

# HARDLINES

# Strategies

**Blisk·Mize**

DISTRIBUTING RETAIL PROFITABILITY

SPRING 2017, VOL. 17, 1



## A New Look

Missouri Retailer Builds  
New Store, Expands Inventory  
*Page 8*

### Also in this Issue:

New Products You Can't Miss *Page 18*

Spring Market Preview *Page 20*

Hardware House Updates *Page 34*

# Your Fastener Connection



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# Luck, and Its Role In Business



**F**ive-star general Douglas MacArthur used to say that the best luck of all is the luck you make for yourself. I *do* believe luck plays a large part in success. Whether it be fortuitous timing, a wonderful review from a customer that brings a new business opportunity, or a lucky connection that leads you to the perfect store manager, a lot of what happens around you is just plain luck!

That being said, I'm not a big gambler in life or in business. However, I do consider myself lucky in many facets of life. We are especially lucky to have an amazingly loyal customer base and employees who have been with us for many years. I consider myself fortunate to be surrounded by such great people.

The team at AG Co-op is working hard to create their own success. They had outgrown their old location and knew they needed to make a move to continue their rapid growth. Their transformation is one for the history books, and we at Blish-Mize are proud to be a part of it. See AG Co-op's story and photos of their journey on Page 8.

Many of you participated in our communications survey that we sent out earlier this year. The results are in, and one thing you told us you want more information on is what's new in the industry. We've added a New Products section to Strategies. You'll find the first installment of this new feature on Page 18. Take a look, and find out what new products you can look forward to seeing in person at the Buying Market!

We look forward to seeing you at our 2017 Spring Market and Customer Appreciation Celebration. This season, you'll find all the best deals and great pricing at our "Savings of the Green." We are taking advantage of one of the luckiest of days of the year, March 17—the start of our market and St. Patrick's Day—to bring you fun giveaways, green beer and our fantastic Kansas City BBQ. Make sure to stick around and test your luck at our casino event. Learn more about what to expect in our Market Preview story on Page 20.

At Blish-Mize, we pride ourselves on bringing you a great Buying Market. We're hoping a lot of our hard work and a touch of luck will bring us all much success in 2017!

See you in March!

**Jonathan D. Mize**  
CEO and President

## HARDLINES Strategies

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### On the Cover:

Bernie Schoen, manager of AG Co-op in Otterville, Missouri, has had a busy year as his company expanded and moved to a new location.

### Advertising Information

Hardlines Strategies is published twice every year by Blish-Mize. Copyright 2017. For advertising rates and deadlines, please contact:

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# Ask the Expert

## Thinking About a Store Reset?

**M**aybe you're thinking about refreshing your store. With the range of changes you can make to maximize its performance, where do you even start?

To find out, we talked to Cindy Kane, Blish-Mize's manager of sales and marketing support.



**What factors should retailers consider when thinking about a store reset?**

**Cindy Kane (CK):** There are really four things to

consider: store signage, pricing, layout and assortments. Each of these is an important part of the process as you begin planning your reset.

### What's the first step?

**CK:** First, look at how you want to lay out your store to make it more appealing. Think about what products should go where and the best way to use the space.

This is where Blish-Mize can help. Several of our staffers, including regional managers, have the ability to do CAD layouts to give retailers an idea of what a new layout may look like. With these layouts, retailers will be able to see if any new fixtures or racking will be required.

This is also a part of the process where retailers can rely on input from their sales reps and regional managers, who not only know the retailer's store, but know the market and the retailers themselves on a more personal basis, so they can have valuable input into what might work best. Another advantage of consulting with your



*Hostetler Feed & Farm Supply in Versailles, Missouri, recently completed a store reset with some help from Blish-Mize.*

sales rep or regional manager is that they've also seen a number of other stores, so they can provide insight into what works and what doesn't.

### Once the layout has been determined, what happens next?

**CK:** It's time to look at signage. Blish-Mize has a variety of interior signage packages to choose from. We can also customize many parts of our signage offerings and give retailers advice about putting together their interior signage presentations.

Retailers should next look at their product mix. Again, Blish-Mize can help with this process. We have a retail merchandising system with well over 1,000 assortments to choose from. Retailers can also choose to use a vendor-driven assortment if they feel it is a better fit for their market.

The next step is to place any orders. Then, when the products, fixtures and signage arrive, Blish-Mize can provide retailers assistance implementing the reset.

