR

Neil Ferguson

DIRECTOR OF MARKETING (ADVERTISING)

Cindy Ferguson

EXECUTIVE EDITOR

Ed Winn III

EXECUTIVE DIRECTOR

Bill Keese

COLUMNISTS

Bill Keese, Gary McDougal,
Greg Ochocki and Ed Winn III

CONTRIBUTORS

Thomas G. Dolan, Joe Dysart,
Bud Holladay and Lyn Leach

DIRECTOR OF CIRCULATION

Laurie Hill

EDITORIAL/ADVERTISING OFFICES

1504 Robin Hood Trail
Austin, Texas 78703
512/794-0095; fax 512/794-0097
E-mail jsherrier@apro-rto.com
www.apro-rto.com

APRO OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

PRESIDENT

Gary McDougal

FIRST VICE PRESIDENT

Ronald DeMoss

SECOND VICE PRESIDENT

Gary Romine

SECRETARY

Mamie Harper

TREASURER

"Tiger" John Cleek

DIRECTORS

Larry Carrico, David P. David,
Brad Denison, Gary Ferriman,
Lyn Leach, Ernie Lewallen, Kim L. Slatton,
James Strong, Shannon Strunk, Michael
Viveiros, Al Zagorniak and Amy Zeller

PROGRESSIVE RENTALS (ISSN 8750-6106) is published bimonthly by the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations (APRO) at 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, Texas 78703; 512/794-0095. Basic price \$1 per year to APRO members. Additional subscriptions: U.S. and Canada—1 year (6 issues), \$30; 2 years (12 issues), \$50; 3 years (18 issues), \$65. Periodicals postage paid at Austin, Texas. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Progressive Rentals, 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, Texas 78703.

Copyright © by APRO, 2001. All rights reserved. Cover and contents may not be reproduced in whole or in part without prior written permission. Back issues \$5 each, subject to availability. For subscription, change of address, back issues, write to above address. Three weeks required for changes on orders. Allow six to eight weeks for the first subscription copy to be shipped.

APRO

Now accessible via the internet.

**Teletrack Can
Reduce Your Losses
And Increase
Your Net Profits.**

REDUCE LOSSES FROM SKIPS. STRUCTURE MORE PROFITABLE DEALS. CALL TODAY 1.800.729.6981 ext. 3

Protect your rental purchase business with Teletrack's risk assessment, fraud alert and skip-tracing services. We can help you reduce your losses without significantly reducing your volume. By accessing Teletrack's unique information you can verify your orders with confidence. Call Teletrack and start increasing your net profits today.

For more information visit www.teletrack.com, or email, webinfo@teletrack.com.



WE'RE ALWAYS THINKING ABOUT THE RENTAL-PURCHASE INDUSTRY!



Projection Television
46" {diagonal}

Stereo Monitor Receivers
31"/35" {diagonal}

XS® Stereo Table Televisions
19"/25"/27" {diagonal}

Table Televisions
19"/25" {diagonal}

TV/VCR Combinations
13"/19" {diagonal}

Portable Televisions
5"/9"/13" {diagonal}

VCRs

Audio

Camcorders

Communications

THINK...

- EXCEPTIONAL SERVICE
- FAST RELIABLE DELIVERY
- EASY ORDERING
- 6-PIECE ORDERS SHIP FREIGHT PREPAID

For more information contact **Tim Shannon-Thomson National Manager**
800.217.3935 voice 800.688.1115 fax shannon@tce.com email



Consumer Electronics Products

www.ge-electronics.com

APRO Charter Associate Member

news

BREAK

COMPILED BY
JULIE SHERRIER

APRO to offer online education program for RTO employees

Although still in the early planning stages, APRO is embarking upon a comprehensive learning program that will be offered online in the format of individual courses for rental-purchase employees. This ven-

ture is being launched to fill the void that now exists in educating and training RTO employees.

APRO's goal is to make specific educational courses available to those involved in the rental-purchase industry either on an individual basis or through employers in the most economical and convenient way possible. The "Rental Professional Training" series will include five courses and they are:

"Rent-to-own industry orientation," "Rental delivery," "Customer rentals and service," "Collections" and "Communications."

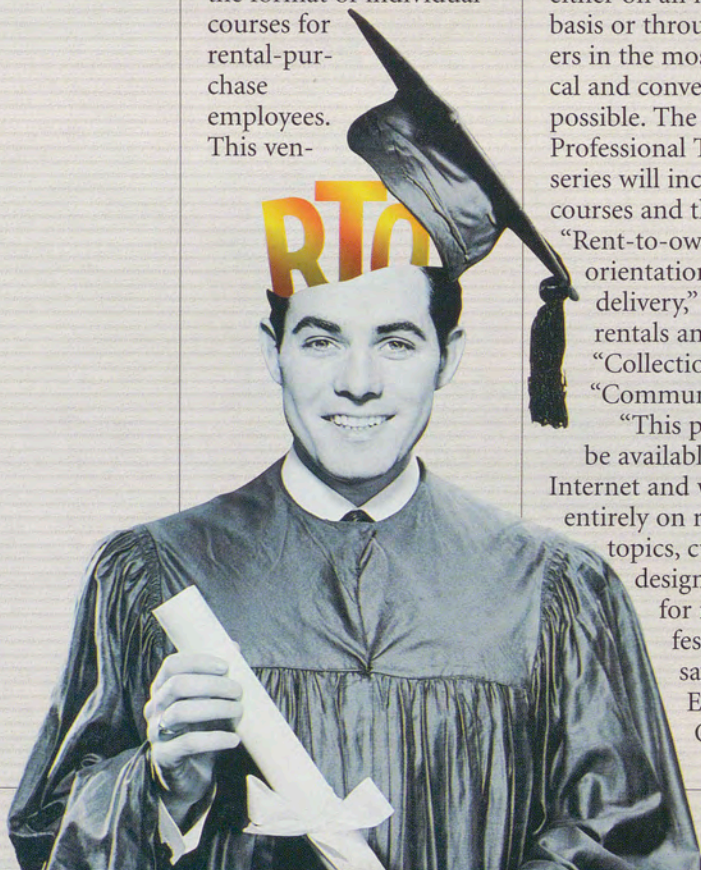
"This program will be available over the Internet and will focus entirely on rent-to-own topics, custom-designed by and for rental professionals," says APRO Education Committee

Chairman Larry Carrico. "Anyone with access to the Internet, either through an employer, home or public library or computer facility, will be able to take these courses on his or her own time, at his or her own pace."

"Online education is the wave of the future," says APRO Education Director Shelley Martinek. "APRO will track the completion of the courses as we want to be able to offer a complete certification program down the line."

Rainbow Rentals expands ad revenue, management teams

The 110-store Rainbow Rentals chain, based in Canfield, OH, is taking several bold steps in order to try to maximize the performance of its growing number of stores. Four top-performing Rainbow store managers were promoted to regional supervisors, bringing the number of regional managers to 12 who are responsible for 7 to 10 stores instead of the 12 stores previously supervised. The new managers are James M. Cave (Western Pennsylvania), William E. Duarte (New England), Pat Greer (Western New York) and Perry S. Rees



NEWS BREAK

(Pittsburgh).

In addition, the company increased its advertising spending 40 percent for 2001. A new campaign is scheduled to begin in March. "Our aggressive increase in advertising spending aims to accelerate

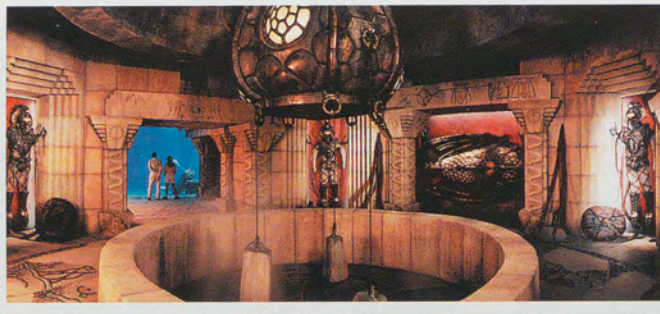
our growth by reaching a wider range of prospective customers," says Wayland J. Russell, Rainbow Rentals chairman and CEO.

Rainbow also implemented a new store staffing system at all of

its locations. The new system requires account managers to handle delivery of merchandise and eliminates delivery teams that had focused solely on transportation. Assisting account managers on deliveries will be

lower-cost truck

helpers. The new model also includes higher compensation for top-performing account managers and store managers. Overall, the new system reduces the cost of payroll per store, while enabling account managers to communicate with customers at the time of delivery.



Paradise awaits at the 2001 APRO Mid-Year Conference

Rental dealers are heading to the Bahamas for the 2001 Mid-Year Conference, scheduled for March 19-21, to the Atlantis Resort on Paradise Island. This conference is an annual gathering of rental dealers, both APRO members and non-members, who want to learn more about the latest in rental-purchase industry research, tax, accounting and legal issues. The focus of this year's conference is on the rental-purchase employee.

Two half-day seminars will address issues such as "What your employees are saying" and "How to keep good employees."

The Atlantis Resort, designed to recreate the legendary lost world of Atlantis, boasts 2,300 rooms, 38 restaurants and lounges and entertainment venues and gambling. The resort also offers breathtaking architecture, underwater displays and archeological tours, as well as a submarine room, marine habitat exhibits and a shark lagoon.

If you have not registered already and are interested in attending, please contact Shelley Martinek at APRO at smartinek@apro-rto.com or call 800/204-2776 or 512/794-0095. Additional information on the conference can be viewed on the APRO Web site at www.apro-rto.com/.

Industry veteran Norm Smith back on his feet

Norm Smith, who has served the rental-purchase industry for decades, first working with Zenith and now with Alliance Computing Technologies, is busy recovering from a double bout of pneumonia. In early December, Smith was hospitalized with Legionnaire's Disease, which can manifest itself as pneumonia. His illness was so severe that Smith was put into a drug-induced coma for 10 days and almost didn't wake up.

After 21 days in intensive care, Smith was moved to a nursing facility where he again succumbed to another bout with pneumonia. Today, Smith is on his feet and is almost his old self again. He's been in an aggressive rehabilitation program and says he is eager to get back to work and go to the upcoming APRO conferences this spring. After all, says



2001

MARCH

19-21
APRO Mid-Year Conference,
Atlantis Resort, Paradise Island,
Bahamas, 800/204-2776

27-28
Canadian Rental Mart, Toronto,
Ontario

28
Arkansas Rental Dealers
Association Spring Seminar,
Little Rock, 573/442-2963

APRIL

17
Ohio Rental Dealers
meeting/seminar, Columbus,
419/782-1188

19-26
High Point Furniture Market—
APRO Hospitality Suite 5-7 p.m.,
April 20 (sponsored by
Progressive Furniture),
336/888-3700

MAY

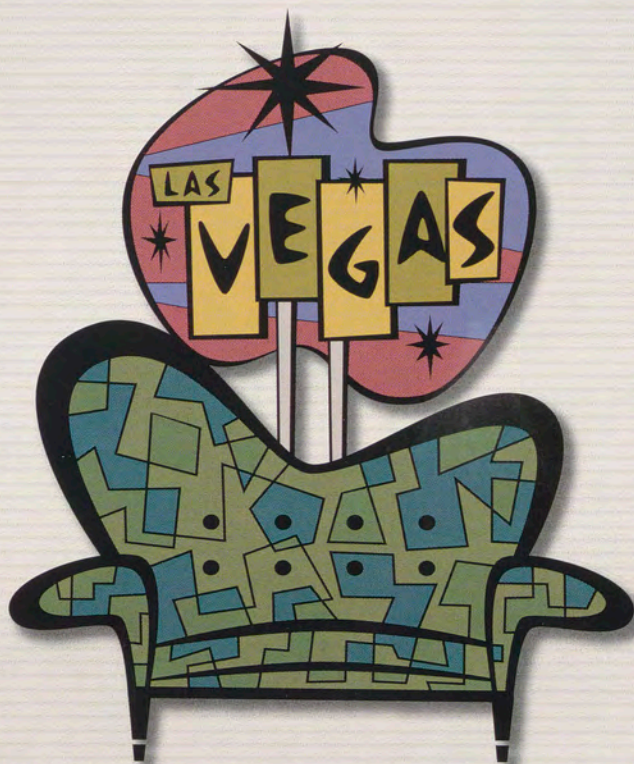
6-8
TARA Convention, Dallas,
940/497-1150

9-10
APRO 2001 Legislative
Conference, Washington, D.C.,
800/204-2776

22-23
Arkansas Rental Dealers
Association meeting, Little
Rock, 573/442-2963

JUNE

13-16
TRIB Group Convention,
New Orleans Hilton,
770/451-4302,
www.tribgroup.com



A Vegas Furniture Mart?

There was much debate among exhibitors at January's San Francisco Furniture Mart about creating a new furniture market in Las Vegas. Apparently, furniture vendors seem to feel that Las Vegas offers a very palatable combination of easier destination access, lower costs and more entertainment. In a column to

Furniture/Today readers, editor in chief Ray Allegrezza listed several complaints being voiced by exhibiting company representatives at the San Francisco Mart. First, the cost of travel, accommodations and exhibit space in not only San Francisco, but also High Point, is very high. Second, Allegrezza noted, Las Vegas gets high marks from exhibitors for entertainment venues.

If a Las Vegas furniture show is born, most furniture dealers were quoted as saying they would have to participate in order to remain competitive. It remains to be seen if and when such a show will be created and if it does, how it will impact the San Francisco and High Point shows.

the other things she received. Again, thank you and God bless you and your family."

Another child wrote

in to say, "To My Adopt a Family, Thank you for the Christmas presents that you gave me, and the clothes that was with

Smith, "I have people I need to see."

Smith welcomes any correspondence from friends and associates during his convalescence. His mailing address is: 1685 Winnetka Rd., Glenview, IL 60025.

Rent One Christmas spirit shines

For the past several years, Kris Lowe, manager of Rent One in Centralia, IL, has been playing the part of Kris Kringle, otherwise known as Santa Claus. As a generous sponsor of the "Adopt-A-Family" program in Bond, Clinton, Marion and Washington Counties, Lowe and his Rent One staff have helped families in need during the holiday season by raising money for the program and by holding toy drives in the store. As a result of the local participation in the 2000 Adopt A Family program by Rent One and other donations from individuals, groups, businesses, schools, churches and other organizations, 761 children from 320 families received gifts of toys and/or warm clothing.

One mother wrote a letter to Rent One after the holidays to express her thanks. N. Lee wrote, "Thank you for adopting my daughter Jessica Morris. The outfit fits her perfect and she loved



APRO measures RTO employee satisfaction

During the months of February and March, a statistical research firm will randomly contact APRO member stores asking to speak with employees in an effort to gauge how they feel about working in the rent-to-own industry. America's Research Group, one of the leading research companies in the furniture and retail business, is conducting the study.

The study is designed to understand better what is on the mind of rental-purchase employees in an effort to help alleviate employee turnover. "Employees represent the industry. They are our customer relations and our public relations; therefore it is imperative to understand their perception. The better our employees, the better our industry," says Gary Romine, Show Me Rent to Own owner from Farmington, MO and chairman of the APRO Public Relations Committee.

Romine believes the industry's most valuable resources are employees. He hopes owners will encourage every employee to be honest and candid if called upon. Of course, the employees and their responses will be anonymous. The study will be conducted by telephone where APRO member stores and employees are randomly contacted. The caller may ask to speak to specific employees and then will subsequently ask a series of questions ranging from opinions on store training programs to employee job satisfaction.

The results of the study will be presented at the 2001 APRO Mid-Year Conference in March as a part of this year's conference theme of "keeping good employees." The research findings will subsequently be presented at the annual APRO convention in Las Vegas this August as well. This study represents the first statistical analysis of rent-to-own employees by the industry.

