

HARDLINES **Strategies** Blish·Mize

DISTRIBUTING RETAIL PROFITABILITY

FALL 2017, VOL. 17, 2



A Growing Business

**Kansas Family Enters Industry,
Helps Local Community**
Page 8

Also in this Issue:

Fall Market Preview *Page 26*

Lessons in E-Commerce *Page 36*

Using Social Media *Page 40*

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A Sense of Community



Becoming an integral part of your community is crucial to your store's success. After all, the more support a store gives, the more support it receives from the community.

A couple of years ago, the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) and Independent We Stand completed a study that verifies this concept.

According to the *Home Sweet Home Study*, conducted in 2015, twice as much money is kept in the

local community when goods are purchased at a local home improvement store, compared to when the same purchases are made at a big-box store. Not only are these statistics exciting and promising for your business, but they should be celebrated and promoted in your store and, whenever possible, shared with the customers in your market.

While you can't rely on this kind of data to make up for less-than-stellar retail performance, you can use it to your advantage by making sure customers know the impact of shopping in your store and drive awareness about your store in general.

Please join us on Friday or Saturday during our Fall Buying Market, Sept. 15-16, for a presentation from Dan Tratensek, executive vice president with NRHA, about how to do just that. Dan will give specific information on how to position your business as a top-of-mind, feel-good destination for your community. He'll also bring posters and provide tips on how to promote the positive impact shopping local has on your business.

As always, we have a few customers we'll be showcasing in this issue of *Strategies*, all of whom know plenty about the importance of shopping locally.

The team at Snodderley Lumber in Clearmont, Missouri, keeps their town—and family—fully involved in their store. With multiple generations engaged in the business' operations, we've watched them grow! This family knows the secret to support and success. Check out their story on Page 14.

Our customers Brent and Megan Melby at Melby's Home Center in Scandia, Kansas, kept their community alive by investing in it. They purchased their store two years ago and have made it a destination for contractors and townspeople alike. Read about how they are creating their own future on Page 8.

Speaking of community, my father, John H. Mize, recently celebrated 55 years of working at Blish-Mize. He's only one of many people who has been with the company for more than 30 years. We consider our employees an integral part of our family community and are happy so many have dedicated decades of service.

We are excited to see you at our Fall Buying Market. As usual, we will have plenty of great products, prices and opportunities for you to connect with our sales and purchasing teams and vendor partners. Of course, feel free to visit with me. I'm always interested in any feedback about our Buying Markets, and how we can make them even better biannual events for you to attend!

Should you have any questions or comments about our business or yours, I'm always available, so please reach out. My direct line is 913-360-6450, or call 1-800-995-0525, ext. 138, or email me at jonathan@blishmize.com at any time.

Jonathan D. Mize
CEO and President

HARDLINES Strategies

Contents

Ask the Expert. 4

Customer Feature. 8
Melby's Home Center

Customer Feature. 14
Snodderley Lumber

Customer Feature. 18
Guadalupe Lumber

New Products 24

Fall Market Preview 26

Hardware House 34

**Learning From
Online Retailers. 36**

Using Social Media 40

News. 42

On the Cover:

Megan and Brent Melby invested in their community when they purchased Melby's Home Center a few years ago, and they now serve contractor and homeowner customers alike.

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Welcome to Twitter!

Social Media Platform is of Great Benefit for Businesses

By Nathan Mize

With social media evolving seemingly every day, more and more businesses are trying to keep up with the times.

While there are multiple social media platforms a company may use to reach their target audience, this article will be focusing on the benefits of using Twitter to interact with your customers.

If you are brand-new to Twitter, see the graphic at right that explains the different parts of a Twitter post.

Top 10 Benefits of Twitter for Business

Made For Business

Before you decide to use Twitter for business purposes, it is important to know the difference between a personal Twitter account and a business account. While they both share similar features, a business account provides more helpful analytical tools.

Track Engagement

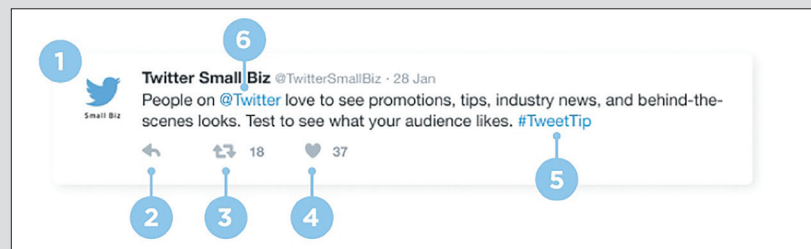
Twitter offers business accounts the opportunity to track the engagement on any tweet. This includes how many users have seen your tweet, how many times a link has been viewed and the engagement rate with that link. This allows you to focus on which tweets are performing better than others.

Advertisements

Although Twitter is a free service, some companies have utilized the benefits of paid Twitter ads to grow their company and drive traffic. Doing so can attract new followers by placing your tweets on their timeline.

Twitter Breakdown

Check out this breakdown of a typical tweet and how to use it.



1. Tweet

A Tweet is an update posted on Twitter. It can contain text, photos, links, GIFs and videos.

2. Reply

Click “reply” to respond to a tweet. Replying to a tweet shows that you are listening and engaged in the topic.

3. Retweet

A retweet shares someone else’s tweet with the people who follow you. Click the “retweet” button twice to share the tweet as is. Or, click once and add a comment to give the retweet context, which is a “quote tweet.”

4. Like

A “like” is a simple way to positively acknowledge a tweet. It can also be useful to use as a bookmarking tool if you want to easily find that tweet again. Tap the heart icon to “like” a tweet, and the author will see that you appreciate it.

5. Hashtag

A hashtag is any word or phrase, without spaces or punctuation marks, beginning with the “#” symbol. Adding hashtags to tweets links all the content related to a given topic.

6. Mention

Bring a tweet to another person’s attention by including their Twitter handle. A handle always starts with “@.” You could use it to ask someone a question, to thank them or to highlight a piece of content.



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“While this might seem like a simple idea, it is important to follow your customers to display that you truly care about their interests.”

Promote Events

Promoting events you're hosting or attending is a quick way for your customers to engage and talk about your business.

Communication

Never underestimate the importance of communication with a large group or a single customer through Twitter. If a customer tweets you a question or a concern, a simple, prompt reply can go a long way in terms of customer loyalty.

Customer Service

Fairly recently, Twitter implemented the option to let users know whether an account provides support. This allows customers to click on a button on your

account and will indicate when an exact response time will be given. This can be turned on and off based on customer service availability hours.

Visual Appeal

Twitter allows you to customize the look and colors of any aspect on your page. You can also upload your company's logo as the background or header. Using your company's colors will help your account look professional and unique.