We know how important it is to get a reset done quickly so it has a minimal impact on their customers, but we also

know that with something as important as a reset, it has to be done right. Because of our teams' experience with handling retail resets, we find most of our customers are able to keep their stores open, disturbing business as little as possible.

### What about pricing?

**CK:** You are refreshing your store; why not refresh your pricing? Our customers can control their retail prices through our website, [blishmize.com](http://blishmize.com), and we also offer competitive price-shop data. Our customers can use this information in conjunction with our retail pricing system to adjust prices to what best matches their customer base and their market. We work to help them make sure they are on track with their prices and are making the margins they want to make.

### How can a retailer get started?

**CK:** There are a lot of little things to consider during a reset, so we encourage retailers to rely on their sales representative. They are helpful and in tune with our customers, and they are happy to answer any questions. Contact Cindy Kane at 800-995-0525, ext. 167, to get started.

Booth #

521

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# Are You Tired Of Financing Your Supplier?

“Rebate adder.” “Support fee.” “Participation fee.”

Whatever you’ve heard it called, if you’re familiar with the inner workings of other suppliers, you’ve probably heard about this sum of money that a supplier takes out of a retailer’s business every two weeks, only to return a portion of it once a year as a “rebate.”

After many years, most retailers come to understand this is actually a way for those suppliers to fund the operation of their business with capital taken from yours. They have great return on your investment in their business—they simply

pay you back a portion of what you invested with them. And many times, you only get that money back if you meet a complicated set of rules and regulations.

Here at Blish-Mize, we do things a little differently. We talk with retailers every week who have dealt with these fees, and we work with those retailers to help them keep their money in their business instead of investing it in a supplier’s. By keeping their money within their company, they can earn the returns on those funds.

Simply put: We don’t ask for your money to finance our business—we know you need it for yours.

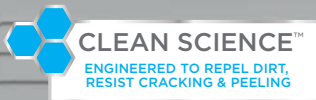
We don’t have mock “rebate” adders. Furthermore, we appreciate that you need to know your true costs with each transaction, and you need to know those costs aren’t dependent upon a fictitious rebate.

Does this story of “rebates” sound all too familiar?

If so, contact us at 800-995-0525 or email Clay Uhrmacher at [clay.uhrmacher@blishmize.com](mailto:clay.uhrmacher@blishmize.com) for more information about how Blish-Mize can help you find a better way to run your business so that your funds stay with your company, rather than financing your supplier.

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## A Fresh Start

### Missouri Retailer Builds, Resets New Store



AG Co-op Services in Otterville, Missouri, moved to a new location in town in 2015, purchasing several acres of land and building new buildings from the ground up. One of those buildings is its 4,800-square-foot retail store.

**B**right. Spacious. Airy. New. These are just a few words that describe AG Co-op's new, 4,800-square-foot retail store in Otterville, Missouri.

The aisles are wide, with plenty of windows to let in natural light. The store is clean and neatly merchandised. It even has that “new store smell.”

It's been a busy year for the staff, as they've worked to buy a new property, construct new buildings, do a full reset of their hardware selection and much more.

#### Serving Everyone in Town

In 1966, the business was founded by Jack Veuleman of Veuleman's Elevator on Vine Street in downtown Otterville, a rural town with a population of 500, about two hours from Kansas City.

It was originally a feed mill that served the farmers in the area. In the mid-1980s, the local lumberyard and hardware store went out of business, and the company sought to fill the void left by the closing of these businesses by selling hardware.

AG Co-op bought the business in 2001. In 2015, management decided it was time for a big move—literally.

“We just didn't have the room we needed in our old building,” says staffer Grant Thompson. “It was super congested.”

“Our old store had everything just crammed in on the shelves,” says Angel Eckerle, AG Co-op's office assistant. “Customers had to ask for particular products because it was too difficult to find anything.”

#### New Location, New Buildings

Finding the room needed to expand meant moving to a new location. That's when the AG Co-op team purchased several acres just a couple of miles away in a highly visible location off one of the main roads in town.

The plan was to build a couple of new buildings right away and continue to move other segments of the business to the new location over time. (A few buildings that haven't yet moved are still



open and running at the old location on Vine Street.)

First to make the move would be the hardware store and feed mill. The new facilities for both of these business units were built from the ground up.

It was a big project, and the Blish-Mize team was there every step of the way.