If your company does not wish to participate, please contact the APRO offices and your company's name will be removed from the source list provided to America's Research Group.



them. Thank you very much, Joshua Shane Booth."

RentWay Inc. expects strong revenues in 2001

"Since our 1993 initial public offering, we have doubled, and doubled again, in size," says RentWay Chairman and CEO William E. Morgenstern in a February announcement of the company's fiscal year 2000 earnings. "By tightening our belts now, we will return to our proven rent-to-own business model. We retain our greatest assets: loyal employees, stores that provide a strategic distribution channel into an under-served market and reliable support from financial institutions and suppliers."

Despite accounting irregularities that surfaced last fall that negatively impacted Erie, PA-based RentWay Inc., the company expects to report a 12 percent to 14 percent revenue increase of \$670-\$685 million for fiscal year 2001—ending September 30, 2001—over prior year fiscal year revenue of \$599 million. "RentWay's revenues have grown steadily through the recent events," says Morgenstern. "Our focus on restoring operational efficiencies should rein-

force the company's strong cash flow."

On October 30, 2000, RentWay initiated an investigation into possible improprieties in its financial accounting. On December 12, RentWay announced that, based on the investigation so far, it expected that these improprieties would have a negative, non-cash impact of between \$65 and \$75 million on fiscal year 2000 pre-tax earnings. The company also expects the fiscal 1999 financial statements to be impacted as a result of the investigation.



Rental.biz anyone?

ICANN, the authority that governs the Internet domain name system, has approved seven new domain extensions. These new extensions are the first new global Internet domains approved by ICANN in over a decade. So if you haven't secured a domain name for your soon-to-be rental Web site, here's the list:

.biz for businesses and corporations

.info for information-based services such as newspapers, libraries, etc.

.name for individuals and personal Web sites

.pro for professions such as law, medicine, accounting, etc.

.aero for services and companies dealing with air travel

.coop for co-operative organizations

.museum for museums, archival institutions and exhibitions

To register for a domain name, go to www.newdomainextensions.com/about_new_dom.shtml

FOUTS BROS. TRUCK SALES SPECIALIZING IN THE RTO INDUSTRY



- ONE-STOP SHOPPING
- DECALED AND DELIVERED TO YOUR STORE LOCATION
- COMPLETE FINANCE PACKAGES
- NATIONAL BODY MANUFACTURERS SUCH AS FLEX, SUPREME AND GRUMMAN-OLSON
- SALESMEN WITH OVER 20 YEARS OF TRUCK EXPERIENCE
- PROVIDING YOUR BUSINESS WITH A NEW IMAGE

FOR DETAILS, PLEASE CALL JOHN NACE

(800) 948-5044 ext. 209 or (678) 300-8492

APRO Associate Member since 2000

APRO delegates attend Bush inauguration

APRO and its members were well represented at the presidential inauguration in January in Washington, D.C., through “Amigos de Bush” and one of its co-founders, El Paso’s Fiesta Rent-to-Own owner Mamie Salazar-Harper. The “Amigos de Bush” luncheon was held on January 19 to celebrate the 54th Presidential Inauguration and to honor the new Hispanic leadership of Justice Alberto R. Gonzales, White House general counsel and Mel Martinez, Secretary of Housing and Urban Development. The officially sanctioned luncheon was held at the Mayflower Hotel in Washington, D.C. and hosted 750 attendees.

APRO was designated a gold sponsor of the event. The following APRO members and their respective companies helped

co-sponsor the event: Gary McDougal of American Rentals, Lyn Leach of Ace Rent To Own, Jimmy Strong of Easy Way, Gary Ferriman of Show-

place Inc., Jeff Lebakken of Lebakken Inc., Mark Peterson of H&H Furniture Inc. and Salazar-Harper of Fiesta Rent To Own. John Rogers of High Touch, Karen Greenwald of Ther.A.Pedic International and Bill Johnson of Southern Rings were the vendor sponsors.

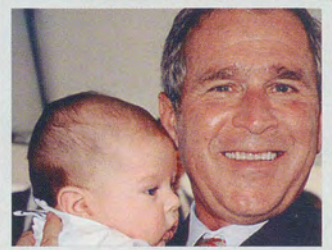
“I am very proud that APRO and the rental industry could occupy a prominent position in recognizing Hispanics and honoring them in their role in shaping America’s future.

According to the latest census figures, Hispanics will soon be the majority minority and, as such, the rental industry must address the concerns and

benefits of a burgeoning consumer and employee base,” says Harper, APRO secretary and APRO PAC chairperson.

Attending the festivities were APRO President Gary McDougal and his wife, Mary, Mamie Salazar-Harper and Dr. Dan Harper, Jeff Lebakken and Cher Schley. John Rafaelli and Tonya Saunders from The Washington Group, APRO’s lobbying firm, also attended.

“Amigos de Bush” was founded in El Paso by a bipartisan group of Hispanics and Anglos who wanted to embrace the ideals of integrity, morals and family values espoused by George W. Bush. This grassroots movement resulted in his carrying El Paso County—a traditionally Democratic party stronghold—during his gubernatorial race. “Amigos de Bush” has now become the impetus for a nationwide movement of chapters forming in California, Florida, New York and Mississippi. The Republican National Hispanic Assembly has approached “Amigos de Bush” to propose a nationwide merger of organizations.



Above: Dan Harper, Mamie Salazar Harper, J.C. Watts and Tonya Saunders. Right: Mary and Gary McDougal with J.C. Watts, center. Below: Amigos de Bush reception. Far right: George W. Bush with the Harper’s new baby, Daniel.



"We are confident that the causes of these improprieties have been isolated and we are taking corrective actions to ensure integrity in our reports on the company's financial results," says William McDonnell, RentWay's vice president and CFO. These actions should restore RentWay to the 14 percent to 16 percent operating margin levels that the company has historically experienced, says McDonnell.

McDonnell says that the accounting improprieties that existed during fiscal 2000 obscured a 6 percent to 8 percent cost overrun among its more than 1,100 stores and the corporate office.

In line with RentWay's strategy to reinforce its operational efficiencies, it recently implemented new programs to further encourage employees' focus on revenue growth and profitability. The programs also foster responsibility of operational management to minimize costs and improve productivity. "Our employees who were quick to embrace this new challenge appreciate the importance of accomplishing our objectives and the significance of their team effort," says Morgenstern.

Saunders joins Michels

Bob Saunders, APRO's 2000 Vendor of the Year

AFFORDABLE SOLUTIONS

COMPLETE POINT-OF-SALE SOFTWARE FOR RENTAL AND RETAIL STORES ONLY



\$899.00

RTO PRO INCLUDES:

Complete inventory, including depreciation
Retail sales Complete rental
Collection and overdue reports and on-screen account
Management Billing Airtime accounts
Contract printing Cash-advance transactions
Data conversions from other software

Windows 95, 98, NT and network versions

HOME OFFICE NOW AVAILABLE!

**FREE DEMO AVAILABLE. CALL [800] 351-6299,
OR VISIT OUR WEB SITE AT WWW.RTOPRO.COM FOR MORE
INFORMATION AND TO DOWNLOAD THE DEMO.**

FUTUREWARE ENTERPRISES INC.

5026 Gall Blvd., Zephyrhills, Florida 33541



APRO Associate Member since 2000

New ideas are growing here all the time



Established 1983

America's largest rental industry
buying group

www.tribgroup.com

We're always thinking of new ways to save our members money. TRIB Group negotiates volume discounts with the top vendors, so our members save money on purchases. Our vendors also offer rebate programs, as an incentive to purchase their product lines; these rebates are awarded directly to the member at year's end. TRIB Group offers purchasing power, even to the smallest rental purchase dealers. Whether you have one location or one hundred, the bottom line is profitability. At least, that's OUR bottom line.

3180 Presidential Drive ☐ Suite F ☐ Atlanta, Georgia 30340
phone 770-451-4302 24 hour fax line 770-451-4312



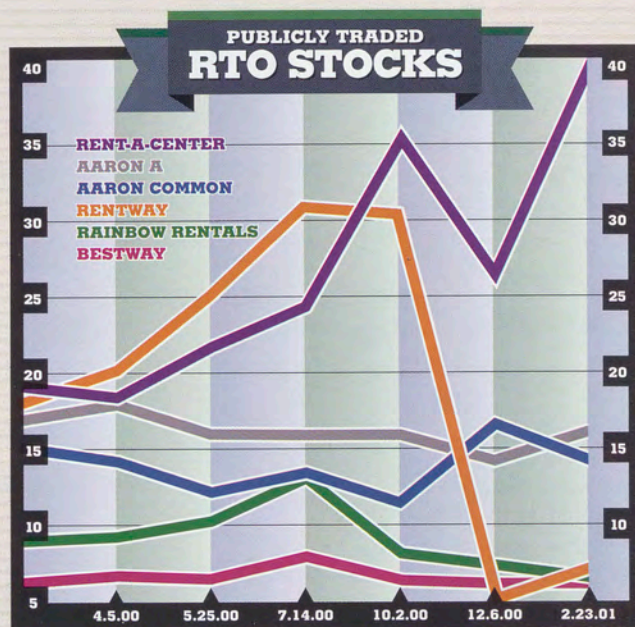
AN ASSOCIATE MEMBER SINCE 1983

NEWS BREAK



and former national sales manager for rental and alternate accounts for Pilliod Furniture Inc., accepted a new position with furniture manufacturer

Michels & Co, based in Lynwood, CA. Saunders has been named Eastern sales manager for Michels, which produces high-end promotional furniture, including bedrooms, entertainment centers, dining rooms and home office.



"We are very happy to have a person of Bob's high caliber join our sales team," says Michels national sales manager

Robe Kramer. "He brings a wealth of knowledge and will play a major role in the company's continuing sales growth."

A moving story

A PRO has moved. Our new headquarters address is 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, TX 78703. Our telephone numbers remain the same: 800/204-2776 or 512/794-0095. Our fax number is still 512/794-0097. And, of course, the Web address is still www.apro-rto.com/.

SPENDING CONTROLS PURCHASING CONSOLIDATION STORE OPENING PACKAGES



APRO
Associate Member Since 1986

Coast-to-Coast
ONE STOP SHOP

TRIB GROUP
Approved Vendor
OWNED MEMBER

APPLIANCES • ELECTRONICS • CHEMICALS • FURNITURE

RES
ACCESSORIES
JEWELRY • WAREHOUSE • PROMOTIONAL • FORMS

RES Accessories has been servicing the Rental Purchase Industry for over 15 years. We have over 850 items specifically tailored to the needs of your RTO Store.

ORDER HOTLINE
1-800-444-7304
FAX 1-800-444-7312



Win a trip to Vegas in APRO's membership drive

Membership in the rental-purchase national trade association is an investment all rental-purchase dealers should make. However, APRO membership currently represents only 50 percent of all rental dealers nationwide. To help boost our membership, APRO is kicking off a "Member get a member" campaign. Those members who recruit new members will be eligible to win a full registration (including a guest) to the 2001 APRO Convention and Trade Show in Las Vegas and four nights at the beautiful Paris Las Vegas resort.

The campaign runs until June 30, 2001. The grand prize of the convention registration and hotel stay for two will go to the member who recruits the most new members. To win, members must bring in a minimum of three new members. A random drawing will also be held for all members who recruit at least one new member. This winner will win a one-carat diamond heart-shaped pendant with a 14K 18-inch box chain, generously donated by Jerry Bogo Co.

If you're interested in participating in this campaign or would like marketing materials, potential member phone

numbers and/or addresses, or have any questions, call Carolyn May or Laurie Hill at APRO, 800/204-2776. The mem-

bership form below can be filled out and faxed to APRO at 512/794-0097. In order to qualify for the competition, please

include the signing-on member name in the space provided on the form ("APRO Member Sponsor").

APRO MEMBERSHIP APPLICATION

APRO REGULAR MEMBERSHIP IS OPEN TO THOSE WHO OFFER PRODUCTS ON A RENTAL-PURCHASE PLAN

REGULAR MEMBER DUES: APRO's annual membership dues are as follows:

1-100 stores	\$375 per store	301-1,000 stores	\$250 per store
101-300 stores	\$300 per store	1,001 or more stores	\$225 per store

OWNER INFORMATION: A complete listing of your stores, including address, zip code and area telephone number must accompany your application and dues payment before your membership can be approved. Allow a minimum of three weeks for processing and approval.

Company name _____

DBA _____

Owner's name _____

Home office address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Telephone [_____] _____ Fax [_____] _____

E-mail address _____ Web site URL _____

APRO member sponsor _____

Number of stores _____

Dues amount [number of stores x appropriate dollar amount listed above] \$ _____

I hereby make application for membership in the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations. I understand all memberships are for a term of one year, renewable annually upon the anniversary of the date of joining. I hereby acknowledge the APRO Code of Ethics and agree to uphold its principals.

Signature _____ Date _____

PLEASE MAKE CHECK PAYABLE TO APRO AND MAIL TO:



1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, Texas 78703

800/204-2776, 512/794-0095, fax 512/794-0097, www.apro-rto.com

Dues payments are deductible by members as an ordinary and business expense. Contributions or gifts to APRO are not deductible as charitable contributions for federal income tax purposes. Payment must be made in U.S. dollars. One dollar per location of due payment goes toward Progressive Rentals subscription. This amount is not refundable should you choose not to receive Progressive Rentals magazine.

Now that the presidential election is over, we know who we, as rental dealers, will be dealing with in Washington. It is imperative that we continue to support our legislative efforts and stay involved.

The 2001 Dave Egan Legislative Conference, May 9 and 10 in Washington, D.C., is a must-attend event for rental dealers. Dealers who have a strong desire to see federal legislation passed that would protect the industry from future attacks on the state level should join us as we educate our elected representatives on the benefits of rent-to-

Let's move forward

own. I commend Lyn Leach, APRO's government relations chairman, for his efforts in recruiting at least one rental dealer from each state to attend this year's conference. To find out more about this year's conference, please read Lyn's article on page 20. For more information or to register, visit the APRO Web site at www.apro-rto.com or call Ron Waters, APRO government affairs director, at 800/204-2776 or 512/794-0095. Brochures were mailed out in early February.

My wife, Mary, and I attended the inauguration in Washington. We also took this opportunity to meet with our congressmen and senators to keep our relations moving forward in this new Congress. I feel that we, as an industry, have developed strong relationships with many of our elected officials over the years. These relationships can only serve to benefit our cause with the new administration.



By **GARY McDOUGAL**
APRO's President

Mary and I met with the Honorable J.C. Watts, a congressman from Oklahoma who once drafted federal legislation for the rental-purchase industry. Congressman Watts encouraged me by saying that the industry will get support from him and his fellow congressmen during this current session.

Only as a united group can we expect to achieve our goals in the successful passage of federal legislation. We cannot do it alone, no matter how big or how small our company. Everyone has

to work as a group in order to achieve this final victory for the industry.

Al Zagorniak from Sears Contract Sales and an APRO board member attended the legislative conference for the first time last year. He stated in the Association's last Vendor Committee meeting in October 2000 that after going to Washington to lend his assistance at the 2000 conference, he was pleasantly surprised to find that he was met with a warm reception. What peaked interest, says Zagorniak, were the results of the Federal Trade Commission study on the industry. The FTC study gave the industry high marks and has served as an invaluable tool in educating members of Congress about rental-purchase.

By now you all should be aware that this year's Mid-Year Conference is scheduled for March 19-21 at the Atlantis Resort in Paradise Island in the Bahamas. The focus of the 2001 conference is on our employees and what we can do to improve our retention rates. You can register online at the APRO Web site at www.apro-rto.com/. I can't encourage you enough to attend this event. Take a break and warm up at the 2001 APRO Mid-Year Conference!