Follow Customers

While this might seem like a simple idea, it is important to follow your customers to display that you truly care about their interests. Building a strong online relationship will lead to an even stronger business link.

Offer Special Deals to Followers

Special sales and deals that are exclusive only to your Twitter followers will not only bring people into your store, it will also increase your followers. Doing this periodically is a great way to measure your online engagement.

Job Openings

Share new roles by posting links to apply for open jobs at your business directly on your page. This will increase the chance of hiring more technologically savvy employees. Remember to use tools like analytics to discover just how well your job openings are being received.

Find Blish-Mize Online!

Blish-Mize is now on Twitter! Follow us at @blishmizeco. The first 10 Blish-Mize customers who follow us on Twitter will win a Blish-Mize hat!





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A New Venture

Growing Family Enters Retail Hardware World

The draw of small-business ownership can be very strong. A craving for the independence offered with being their own bosses as well as a sense of duty to their community were factors in Brent and Megan Melby's decision to purchase an existing building supply store in Scandia, Kansas, when the former owners retired.

It's been an on-the-job learning experience for the growing Melby family ever since.

Brent and Megan bought the business about two years ago. In that time, they've hit a few hurdles as first-time retailers, but with the assistance of other independent hardware stores and Blish-Mize, the couple has modernized their operation and product offerings to produce a unique store in north-central Kansas.

The couple also credits their success to family who have helped counting inventory, putting up new displays and, in the case of Brent's father, helped at the store on weekends.

On top of being a focal point for area builders and a reliable hardware resource for homeowners, Melby's Home Center boasts a home design center that provide services residents would otherwise have to drive hours to find.

Featuring dedicated design professional Amy Rickard and the kind of showroom



Megan and Brent Melby bought their town's home improvement store and lumberyard two years ago. They say the flexibility in their work helps in caring for their growing family.

most might expect only in a larger market, Melby's Home Center can do full remodels and has the resources to follow the latest trends.

"The design center is unique in this area; you don't see this kind of setup in stores our size," Rickard says. "Everyone tells us there's no one around us doing what we do, and we'll go wherever we need to if someone wants design work."

"We have seen other communities lose businesses and the hardships that go with that."

—Megan Melby, co-owner

Keeping it Local

For the Melbys, the store they came to buy was just as much a part of Scandia as the Melby name—the local football field is named after Brent's uncle, and his family has been prominent in the community. Brent's father Mark also runs a construction company.

Brent was working with his father, who is nearing retirement, but said he wasn't sure if he wanted to continue in construction. "We also factored in that some day, when he is ready and if he wants to, the store will be a nice place for my father to work and be a great asset to us," Brent says.

"It was looking like I was going to take over as a contractor, and I wasn't sure I wanted that," he says. "We factored in our family and what our needs would be, and that's when we looked at buying the store."

We wanted to be able to adjust our own schedules, be our own bosses and fit our kids' activities into our work lives."

As luck would have it, an opportunity to have that life was coming his and Megan's way. The 65-year-old store had been a crucial part of the town, but the previous owners, also Scandia residents, were ready to retire and didn't yet have a designated successor. The outgoing owners reached out to the Melbys, having known about their interest in a business opportunity.

Along with their own goals, the Melbys say a sense of community was also a focus when considering whether to buy the 10,000-square-foot store.

"We didn't want to see our communities lose this," Megan says. "We have seen other communities lose businesses and the hardships that go with that."



The design center in Melby's Home Center offers services and products hard to find in north-central Kansas.

Making the financials work was helped along by Megan's background in banking, a key advantage to making the process that much easier.

All in Succession

While both parties were motivated to change ownership of the store, Brent and Megan were forging a new path with the financial and logistical realities of business ownership. The former owners and the Melbys first sat down to talk in November 2014, with the final transition coming in May 2015. This tight timeline made an already challenging process even more difficult.

Making the financials work was helped along by Megan's background in banking, a key advantage to making the process that much easier.

"When we all sat down together, we first started going through the inventory for everything," says Brent. "We were able to work with a local bank, and they were confident in us. We wouldn't have been able to make it without their help."

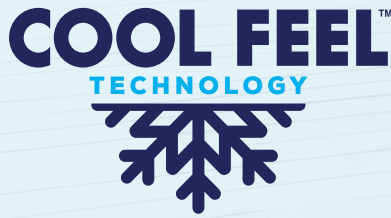
The speed of the transaction also meant a steep learning curve in the hardware business. For a contractor family taking on departments like paint and sundries for the first time, the Melbys hit a few bumps in the road.

"That's the downside to only taking six months," Megan says. "But that's part of the process. There are no blueprints. We had several fellow retailers who did a lot to help us, offering suggestions and answering questions as they came up."

As they've pushed through the challenges, the Melbys are experiencing success in their first couple years as owners and figuring out how to balance a store along with their family.



Brent and Megan Melby have completely revamped the product selections at Melby's Home Center since taking over the store two years ago. The tool section, top, offers a much larger selection than it did before, while the paint department, bottom, has also been reset.



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CUSTOMER PROFILE



On top of its design center and hardware selections, Melby's Home Center in Scandia, Kansas, also offers full lumberyard support.

"We've had very few slow days, which is a good problem to have," Brent says. "We're all learning, and it's not always easy. As a contractor, I'm used to having a task to do that day, accomplishing it and going home. With the store, there's always 'one more thing' on your to-do list. You have to learn to leave work at work and not bring it home when it's a family business like ours."

Partnering Up

Brent and Megan say the relationship with Blish-Mize goes beyond that of distributor and customer, especially given their new entry into retail. Along with aiding the couple in modernizing the store's selections, Blish-Mize's online resources have helped them get the word out to their customers that there's more available than just what they see on the shelves.

"We really push to our customers to look on the Blish-Mize website and see

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what's available," Brent says. "It's a real online presence for us, because those are items we can order and get to them within a short amount of time."

The customer relations are another key aspect of the relationship, says Megan. "We're not a number when we call. We have great relationships with our sales representatives and drivers, all the way up to management."

"At the Buying Markets, you see Blish [Connor, communications director] and Jonathan [Mize, CEO and president] working just as hard as the other employees. When it comes to customer service, it means something to them that it means something to us. We look forward to the Blish-Mize Buying Markets as they help us expand our knowledge, and we look forward to dinners with other store owners. We cannot say enough about Blish-Mize and its customer service."

Planning Your Store's Future

Succession planning isn't a quick or easy process. While some transitions move faster than others, in some cases, it can take years to plan who will be taking over your business when you retire.