A few staffers from Blish-Mize met with AG Co-op to look at how they'd like to lay out the store, as well as decide what products to add to their inventory. Blish-Mize also helped them design the store layout and

aisle positions, adding plenty of space and even room to grow.

Thompson says they knew from past experience what products their customers might want.

"We added a lot of SKUs," says manager Bernie Schoen. "This store is five or six times bigger than what we had in our old building. It's a very welcome change."

Schoen says Blish-Mize helped make these changes a reality with their assistance during the planning, move and reset.

And now, AG Co-op boasts a building with a variety of hardware items for its customers. Plumbing is the strongest category on the hardware side, Schoen says, and fasteners and hand tools are also popular sellers.

As far as continued construction, the goal is to keep moving forward with adding new buildings in 2017.

"We want to become a one-stop shop," Schoen says.

So far, the reaction from customers has been positive.

"Everybody really, really likes it," says Eckerle. "Now, when you walk in the store, it's easy to see everything we have to offer."

"Now, we have more room for hardware products, and we're seeing our hardware sales increase, which is great," says Thompson.

**"The service is great, and we have a very good working relationship. We'd definitely recommend Blish-Mize to other retailers."**

**—Bernie Schoen, store manager**



AG Co-op and Blish-Mize have worked together for more than 30 years. Blish-Mize was an integral part of the reset process for the new hardware store.

## Working With Blish-Mize

It wasn't the first time AG Co-op and Blish-Mize collaborated on a project. In fact, they've worked together for more than 30 years.

"When the old Otterville Lumberyard, which was the only hardware store in town, went out of business, we took over their inventory and began working with Blish-Mize at that time," says Schoen.

The AG Co-op team keeps a close eye on Blish-Mize's promotions and appreciates the good customer service they provide.

And, Schoen says, he and his team very much enjoy working with the family-owned distributor.

"The service is great, and we have a very good working relationship," he says. "We'd definitely recommend Blish-Mize to other retailers."



Grant Thompson, Angel Eckerle and Bernie Schoen are just a few of the staff who help run the day-to-day operations at AG Co-op.

## PELICAN™ Travel Tumbler



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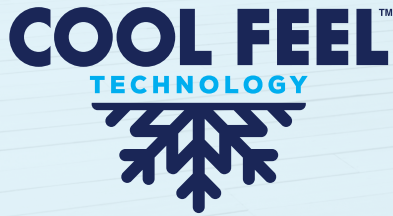
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## A One-Stop Shop

### Oklahoma Paint Retailer Expands Offerings to Include Hardware

**M**arvin Munger has spent much of his life in the paint business.

Munger worked at a paint store during high school and college, and after time spent in the military, came to Oklahoma City and began working with a national paint company.

More than a decade later, after being approached by a different paint manufacturer about opening his own business, Munger Paint & Wallcovering was born.

The 8,000-square-foot store in Warr Acres, Oklahoma, a suburb of Oklahoma City, is filled with paint and stain, paint sundries, a large wallpaper selection and a small selection of hardware.

The store's customer base includes a mix of retail and contractor customers, as well as maintenance accounts for the store's business with local schools. With such a diverse range of customers, Marvin Munger and his son, Curt, are careful to make sure they have the products on hand these clients might need. This takes thoughtful planning, a thorough understanding of customer needs and a little help from Blish-Mize.

#### Standing Out From the Rest

Despite several competing stores nearby, including some big-boxes, Munger Paint & Wallcovering stands



*Marvin Munger, left, started Munger Paint & Wallcovering in 1977. Now he and his son, Curt, a second-generation owner, run the store together.*

out from the competition with top-of-the-line customer service and strong product selection.

“We may be the only paint and wallpaper store in the area,” says Marvin. “You think of the day when you went to the paint and wallpaper store and bought

all materials and tools you needed for a project—everything from beginning to end. That’s not as common now, but we still offer all these products.

“We carry a lot of unexpected products that other stores may not, which saves our customers a lot of time,” he says.

**DEWALT**

**MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS**

**FIRST 20 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,500 ORDER IN DEWALT POWER TOOLS AND ACCESSORIES**

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**PORTER CABLE**

**MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS**

**FIRST 10 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$500 ORDER IN PORTER-CABLE POWER TOOLS**

(ANY MIX, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS COUNT AS ONE ORDER. WHILE SUPPLIES LAST. This does not include compressors or pneumatics.)