On a final note, APRO is currently sponsoring a membership campaign. We all know dealers who have either let their APRO membership lapse or who have never been members. We need to educate those dealers that they do have a voice and why it is important to belong to their industry's national trade association. We need the names of these dealers so we can contact them directly about joining APRO. Take a moment and jot down people you know who don't belong to APRO. Fax your list to 512/794-0097. We'll take care of the rest. ■

.....
"Dealers who have a strong desire to see federal legislation passed that would protect the industry from future attacks on the state level should join us as we educate our elected representatives on the benefits of rent-to-own."

Gary McDougal is owner of American Rentals in Hixson, TN.

We've got a new address:



www.foresightclub.com

We're putting out the welcome mat with online access to Club benefits for both our clients and their customers.

Now your customers can access many of the benefits of the Foresight Preferred Customer Club online anytime 24 hours a day through our new web site at www.foresightclub.com. Through our "Member Services" link, Club members can search for local benefit providers and even map the location with just a simple "click" of the mouse. Members can also print Club benefit forms and coupons right from their living room or office.

Clients can also take advantage of the benefits of Foresight's new web site with online supply orders and claims assistance. Thousands of people have visited our web site since August. Visit our web site and discover for yourself how you can put the benefits of the Club to work for you! For more information on the Club and its online benefits call Cliff Stoner or Amy Raper, toll-free at 1-800-733-0811.



We "click" with customers.

From Leased Property Protection and Extended Service Warranty to Entertainment and Healthcare Discounts, Foresight has the Club program that will help your store generate added revenue and offer more value to your rental customers.



FORESIGHT
PREFERRED CUSTOMER CLUBS

P.O. Box 721738 Norman, OK 73070-8328 1-800-733-0811

APRS Associate Member since 1991

As you can see from the cover of this issue of *Progressive Rentals*, industry activists are preparing to descend on our nation's capitol to push Congress for long-awaited federal legislation regulating rent-to-own. I am issuing an urgent call to all rental dealers to join in the effort this year. Your industry needs you!

I just returned from Washington, D.C., where I met with The Washington Group, APRO's federal lobbying firm. With me was Ron DeMoss, chairman of APRO's Government Relations Committee, Brad Denison, the head of our federal effort

than 10 years of political experience working for Democratic Leader Tom Daschle and Democratic members of the Senate.

Bill Burke, director of legislative affairs for TWG, will also be assisting our efforts. He's the former legislative director for Congressman Patrick J. Kennedy and acted as the liaison to the business community for Kennedy. The director of policy for TWG is "Tripp" Funderburk. He served seven years with Congressman Bob Livingston (R-LA).

Others who will assist our efforts include Jeff Walter, a vice president of TWG. He has served as finance director for Friends of Senator Alfonse D'Amato (R-NY) and as a

fundraising consultant to the national Republican Senatorial Campaign. Fowler West, general counsel of TWG, has more than 19 years experience on Capitol Hill and worked under former Congressmen W.R. Poage of Texas and Thomas S. Foley of Washington. Never have we had as strong a team pushing our issues. But, more important, never have we had the political opportunity facing our industry on Capitol Hill.

We don't have a crisis facing rent-to-own as we did in 1993. Back then, we had more than 100 rental dealers attend APRO's Legislative Conference. We stared those crises in the face and overcame them. All of us know we can't continue to pursue federal legislation indefinitely. This year we need to exert our greatest effort yet. We may never have as good an opportunity as we do now.

This is where you come in. I know many of you have never come forward to help the industry in Washington. There are countless excuses for not coming to Washington in May to help your industry. I ask you to put those reasons aside and step forward. If you won't do it for the industry, then do it for your business. It's that simple.

To find out how you can register to attend this year's legislative conference, May 9 and 10 in Washington, D.C., visit the APRO Web site at www.apro-rto.com or call Laurie Hill at APRO at 800/204-2776 or 512/794-0095. ■

Bill Keese's e-mail address is bkeese@apro-rto.com.

.....
**"Never have we had
 as strong a team
 pushing our issues.
 And we've never had
 the political opportunity
 facing our industry on
 Capitol Hill."**

The group in Washington

and Ron Waters, our government affairs director. John Raffaelli, the founding partner of The Washington Group, joined us in the meeting. John has been our lead lobbyist for 10 years and is the chief strategist in the firm. It was with the leadership of Kevin Quinn, APRO's then president, Wayne Chambers, chairman of our Tax and Accounting Committee, and John that we were successful in achieving one of our goals of fair and equitable tax treatment for rent-to-own businesses.

In addition to John, Mark Schnabel, senior vice president of TWG, and Tonya Saunders, vice president of TWG, joined in on the strategy session. Mark has been our key to the great relationship with the Republican leadership and their understanding of our issues. Within the industry, Ernie Talley, Brad Denison and Gary McDougal have all played a key role in the development of this relationship. Tonya has been working our issues on the Hill for many years and is our main day-to-day contact with TWG.



By **BILL KEESE**
 APRO's Executive Director

John has reorganized his office and there now will be more from TWG to help in our effort. There is John O'Hanlon, a founding partner who has great contacts with the Democratic leadership in the House. Rita Lewis is the executive vice president and was the deputy executive director and political director for the Democratic Senatorial Campaign committee before joining TWG. She also has more

WHO STANDS BEHIND YOUR SOFTWARE?

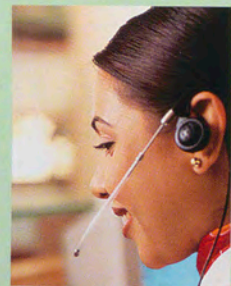


...and your company?

Your software system is mission-critical to your business. That's why you need to know something about the company (and its people!) that stands behind it. Reliable software is more than just a pretty face...uh, screen.

In 1983, IDEAL Software Systems was one of the leaders who wrote software specifically for the Rent-To-Own industry. Today, with thousands of customers around the world, IDEAL is the pacesetter of the industry. The IDEAL system is the fastest, easiest to learn, and most secure software you can buy.

IDEAL stays with you every step of the way. Half of our 40+ employees work in technical support and development. 99.7% of all technical support calls are answered by a live technician, not a machine—24 hours, 7 days a week. You get a mind, not a recording...



When you choose the software that is going to run your business, be sure the team that stands behind it is IDEAL.

**IDEAL**
SOFTWARE SYSTEMS, INC.

1-800-96IDEAL (800-964-3325)

FAX (601) 693-2302 • www.idealss.com

P.O. Box 110 • Meridian, MS 39302-0110



We live in stressful times. It is in part due to the pace at which we all must move in these initial days of the 21st century. There is little prospect that the pace will slow and, instead, is likely to increase. You can blame technology, but you cannot alter the trend. And ours is a particularly stressful business. It has been that way for as long as there have been rental dealers. It is a stressful business from top to bottom. Account reps must deal with recalcitrant customers daily, some of whom have nothing better to do than try to beat the system. Everyone in

organizational chart in a company. How many account reps have acknowledged lately that the store manager has a tough job? It can work with customers, too. You can acknowledge that it sounds like the customer is in a really tight spot while still patiently insisting that you get some money or the TV.

.....
 "We live in stressful times. It is in part due to the pace at which we all must move in these initial days of the 21st century. So, what to do besides pulling hair and eating Roloids?"

Acknowledging stress

the store has numbers to hit—daily numbers, weekly numbers, monthly numbers. Paychecks depend on those numbers. Bosses are bombarded with demands from lenders, suppliers and the new guy opening a store across the street. Unless you work in a rental store or are a rental customer, you probably do not really understand how the business works and may think the worst about it. That means friends and family do not understand and may not like your current career choice. Such sentiments add to the pressure that is always there and at every level.

So, what to do besides pulling hair and eating Roloids? A few thoughts:

First, acknowledge that your job is stressful. Denial is unhealthy. We all have internal indicators to alert us to circumstances that threaten to overload our systems. These "twinges" are signals of impending stress. We can ignore the signals; we can dim them with drugs, alcohol or other diversions, but if we acknowledge the stress, we are better able to respond meaningfully to whatever comes our way.



By ED WINN III
APRO's General Counsel

Acknowledge that the jobs of those around you are stressful. Management training teaches that acknowledgment can be a powerful tool in interpersonal relations. You can acknowledge the person and that what they do is stressful. Acknowledgment can work up and down the or-

Acknowledgment, perforce, includes recognition. You have to be aware of your coworkers, bosses and subordinates before you can acknowledge them. This awareness may help you see job stress is overwhelming someone you know. Then you can either get out of the way or step in and try to help, depending on your job description and your own temperament. The message here is that it is not just you. All of us are stressed most of the time.

Second, release stress when you can. A smart businessman in another field told me once that he makes it a rule always to make his toughest telephone calls the very first thing in the morning. Otherwise, those calls just nag at him all day. He is right, of course, but we also know how incredibly easy it is not to make those calls. Most times, we know that tackling things head-on creates less stress than avoiding them.

There are other releases. Just sharing stress can help dissipate it. Be sure to inform the listener what you are doing so that they don't reach for the tranquilizer gun. And there are all of the tried-and-true methods for relieving stress—exercise, meditation, prayer and the like. I am not telling you how to live; rather, I am writing about recognizing the stressful nature of what you do for a living with the hope that you might rise to help a colleague before he or she explodes. That recognition could deter you from responding negatively to your stress by doing something unalterably wrong to yourself and your company. ■

Ed Winn's e-mail address is edwinn@ibm.net.



THE INSIDE ADVANTAGE™

GIVE PEOPLE
SOMETHING
SPECIAL
AND THEY WILL

APPRECIATE IT.

The life of a rental appliance is a rough one. Often having to withstand several owners in a single year, they each need to be built to last. And at Whirlpool Corporation, they are. With full one-year warranties to back them up, our appliances are also designed for easy cleanup. Plus they look great, with colors and styles your customers can appreciate. But not as much as you'll appreciate our extremely low service incidence rates. To learn even more about how Whirlpool Corporation can help your business, contact us today.



888.567.7368
insideadvantage.net

APRS Associate Member since 1981

WIN FRIENDS and INFLUENCE CONGRESS

AT THE 2001 DAVE EGAN LEGISLATIVE CONFERENCE

THE MAJORITY OF RENTAL DEALERS still consider an industry-friendly federal law to be the most significant issue facing our industry today. In order to secure our goal of getting federal legislation, we must have two key items: people who are willing to work and money. That is where the annual Dave Egan Legislative Conference comes in. Scheduled for May 9-10, in Washington, D.C., the 2001 conference is guaranteed to help rental-purchase dealers "win friends and influence people" in our nation's Capitol.

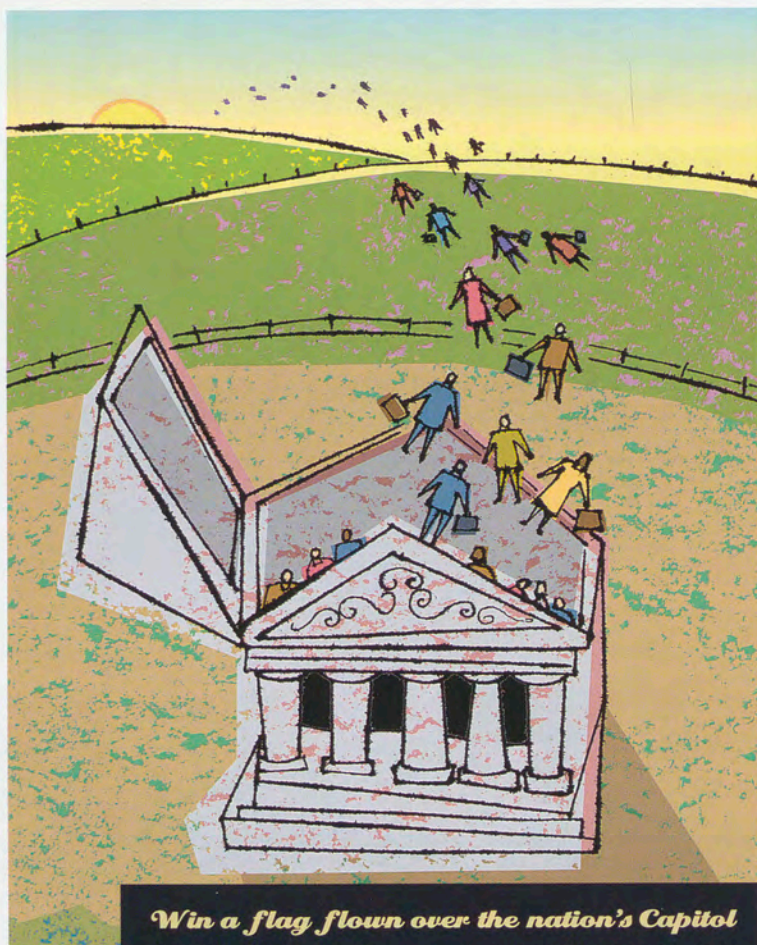
By Lyn Leach

ILLUSTRATIONS BY ALAN KING



Let's first address the need for people. Rental dealers have always been known for their strong work ethic. Rental-purchase owners are, for the most part, very involved in the day-to-day inner workings of their stores. It is because of these high work standards that they have become successful. The challenge, then, is to get these hard-working people to travel to Washington, D.C. to talk with their congressmen and senators.

I believe there are many rental dealers who want to get more involved in APRO and industry issues but have never been personally asked to help. The first goal for the 2001 conference is to get more dealers involved. The 2000 conference had 70 attendees. The problem last year was that of those 70 attending, only 20 states were represented. That means 28 [minus Alaska and Hawaii] states did



Win a flag flown over the nation's Capitol

The individual(s) with the highest number of meetings with his or her members of Congress during the Legislative Conference will be honored with a U.S. flag that will be flown especially for him or her over the nation's Capitol. This flag will be presented to the winners at the 2001 APRO Convention in Las Vegas in August.

not have someone from their home state visiting their elected representatives. It makes all the difference in the world to have a rental-purchase dealer from a congress-

THIS YEAR, APRO HOPES TO HAVE RENTAL-PURCHASE DEALERS FROM ALL 48 CONTIGUOUS STATES IN WASHINGTON ON MAY 9. NO PREVIOUS POLITICAL EXPERIENCE IS NECESSARY. YOU DO NOT NEED TO BE WELL VERSED IN THE POLITICAL PROCESS NOR DO YOU NEED TO HAVE PREVIOUS EXPERIENCE IN LOBBYING POLITICIANS. THE EXPERTISE AND EXPERIENCE WE NEED IS IN THE RENTAL BUSINESS. THE POLITICIANS UNDERSTAND VERY WELL THE POLITICAL PROCESS, BUT WHAT THEY DON'T UNDERSTAND IS THE RENTAL BUSINESS.

man or senator's home state making the visit. If you live, vote and drive a car with the same license plates as the congressman or senator you are meeting with, you will get a lot more attention and, generally, a more positive result.

This year, APRO hopes to have rental-purchase dealers from all 48 contiguous states in Washington on May 9. No previous political experience is necessary. You do not need to be well versed in the political process nor do you need to have previous experience in lobbying politicians. The expertise and experience we need is in the rental business. The politicians understand very well the political process, but what they don't understand is the rental business.

Congressmen, senators and their aides are very willing to listen and learn. They are delighted that people travel all the way to Washington to address them. APRO provides written materials that make your visit go smoothly and will help answer any questions that may arise. These materials include facts and figures about our industry and its financial impact. Also included are specifics about our bill and the recent Federal Trade Commission report, which is very complimentary. You will be provided with everything that you need in order to have a pleasant and positive meeting.

For those of you who may be considering attending this year's conference, but are not entirely sure, it will reassure you to know that someone who has made political visits before will be available to go with you on any or all of your visits. Those individuals who make themselves available to help you include APRO staff members, APRO General Counsel Ed Winn, members of our Washington lobbying group and other fellow rental dealers. All of us will be glad to help first-time attendees feel comfortable.