If you need help from the experts, there are several available. One is Resnick Associates, where brothers Leon and Terrance Resnick are partners in the estate planning and business succession company. Lee Resnick spoke at the Spring Buying Market last March to talk more about succession planning and how the process works. To learn more, email lee@resnickassoc.com.



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Family Matters

Missouri Lumberyard, Family Enjoy Success



A family business from the beginning, Snodderley Lumber in Clearmont, Missouri, is still a home away from home for the Snodderley clan. It serves as a lumberyard, hardware store, plumbing supplier and garden center for the surrounding communities.

At Snodderley Lumber, if you can't make it to the coffee circle, the coffee circle will come to you.

A regular sight at the Clearmont, Missouri, lumberyard and hardware store, the circle forms in the morning with the first pot that's brewed and rotates regular members throughout the day, who sip coffee and chat in the chairs set up around the checkout counter.

But following an accident at a greenhouse that left office manager and merchandiser Brooke Kinsella with a fractured ankle, members of the coffee circle decided they had a better place to be.

"I was unloading everything from the truck, and I fell and hurt my ankle.

I sat down out front, and after going for help and getting me ice, there was a circle of men drinking coffee around me," says Kinsella, granddaughter of the store's founder and daughter of manager and owner Steve Snodderley. "I grew up in this store, and have known most of those men since I was little, so I knew what was coming. You tend to get a lot of advice when you grow up in a community like this."

All in the Family

That family environment permeates throughout the current store layout, which takes up close to a full block in Clearmont. The business started in 1964 after the family farm was sold and Darrell Snodderley bought the operation. Snodderley Lumber began supplying lumber and coal to the area for some time before growing into the full-service supply center it currently is.

The store now complements its lumber and building materials offering with a 1,600-square-foot hardware salesfloor. A plumbing showroom, garden center and paint department have further diversified the offerings.

However, the modernization of the selection and services at Snodderley hasn't kept the store from maintaining its place as a social hub in the community. Whether it's Kinsella's children regularly visiting with customers to the longtime coffee circle attendees, the store remains a focal point within the community.

"While we offer everything a hardware store can offer just as part of doing business, there's also a lot of people who trade with you because they've known you as their neighbor for so long," says Ruth Ann Snodderley, Steve's mom and the store's bookkeeper. "We used to have four filling stations and some restaurants

in Clearmont, and a lot of those are gone now. It takes a lot to keep a business here, but people know the Snodderley name.”

Back Home Again

The family environment was what drew Kinsella back to the business in which she grew up. After graduating from college and spending some time in Omaha, Nebraska, as a sales representative in the hardware industry, Kinsella began to crave the same lifestyle she knew from her childhood in Clearmont.

So she returned to Snodderley Lumber, wanting to give her children the same kind of upbringing she knew and loved.

“I worked in Omaha for two years, and I didn’t like the city. We’re back in the same farmhouse that Ruth Ann lived in, and my kids are being raised in the store,” Kinsella says. “That’s a special setup,

with the whole community feeling like they’re part of raising these children in this store. It really is like family life is repeating itself.”

With three generations currently part of the business, discovering each person’s role has been a key to finding success, Steve says. Ruth Ann manages the books and keeps the store’s paperwork in order, while Steve is the primary source of knowledge and expertise. Kinsella keeps up the inventory, which is an ideal position for her since she has experience working with distributors and sales representatives.

“We each have our own areas of expertise and responsibility,” Steve says.

The Ideal Size

After working with several distributors in the past, Snodderley Lumber partnered

with Blish-Mize in 2002. This partnership has helped keep the small-town store successful, Kinsella says, especially with the speed of delivery and price point for a customer base evenly split between homeowners and contractors.

“We’ve been too small of an operation for some distributors, but everything we do with Blish-Mize has helped us operate successfully,” Kinsella says. “We draw customers from further away each year, so when someone comes from a few towns away for materials, you need to have what they’re looking for.”

The biannual Blish-Mize Buying Markets play a huge factor in the Snodderleys’ decision-making, from both professional and personal standpoints. Not only is it a place to find new products and build a more diverse inventory, it holds a special place in the family dynamic.



Darrell Snodderley bought the original lumberyard in 1964 after the family farm was sold. It has since grown to offer a larger selection of products and services to its customers while inhabiting close to a full block of space in Clearmont, Missouri.

CUSTOMER PROFILE



While Snodderley Lumber offers all the modern services needed for today's consumer, there are also small reminders of the past sprinkled around the store.

"We have friends, both who work at Blish-Mize and other Blish-Mize customers, who we see at each Buying Market and enjoy getting together with," Steve says. "But we also use the Markets as our best chance to get ideas for new products. For example, we just added metal building material, and with Blish-Mize and the buying power they offer, we can keep our prices competitive."

Price point hasn't been too much of an issue for Snodderley Lumber, Steve says, and a lot of that has to do with Blish-Mize.

"We just brought in a cable ties display from the Market," Steve says. "It was a great way to get started with a new product for a good price while you decide if you want to expand. Customers are surprised that we, as a small-town lumberyard, can offer the prices we have. That's the advantage to having a partner like Blish-Mize."

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A Balancing Act

San Antonio Lumberyard Keeps Multiple Stores in Harmony

The Grothues family has always been business-oriented, but its move into the independent hardware business traveled an unconventional route.

To hear general manager Kyle Grothues tell the story, it's an unfortunate situation that turned into a thoroughly beneficial one for his great-great-grandfather. Thus, Guadalupe Lumber Co. was born.

"Guadalupe Lumber, before 1933, was a general store," Grothues says. "My great-great-grandfather was owed money,

and he was paid in lumber to settle the debt. He turned around and sold the lumber for a really good price, then went back to the man and asked where he got the lumber, so he could buy and sell more of it. We've been in the lumber business ever since."

Staying in that business has certainly worked out for Guadalupe Lumber in the subsequent years, with the company growing to three locations in San Antonio, Texas. Each location has a different customer base and employs different retail strategies to meet their markets' unique needs.

Dealing with all of these qualities and the needs of each store has been the real balancing act, says Grothues, who runs the locations alongside his father, Mark, the company president and owner, and his brother, Kevin, the marketing manager.

Diverse Customers

Guadalupe Lumber's leadership has learned how to orient each of its multiple locations to its customers' needs. The home office location remains the largest, with around 100,000 square feet of salesfloor space and a lumberyard on nine acres. Guadalupe's smallest location is more hardware-oriented, looking to cater to an area that doesn't feature a big-box retailer with home supplies like cleaning and homeware products. The third location is the business' newest and is built along the same design requirements as the home store, encompassing eight acres and about 90,000 square feet on the floor.