**RECEIVE A PCC771B AT NO CHARGE!**

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**BOSTITCH**

**MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS**

**FIRST 10 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,000 ORDER IN BOSTITCH TOOLS OR FASTENERS**

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**RECEIVE A PN50 AT NO CHARGE!**

(ORDERS MUST BE PLACED AT THE BOSTITCH BOOTH.)



**STANLEY DEWALT**

**MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS**

**FIRST 10 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,500 ORDER IN STANLEY AND/OR DEWALT HAND TOOLS AND STORAGE**

(ANY MIX, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS COUNT AS ONE ORDER. WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.)

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**BLACK+DECKER DEWALT**

**MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS**

**FIRST 15 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,000 ORDER IN BLACK+DECKER AND/OR DEWALT OUTDOOR PRODUCTS**

(ANY MIX, MULTIPLE LOCATIONS COUNT AS ONE ORDER. WHILE SUPPLIES LAST.)

**RECEIVE A DCR018 AT NO CHARGE!**

(ORDERS MUST BE PLACED AT THE BLACK+DECKER OR DEWALT OUTDOOR PRODUCTS BOOTH.)



# CUSTOMER PROFILE

“For example, you’d be amazed at how many light bulbs a painter uses. Most paint stores don’t carry light bulbs—we do.”

Another way the store stands out from its competitors is with its inviting layout. Painted tables and desks are scattered throughout the paint chip area, offering customers places to sit and showing them firsthand the difference a coat of paint can make to furniture. This laid-back and decorative setting helps shoppers relax. They can browse through wallpaper sample books while sitting at a table by a fireplace.

“We have that softer side to our business,” says Curt. “People feeling comfortable coming in and looking around and thinking about what they might want.”

## Working With Blish-Mize

As their customer base has broadened, the Mungers have continued to add more and more hardware



*Munger Paint & Wallcovering has expanded its selection to include cleaning supplies, hand tools and more—all products they’ve been able to bring in thanks to Blish-Mize.*

# SHUR-LINE



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**DROP SHIP PREPAID**

- POG INCLUDE 2 PIECES
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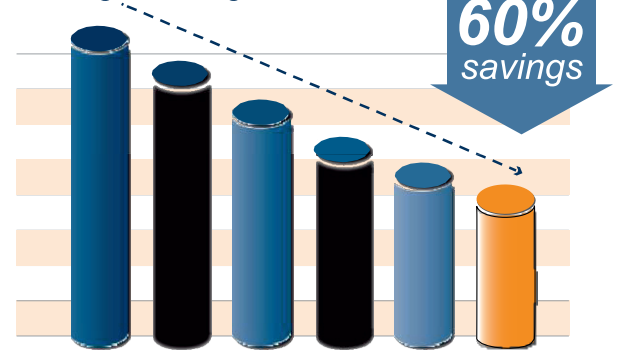
- Is 98% recyclable
- Reduces power consumption by a minimum of 50%
- Is a much healthier alternative to traditional lighting versus many mercury-filled products
- Seldom needs to be replaced, since it provides a lifespan 10 times longer than traditional lighting

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

# CUSTOMER PROFILE

products to their inventory. In addition to buying their paint from Blish-Mize, the Mungers can now get cleaning supplies, hand tools and more from the distributor. "Blish-Mize has allowed us to bring in those products that we wouldn't have otherwise had access to," Curt says.

Munger Paint & Wallcovering and Blish-Mize, both family-owned businesses,

**"They are just the right size: They can help provide us with what we need, and they listen to what we have to say."**

—Marvin Munger, founder



In addition to helping provide a strong product selection, Marvin and Curt Munger say Blish-Mize allows them to be competitive with pricing.

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teamed up about 10 years ago, Marvin says. "It has worked well. They've done a very good job of building a paint and sundries line, which, for hardware distributors, may be challenging at times."

He also appreciates that the Blish-Mize team listens to him and provides him with the products he's looking for, which leads to higher inventory turns and lets customers know they can always find what they need at his store.

"If we say we need a certain product, they are very good about providing it for us," he says. "They help us be competitive with pricing, too. And the sales representatives are great. I think the most important thing is their willingness to get the products we want and need."

And those products are premium products. "We carry good brands," Marvin says. "We don't chase the cheap end of the business. Our customers know if they want a high-quality paint product, they can find it here."