On the first day of the legislative conference, there will be one hour dedicated to training first-time attendees and an additional 90 minutes will be devoted to a general session to prepare all dealers to carry a unified message. Rest assured that the interaction with your congressmen and senators will go much easier than you might expect.

On the money side of the equation, last year was the most successful year our industry has had in raising money for the APRO Political Action Committee. More than \$100,000 was raised, which allowed for more generous political contributions than in the past. Needless to say, politicians took notice. The next time you get APRO PAC information in the mail, take the time to consider what amount you should pledge. Think of what the rental industry has done for you, your family and your employees. Imagine how frightening it would be to get a phone call some day explaining that a politician has introduced a bill to change your state law and put you out of business. This happened just last year to dealers in Kentucky and New York.

This year it is also our hope to get more vendors involved in the industry's political effort. Al Zagorniak, with Sears Contract Sales, attended the 2000 legislative conference. Zagorniak rolled up his sleeves and made quite a positive impact. He explained what the rental industry meant to his company. Vendors have the unique ability to explain how important the rental industry is to manufacturers. They can share with their elected representatives how much business they do with rental dealers. Politicians are always interested in the big picture, so vendors should be prepared to talk about how many jobs the rental business creates and perhaps what percentage of their revenues are provided by rental stores. There is strength in numbers, and the vendors have a powerful story to tell, thereby multiplying the conference's overall power.

After arriving in Washington, D.C., getting checked in and going through the two training seminars to prepare you for your meetings, attendees will spend the next day-and-a-half in meetings with the congressmen and senators from their home states. Walking the halls of Congress and the Senate is an awesome experience in and of itself. You'll walk past all the offices of the people you read about in the paper every day. In just a couple days, you'll get a good feel for the true Washington D.C. and a baptism into the science of politics. There are many rental dealers who have been to Washington a good number of times. They are to be commended for tirelessly fighting the battle. These rental dealers are the backbone of the industry and often serve without getting the credit they deserve for helping improve the image and position of our industry.

On the final night of the conference there will be a social event where attendees share their lobbying success stories. It is at this dinner that you really begin to get an understanding of how important the efforts are of each and every attendee and what the overall expectations are for the success of our bill. It is my belief that this year offers the industry the greatest chance to get its bill successfully passed. The political climate is very favorable.

Conference schedule

TUESDAY, MAY 8

EARLY-BIRD SESSION

Rental dealers who may need more time for appointments on Capitol Hill can take advantage this "early-bird" day.

WEDNESDAY, MAY 9

8:30-10 a.m.

Registration

9-10 a.m.

Seminar: "Our Message to Congress"

Enter to win one free APRO 2001 Convention registration in a drawing during attendance at this seminar. It's time for our team huddle! Huddle up and refresh your knowledge of industry issues with Congress. See first-hand how a meeting with your elected official actually works. We'll take any fears or concerns away before you meet with your Congressmen.

10-11:30 a.m.

General session

11:30 a.m.-4:30 p.m.

Meetings on Capitol Hill

5-6 p.m.

Cocktail reception

6-10 p.m.

APRO PAC event

Come prepared to be entertained in a city that knows no limits! APRO arrives in Washington, D.C. each year to celebrate the industry's success. This year's event will once again bring many surprises. There is no registration fee for the 2001 APRO Legislative Conference. However, if you attend this special event, APRO PAC requests a minimum \$200 donation (personal checks or personal credit cards only) for each person in your party attending.

THURSDAY, MAY 10

8:30-9:30 a.m.

Send-off breakfast

10 a.m.-4 p.m.

Meetings on Capitol Hill



APRO's 2001 Dave Egan Legislative Conference is sponsored by High Touch, Sears Contract Sales and the TRIB Group.

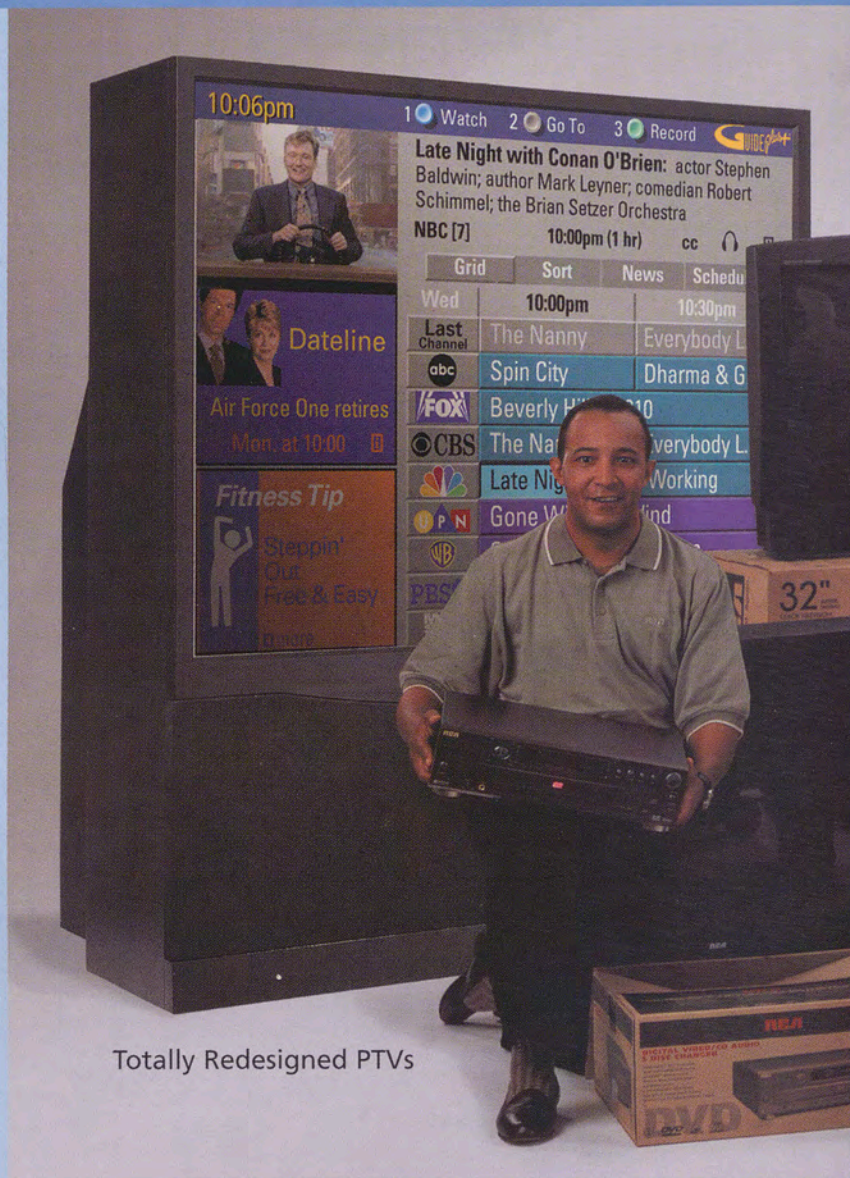
THERE IS NOTHING MORE IMPORTANT IN THE ELECTRONICS INDUSTRY THAN DELIVERY, DELIVERY, DELIVERY

Our goal is to deliver the products you need when your customers want them. That's why our experienced RCA Rental Specialists make ordering easy and they are ready to answer any questions you may have about pricing, product availability, programs as well as our nationwide distribution system.

Best of all, a 6-piece electronics order will be delivered directly to your store freight pre-paid.

Our full-line of RCA brand electronics include: VCRs, DVD Players, Camcorders, Home Entertainment Audio Systems with 350-Watt Dolby Digital¹ Surround Receivers and 100-Watt Powered Subwoofers, Televisions, TV/VCR Combinations, Audio and Accessories as well as a complete line of BUSH² Furniture.

We deliver, so you can.



Totally Redesigned PTVs



Portable CD Player w/Digital AM/FM Stereo and Cassette Player



Digital Still Camera



350-Watt Dolby Digital¹ Surround Receiver with 5-Speaker Package and 100-Watt Powered Subwoofer

Questions? Contact **Tim Shannon** National Manager/800.217.3935 voice/800.688.1115 fax/shannont@tce.com

© 2000 Thomson Consumer Electronics, Inc.

WANT TO THE RENTAL-PURCHASE EVERY AND DELIVERY.

*We Deliver.
So You Can Deliver!*



IS Camcorder



VHS-C AutoShot™
Camcorder



Changing Entertainment. Again.

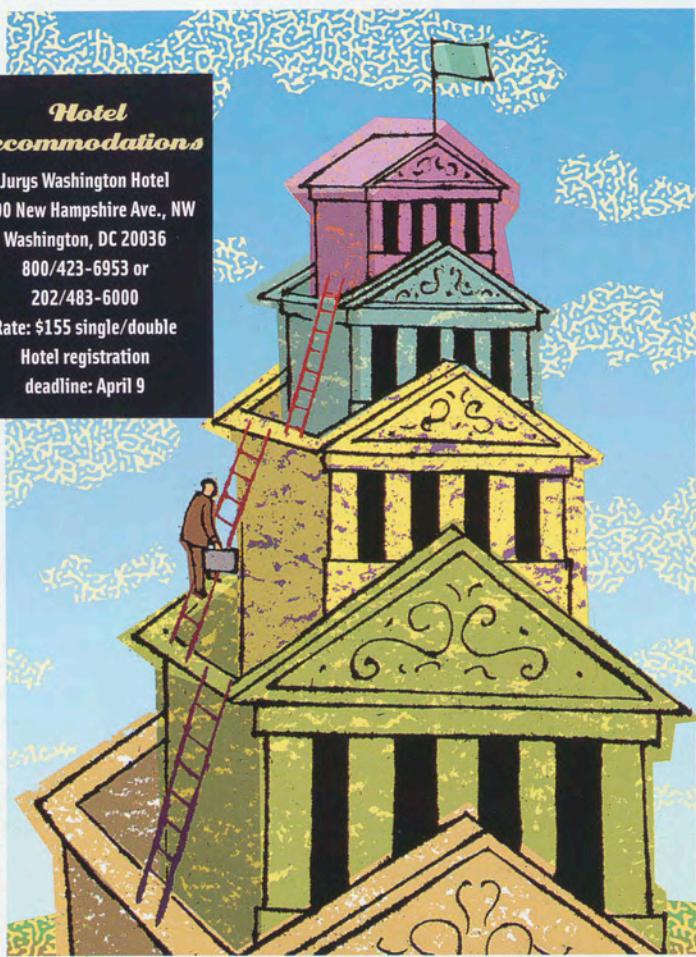
www.rca.com



¹Dolby Digital and the double-D symbol are registered trademarks of Dolby Laboratories Licensing Corporation. Requires optional speakers and Dolby Digital receiver. ²Bush is a registered trademark of Bush Industries, Inc. Specifications are subject to change without notice. Simulated Pictures.

Hotel accommodations

Jurys Washington Hotel
 1500 New Hampshire Ave., NW
 Washington, DC 20036
 800/423-6953 or
 202/483-6000
 Rate: \$155 single/double
 Hotel registration
 deadline: April 9



APRO HAS SPENT BETTER THAN A HALF A DOZEN YEARS BUILDING UP TO THIS POINT AND NOW WE NEED EACH AND EVERY ONE OF YOU TO COME HELP. ONE PERSON CAN MAKE A DIFFERENCE AND YOU JUST MAY BE THIS YEAR'S DIFFERENCE MAKER.

Over the past decade, our industry has become more and more mainstream America. Rental dealers have run their businesses with more prudence and pride and people are noticing. It is incredibly exciting to think that during 2001, the start of the real new Millennium, we may well get the federal law that is so fundamentally important to every rental dealer, vendor and employee, finally passed into law.

I share these high expectations with some trepidation, because for us to be successful, we need attendance. In the movie *Field of Dreams*, Kevin Costner hears a voice telling him, "Build it and they will come." APRO has spent better than a half a dozen years building up to this point and now we need each and every one of you to come help. One person *can* make a difference and you just may be this year's difference maker. I get up every morning and am thankful for the opportunity to operate rental-purchase stores. I'm sure many of you feel the same way. We must not let anyone take away that feeling of gratitude. I'm looking forward to seeing many of you in Washington D.C. on May 9 as we represent our industry and invest in the security of our business. ■

Lyn Leach is a member of the APRO board of directors, the APRO government relations committee and the APRO PAC. He is president of Ace Furniture & TV Inc. in Malcolm, NE.

REGISTRATION DEADLINE: APRIL 23

Name _____ Title _____

Company name _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip code _____

Business phone (_____) _____ Fax (_____) _____ E-mail address _____

There is no registration fee for the 2001 APRO Legislative Conference. However, if you attend the APRO PAC sponsored event on Wednesday, May 9, APRO PAC requests a minimum \$200 donation (personal checks or personal credit cards only) for each person in your party attending.

I will attend: Tuesday, May 8 (Early bird) Wednesday, May 9 APRO PAC event, Wednesday, May 9 Thursday, May 10

Number in party attending _____ Are you an APRO member? Yes No

APRO PAC contribution: Amount \$ _____

Personal check enclosed Charge to my **personal** credit card: American Express MasterCard Visa

Credit card number _____ Expiration date _____ Authorized signature _____

Mail this form, along with your contribution made payable to APRO PAC, to:

Association of Progressive Rental Organizations, 1504 Robin Hood Trail, Austin, TX 78703—or fax to 512/794-0097

Questions? Call Laurie Hill at APRO at 800/204-2776 or 512/794-0095

CONFERENCE REGISTRATION

de·pend·a·ble

reliability

experience

support

dependable

flexible

control

definition:

thorough software testing before installation
syn. High Touch

If you're spending too much time with your current software, call **HIGH TOUCH** for integrated Store to Home Office software systems, including:

- fully integrated accounting
- automatic data collection
- company-wide consolidated reporting
- custom report writing
- database marketing

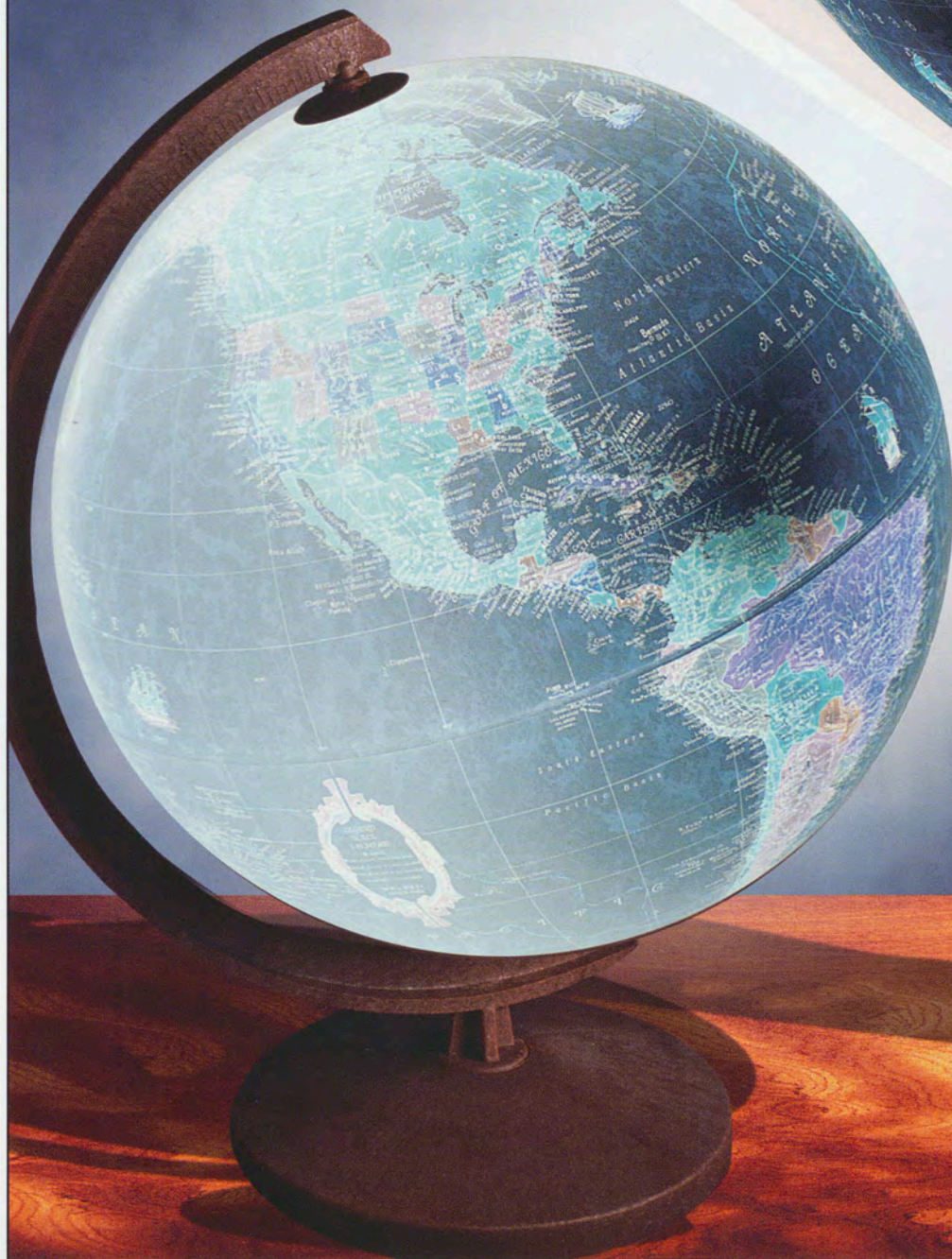


1.800.326.6059

www.hightouchinc.com

APRS associate member since 1984

PROMOTING YOUR



Web Site



BY JOE DYSART

OK, SO YOU HAVE A GREAT WEB SITE. BUT WHO IN THE WORLD KNOWS ABOUT IT?