The boom in apartment construction in San Antonio, and surrounding cities, has helped keep the lumber, cabinet and tile



With three stores in San Antonio, Texas, Guadalupe Lumber serves a diverse consumer base. The Grothues family has learned how to adapt each store to serve that area's needs.

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business in high gear for the two lumber-oriented locations, but servicing such diverse areas means offering different product mixes for each, says Grothues.

“Each store is pretty different, and that presents challenges we deal with every day,” he says. “It would be really simple to bring in the same product mix to all three, but it wouldn’t be as beneficial for our customers. For example, our Farm and Ranch category works really

“Lighting, which is a popular Hardware House department for us, does well in our newest store.”

—Kyle Grothues, general manager

well with the two locations that have lumberyards, but we don’t have as much success selling those products in our third store, which is closer to the city.”

That diversity also means there isn’t one real leader as far as category sales for Guadalupe Lumber. With so much business involved in contractor work that can reach even across state lines, Grothues and the management team handle a variety of categories in San Antonio, a town that features many large, independent lumberyards for competition.

Grothues says that Guadalupe Lumber’s newest store does about half of its business in lumber sales, but they are always looking to diversify.

“Plumbing does well in all three stores, while we do really well with scratch-and-dent tile at our original location,” Grothues says. “Those work really well

with contractors in apartment work. Lighting, which is a popular Hardware House department for us, does well in our newest store. We’ve found a lot of success with Hardware House items in both lighting and in plumbing fixtures.

“We’re really trying to increase our presence in paint in all of our stores, too,” he says. “That’s a big future investment.”

Another area where Grothues is looking to improve the stores is its ecommerce offerings. By changing computer systems, he is hoping to bring Guadalupe Lumber into the digital world.

Working With Blish-Mize

In a market where independent retailers are the norm rather than the exception, the ability to remain independent to handle its stores the way



General manager Kyle Grothues and Guadalupe Lumber sell several types of Hardware House products in their stores, including lighting.



COME SEE US AT
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NEW

LENOX METALMAX™ is a new alternative to abrasive cut-off wheels. Its breakthrough diamond technology delivers extreme durability to help you maximize work efficiencies and reduce costs in your metal cutting jobs.



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30X LONGER WHEEL LIFE 

1000+ CUTS

LENOX METALMAX delivers 1,000 or more cuts with no need for wheel changes. That is 30 times longer life than thin bonded cut-off wheels.

* Average performance for 4.5" wheel in 1" carbon steel square tube vs thin bonded abrasive cut-off wheels.



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LENOX METALMAX is made with a solid steel body that is stronger to greatly reduce the risk of breakage.



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For more information on the NEW LENOX METALMAX visit lenoxtools.com

CUSTOMER PROFILE

management wants has been a driving force for Guadalupe Lumber in its partnership with Blish-Mize.

The connections with the distributor have made for a strong working relationship, Grothues says.

Originally, it started with a few Hardware House items, but Guadalupe Lumber has since moved more and more of its business to Blish-Mize. Plumbing, lighting, vanities and locksets have been productive items for Grothues' stores, but the relationship has been just as important, he says.

"We like that Blish-Mize is family-owned like us, and they're so easy to work with. They do a great job getting products and orders to us, especially given how far south we are," Grothues says. "We like that we can stay independent to run our business with the freedom to make our own decisions."



One location of Guadalupe Lumber is decorated with several murals and paintings. The murals are designed to portray the products featured in each area.

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When a Patch Needs to be Permanent

- Can Be Applied to Damp Surfaces
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Withstands Ponded Water!

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Visit Us At Booth 561

Gaco Western

SINCE 1955



Guadalupe Lumber's newest location in San Antonio, Texas, offers a full lumberyard while also containing full hardware and home improvement selections. The store's management is improving its paint selection as well.

INTRODUCING DECORATIVE INTERIOR SLIDING DOOR HARDWARE

Perfect for bedrooms, bathrooms and other living spaces

Offered in oil rubbed bronze, satin nickel, and stainless steel

Designed and tested to follow ANSI/BHMA Grade 1 standards

Kits include 72" track, hangers, doorstops, anti-jump discs and floor guides

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Blish·Mize

**National
Hardware™**

Can't-Miss Items

Check Out These Booths at the Market

It's important that retailers are always on the lookout for new products across the different categories they sell. The Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market is a place to see up-and-coming items and product lines, such as those listed below. They'll all be on display at the Market; stop by the vendor booths to learn more.



World and Main

We have added 17 heaters, which offer fresh options and great price points and include a 240-volt heater, a ceiling-mount heater and many more. **Booth #525**
www.worldandmain.com



DeWalt

FLEXVOLT® is new to the warehouse. It automatically switches between two voltages, allowing one battery to work with multiple tools. **Booth #451**
www.dewalt.com



Warren Distribution

At the Market, we will offer over 200 new items in automotive/farm oils and additives. Check out discounts on planograms in Assortment Central. **Booth #621**
www.warrendistribution.com



Logo Brands

See the pop-up tents, folding chairs and soft-side coolers on display at the Market. These products are perfect for tailgating and outdoor events. **Booth #312**
www.logobrands.com



Moen

Stop by and check out a brand-new lineup of Moen faucets! Great styles and finishes are now available in the Blish-Mize warehouse. **Booth #258**
www.moen.com



Prime Wire

This vendor will be offering a can't-miss new line of USB charging solutions and surge protection at the Fall Buying Market. **Booth #765**
www.primewirecable.com



Ready Seal

Stop by the booth and see Ready Seal's competitive exterior stain program, which is backed in the Blish-Mize warehouse. **Booth #313**
www.readyseal.com



Blackstone

Stop by the booth to see this new unique lineup of outdoor cooking stations, griddles and accessories. Great for camping and tailgating! **Booth #707**
www.blackstone.com



Kreg Tool

This vendor will offer a new and unique line of woodworking tools at the Fall Buying Market. Be sure to check out the new workbench! **Booth #771**
www.kregtool.com



Satco

Satco offers a full program of LED, incandescent, fluorescent and HID lighting, all of which are new to the Blish-Mize warehouse. **Booth #270**
www.satco.com



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**VISIT
BOOTH
#803**

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www.penofin.com

Chill Out With Some Cool Savings

Get Ready for the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market, Sept. 15-16



Vendors will have products across all categories on display throughout the two-day show. Take time at the Market to look for new products, network with other Blish-Mize customers, meet with members of the Blish-Mize staff and more.

The savings will be as diverse as the colors of the leaves this fall at the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market. It will be held Sept. 15-16 at the Overland Park Convention Center in Overland Park, Kansas.