The Mungers say they enjoy doing business with Blish-Mize. "They are just the right size: They can help provide us with what we need, and they listen to what we have to say."

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BOOTH 795

## Can't-Miss Items

### Stop By These Booths at the Market

Finding the right new products to bring into your operation can be critical. These items and product lines will all be on display at the upcoming Spring Buying Market—visit the vendor booths to learn more.

Also, see the new in-store credit card program available to Blish-Mize customers. An easy credit approval process and attractive terms give you an opportunity to offer your customers a credit card program designed to increase your sales. See Credit First National near the Blish-Mize Sales Booth area to learn more.



#### Pulsar Products

See the new Ford brand power equipment from Pulsar Products. A great selection of generators and power washers are available at the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market! Stop by the booth and check out Pulsar's 2017 selection! **Booth #763**  
[www.pulsar-products.com](http://www.pulsar-products.com)



#### IT Tile

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[www.charbroil.com](http://www.charbroil.com)



#### Master Lock

Operate Master Lock's new Bluetooth® Padlocks from your smart device! Easily share access to padlocks with multiple users. See the new indoor and outdoor options, which combine safety and innovation. **Booth #102**  
[www.masterlock.com/bluetooth](http://www.masterlock.com/bluetooth)



#### MD-Prova Products

Stop by the MD booth to see the new shower and flooring products available. This unique program includes a complete shower installation system, underlayment and even tile, and is a great addition to any plumbing department. **Booth #651**  
[www.provaproducts.com](http://www.provaproducts.com)



#### Fulcrum

Fulcrum's inexpensive and convenient LED lighting is a great addition to your lighting department or endcap programs. It's designed to provide more light, wherever you need it, with minimal installation, and there's no wiring required! **Booth #808**  
[www.fulcrumproducts.com](http://www.fulcrumproducts.com)



#### Flair-It

Flair-It's Pexlock PEX program is available in various assortment options. It's ultra-convenient and easy to use; a great solution for the do-it-yourself PEX consumer. No expensive crimping tools are required. **Booth #867**  
[www.flairit.com](http://www.flairit.com)



#### Tell

Are you capturing the commercial door hardware business in your local market? Come see Tell's newly designed commercial door hardware assortments. Get in to the program with as little as 2 feet of space! **Booth #167**  
[www.tellmfg.com](http://www.tellmfg.com)



#### Woods

Control your home's lighting, HVAC, power cords and more from a smartphone or tablet. The new WiOn program from Woods gives you the opportunity to offer a full selection of wireless options to your customers. **Booth #627**  
[www.woods.com/apps](http://www.woods.com/apps)



#### World and Main

Visit World and Main at the Spring Buying Market in the Concourse area. Blish-Mize is adding new lawn and garden, electrical, hand tools, impulse items and more from this vendor. Visit [worldandmain.com](http://worldandmain.com) to see more. **Booth #40**  
[www.worldandmain.com](http://www.worldandmain.com)

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# It's Time to Save Some Green!

**Get Ready for the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market, March 17-18**

**A**re you ready to find a little luck as you look for good deals and search out new products?

It's time to make your way to Overland Park, Kansas, for the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market, which will be held March 17-18 at the Overland Park Convention Center.

"We're so excited to see everyone at the Spring Buying Market," says Blish Connor, communications director. "We've put together a couple of days that are full of good buys, educational seminars, networking opportunities and more. We are looking forward to a great weekend!"

Get ready to feel lucky as you browse the Buying Market showfloor. Catch up with Blish-Mize staff and other retailers, and find the products you've been looking for—and maybe a good deal along the way.

Once the market wraps up for the day, stick around for a customer appreciation event, which will include a Green Beer Fun Fest, Jack Stack barbecue and a casino event.

"We think attendees will really enjoy these activities after a busy day on the market floor," says Connor. "It will be a good way for them to unwind and spend some time with other retailers—and they may win big at our casino event!"



*There will be plenty to see at the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market, which will be held March 17-18 at the Overland Park Convention Center in Overland Park, Kansas.*

Arriving early at the Buying Market will pay off: The first 50 stores to arrive on Friday morning will receive an official 2017 Blish-Mize Buying Market cup—a lucky green Pelican tumbler!