While Web fever has many rental-purchase organizations examining whether or not to commit to cyberspace, Internet marketing consultants warn that without proper marketing and promotion, Web sites can quickly become cyber elephants.

Chad Mitchell, advertising manager and buyer for Virginia-based Kelly Rentals, was responsible for creating his company's Web site. "We felt like we were going to have to do it sooner or later," says Mitchell. "We currently have a product order form that potential customers can submit, but we haven't experienced a whole lot of traffic yet." Mitchell says that the first big change his company will make to the Web site will be to feature more products.

Slowly but surely, rental-purchase companies are creating an online presence, if only to have the company name out there and for when current and potential customers become more Internet savvy. It would benefit those rental dealers with Internet sites or those who are considering a Web site to learn a few tricks of the trade in creating and engaging online traffic.

The now-cliché Web maxim, 'If you build it they will come,' has lulled many online marketers into a false sense of opportunity. The truth is that Web site traffic building has its own set of PR needs and requires its own system of aggressive, attention-getting tactics" says Charles Sayers, an Internet marketing consultant based in Acworth, GA.



nce implemented, these tactics have the potential to produce significant new trade for rental-purchase businesses. The reason: 74 percent of Internet users shopped online this past Christmas selling season, according to Media Metrix ([see sidebar for Web addresses](#)), an Internet marketing research firm. And while many traditional rent-to-own customers do not have PCs at home, many have access to computers at work, school and at local libraries. Moreover, Internet marketers see the Web as marketing tool becoming even more effective for business as cell phones and inexpensive personal digital assistant devices begin offering Web access. Should you decide to make the plunge, Internet consultants advise you to take advantage as many of the following Web site marketing and promotion strategies as possible:



Consider a professional search-engine-listing firm.

Seasoned Web users turn to search engines like Yahoo! and Excite to help them find specific information on the Net quickly. Essentially, they simply type in a subject area and the search engine brings back “links” that they can “click on” for further information.

Given the great power these search engines have to steer thousands of Net cruisers to specific sites, it should come as no surprise that a number of Web-savvy firms have cropped up to help firms be among the first “links” the search engines return to information seekers. Many of these service providers are profiled on SearchEngineWatch.

Elite Rent-To-Own, based in Eugene, OR, is apparently no stranger to this listing strategy. When the keywords “rent-to-own” were entered into Yahoo!, its site was the first link to be listed. That kind of visibility does not happen accidentally. Another winner in the listing wars was Budget Rental Centers, based in Victoria, British Columbia. Its site was first up when the same keywords were entered into AllTheWeb, another popular search engine.

Another option is to use a software program like Web Site Traffic Builder, by Draper, UT-based Intelliquis. Traffic Builder automatically registers your site with more than 900 Internet search engines and will automatically put your business in the appropriate

category for each search engine. Plus, you can use the software to check your site’s position on the Net’s eight most popular search engines. A similar program, WebPosition Gold, by FirstPlace Software, focuses on getting your site placed high up on the Web’s top search engines.

Rent or buy a consumer e-mail list. This is probably one of the easiest—although maybe one of the most expensive—ways to promote a Web site and company services on the Web. Essentially, firms using this technique rent exposure in an e-mail customer distribution list of a firm that is already established on the Web. Often, the firm owning the list recommends via e-mail that its customers visit the site of the list renter and sometimes includes a discount

coupon for a goods or services at the list renter’s site.

Create “hook” pages. Many a site has drawn in Net cruisers by creating informational pages that in turn offer links to a commercial site, according to Craig Settles, a senior strategist for Berkeley, CA-based Successful Marketing Strategists and author of *Cybermarketing: Essentials for Success*. An information page thoroughly detailing the benefits of rent-to-own agreements, for example, would serve as a good “hook” to a commercial site specializing in the same service.

Link ‘til you drop. Probably the easiest, least expensive and most effective way to promote a site is to link your page with every other non-competitive page on the Internet that shares the same interest. That

includes links with trading partners, local businesses and organizations and your local chamber of commerce.

Enter as many Web site contests as possible. Web sites that have the mettle should attempt to get their new (or improved) site judged by the many “cool site of the day,” week, etc. judging services. Sites that are judged worthy of an award are given the equivalent of a graphic blue ribbon that can be posted on the winning site. And the awarding service also provides a free link to the winning page from its own home page—a perk that can literally generate thousands of visits to



ColorTyme leverages a traditional promotional tool—the coupon—in cyberspace.

a new Web site, according to Sayers.

Adds Jim Wilson, the Webmaster behind Virtual Promote and a samurai-class Web marketer, “Keep in mind that most people who

will be surfing to your Web site don't know the relative difficulty (or ease) of earning different awards. All they see is that some people thought your site was good enough to win an award. Go ahead. Apply for everything."

Offer coupons. This is another old-economy bricks-and-mortar solution that works just as well—if not better—on the Web. Coupons can be offered easily online for easy printout, or periodically delivered directly to the visitors' e-mail boxes. The advantage of e-mail delivery is that the business can more easily build a relationship with customers over time, since they do not have to make any effort to search for the coupons.

Colortyme Rent To Own, based in Alice, TX, offers a \$25 off coupon at its site. Rent-2-Own, offers a generous two months free rent coupon at its site. And A to Z Rentals, based in Jasper, AL, offers a \$10 off coupon at its site.

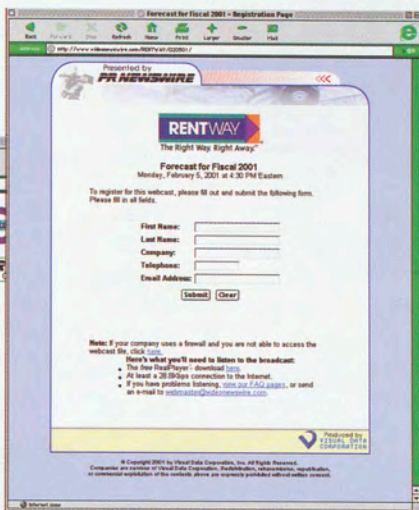
Start your own contest. Another tried-and-true traffic generator in the bricks-and-mortar world, online contests do the same for Web sites—as well as glean valuable demographic data about site visitors. Rent-to-own businesses that offer coupons could also offer the chance to win more generous awards for Web visitors willing to share a little information about them on an interactive form.

Establish a virtual press center. Probably one of the most overlooked opportunities on the Web is the opportunity to establish a virtual press center on a site. Increasingly, journalists are turning to the Internet and the Web to search for stories and develop new ideas, and there is no reason why any company with a Web site should pass up an opportunity for free media exposure, says Settles.

RentWay, based in Erie, PA, embraces the virtual press room concept in earnest. In addition to press releases online, it also offers downloadable audio/video Webcasts of key company news events. Of course, being a publicly traded company such as RentWay, having a Web site press room is almost mandatory these days.

Become an information clearinghouse. Web sites featuring in-depth information resources are magnets for potential customers. A good start, for example, is to simply offer as many links as possible to Web sites offering information related to the rent-to-own industry. Alternatively, you may want to create a series of in-depth backgrounders on your own approach to rent-to-own.

Offer a branded news ticker. This is probably one of the more innovative of Web site promotion strategies being used on the Web today. Currently, a number of news organizations offer free, Web-based news



RentWay fully embraces the promotional value of a virtual press center with downloadable audio/video Webcasts.

LINKS

Media Metrix: www.mediametrix.com

Yahoo!: www.yahoo.com

Excite: www.excite.com

SearchEngineWatch: www.searchenginewatch.com

Elite Rent-To-Own: www.eliterent-own.com

Budget Rental Centers: www.bc-biz.com/budgetrent

AllTheWeb: www.alltheweb.com

IntelliQuis: www.intelliquis.com

FirstPlace Software: www.webposition.com

Virtual Promote: www.virtualpromote.com

Colortyme: www.shopalice.com/colortyme/coupon.htm

Rent-2-Own: www.r2o.com/index.html

A to Z Rentals: www.buyjasper.com/atoz

RentWay: www.rentway.com

Individual.com: www.individual.com/network/headlines

Locatel: www.locatel.ca

The Montreal Page: www.pagemontreal.com

SmartClicks: www.smartclicks.com

Banner Swap: www.bannerswap.com

Trade Banners: www.resource-marketing.com/tb.html

Tech Rentals: www.techrentals.com.au

Full-O-Pep American Rental Co.: www.americanrentals.com

TGP Consulting: www.tgpconsulting.com



Locatel enhances its online exposure with a link from The Montreal Page directory.

feeds to any Web site interested in running those feeds. Individual.com, for example, offers free news feeds to Web sites.

Get posted in Web directories. In an effort to make Web cruising a little easier, a number of businesses have packaged themselves in easy-to-use directories to help get to their sites more quickly. Locatel, based in Montreal, Canada, links to The Montreal Page, an online directory of the Canadian city's goods and services.

Add a chat room. This is the application that catapulted America Online to the premier spot among Internet service providers. Essentially, it's a place where 30 or so people can "congregate," and exchange live text messages with one another over the Net. The operative word here is "live." In a chat room, everyone gets to read and respond to anything that anyone else feels inspired to write on the spot. For more information, type the keywords "chat room software" into any popular search engine.

Consider banner ads. Many Web sites are promoted by brief flourishes of color and text—banner ads—that float across the screen while Net cruisers are visiting related Web sites. "During the past year, many services have sprung up to help Webmasters find other sites to exchange banner advertising," says Virtual Promote's Wilson. You can find out more about banner ads by visiting SmartClicks, Banner Swap and Trade Banners.

Start a newsletter. Interesting and informative company newsletters are a time-honored way to establish an ongoing relationship with current and prospective customers. Tech Rentals, based in Ringwood, Victoria, Australia, puts a Web spin on the newsletter with a sign-up

online for e-mail alerts. Each alert offers news of special promotions and sales regularly offered by the RTO firm. Full-O-Pep American Rental Co., based in Bloomington, IN, has a similar e-mail alert sign-up at its site.

Add a send-this-page option. A new twist on one of the most reliable forms of advertising—word-of-mouth—send-this-page options enable site visitors to send your home page, or any other site page for that matter, to a friend with a few mouse-clicks.

Offer free classified ads. A bread-and-butter advertising staple of every newspaper in America, classified ads are also a big hit on the Net. Many businesses offer classified domains as a free service, just to draw more traffic to their sites. A rent-to-own business, for example, might want to offer a free "personals" ad service.



Tech Rentals nurtures an ongoing relationship with site visitors via its e-mail alerts featuring special promotions and sales.

Simply offering your Web site in a number of languages—say Spanish and Chinese, for example—is a good start. You also may want to hire on a localization consultant to help you further customize your site for specific cultures. For more info on localizers, visit Silicon Valley Localization Forum, hosted by TGP Consulting, based in Palo Alto, CA.

concludes Sayers, "Combining these tactics with a relentless persistence to build your site's traffic will virtually guarantee that within a few short weeks, your access counters [a software tool used to measure visits to a Web site] will start spinning like the gallon indicator on a 1950s gas pump."

Joe Dysart is an Internet speaker and business consultant based in Thousand Oaks, CA, 805/379-3673, joedysart@digitalubiquity.com, www.digitalubiquity.com



APRO'S **NEW** 2001 COMMERCIALS

Creative. Informative. High-quality. And free.

Upgrade your advertising with APRO's latest television commercial production. Nine minutes of testimonial footage is now available to customize at your discretion—plus, four additional creative concept spots are included to add humor and variety to your advertising. Each edited spot allows for ample time to add store information and specials. The messages in the footage were generated from customer and potential customer marketing research reports to ensure your advertising reflects a positive image of the industry. The testimonials and spots were shot in the same format as last year's APRO television footage to allow for integration of the two productions. It's broadcast quality. It's creative and informative. And it's free!

