

United Sales Association Summit Looks At Gift Industry Structure

For Immediate Release

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Envisioning the Ideal Gift Industry Summit Identifies 5 Areas of Improvement

Chicago – 16 senior executives from across the gift industry met in Chicago June 10th and 11th for a United Sales Association summit “*Envisioning the Ideal Gift Industry.*” Representing manufacturers, manufacturers’ representatives, retailers, shows, marts and publications, the group made a sweeping review of the current industry sales and marketing structure, what current trends are impacting that structure, and, most importantly, if the industry could be re-engineered to meet those needs and trends, identified how an ideal gift industry might be structured.

“Rarely does an industry take a step back and look at its own structure, functions and costs. With the formation of USA, the gift industry is in a unique position to take such a look,” remarked Andy Bjork, president of BrassSmith House and current president of USA.

The meeting was facilitated by Kirby Martzall of the Pennsylvania consulting firm of KL Martzall. "From my experiences working with a wide range of executives across the US it seems to me that for a group of people not knowing each other at the start of this session, this group came together very quickly. Within the second hour they were placing real, central issues on the table, discussing adversarial perspectives and finding solid mid ground for industry innovation and improvement," commented Martzall. "Clearly within less than 2 days we are at a point that commonly requires twice if not more time. It is reassuring that so much can be achieved by bringing together and focusing a collection of experienced, creative and enthusiastic people who are capable, mature and high functioning in pursuit of things that capture their passion."

After reviewing the current industry organization and trends, the group was divided into 4 sub-groups who began the process of identifying the ideal gift industry over dinner and into the evening. When the group reconvened the next morning, each sub-group presented its vision to the other groups. A consensus of key industry issues quickly emerged and the group moved on to refine the major areas that need to be addressed in the report.

Those key areas can be broken into 5 major groupings:

Streamline and Improve the Sales System

- ❖ Determining Industry Sales And Marketing Costs
- ❖ Trade Shows, Show Rooms, Marts
- ❖ Sales Process Efficiencies
- ❖ Professional, Well Trained Field Representatives

Improving Industry Operations, Standards & Relationships

- ❖ Mutual Cooperation Between Manufacturers, Manufacturers' Representatives, Retailers
- ❖ Standard Operating Procedures
- ❖ Industry Wide Education And Training

Technology & Knowledge

- ❖ Technology Utilization
- ❖ Industry Statistics And Data – Design, Collection, Update, Access

Need for Industry Positioning/Brand/Message

- ❖ Strengthening the Independent Retail Industry
- ❖ Consumer Advertising Campaign

Industry Representation/Voice

- ❖ Role and Function of the USA Trade Group

The next step in the process will be the release of *Gift Industry Action Plan: A Vision to Restore Profitability and Growth* by the end of October. That report will expand on the ideas from the summit and will be available at no charge from the USA web site www.unitedsalesassociation.org. Based on that report, USA will be expanding the discussion during sessions at its second annual conference, November 19th and 20th in Amelia Island Florida. During those sessions, the several hundred attendees will discuss and comment on the report's findings. Interested industry members are invited to attend the conference to participate.

United Sales Association, The Association Of Gift Industry Professionals, is the association of reps and manufacturers in the gift and decorative industry. Through mutual cooperation of its members, USA's mission is to establish fair standards, better business practices, ethical guidelines and a culture of professional development and education. USA is a sponsoring member of MRERF. USA is holding their next annual educational conference in Amelia Island Florida November 19th and 20th. USA can be reached at 6740 East Hampden Avenue, Suite 306, Denver, CO 80224. 1-877-600-4USA / 303-756-5120, or by email at info@unitedsalesassociation.org. They can be found on the web at www.unitedsalesassociation.org.

Envisioning the Ideal Gift Industry Participants

Manufacturers

Trip Van Roden
Dave Kiersnowski
Phillip Wong
Jim Sadek
Roberta O'Neill

Company

Wellspring
DEMDACO
Care & Wonder
Charles Sadek Import Company, Inc.
Tatutina

Manufacturers Representatives

Andy Bjork	BrassSmith House
Kelly Dierke	Ron Bauman & Associates
Don Hiskey	Hiskey & Company
Jon Levin	Orchard Street Associates
John Kaiser	OneCoast Network
Peter Lisciotta	Eastern Sales Associates

Retailers

Laura Murphy	The Preservation Society of Newport County
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Industry

Gregg Marshall	USA
Robbin Wells	Dallas Market Center
Penny Sikalis	George Little Management, Inc.
Quinn Halford	Gift and Decorative

Pictures are available on request.

USA Sets Visionary Goals for Future

- Quinn Halford, Editor, Gift and Decorative Magazine

Chicago — A group of 18 industry sales reps, manufacturers, and trade show organizers, including a retailer and an editor, spent a day and a half last week trying to envision what the ideal gift industry might look like. Organized by the United Sales Association (USA), the group completed its assignment by producing an "Industry Action Plan: a Vision to Restore Profitability and Growth." The plan focuses on five categories that the participants agreed need addressing. They are "Sales Systems" (improving sales training and process efficiencies, as well as addressing trade show and showroom questions); "Operations & Relationships" (encouraging cooperation among manufacturers, reps, and retailers, as well as setting standard operating procedures); "Technology & Knowledge" (utilizing technology and collecting industry data); "Industry Voice" (defining the role and function of the USA organization); and "Positioning/Brand Message" (strengthening the independent retailer by reaching out to the consumer). Over the next months, participants will present the plan to colleagues for feedback, and a revised draft of the plan will be presented to USA members at its November 19–20, 2004, conference in Amelia Island, FL. Members will be asked to accept or modify the plan before specific actions are taken. For more information, contact Gregg Marshall at gmarshall@unitedsalesassociation.org.