Opportunities for savings, education and connections will abound at the Market, with the return of well-known and popular areas, such as THE 24 and educational seminars, as well as a new addition: live demonstrations on the show floor. The Market will be a chance for you to update your product offerings and enhance your own knowledge of products and industry practices, according to Blish Connor, communications director for Blish-Mize.

“The opportunities for savings that will be available will help our customers make the most of their trip to the Fall Buying Market,” Connor says. “I’m looking

forward to seeing everyone there for a great weekend.”

Learning Local

How often do retailers stress to their customers that shopping local helps keep dollars local and out of the pockets of big-box stores? Blish-Mize and the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) are looking to make that argument an easier one with two presentations at the Fall Buying Market.

Dan Tratensek, executive vice president with NRHA, will conduct seminars on

DEWALT

FLEXVOLT

NEW IN BLISH-MIZE WAREHOUSE

Come by Booth 451 and check out these new items and special pricing

DCS575T1 **421-9846**

FLEXVOLT® 60V MAX* 7-1/4" (184 mm) CIRCULAR SAW w/BRAKE KIT

(INCLUDES 1 60V MAX* LI-ION BATTERY AND FAST CHARGER)



- Delivers up to 339 cuts per charge in 2" x 4" SPF lumber
- Electronic brake stops the blade after the trigger is released

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- Site-Pro Modular Guarding System allows for tool free adjustment of the guarding

DCS388T1 **421-9853**

FLEXVOLT® 60V MAX* BRUSHLESS RECIPROCATING SAW (1 BATTERY)



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DCG414T1 **421-9887**

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- 13.0 Amp Motor
- 9,000 RPM Speed allows the use of up to 6" wheels

DCB606 **422-0034**

20V MAX*/60V MAX* FLEXVOLT® (6.0 Ah) BATTERY



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- Durable construction with a single piece cell holder

DCB1800M3T1 **421-9838**

1800 WATT PORTABLE POWER STATION AND PARALLEL BATTERY CHARGER KIT



INCLUDES: Unit, (3) (4.0 Ah) 20V MAX* batteries, (1) (6.0 Ah) FLEXVOLT® Battery

Friday and Saturday regarding a study that shows the significance of local dollars to the economy of independent retailers. NRHA and Independent We Stand partnered to produce the *Home Sweet Home* study in 2015.

“The *Home Sweet Home* study shows just how important shopping local can be to an area’s economy. We can show you how to best harness your potential for good in your communities, both through your sales and your actions,” Tratensek says.

Everything from schools to public amenities are affected by shopping local. Retailers can arm themselves with the latest statistics about how local shopping can improve job creation and the economy.

Through the Generations

How many generations of the family are working in your store? Your customers, as well as your employees, come from diverse backgrounds and experiences. Learn how best to bridge the generational divide from award-winning speaker Shannon Oleen, who will speak at 10 a.m. Friday, Sept. 15.

A former executive recruiter, Pryor Leadership Fellow, NFL cheerleader

and now keynote speaker for over a decade, Oleen has entertained and educated audiences around the world, receiving several accolades and awards throughout her career.

Savings Supreme

Returning for another Buying Market will be THE 24, a program that has drawn rave reviews in recent years and helped get the latest products into market attendees’ stores for the best price.

THE 24 area, which debuted at the Spring Buying Market in 2016, will once again feature unbelievable deals on 24 popular items from various manufacturers and categories. The uses for these items are as diverse as the items themselves, including seasonal promotions, store giveaways or just a new, popular product to help your bottom line.

“In THE 24, we’re excited to show off a variety of products from across some of our most popular categories,” says Clay Uhrmacher, vice president of sales and marketing for Blish-Mize. “This area has proven popular at past Markets, and we continue working to grow it and bring

our customers some of the hottest products in the industry at some great prices.”

Market attendees who want to place orders for any items that are part of THE 24 selection should do so at the participating vendor’s booth. Vendors will also be handing out tickets for prizes and giveaways to anyone who orders a product that’s part of THE 24.

These deals are exclusive to the Buying Market, so make sure to attend and take advantage of them.

A Live Look

Keep your eyes peeled for live vendor demonstrations on the show floor throughout the weekend!



Check out what’s new from vendors when you visit the Fall Buying Market on Sept. 15-16 in Overland Park, Kansas.

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Titan LED and Blish-Mize have come up with a brilliant idea: an innovative lease-to-own program that makes the lower cost, energy saving and brighter atmosphere provided by LED lighting available to qualified small businesses across the country. You'll have no up-front cost and ongoing savings of 50%-75% off the illumination part of your electric bill - plus you'll be making a significant positive effect on the environment.

You should know that LED lighting:

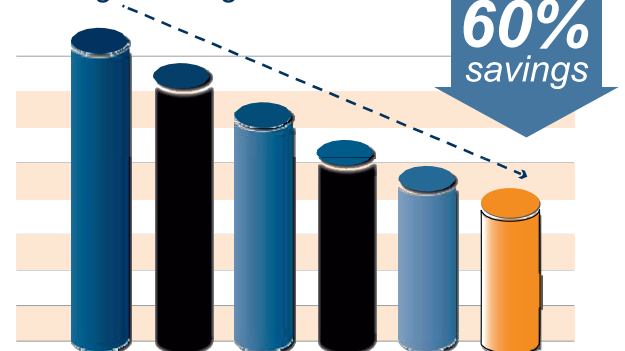
- Is 98% recyclable
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Why should you partner with Titan LED? We've helped thousands of businesses achieve lower energy bills and ongoing cost savings while brightening their environments with our innovative LED lighting solutions. Plus, we're committed to American standards, American quality and American manufacturing.

LED vs. Fluorescent Lighting

LED Lighting	Fluorescent Lighting
Provides steady, constant light (natural white or cool white)	Suffers from frequent flickers and buzzes (yellowish)
Stays cool even if left on all day	Heats up to dangerous temperatures
Made from environmentally safe materials	Contains mercury and phosphor
Uses less than half the power	Uses double the power
Rated at 100,000+ hours	Lasts from 7,000-10,000 hours
Offers ongoing savings (lower energy bills, no maintenance, no ballasts, reduced cooling costs)	Does not offer ongoing savings
Maintains its light output	Loses 30% of its light output in its first 1,000 hours of operation

Average Savings in First Year



TITAN LED clients saw an average of a 60% drop in their lighting energy bills.

BEFORE TITAN LED



AFTER TITAN LED



Blish·Mize
DELIVERING MORE

Party Time

Don't forget to mingle a bit on the evening after a busy first day at the Market. Join Blish-Mize for a Hometown Cocktail Hour, set to include Atchison, Kansas', own Till Vodka, and Kansas City's best hometown brews and barbecue. The evening will close with the Customer Appreciation Celebration and a performance from comedian Mark Cordes.