ORDER YOUR FREE BROADCAST COPY TODAY

800.204.2776

(Only shipping and handling costs will apply)

Don't forget our other commercials, still available free to APRO members:

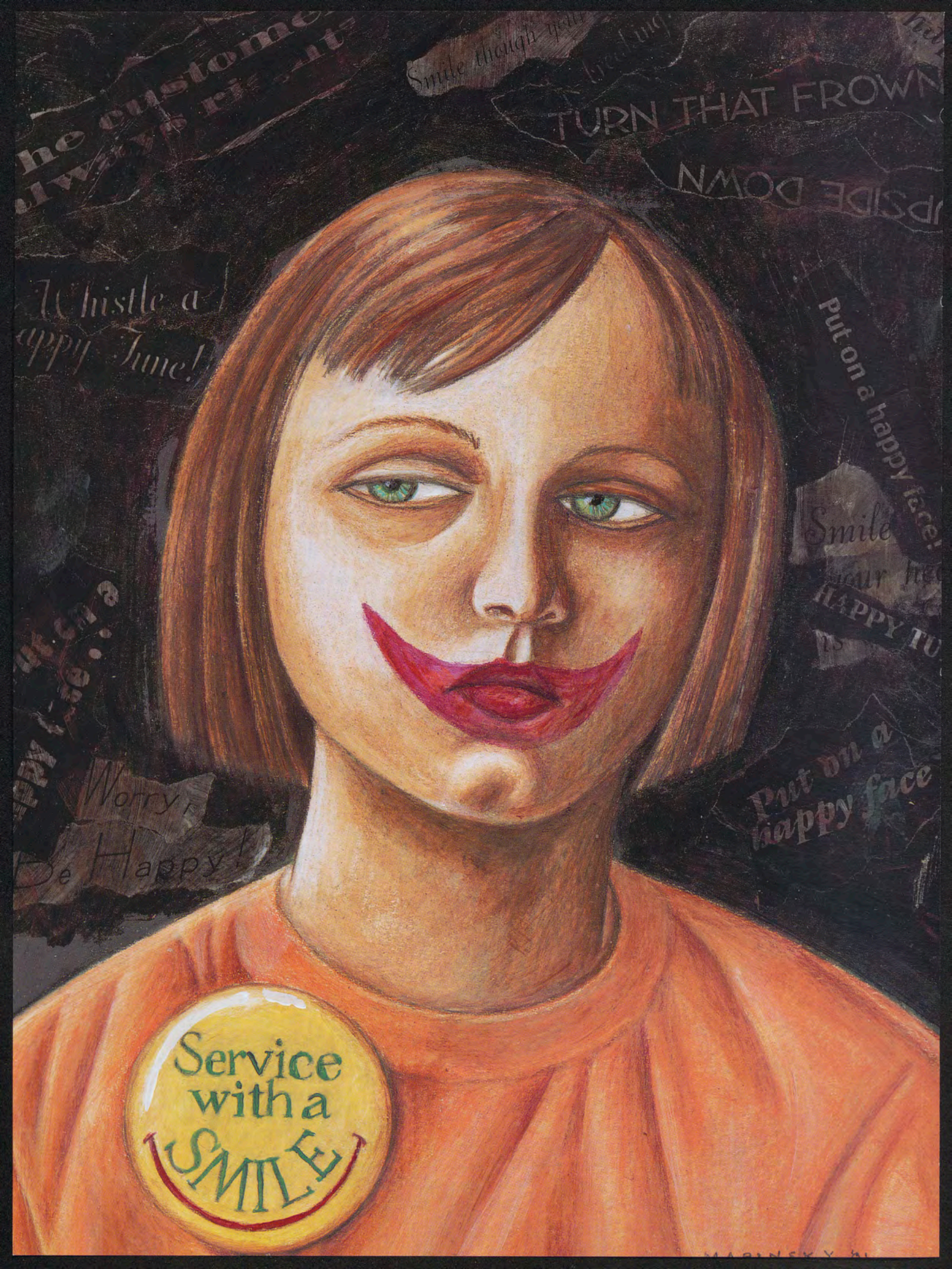
Television production footage—23-minutes of in-store scenes to customize at your own discretion

"Couple" television spot—25-second concept spot with five-second local tag

"Image" television spot—25-second concept spot with five-second local tag

"Introducing Gus" television spot—25 second award-winning concept spot with five-second local tag

"Sisters" radio ad—55-second award-winning concept spot



the customer
always is right

Smile though your
heart is breaking

TURN THAT FROWN
UPSIDE DOWN

UPSIDE DOWN

Whistle a
happy Tune!

Put on a happy face!

Smile
your heart
is HAPPY TO

Worry,
Be Happy!

Put on a
happy face

Service
with a
SMILE



YOU WANT
ervice
WITH THAT?

By Bud Holladay

LUNCHTIME. You wheel into the drive-through, fork over \$5 for a fast lunch and a surly kid who'd rather be anywhere else wordlessly drops your change into your outstretched palm, sticks a bag in your face and slams the window shut. Have a nice day. You don't even bother checking the bag; you know the order won't be right. But getting it corrected takes too much time and causes too much aggravation. You drive away vowing never to return. Tomorrow you try your luck at the place across the street. There, the line of waiting customers is long and restless. Employees mill about behind the counter, joking and laughing, completely oblivious to the people waiting for their food. All conversation, all eye contact, is with each other. The customers are an interruption. ●●● Sure enough, they get your order wrong here, too. Instead of an apology and a quick turnaround, you get *The Treatment*. The young man at the cash register—apparently the missing twin of the one across the street—glares at you, snatches the tray from your hands and retreats to the kitchen, all the while mumbling something about your parentage, his wage rate, management in general and people who expect things to be perfect. Have a nice day. Eventually you're handed a new tray containing most of what you ordered and you slink silently to the nearest empty table, vowing never to return.

Fast-food emporiums don't have an exclusive on incivility and poor service. How many department store clerks have ignored your armload of purchases and simply pointed wordlessly when you asked directions to the next department? How about the doctor's office that always calls to remind you of your appointment, but when you show up leaves you cooling your jets in the reception area for what seems like hours with no explanation or apology. Rental store delivery crews routinely forget hoses, cables, remote controls; many haven't a clue how to assemble the bedroom set for which some customer just plunked down \$100. Have a nice day.



Faulty expectations

We've become so used to bad service nowadays that we nearly expect it. When a store clerk or service worker demonstrates simple courtesy, we think that's good service. It's really no more than common civility, the kind you should be able to expect from any human being. Service is more than simple courtesy. It could be defined as a process rather than an act.

Companies that have service figured out—Neiman-Marcus and Disney, to name a couple—seem able to anticipate what customers will want and how they'll want it, and they are ruthless in eradicating anything that might get in the way of that. The policies and procedures of those companies are built around the requirement to deliver exemplary service, instead of vice versa.

If you've ever visited a Disney property you know what a difference that makes. Imagine the same kid at the burger joint smiling, opening the bag and checking the order in front of you and returning your change in a little envelope so you don't have to juggle coins, bills and your lunch bag while gripping a steering wheel. Imagine him finishing this off with a big smile and a "Thank You" that sounds real, not pre-recorded. Imagine that he fully understands the value of customers as they relate to his income and well being. Imagine.

It takes a village to make great service

Interesting enough, Rally's Hamburgers started out with exactly that kind of service. Trouble is, their service guy was better than their other guys; Rally's never could get enough stores open in any one market to justify the level of advertising needed to build a national or even a regional presence. The moral to the story is that service alone won't get you there if your business plan is inherently flawed. But if all the other pieces are in place and service really means lip service, you're history the day somebody opens up down the street with the total package. That outfit quickly



COMPANIES THAT HAVE SERVICE FIGURED OUT—NEIMAN-MARCUS AND DISNEY, TO NAME A COUPLE—SEEM ABLE TO ANTICIPATE WHAT CUSTOMERS WILL WANT AND HOW THEY'LL WANT IT, AND THEY ARE RUTHLESS IN ERADICATING ANYTHING THAT MIGHT GET IN THE WAY OF THAT.

becomes the "big guy" and your organization is suddenly struggling to keep up. (Ever notice how nobody ever worries about the competition until it gets too big to do anything about? That's the second moral.)

The people at Disney provide great service because legions of people within the organization are hired specifically for that purpose. They hold degrees from good schools and have the same clout and status as those in charge of operations or marketing or finance.

In most service industries—including rental-purchase—the trainer is usually the district manager who couldn't or the boss's nephew who could. While everybody talks about service and quality, most rewards are based on hitting quotas or meeting certain percentages. How do you measure the number of customers who didn't come back because we didn't live up to our own advertising? How do you quantify the number of referral accounts we don't get?

In a medium- to low-wage environment everything has to function flawlessly for quality to come through. Otherwise, people are so bogged down in the process that they lose sight of the objective. In case anybody doesn't know by now, the objective is to provide total customer satisfaction, even in the face of adversity, time constraints or personal inconvenience. That kind of mandate can be hard to satisfy.

Paying homage to the home office

The truth is that most multi-unit retail and service operations employ low-wage workers because that's the only way they can keep their product affordable (the armed forces being no exception). Only a fool would argue that there's no benefit in hiring better, smarter, faster workers. But such benefits don't produce immediate sales

increases, don't reduce overhead and they always require hard analysis. Home office wants results today. More hands turning more burgers or renting more product = more cash in the till. Managers quickly learn what satisfies the boss.

In emergency-room vernacular, multi-unit managers are hired to stop the bleeding or to start the heart pumping. We don't hire them to manage a long process of conditioning and strengthening. Few of them can pro-

No Matter Where You Are.....

You Can Be Another

Satisfied RSSS Customer!



New Additions For 2001:

- Laser Printing of Agreements and other preprinted documents.
- Open Database - easily create your own reports and graphs from all of your company data.
- Automatically fax purchase orders to your vendors.
- Connect Stores over the Internet without incurring long distance telephone charges.
- Voice Over IP - free voice long distance over the Internet.

Interfaced Software Modules Include:

- Rental Purchase
- Rent-To-Rent
- Retail Point of Sale
- Home Office / Back Office
- Inventory Control
- Accounts Receivable
- Bar Coding
- On-Screen Collections
- Interfaced Accounting
- Accounts Payable
- Depreciation Tracking
- Purchase Order
- And Many Others.....

**The Next Generation of
Rental Purchase Software**



- In Use Since **1979**
- 24/7 Reliable Support

57 Robert Drive

Corpus Christi, Texas 78412

800.334.5224

Fax: 361.993.1731

www.rsss.com

sales@rsss.com

APRO Associate Member since 1986

duce instant results in sales and collections while simultaneously directing a systematic plan for long-range improvement based on selective hiring, specialized training, regular monitoring and directed rewards. By the time they get to the monitoring part, it's time to hire another new body.

When those responsible for delivering great service are the newest or the lowest paid people in the organization—and their supervisors lack the kind of training that lets them control outcomes instead of procedures—not much good can be expected to happen.

Placing value where value's due

It's easy to say that raising wages improves customer service, but it probably doesn't unless management changes a lot of other things first. One of those is the average length of service of front line workers. Management has to find ways to let new account managers and customer service reps stick around long enough to get good. That means increasing the outlay on recruiting and training while reducing spending on other, less essential items. Exactly what those items might be differs from company to company.

Look hard and you will find that the difference between the biggest and all the rest in our business—and in most others—is more than just finance or marketing; it goes to how much value each company places on the people who handle their customers. One fact is inescapable: In our business, the biggest companies have the best training. But almost none started there. Nobody opens their first store or even their 10th with a developed training department staffed by experts in that field. No, the giant operators simply bought their way in.

Almost without exception, every mega-operator in the business started out paying store managers and account managers more than the other guy paid. Tom Devlin, founder of Rent-A-Center, once told an APRO audience that the real advantage his company enjoyed over the rest of us wasn't lower product cost or cheaper

advertising. It was people.

When we were paying managers \$30,000 a year, Rent-A-Center was paying \$38,000 or more. Consequently, Tom Devlin got the best managers and the competition got the rest. While everybody else replaced managers and struggled with sales and collections, Rent-A-Center was opening store



LOOK HARD AND YOU WILL FIND THAT THE DIFFERENCE BETWEEN THE BIGGEST AND ALL THE REST IN OUR BUSINESS—AND IN MOST OTHERS—IS MORE THAN JUST FINANCE OR MARKETING; IT GOES TO HOW MUCH VALUE EACH COMPANY PLACES ON THE PEOPLE WHO HANDLE THEIR CUSTOMERS.

after store. It isn't unusual to meet a former RAC store manager who became a millionaire helping Tom Devlin or Ernie Talley grow that company.

The cost of lost customers

Beyond wages, keeping new employees around requires that we also see other things differently. For example, if price and product are competitive and thus not an issue, why do up to 20 percent of customers return their goods within the first five months? That number suggests that only 80 percent of rental-purchase customers have sufficient motivation to take whatever measures are required to keep their account open.

To be fair, there are a certain number of customers who just can't keep up the payments, no matter how satisfied. It's the rest that have to be accounted for. Some companies spend up to \$25 in advertising to get one new customer. How much does anybody spend learning what happened to last year's customers? Last month's?

Taking the higher road

Delivering high-quality service should be everybody's aim and usually it is. But when the process fails, it becomes nobody's child. Part of the problem with multi-unit operations of any kind is the cookie-cutter process required to manage a lot of them across great distances. Everything has to be reduced to a simple process that can be easily followed by people with

no specialized skills and only minimal training. When executed, that process produces the desired results more often than not. Costs are contained within acceptable limits and the cash is accounted for. Upper management, usually sitting miles away and far from the end user, invariably confuses efficient function with the delivery of

quality service. Thus, any unit that makes the numbers gets a pass on anything else. To be sure, management up and down the line gets agitated when sales decline.

When the chart starts heading the wrong direction, the advertising gets a new message, stores get new paint and new signs and a few prices get changed. Sure enough, sales inch upward again and everybody's satisfied until the next go-round. The next go-round comes when the new customers eventually tire of spending their money where nobody cares and they move on, too.

(Sometimes management realizes these cycles are occurring with greater frequency and they decide to spend a little money figuring out why. Invariably, this leads to a lot of breast beating and wailing but not much change because nobody can afford the improvements after paying for the consultants.)

If there's anything to learn from all this, it is that wherever you see a sign reading, "Our Policy Is 100% Customer Satisfaction," you can bet that it probably isn't. They only put the sign up to make you feel better while some employee busts your chops in the process of enforcing policy. Companies that routinely deliver great service don't have to hang signs telling you what's coming. They trust you'll know it when you see it. ■

Bud Holladay is an industry veteran and frequent contributor to Progressive Rentals magazine.

A RELAXING PLACE WITH A COOL SECRET.

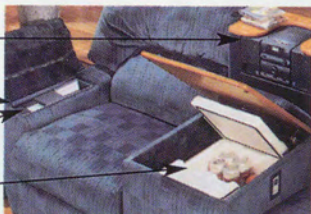
This modular group has plenty of room for family and friends to gather and relax.



igloo.

This stylish BenchCraft® group features a side-by-side reclining loveseat, corner wedge, and full sleeper, plus a multi-function CD player w/radio and two speaker system, dual two-motor massage and hands-free telephone. But there's more. Cleverly concealed under the hardwood oak console top is a convenient Igloo® cooler! Ideal for snacks while reading a book or watching TV.

- CD player w/radio & 2 speaker system
- Dual 2-motor massage
- Hands-free telephone
- Built-in Igloo® cooler



Features a built-in full sleeper for total sleep comfort.



Cocktail table has a convenient pull-out storage drawer hidden underneath.

BENCHCRAFT®

P.O. Box 86 • Highway 15 North • Blue Mountain, MS 38610 • Tel. 662.685.4711

AN
PROFILE BY
THOMAS G.
DOLAN

From a woman's standpoint, this has been a male-dominated field," says Lisa Neyhart, who got started in the business in 1985 as a \$4-an-hour sales representative and has worked up through the ranks to owning her own company. Neyhart says that while there is always room for improvement, the industry's attitude toward women has changed for the better. "When I was just starting out and went to a conference, I would see only a handful of women. Now there are many more and several are branching out to start their own companies. So a lot has changed. I also think a lot of managers are looking to hire more women now as they are more appreciative of women's communication skills."

PERSONAL THE PERSONAL

COMMUNICATION SKILLS
ARE THE KEY TO LISA NEYHART'S
SUCCESS



TOUCHA

Neyhart lists her own communication skills as a key factor in moving her forward in the industry. She got her start in Louisiana going to work for Patrick "Pat" Parker, who currently has 29 stores in Louisiana, Ohio, Massachusetts, Mississippi, Rhode Island and New York under the name of Utica Rentals. In 1992, she was transferred to Ohio. Over the years she was promoted to regional manager and then vice president as her range of responsibilities grew. Along the way, she continually sharpened her skills by taking courses in subjects such as supervision, coaching and delinquency management.

In 1996, Neyhart increased profits by \$385,000 in the Western region, as well as being responsible for the largest BOR increase through a gain of 1,300 units. Volume increase in 1996 was 9 percent, followed by 15 percent in 1997, 9 percent in 1998 and 17 percent in 1999.

During her rise to success, she met and married Tom Neyhart in 1996. Tom, who had a close relationship with Parker, branched off, with the latter's blessing, into his own store in Baton Rouge, LA, called TJ Rentals Inc. Lisa also worked with Parker to achieve a similar independence about two years ago for her store in Hammond, LA. Now husband and wife are partners in the ownership of the two stores in a business called Success Rental Systems Inc., doing business as ColorTyme.

Although this business is now separate from Parker's, Lisa says they are still "loosely affiliated." Tom, in fact, also still works as chief operating officer for Parker's business. Lisa, however, retired from Utica at the end of 2000 in order to spend more time with her three teenage children. "I was on the road nine weeks out of twelve," she says. "Now I don't have to travel anymore."