### Big Savings, New Products

One can't-miss area of the Buying Market is THE 24, which showcases a selection of popular products at deep discounts. This area debuted last year and, thanks to its popularity, will once again feature some great deals on 24 products across various manufacturers and categories.

Use these products in seasonal promotions at your store, pass along your savings to your customers or add profits to your bottom line.

"THE 24 will be front and center at the Buying Market and will feature some great deals on popular products," says Jason Drury, marketing director at Blish-Mize. "Don't miss out! Retailers will want to make sure they set aside some time to browse this area of the show."

Some of these products will be tied to cash and prizes, too. These deals are only available to those who attend the Buying Market, so register today!

And if you're at the market to find new products (as most attendees are), make sure you visit the What's New? section, where you can find new products and displays, all at great prices.

### Find Some Extra Cash

Not only can you save some green at the Buying Market, but you may be able to pick up a little extra, too! The Pot of Gold Cash Giveaways will take place at Friday's Customer Appreciation Event, and at 1:30 p.m. and 2:45 p.m. Saturday afternoon. No purchase is necessary.

The popular Cash Coupons will once again be at the Buying Market, featuring some highly sought-after items. Each time you purchase one of these key items, you will be entered into a drawing for cash or another prize. Find the coupons in your SmartBook.



At the Buying Market, use the Cash Coupons to save big on your purchases. In addition, some vendors will offer cash spiffs on other coupon items.

## Event Sponsors

Blish-Mize would like to thank the following companies for taking part as sponsors at the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market. Be sure to attend Friday night's customer appreciation event, which will begin at 5:30 p.m. with a reception and the Green Beer Fun Fest. From 6 p.m. to 9 p.m., enjoy some Jack Stack barbecue and try your hand at the casino event.

### Friday Night Reception Sponsor:



### Friday Night Event Sponsors:



And additional cash spiffs will also be available on some coupon items—expect these cash spiffs when you place your order at those booths.

## Hardware House Updates

The team at Hardware House, Blish-Mize's private-label line, has been busy updating several of its families of lighting, ceiling fans, bath hardware, vanities and more. See these updates, which highlight the latest industry trends and cover a wide range of styles, front and center on the market floor. (Learn more on Page 34.)

Hardware House products offer you an edge by giving you the chance to sell high-quality products that will make your selection stand out from the competition.

## Visit the Blish-Mize Sales Booth

Blish-Mize offers a variety of retail services, and the Buying Markets offer the perfect opportunity to learn about these services, which include the following:

- Advertising Services
- Website Development
- Grainger Program
- Retail Services
- Remote Ordering Devices
- Hick's Inc. (including fishing, hunting, marine, archery and outdoor products)
- Tradavo Snack Program
- Pricing & Profitability Programs
- Interior/Exterior Signage
- Trusty Helper Rental
- VDI/Variety Housewares Program
- RMS Assortments
- Office Depot Program
- PartScription Parts Program
- Warren Automotive
- Store Design & Merchandising
- Demographic Information

## Order Your SmartBook Today!

Want to get a jump on getting ready for the Buying Market? Use your customized SmartBook to do just that.

The SmartBook is available both in print and online and is created just for you and your business. It includes your past 12 months' history of purchases out of warehouse and ordering amounts

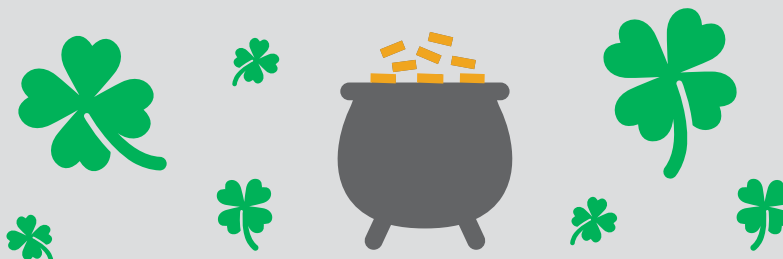
## Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market Schedule of Events