Cash Coupons

Another way to save big while at the Fall Buying Market is the Cash Coupons program. Featuring some of the Market's most popular items, the Cash Coupons allow you to enter into drawings for cash and prizes with each purchase. You can find the coupons online or in your printed SmartBook.

Additional cash spiffs are available on selected coupon items. Cash Coupons noted with cash spiffs are in addition to the cash prize drawings. Participating vendors will pay the cash spiff when you place your order in their booth. The vendor will ask you to sign for the cash amount received. Refer to your SmartBook or blishmize.com for more details regarding Cash Coupons.

Prize and cash giveaways will be conducted at 5 p.m. Friday, Sept. 15, prior to the Customer Appreciation Event,

and at 1:30 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 16. No purchase necessary. Ask your sales representative for details.

Planning Ahead

You'll have plenty to do at the Market, so save some time and plan your orders ahead of your trip by using your customized SmartBook. It can also be your key to an astounding number of opportunities for savings.

The SmartBook, which is available in print or online, is created just for your operation and includes your past purchases out of the warehouse for the past 12 months. It also includes ordering amounts for the next three and six months to help better plan your purchases.

If you haven't registered to receive your SmartBook, do so right away so you can start planning your Market trip. SmartBooks are set to ship via UPS Aug. 13.

Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market Schedule of Events

Friday, Sept. 15

- 7:30-8:30 a.m.**.....Customer Appreciation Coffee & Donuts. Be one of the first 50 stores into the Market and receive a special Blish-Mize gift.
- 8:30 a.m.**..... Market Opens
- 10 a.m.**..... "How to Communicate With Millennial Employees and Customers," presented by motivational speaker Shannon Oleen
- 12 p.m.**..... Lunch
- 2 p.m.**..... "How to Make Your Store an Integral Part of Your Community," presented by Dan Tratensek, executive vice president of NRHA
- 5 p.m.**..... Prize and Cash Giveaways
- 5:30 p.m.**..... Market Closes
- 5:30-6 p.m.**..... Hometown Favorites Customer Reception
- 6 p.m.**..... Customer Appreciation Celebration with Jack Stack BBQ and Comedian Mark Cordes

Saturday, Sept. 16

- 7:30 a.m.**.....Customer Appreciation Coffee & Donuts. Connect with your sales representative for an early-morning strategy session.
- 8 a.m.**..... Market Opens
- 9 a.m.**..... "How to Make Your Store an Integral Part of Your Community," presented by Dan Tratensek, executive vice president of NRHA
- 12:30-1:15 p.m.**..... Lunch
- 1:30 p.m.**..... Cash Giveaways
- 2:45 p.m.**..... Prize Giveaways
- 3 p.m.**..... Market Closes



Friday Night Event Sponsors

Blish-Mize would like to thank the following companies for helping sponsor the Customer Appreciation Event at the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market. Be sure to attend Friday night's event, which will begin at 5:30 p.m. with a Hometown Favorite Customer Reception. At 6 p.m., enjoy some dinner from Jack Stack barbecue and see comedian Mark Cordes.



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Display Rack:	\$350.00
Total w/ Rack:	\$1,207.19

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www.bkproducts.com

Speaking Out

Check out these learning opportunities at the Market.

Millennial Communication

10 a.m., Friday, Sept. 15

Learn how to best communicate with millennial customers and employees from national speaker Shannon Oleen.

Are millennials at a disadvantage because technology has been a part of their lives from the very beginning? If so, how do we shift away from “connecting” through “likes,” emoticons and friend counts? How do we develop skills that are more emotionally fulfilling? Oleen looks to answer these questions and give you the tools needed to bridge generational gaps.

Local Impact

2 p.m., Friday, Sept. 15
9 a.m., Saturday, Sept. 16

Join the North American Retail Hardware Association’s (NRHA) Dan Tratensek to learn how to best integrate your company into your local community.

NRHA’s recent *Home Sweet Home* study outlines just how important local shopping can be to the economy. In real numbers, Tratensek breaks down how to increase awareness for shopping local and make your customers want to return to your store time and time again.



THE INDUSTRY’S LEADING PAINT APPLICATOR PROGRAM

Premium quality paint applicators for everyone from professionals to first time painters



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Can't-Miss Areas

Don't miss out on these key areas at the Fall Buying Market:

- **Hardware House display area:** Come see the latest additions and product lineups for the Blish-Mize private label line, including ceiling fans, lighting, vanities and decorative bath hardware. Hardware House has been manufactured for over 40 years with the promise that each item will meet or exceed the quality of leading national brands. Come see the leading-edge design and product diversity of Hardware Home during your visit.
- **New Items area:** Check out the latest and greatest additions to Blish-Mize's offerings from the warehouse. Products featured will help increase your product diversity and are presented to increase your buying convenience at the Market. Make the most of your visit to the Fall Buying Market by taking a look at these products and seeing everything vendors have to offer at the Market.
- **THE 24:** Make sure to take a look at the 24 selected items showcased during the Market. These items will be offered with unbelievable discounts during the show.



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Take a Look at These Updated Products

See Hardware House's Fresh Cabinet Hardware Program



Kitchen and bathroom updates are some of the most effective for homeowners getting ready to sell their homes.

According to Realtor.com, in 2017, a minor kitchen remodel offers an 80-percent return on investment, while a major kitchen remodel and a bathroom remodel are each listed at 65 percent.

And even for those who aren't planning to move, it's nice to have a remodeled kitchen, which often serves as the center of the home, or bathroom, a room everyone visits every day. Who wouldn't like updated cabinetry and countertops, or a new walk-in shower and lighting?

But sometimes, it doesn't make sense to fully update a room. Or a homeowner may be working on a budget. In those cases, one quick, easy and cost-effective way to give a room a new look is simply by adding new cabinet knobs or pulls.

Whether it's trying a new finish, such as changing out old brass cabinet handles

to updated satin nickel ones, or updating a handle to a more modern, square shape, homeowners can find a variety of types of cabinet hardware to fit their needs—and their budget—at your store.

And Hardware House is here to help you find what they're looking for—no matter if your business is a smaller hardware store, a larger lumberyard or anywhere in between.

"Hardware House offers a great program for our customers," says Clay Uhrmacher, vice president of sales and marketing for Blish-Mize. "The selection is targeted for lumber and hardware stores, giving them an

opportunity to carry the right core SKUs in the updated styles and finishes.

“It’s a perfect program for stores that move a high volume with builders or remodelers,” he says, “and it’s also a great fit for stores that want to offer the category, but don’t want to wrap up thousands of dollars in inventory to be in it.”