SWAYING POLITICAL FOES

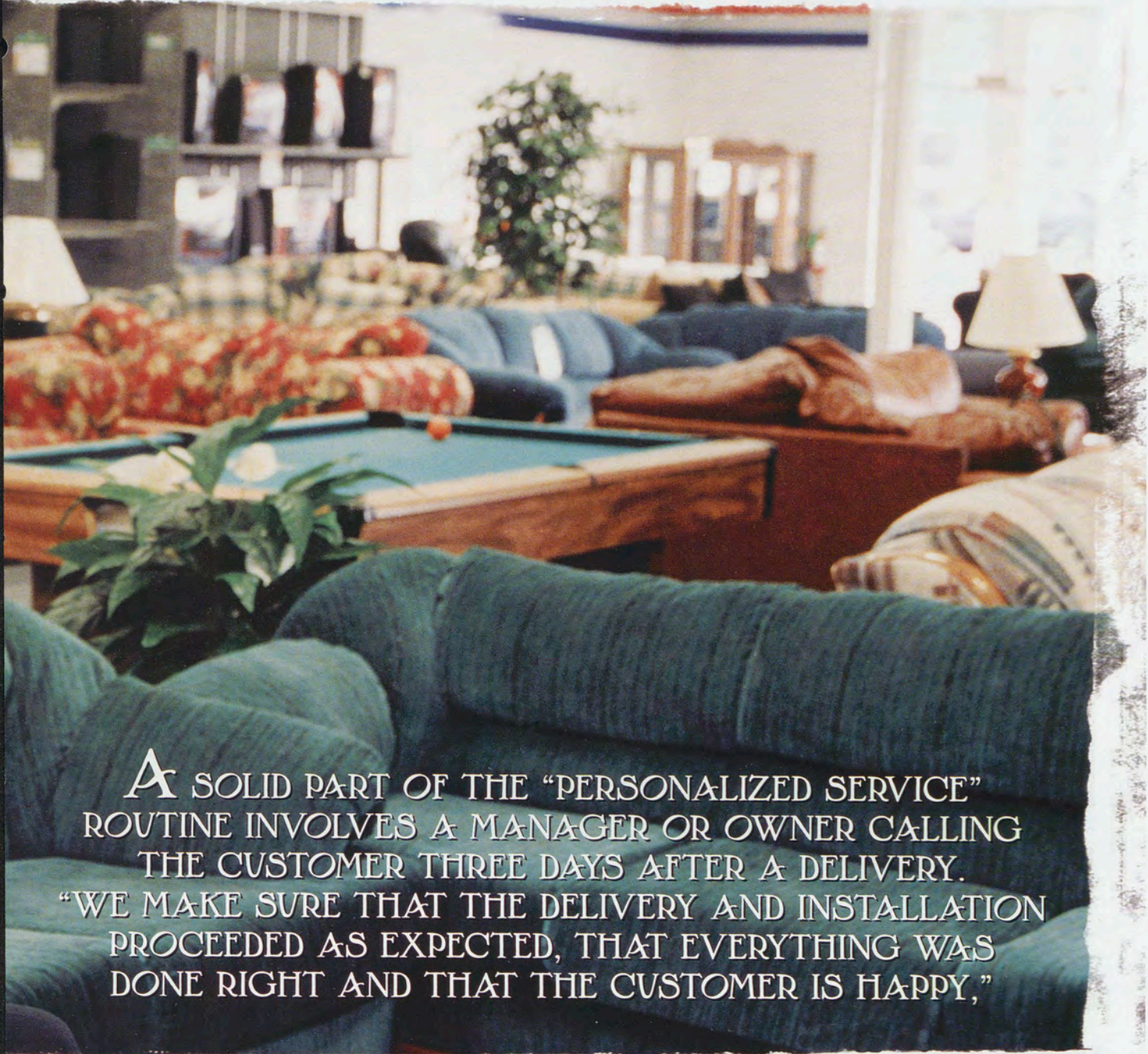
The couple has long been pro-industry, with Tom recently serving on the APRO board of directors. Lisa has made special use of her communication skills by becoming actively involved in the legislative process to help combat the sometimes negative perception of the industry. Although she credits Tom for being active in this arena longer, she is currently close to finishing her term as president of the New York Rental Dealers Association, on whose behalf she has visited members of Congress about 20 to 25 times a year for the past three years.

At one point, she took notice of a program in New York in which used or broken cell phones were picked up and taken to the telephone company to be repaired and repro-



grammed only for 911 calls. These phones were then distributed to battered women who could use the phones as a means for safety. She has now taken that program to legislators in Louisiana and is in the process of getting it implemented there.

Perhaps her biggest legislative victory in terms of the industry, however, was her spearheading the defeat of a proposed bill in New York that would have effectively put rent-to-own companies out of business. Neyhart contacted Marian Gibson, an aide to Senator Charles Fuschillo, who was sponsoring the bill. She was able to establish a rapport with Gibson and this was a start of the educational process. Neyhart and her associates were able to dispel the notion that rent-to-own was some kind of shady business designed to exploit the poor. The senator was receptive and withdrew the bill.



A SOLID PART OF THE "PERSONALIZED SERVICE" ROUTINE INVOLVES A MANAGER OR OWNER CALLING THE CUSTOMER THREE DAYS AFTER A DELIVERY. "WE MAKE SURE THAT THE DELIVERY AND INSTALLATION PROCEEDED AS EXPECTED, THAT EVERYTHING WAS DONE RIGHT AND THAT THE CUSTOMER IS HAPPY,"

PERSONALIZED SERVICE = SUCCESS

Neyhart's main communication efforts, however, are directed toward her business. All successful businesses, by their very nature, tend to become standardized. Neyhart, however, tries to keep her business from becoming cookie-cutter as she makes every effort to put a personal touch to customer interaction. Take advertising, for instance. She uses the conventional media such as radio spots and radio remotes, ADVO and television, as well as direct mail brochures, but her most successful efforts are those that incorporate the people factor.

For instance, when the drivers make a delivery, they'll ask if the customer needs something else. If the customer responds by taking on a washing machine, the driver gets \$5. On each call the driver will knock on doors five houses to the left and right of the customer and drop off coupons, fliers or brochures.

"The majority of our business comes from our thank-you cards and in-house mailing program," Neyhart says. Neyhart sees any contact with new customers as an opportunity. For instance, thank-you letters routinely go out to every reference the new customer lists, along with the note, "Here's a \$25 coupon, come in and see us sometime." Neyhart even has what she calls an "Oops" letter. "If we make a mistake, we'll sign the letter and send it with an apology," she says.

A solid part of the "personalized service" routine involves a manager or owner calling the customer three days after a delivery. "We make sure that the delivery and installation proceeded as expected, that everything was done right and that the customer is happy," Neyhart says. "Sometimes deliveries run late or somebody forgets to deliver the remote to the VCR. What this allows us to do is take care of any problems and make sure we have a satisfied customer before



any collection call takes place.”

In other words, a satisfied customer is not only apt to be a return customer, he will also be inclined to pay on time. Again, it's good communication that builds the relationship. The more effort that goes into the transaction early on, especially in terms of making clear that the customer understands the rental agreement, the payment date due and the reasons for the various provisions in the contract, the more committed the customer will be to honor it.

If there is a nonpayment, Neyhart doesn't believe the first response should be, as she says, “Either pay or I'll pick it up,” for that just sets the person back on his heels. “What needs to be done is solving the problem. Find out the problem and then be a problem solver to help the customer pay. I call my collection principles the three F's—be fair, firm and friendly. Follow them and they will do good for you.”

ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM REQUIRED

The three-day follow-up call by the manager or owner, in addition to nipping any problem in the bud, also builds in the added benefit of being able to find out how well the employees who went into the customer's home represented the company.

“The call serves as a customer survey,” Neyhart says. She explains that if the customer gives a positive response, the employee gets recognized as a part of the “Wow” program. “If the customer tells us that the employee took the old refrigerator to the road or moved the furniture around three times to get things looking right even though she knew he didn't have to, we'll put the customer's remarks and the employee's name up on the bulletin board.”

The employees are recognized at weekly staff meetings and, once a month, the employee with the most or best “Wows” will receive some spontaneous appreciation, ranging from a free lunch to a \$100 bonus.

“I look at myself as a cheerleader who encourages people to do their very best,” Neyhart says. “I believe the two main attributes I bring to my business are energy and enthusiasm. If you have those qualities and tackle problems with a positive attitude, everything else will fall into place.” Neyhart adds, “We work in terms of the buddy system. If someone is not performing quite the way he should, then we make the effort to pep him up, to bring him up to the high energy level that we want to have filling the store.”

Because Neyhart is striving to create a positive image in a business which sometimes has negative connotations to the public, she makes it her practice to hire new employees from outside the field. “This way they don't bring in any bad habits. We can train them that customer service is the key,” Neyhart says.

An important dynamic to running a successful business is attracting the right employees. “You have to be able to find people who can respond to your energy level, to recruit them and then to keep them,” Neyhart says.

The key to high retention, she says, is training. Every quarter the company rents a hotel conference room and provides training for half the staff one day and the other half the next. Then there is ongoing, more informal training at the store. “Young managers are often afraid to educate their workers for they are in fear of losing their own jobs,” Neyhart says. “But the more you educate, the easier your job is. If you have four people working under you and all of you are working at 100 percent capacity, that's much different than if you are working at 100 percent capacity and they are each working at only a 25 percent capacity.”

Neyhart says, “There's something about motivating others to grow that really satisfies me. I've watched people I've

trained develop and grow and then watched them move out to start their own stores. That gives me pride and helps motivate me to keep doing my best."

In order to really bring the best out of people, Neyhart says, "you have to give them an opportunity to fulfill their dreams. It's not enough just to have them work for you. They have to feel that they have ownership in what they are doing. If you really want strong motivated people working for you, you have to share. You have to give them a part of the pie."

Performance evaluations take place twice a year, in which management and employees review goals for the past six months, determine how well the goals were met and project goals for the coming six months.

"We talk about responsibilities and review specific categories, such as sales ability and customer service," Neyhart says. Pay raises are determined on an annual basis, resulting

❧

**"I BELIEVE THE TWO
MAIN ATTRIBUTES I BRING
TO MY BUSINESS ARE
ENERGY AND ENTHUSIASM.
IF YOU HAVE THOSE
QUALITIES AND TACKLE
PROBLEMS WITH A
POSITIVE ATTITUDE,
EVERYTHING ELSE WILL
FALL INTO PLACE."**

❧

there is no doubt her stores will continue to promote a more positive image of the industry in the years to come. ■

Thomas G. Dolan is a free-lance writer living in Anacortes, WA.

from these semi-annual conferences. Bonuses, however, are paid once a month. Account reps receive their bonuses on their credit closures per week and unit gain for each route. Sales associates are paid a percentage of new rental income. And managers are paid on profitability. As the employees grow the business, they grow both their incomes and their opportunity for advancement.

Neyhart's unique and personal approach to the rental-purchase business is paying off. "We plan to open a new store next year," Neyhart says. "And hope not long after that to grow to six stores." With such a high level of determination,

Need **RELIABLE** Software Support?

Our technical support staff will give you professional, accurate, and QUICK responses to your questions, guaranteed!

DOS / Windows 95 / Windows 98 / NT

POS SOFTWARE SYSTEMS

- Year 2000 Compliant
- Complete Customer Tracking
- Complete Inventory Tracking
- Purchase Orders
- Company Depreciation
- Integrated Home Office
- Single or Multi-User

24 HOUR TOLL-FREE SUPPORT!



Since 1985

Rental Information Systems, Inc.

834 Jeanette Ave.

Magnolia, AR 71753

800-863-7394 • www.rentinfo.com • sales@rentinfo.com

Management Services/Miscellaneous

The following list of management and miscellaneous service providers cater to the rental-purchase industry. All are either APRO Associate Members (*), advertisers (+) in APRO publications or APRO convention exhibitors (^).

ACCOUNTING SERVICES

Grant Thornton LLP *

Contact: Jon A. Wolkenstein
1717 Main St., Ste. 500
Dallas, TX 75201
214/561-2318

Kirkpatrick, Sprecker & Co. LLP *

Contact: Jay Cooper
311 S. Hillside St.
Wichita, KS 67211-2130
316/685-1411

White & Associates LLC *

Contact: Michael S. White
1020 N. Main St., Ste. B
Wichita, KS 67203-3617
316/265-4877

Whitsell and Co. PC *

Contact: Daniel G. Whitsell
1275 E. Road To Six Flags,
Ste. 100
Arlington, TX 76011-5034
817/461-0041

ADVERTISING PROMOTIONAL

American Advertising & Marketing Inc. *

Contact: Gary Levitz
1155 Rt. 73 N.,
Ramblewood Ctr., #16
Mt. Laurel, NJ 08054
800/908-0998

Bonnie The Flyer Specialist/ America On Hold **+

Contact: Bonnie Nitzsche
10110 Cinti-Cols Rd.
Cincinnati, OH 45241
800/83-PRINT

Central File Inc. **+

Contact: Tom Weirich
5277 W. Beaver Creek Pkwy.
Brown Deer, WI 53223
414/365-9000

G&G Graphics and Promotions **+

Contact: Gene Paris
6850 Shiloh Rd. E., Ste. A
Alpharetta, GA 30004
678/947-3700

Imagery Marketing Consultants **+

Contact: Rick Linton
13611 Barrett Office Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63021
314/835-0004

Levenson & Hill *

Contact: Janice Jenkins
P.O. Box 219051
Dallas, TX 75221-9051
214/880-0200

Market Masters +

Contact: Al Hernandez
10840 Talbert Ave
Fountain Valley, CA 92708
714/963-8707

Sportworx Inc. ^

Contact: Ralph A. Alger
5404 McEver Rd.
Oakwood, GA 30566
770/967-4545

Thompson Wells Advertising Ltd. *

Contact: O.J. Johnson
1601 S. Federal, Ste. 107
Denver, CO 80219
303/922-5571

Total Package Marketing Inc. **+

Contact: Ed Brandhorst
122 Kings Hwy., Ste. 501
Maple Shade, NJ 08052
856/722-1500

FINANCIAL SERVICES

Finova Capital Corp. **+

Contact: Paul Whitley
16633 Dallas Pkwy., Ste. 700
Addison, TX 75001
972/764-1100

First Union Securities *

Contact: John A. Baugh
901 E. Byrd St.
Richmond, VA 23219-4069
804/782-3297

Schorsten & Associates **+

Contact: George M. Schorsten
P.O. Box 4924
Austintown, OH 44515
888/232-6755

Tele-Cash Inc. *

Contact: Richard Mickman
401 City Ave., Ste. 209
Bala Cynwyd, PA 19004
610/667-5500

Tax Refund Express Inc. ^

Contact: Rene Luker
1050 N. Post Oak Rd., Ste. 240
Houston, TX 77055
713/681-0003

FRANCHISING AND STORE LICENSING

ColorTyme Inc. **+

Contact: Steven M. Arendt
5700 Tennyson Pkwy., Ste. 180
Plano, TX 75024
972/608-5376, ext. 201

Premier Rental-Purchase *

Contact: Trooper Earle
213 McLaws Circle, Ste. 2
Williamsburg, VA 23185-5649
757/229-1400

Rent-America Inc. *

Contact: Larry Tinney
5408 Yadkin Rd.
Fayetteville, NC 28303-3199
910/864-5778

INSURANCE

Integrated Insurance & Risk Management Inc. **

Contact: Robert P. Scott
1912 N. Sheridan Rd.
Peoria, IL 61604
309/686-3737

Mass Marketing Insurance Consultant ~

Contact: Edwin J. Sterczek
14616 John Humphrey Dr.
Orland Park, IL 60462-2642
708/349-3900