### Friday, March 17, 2017

- 7:30 a.m.-8:30 a.m.** ..... Customer Appreciation Coffee and Donuts
- 8:30 a.m.** ..... Market Opens
- 10:30 a.m.** ..... "Grow Your Lawn and Garden Sales Product and Retailing Training"  
*Presented by BWI*
- 12:00 p.m.** ..... Lunch
- 1:30 p.m.** ..... "Assuming the Successful Continuation of Your Family Business"  
*Presented by Leon Resnick of Resnick Associates*
- 3:30 p.m.** ..... "The Amazon Effect: How Amazon Changed Retailing and How You Can Respond"  
*Presented by NRHA's Dan Tratensek*
- 5:30 p.m.** ..... Market Closes
- 5:30 p.m.-6:00 p.m.** ..... Customer Appreciation Reception and Green Beer Fun Fest
- 6:00 p.m.-9:00 p.m.**...Customer Appreciation BBQ, Lucky Casino Event and  **Prize Giveaways**

### Saturday, March 18, 2017

- 7:30 a.m.** ..... Breakfast Burrito Bar
- 7:30 a.m.** ..... "From Good to Great: 10 Easy Things You Can Do to Take Your Business to the Next Level"  
*Presented by NRHA's Dan Tratensek*
- 8:00 a.m.** ..... Market Opens
- 10:00 a.m.** ..... "Grow Your Business With Pre-Engineered Steel Buildings"  
*Presented by Central States Manufacturing*
- 12:30 p.m.-1:15 p.m.**..... Lunch
- 1:30 p.m.** .....  **Pot of Gold Cash Giveaways**
- 2:45 p.m.** .....  **Prize Giveaways**
- 3:00 p.m.** ..... Market Closes





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#166**

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over the next three months and the next six months. If you haven't yet, register right away to receive yours, which will be shipped via UPS directly to your store. SmartBooks begin shipping Feb. 13.

If you'd prefer to view your SmartBook online, you can do so by visiting [blishmize.com](http://blishmize.com) and clicking on the "Market Program" tab. Customized SmartBooks are available to view online beginning Feb. 6.

## Educational Opportunities

The Blish-Mize Buying Markets offer the perfect opportunity for you to advance your education in a variety of areas in the industry. Whether it's listening to expert speakers or hearing discussion among retailers in the seminars, there's something for everyone to learn.

At the Buying Market, hear from speakers who will cover topics such as product knowledge, training and succession planning.



Several speakers will host seminars at the Buying Market. Learn from these industry experts about a variety of hot topics, including succession planning and competing against online businesses.

**See us in Booth #471**

**Collections that coordinate with ease**

- El Dorado Family (Satin Nickel)
- Horizon 48" Ceiling Fan (Triple Mount - Satin Nickel)
- Cappuccino Vanity Top (Granite Finish)
- Greystone Handleset (Satin Nickel)
- St. Regis Vanity (Espresso)
- Monterey Bay Bath Hardware (Satin Nickel)
- Single Handle Faucet (With Magnetic Sprayer - Satin Nickel)
- Cabinet Hardware (Satin Nickel)

**"With Hardware House Products ... It's in the house."**



## Learning Opportunities

Besides being the place to find new products and good deals, the Blish-Mize Spring Buying Market offers the perfect opportunity for you to take home some business lessons that can help you grow and improve your business. Don't miss these seminars:

### “Grow Your Lawn and Garden Sales Product and Retailing Training”

**10:30 a.m. Friday, March 17**

Representatives from lawn and garden distributor BWI will share some insights on what retailers can do to increase product knowledge—and sales—in the lawn and garden category.

### “Assuming the Successful Continuation of Your Family Business”

**1:30 p.m. Friday, March 17**

What will happen to your business when you retire? Leon Resnick of Resnick Associates, a business succession firm, will share with retailers what steps

to take now to ensure your business successfully moves on to the next generation when you decide it's time to take a step back.

### “The Amazon Effect: How Amazon Changed Retailing and How You Can Respond”

**3:30 p.m. Friday, March 17**

From its ability to send the products directly to doorsteps to the multitude of programs it offers, Amazon has changed the face of retailing. NRHA's Dan Tratensek will offer advice on how independent retailers can compete against the online giant.

### “From Good to Great: 10 Easy Things You Can Do to Take Your Business to the Next Level”

**7:30 a.m. Saturday, March 18**

Looking for a few quick ways to take your business up a notch? Join NRHA's Dan Tratensek and learn about 10 small steps that can make a big impact.



## Innovative New Products Now Available at DAP!



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dap.com



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# 7 Easy Tips to Creating Your Own Luck

## Blish-Mize Is Here To Help You Seize Your Chances

**B**uilding a successful business doesn't happen overnight, and for most retailers, it doesn't happen alone.

As independent business owners, you know about hard work. Since the Spring Buying Market falls on St. Patrick's Day, we compiled some ideas that may bring luck to you and your business.