A New Program

Hardware House has recently updated its Cabinet Hardware program, which includes knobs, pulls, hinges and catches in a variety of finishes and designs. The most recent updates include 36 new items and finishes, bringing the total of available items to more than 200.

The best-selling items are part of a 72-piece display, which includes header boards showing other cabinet hardware products, and there’s even a contractor pack of best-selling items for all your pro customers who might want to buy in bulk.

The updated program also offers a new merchandising display. Each item is mounted on individual wooden blocks and displayed in a 4-foot metal strip, which mounts directly to your current shelving, making it easy to install. And because each item is on its own block, it doesn’t take long to change out items as you make adjustments from year to year.

“We’re excited to be able to offer this updated program to our customers,” says Wayne Lueckenhoff, vice president of purchasing for Blish-Mize. “We think

they’ll really like the changes we’ve made. We took a look at trends in this category and made adjustments accordingly. As a result, we’ve put together a program we really think consumers will appreciate.”

Special Orders

If a customer wants a product that’s in the catalog but not your store, it’s no problem! Hardware House has introduced a Special Order Program, which includes 126 items that can be showcased on high-gloss photo header boards, making it easy for your customers to get a detailed look at these products before ordering them.

“We’ve really focused on making Hardware House the most attractive program for a wide spectrum of customers in the cabinet hardware category,” says Frank Barnes, national sales manager for Hardware House.

“Our updated POP package gives the product a great presentation in the store to help pull-through retail sales.”

To learn more, visit hardware-house.com or stop by the Hardware House booth at the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market.

“We’ve really focused on making Hardware House the most attractive program for a wide spectrum of customers in the cabinet hardware category.”

—Frank Barnes, national sales manager



Learning From Online Retailers

What Are They Doing That Brick-and-Mortar Retailers Aren't?

If you're an independent home improvement retailer, you've probably experienced a time when a customer asked you to match a price on Amazon or with another online company.

You've also most likely bought something online or maybe even tried selling something that way. The online world, including online shopping, has become more and more part of all of our everyday lives.

So how can brick-and-mortar retailers compete?

Some answers are obvious. You can provide face-to-face customer service that consumers can't find on their laptops, tablets or smartphones. You can offer a variety of services, such as small engine cleaning, grill assembly or screen door or screen window repair. You can ask the right questions to ensure your customers are purchasing exactly what they need.

But you might need to do more. And the ideas for that "more" can come from those same online retailers you might feel you're competing against.

What Online Retailers Are Doing...

Here are just a few things some big brands are doing online, according to a recent article from SocialMediaToday.com:

- Nike has a dedicated Twitter account to help with customer service, and they offer answers seven days a week, and in seven different languages.

- Starbucks has a Twitter account set up to gather customer ideas for new kinds of drinks, as well as get feedback on how they can improve their service.
- Netflix, a company in the entertainment business, uses a light, conversational tone in its Twitter interactions to have a little fun even while working to resolve issues.

Other companies, such as Nordstrom and Zappos.com, are well-known throughout the retail world for their high levels of customer service and hassle-free return policies. There's even that famous story of how a man walked in to a Nordstrom to return a car tire, and Nordstrom handed him the cash, no questions asked. (While there are several versions of that story floating around on the internet and none has been verified, it's still a good example of the high-end customer service associated with the Nordstrom name.)



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Have a suggestion box set up at your store, or ask them to post any ideas on your store's Facebook page.

Still others make buying online so easy that it only takes a few clicks of a button to make your purchase—no credit card numbers or passwords needed (well, once they're saved after your first purchase).

...And What You Can Do

Most experts agree brick-and-mortar retail isn't going to go anywhere any time soon. However, it's still a good idea for these retailers to look to their online counterparts for ideas of how

they can continue to improve the overall shopping experiences for all of their customers.

You may not have a Twitter account, and you may not need to speak multiple languages to communicate with all of your customers. But you can still learn some lessons from these online retailers that may work in your brick-and-mortar stores.

Like Starbucks, you can solicit customer opinions. You may not have a specific social media account to do so, but try asking your customers for their thoughts about any aspect of your business where you're looking for additional feedback. Have a suggestion box set up at your store, or ask them to post any ideas on your store's Facebook page.

And, like Netflix, keep the conversation light yet professional. Chances are that you know a good

number of your customers by name already, which is great. Work to get to know the ones you don't know yet; they'll appreciate that even more personalized service they'll be offered when you greet them by name as they walk in the door. Ask them what they're looking for and how you can help.

While your ultimate goal is to answer their questions and provide good service, doing so with a light, friendly tone (which is especially helpful when you're explaining something that might get a little technical, such as when talking plumbing or lighting repairs) can offer "that something extra" customers appreciate when shopping at their favorite stores.

In the next issue of *Strategies*, we'll take a closer look at what brick-and-mortar retailers can do to compete with online retailing. Stay tuned to learn more!

Covering your needs in these categories:

CEILING FANS

VANITIES & VANITY TOPS

LIGHTING

BATH HARDWARE

LOCKS

CABINET HARDWARE

FAUCETS

see us in booth #471

In-Store Vs. Online: By the Numbers

Even as you learn some new ideas from online retailers that you can implement in your store, don't forget about the advantages you already have over these retailers, such as strong product knowledge and excellent customer service. After all, that's what your customers are looking for.

Retail Dive, a website that covers retail industry news and provides original analysis, earlier this year conducted a consumer survey that explored consumer shopping habits. One question was why consumers still choose brick-and-mortar stores over online businesses. Here's what they had to say:



Source: Retail Dive Consumer Survey, Fielded by Google Survey

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Front

Back



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Putting Your Best Face Forward

Oil Country Retailer Finds Success on Facebook

Social media can be a great equalizer for retailers, allowing any store to create an identity and build a relationship with customers in an interactive way that traditional advertising cannot provide.

It was with this idea in mind that BES Supply Store in Carlsbad, New Mexico, began exploring ways to take advantage of the many advertising opportunities available on Facebook. LaRae Carrasco, who handles marketing for the store (among other responsibilities, such as bookkeeping, human resources and more), began looking into the different advertising options on the popular social media platform.

She's since found quite a few ways to integrate these unique options, and Facebook as a whole, into her store's marketing strategy. For a little time and a few dollars, she's seen success through a variety of promotions.

Being Social

The initial idea to advertise online came from a basic look at the numbers involved, Carrasco says. As the store's bookkeeper, she knew exactly what was being spent on advertising, and she was unsure that BES Supply was getting the kind of results that reflected the financial commitment.