RTO Systems Inc./

Walter Clark & Associates **~

Contact: Jeanette Willingham
1055 W. Morton, Ste. C
Porterville, CA 93257
559/781-3466

Underwood, Anderson & Associates *

Contact: Wayne Hood
2302 N. 9th Ave.
Pensacola, CA 32503
850/434-5526

MISCELLANEOUS

AIRBORNE EXPRESS PROVIDER

Unishippers Association of San Francisco ~

Contact: Andy Keys
2171 Pacific Ave., Ste. 203
San Francisco, CA 94115
415/764-8043 pager

CLUB PROGRAMS

Foresight Inc. **+

Contact: Mark Kidd
2500 S. McGee, Ste. 100
Norman, OK 73072
800/733-0811

Nationwide Club Administrators Inc. **+~

Contact: Alan Stein
2801 N. University Dr.,
Ste. 306
Coral Springs, FL 33065-5054
954/753-5849

CONSTRUCTION

Billco Construction Inc. **

Contact: Suzanne Capobianco
1010 Palm View Dr.
S. Daytona, FL 32119
904/322-2123

ELECTRONICS DISABLER

Premier Asset Protection ^

Contact: Jim Varney
6709 Greenleaf
Whittier, CA 90601
562/696-0404

FITNESS EQUIPMENT

Icon Health & Fitness

Wen Marketing Co. ^

Contact: Don Nicol
5959 Shallowford Rd., #2092
Chattanooga, TN 37421
423/855-0805

INTERNET RENTAL EXCHANGE

Masterental.Com ^

Contact: Linda Sease
22 New Leicester Hwy.
Asheville, NC 28806
828/254-2927

RentalCorner **+

Contact: Mike Patel
16 Corning Ave., Ste. 256
Milpitas, CA 95035
408/956-1890

MEDIATION/ARBITRATION PROGRAM FOR APRO MEMBERS

Dispute Systems Inc. ~

Contact: Larry Montgomery
P.O. Box 470247
Fort Worth, TX 76147
817/732-3770

MYSTERY SHOPPING

Shoppers View *

Contact: Steve Leach
4976 Plainfield Ave. N.E.
Grand Rapids, MI 49525
616/447-0097

RENTAL AGREEMENTS/BUSINESS FORMS

Inform Business Services *

Contact: Chet Pensak
1209 S. Ridgewood Ave.
Daytona Beach, FL 32114
888/786-3676

RENTAL INDUSTRY BUYING GROUP

TRIB Group **+

Contact: Dennis Shields
3180 Presidential Dr., Ste.
Atlanta, GA 30340-3900
770/451-4302

RISK ASSESSMENT, FRAUD ALERT AND COMPUTERIZED SKIP TRACING SERVICES

Tele-Track Inc. **+

Contact: Dana Webster
155 Technology Pkwy.,
Ste. 800
Norcross, GA 30092
800/729-6981 ext. 1201

RTO CONSULTING/TRAINING

Innovative Insights *

Contact: Keith Carrico
13611 Barrett Office Dr.
St. Louis, MO 63021
314/835-0005

RTO Consulting & Management Inc. *

Contact: Lindsey Semon
P.O. Box 17188
Charlotte, NC 28227
704/844-9227

Triad Learning Systems Inc

Contact: Larry Randolph
P.O. Box 450392
Garland, TX 75045-0392
972/530-1260

RTO LEGAL SERVICES

Overstreet, Winn and Edwards P.C. ~

Contact: Ed Winn III
1209 W. 5th St.
Austin, TX 78703
512/474-6436

Central File

Complete Direct Mail Marketing

POSITION: ACCOUNT EXECUTIVE

A recognized leader in direct mail marketing within the rental-purchase industry is looking for a proven salesperson to join our growing team! This position requires the following skills:

- ▶ Above-average communication and organizational skills
- ▶ Networking
- ▶ Telephone sales
- ▶ Ability to interact with decision-making personnel
- ▶ Relocation allowance

Compensation is based on commission/draw basis with a six-figure earning potential. We offer an excellent benefits package, including 401k. If you're looking for an opportunity to grow with an award-winning team, please contact:

Tom Weirich, Sales Manager
 Central File Inc.
 5277 W. Beaver Creek Parkway
 Brown Deer, WI 53223
 [800] 749-6245
 E-mail: centralfile@execpc.com
 www.centralfileinc.com



Erston & Day P.C. *
 Contact: John B. Elleman Esq.
 60 S. Warren St., 6th Floor
 Syracuse, NY 13202
 315/422-5900

KS

Industries Inc. **+
 Contact: Alan H. Peters
 P.O. Box 520
 Knoxville, TN 37367-0520
 615/447-2187

Bros. UD-Isuzu-Truck Inc. **+
 Contact: John Nace
 20 Atlanta Rd.
 Smyrna, GA 30080
 404/431-9452

Marara Isuzu Trucks **+
 Contact: Michelle Dunning
 15 Lawrenceville Hwy.
 Tucker, GA 30084
 404/270-6765, ext. 765

**AND HOUR
 ULTATION FOR
 MEMBERS**

**Weisbrod
 States Inc. ~**
 Contact: Harry Weisbrod
 P.O. Box 821329
 Dallas, TX 75382
 409/373-0436

**HOUSE AND
 VERY SUPPLIES**

Marketing Inc. **+
 Contact: Michael E. Gerwe Jr.
 209 Nassau St.
 Tampa, FL 33607
 813/444-7304, ext. 210

Terry Distributor Inc. *
 Contact: Walter Terry
 P.O. Box 230714
 Houston, TX 77223-0714
 281/227-6369

Distributors **
 Contact: Tammy Williams
 833 Empire Central
 Dallas, TX 75247-4351
 972/338-6679

RENT-TO-OWN SOFTWARE REPRESENTATIVE

*If you know the rent-to-own business
 and are working on an automated system,
 we have the job for you!*

- Work normal hours—
8 to 5, Monday through Friday
- Go to national trade shows
in exotic locations
- Major medical and dental
insurance
- 401k plan
- Health and fitness center
membership
- Paid vacation, holidays,
sick time and personal days

— Fax or e-mail your résumé today —

CAREER RECRUITERS
 P.O. Box 1612
 Meridian, MS 39301-1612
 nightwrite@earthlink.net
 Fax 601.693.2302

ADVERTISER INDEX

Alliance Computing.....	IFC
APRO Commercials.....	33
Benchcraft.....	39
Central File.....	47
ColorTyme.....	2
Foresight.....	15
Fouts Bros.....	9
FutureWare.....	11
G.E. Appliances.....	IBC
G.E. Electronics.....	4
Hewlett Packard.....	IFC
High Touch.....	27
Ideal Software.....	17
Rental Information Systems.....	45
RES Accessories.....	12
RSSS.....	37
Schorsten & Associates.....	2
Tele-Track.....	3
Thomson/RCA.....	24-25
TRIB Group.....	11
Whirlpool.....	19
Zenith.....	BC



ne of your assistant store managers calls in a panic. The competitor across the street just came into the store and hired your store manager. The competition promised a signing bonus and higher pay. To make matters worse, you suspect he took a customer list with him.

A week later, you receive an irate call from another dealer. Your regional manager was just in his store doing a "competitive shop," but left his card with a handwritten note on it saying, "Call me to discuss employment opportunities." You're embarrassed, but feel that your employees aren't

ground rules. Rental dealers should not have to pay their employees to hear a competitor's recruiting pitch. Employees should not be working on new job opportunities when they're at work. It's dishonest and disloyal.

The most effective way to make sure your company complies with these canons is to pass them on to your employees. Make them a part of your policies and procedures. Let your employees know that violations will be met with disciplinary action (see suggested memo to employees below).

RentWay sends a similar memo to all employees every quarter. We have also incorporated the canons into our training materials. While these procedures haven't eliminated the problem, we have noticed a sharp decline in the number of complaints we've received.

These suggestions may not cure the problem, but they are steps in the right direction. It's time for APRO members to give these canons more than lip service from dealer to dealer. It's time to

Recruiting ethically

doing anything that hasn't been done to them.

If you haven't experienced either of these situations, then you're part of a very small minority of rental dealers (most of who are so isolated that they have no competition).

All retail establishments are feeling the effects of low unemployment. Rental dealers, who deal with a high rate of employee turnover, are scrambling to keep their stores fully staffed. In order to meet personnel needs, it's natural to look at competitors as a source of new employees. However, this is a highly emotional issue, rife with potential for conflict between APRO members who otherwise are not only civil toward each other, but also are often friends. So, guidelines for conduct are both necessary and welcome.

APRO addressed the issue of recruiting employees of competitors by adopting the following canons to its Code of Ethics:

- Members shall recruit employees of other members only during an employee's personal time and never on or about the premises of other members; and
- Members who successfully recruit the employee of another member shall insist that the employee return all confidential and proprietary information, including customer lists, to the former employer without making use of any such information.

While this does not prohibit recruiting the competition's employees, they do set reasonable

SAMPLE MEMORANDUM TO EMPLOYEES

The trade association for the rental-purchase industry, the Association of Progressive Rental Organizations (APRO), has adopted the following policies and added them to its Code of Ethics:

- Members shall recruit employees of other members only during an employee's personal time and never on or about the premises of other members; and
- Members who successfully recruit the employee of another member shall insist that the employee return all confidential and proprietary information, including customer lists, to the former employer without making use of any such information.

The first policy does not prohibit conversations with the competition's employees. It does, however, prohibit recruiting pitches in a competitor's store and when employees are on a competitor's time.

The second policy expresses the law in most (if not all) states: a company's trade secrets are protected. Trade secrets can include the identity of a company's customers (past or present), pricing information, cost information, names of vendors or suppliers, marketing plans, training manuals or any other information the company does not make known to the public. In fact, theft of trade secrets is a criminal offense in most states.

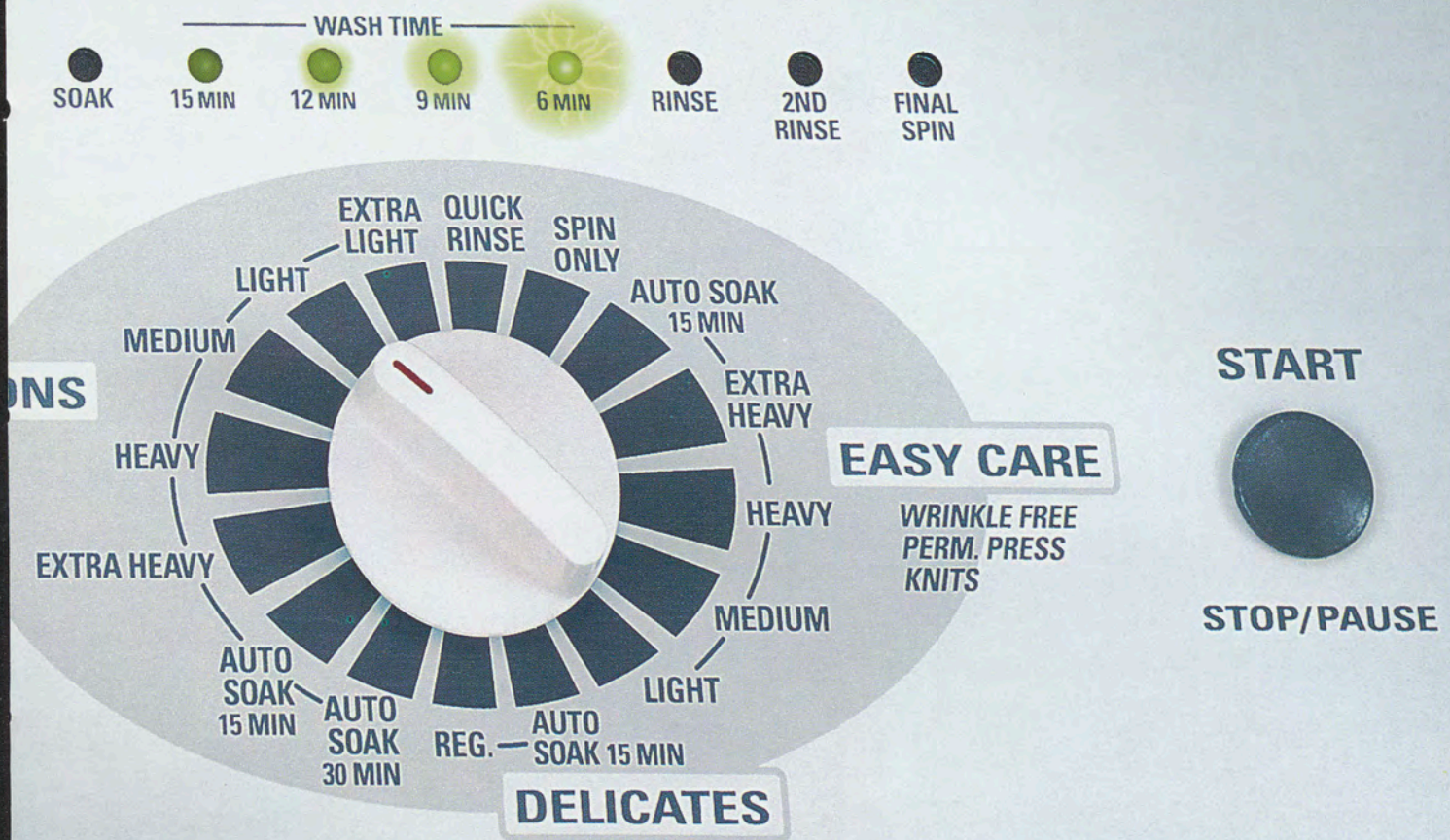
We believe that following these ethical policies is fair, reasonable and in the best interest of everyone in the rental-purchase industry. We therefore adopt these policies as our own and any violation of them will be subject to appropriate disciplinary action. Similarly, any violation of these policies by our competition should be documented and forwarded to management so that appropriate action can be taken.

make sure employees understand that violating the canons won't be tolerated. ■

Greg Ochocki is staff attorney with RentWay Inc.

By GREG OCHOCKI

MORE BRIGHT IDEAS FROM GE FOR THE RENTAL-PURCHASE INDUSTRY.



GE knows today's consumers are busier than ever. That's why America's #1 preferred appliance brand* wants to make life easier.

GE's Super 3.2 cu. ft. Capacity Plus Washers have electronic controls allowing you to simply select the appropriate cycle and press start... it's that easy. GE also provides bright Cycle Countdown Lights above the cycle selector. So you always know where you are in the wash cycle.

Our strict Six Sigma methodology has shown electronics to be more reliable and longer lasting than mechanical controls because there are fewer moving parts. The result is GE's most reliable washer ever.

Our bright ideas didn't stop there, we even upgraded our Extra-Large 6.0 cu. ft. Capacity Dryer with an interior light. As if, 5 drying cycles, 4 heat selections and Reverse-A-Door flexibility weren't enough.

For more information on our complete product line, programs and distribution systems call either:

Paula Allison at 800.782.8093 or
Paul Eichberger at 800.782.8097.



We bring good things to life.

Television is a trip.
You're the driver.
Zenith is the top down.



Your customers pile up the miles exploring the wide open world of television. For them, Zenith offers a full range of products to take them from zero to sixty in five seconds flat. From our 60-inch projection TVs and DVD players to talking VCRs and EZ Features to our 19-inch Game TV, Zenith gives you a roadmap to guide your customers through the endless entertainment landscape. Together, we can help your customers rent the best and flat out enjoy the view.

zenith 

Enjoy the view.™

For more information, call 1-847-391-8044 or don.julson@zenith.com, or contact your Zenith representative. Visit our website www.zenith.com

APRO Associate Member since 1981

Projection TVs ▼ DVD Players



Tabletop TVs ▼ VCRs ▼ Consoles