So she turned to Facebook, first through paid advertising options available to businesses.

"We're fairly new to social media, so it made sense to start there," Carrasco says. "That's the standard, and it's a cheap way to advertise. We started with just a few ads and a few dollars to promote them, but it was clear very early that it was effective."

After the initial run of paid ads, Carrasco and her team began looking into other ways they could promote the diverse product selection available at BES Supply. One way they tackled this issue was by promoting unique items they sell that are built by local designers.

One unique product BES promotes comes from an area artist that designs custom hard hats, a lucrative business in an area rich with oil fields and other industrial sites. The area's industries have been a big part of BES Supply's retail success, with fire-retardant clothing and safety equipment being some of the biggest growth items for the stores.

Next Steps

Along with ads and featured products, another common sight on BES Supply's Facebook page is a monthly prize giveaway, a recent innovation to make people more aware of what the store offers. One month, the giveaway could be for a cooler full of soft drinks; the next month, it might be a new grill. The photos of the winners with their prizes are shared on the page.

Carrasco is also excited about using the Facebook Live feature to give an online audience a live look inside the store. Facebook Live allows a user to broadcast live to other users, showing up on their feed with a special designation that signifies this is a live, and limited, event. That can help show customers what is currently in stock at BES Supply, she says.



BES Supply has used items like these grills in social media giveaways.

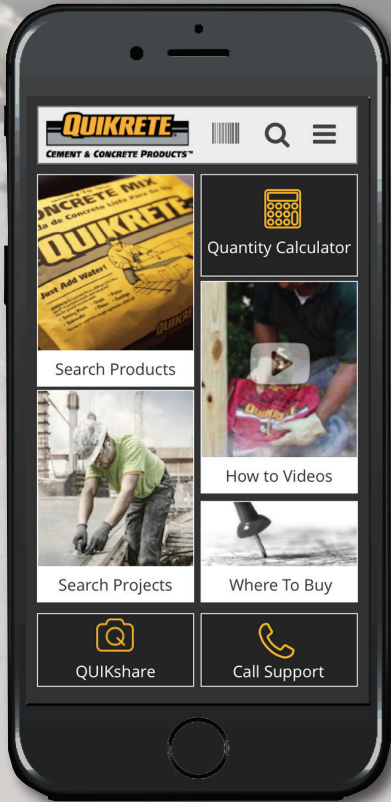
Customer appreciation days are held, and also posted about, twice a year. This post, combined with some advertising dollars to promote it, can reach an entirely new audience by pushing it to users who have yet to "like" the store's page, she says.

"Those are the kinds of posts that can reach someone who has never been to the store in the first place," she says. "Maybe they just want to stop by for a free hot dog. It still gets them to come in to our store."

Another tactic BES Supply is exploring is featuring a drawing for a gift card. All it takes to be entered in the drawing is to share the post and tag a Facebook friend. This kind of crowd-sourced advertising can exponentially increase a page's "likes" and followers, says Carrasco.

"It's a small cost to get started, and it can be customized to your own budget and audience," she says. "I've paid \$3 for three days of advertising or \$25 for seven days. You can choose the reach, and the more people you try to reach, the higher the cost. But the returning benefit more than makes up for the cost."

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How Do You Go To Market?

Steve and Walene Graham, co-owners of Miltonvale Lumber in Miltonvale, Kansas, never miss a Blish-Mize Buying Market. They never miss the Kansas City Royals' spring training, either. Each year, the Grahams check their calendar and plan a trip to Phoenix for spring training, either right before or right after the Market.

The cheering doesn't stop there. Despite living nearly 200 miles away from Kansas City, the Grahams have Royals season tickets—and use them regularly.

“We love the Royals,” Steve Graham says. “We even went to the 1985 World Series! We have season tickets and go to as many games as we can.”



The past Buying Market was held March 17-18, and thanks to the St. Patrick's Day holiday, there were a few leprechauns on hand at the show.

They were actually two members of the Apex team, who dressed up in costume. “We try to incorporate themes whenever possible when we go to different shows,” says Brian Kintzer, national sales manager for Apex (pictured on the right in the photo). “This is the first time I've worked a show in costume, though.”

He says he and his colleagues enjoy coming to the Markets. “We're a proud supporter of Distribution America, and Blish-Mize is one of our best customers.”

Upcoming Market Dates

Mark your calendars! The Blish-Mize Buying Markets will be held on the following dates in 2018. All Buying Markets will be held at the Overland Park Convention Center in Overland Park, Kansas.

2018

Spring Buying Market

March 23-24, 2018

Fall Buying Market

Sept. 21-22, 2018

Shipping Smarter, Faster

The Blish-Mize staff continues to focus on improving shipping efficiencies for its customers as it ships daily deliveries out of its warehouse.

One way of doing so is auditing orders, which is done in three phases, says Greg Lutz, executive vice president of operations for Blish-Mize. “We scan the UPC code on the item when we pick it, and we scan the ship label on the dock as we build the pallet. We have a full-time accuracy control clerk who does random checks of the items picked.”

That random checking process is recorded and tracked individually and as a group, he says, with incentives given to the employees with excellent accuracy records.

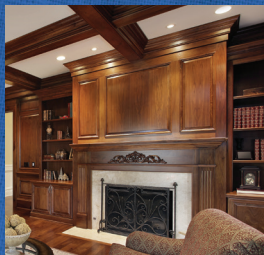
There are a few more updates coming soon, including voice-picking technology for all picking zones, and an enhancement to the technology that will allow either a 12-digit UPC code or a shipping container code to be scanned. These updates will allow those in the warehouse to scan orders more quickly and efficiently.

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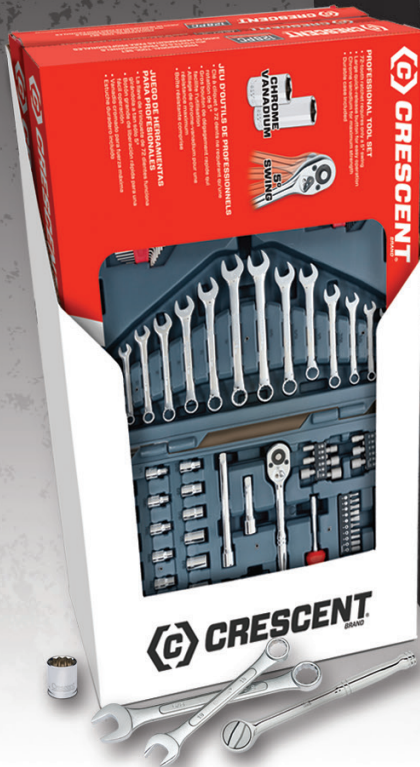
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