### 1. Attend Blish-Mize Buying Markets.

Offering your customers the latest products and staying up-to-date on trends is an important part of building your business. Blish-Mize Buying Markets bring these product and merchandising ideas to you. Visit the Sales Booth at the Spring Buying Market for a wealth of information on topics like advertising services, remote ordering devices, store design and merchandising, and more.

### 2. Engage with your community.

Your customers come back to you because you are the expert on all their home improvement needs. Find additional ways to put your company at the forefront when your customers think of community. Host town events, connect with local scout troops or Boys and Girls clubs on service projects, or create workshops for your retail customers to develop new home improvement skills.



### 3. Connect with other retailers.

You never know what skills or knowledge are in the store in the next town over. The independent hardware retail market is made stronger by independents who work together to build each other up. The Spring Buying Market is a great opportunity to connect with other Blish-Mize Retailers to discuss Industry Best Practices and share success stories.

### 4. Empower your staff.

A business is only as strong as its staff is knowledgeable. From day one, be sure to arm your staff with the industry knowledge they need to help customers that come in to your store, and build the store's reputation as the place to go for expert knowledge. Each position should have a set job description, and make sure all employees are fully aware of their responsibilities and expectations.



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From the first board you brush to the last, you'll find it's surprisingly simple to protect and beautify your deck, fence, patio furniture and more. *Flood* provides a broad range of quality woodcare prep and finishing products for deck, fence and siding projects. [flood.com](http://flood.com)



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*Homax* products have been providing home improvement solutions for Professional Contractors and Do-It-Yourselfers for more than 25 years. Our extensive line of innovative products make complicated, time-consuming projects faster and easier without compromising results. [homaxproducts.com](http://homaxproducts.com)

## 5. Connect with your Blish-Mize account representative.

Regular meetings and conversations are essential to making sure Blish-Mize continues to meet your needs and ensure you have the latest products available for your customers. The Buying Market is an opportune time to meet up with your sales representative to view new products and discuss new categories in person, as well as ask any questions about product offerings or explore a new niche.

## 6. Stay on top of your inventory.

Regularly check your inventory system for dead items, and consider different ways to move products out of the store. If a product



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Needs to be  
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# Visit Us At Booth 156

## Gaco Western

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isn't moving, seek out opportunities to donate the inventory to home improvement charities or local programs that are in need. Be sure to visit THE 24 at the Spring Buying Market to find some deep discounts from various manufacturers across multiple categories, and check out the What's New? section at the Buying Market to see a selection of new products and displays you can try in your store.

### 7. Follow your instincts.

You created your store through plenty of hard work and expert knowledge. While some circumstances may come to us through chance, there is nothing that comes through luck alone. Use your expertise and that of the successful players around you to help you steer your course. Register now to receive your Blish-Mize SmartBook before attending the Spring Buying Market in March. The SmartBook includes your purchase history out of warehouse from the past 12 months and ordering amounts over the next three and next six months, and will allow you to have the data you need to make the right purchases for your business.

## BLISH MIZE SPRING MARKET MARCH 17TH-18TH 2017

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# Building a Web of Inspiration

Stay Tuned In Online to Support Customers at Every DIY Turn

**T**he DIY movement has exploded in recent years, thanks in part to decor and craft inspiration blogs and social media sites.

Hardware retailers should take cues from these sources to stay informed of DIY trends and to be your customers' go-to resource for the tools and items they need for any DIY project.

## Pinterest

It's first on this list because it's most likely the first place DIYers will look to get inspired. Take advantage of the "Pinterest Effect" by highlighting a Pin of the Week on an endcap or another prominent space in your store. Search each store department on the site to see what people are pinning when it comes to lawn and garden, paint and sundries or power tools. See what suggested searches come up to discover what other pinners look for when searching for ideas in that department. Encourage customers to follow your account on Pinterest and be sure to regularly share the latest DIY trends. Consider offering a discount to customers who show you they follow your page.

## Instagram

Join this picture- and video-sharing platform to have a hand in creating DIY trends. Engage with your customers who come in looking for the supplies they need for their projects, and ask to take a photo of them with their purchases. Be sure to follow and tag them in the photo, and ask



*PlanItDIY is one of several websites that showcases a variety of home improvement projects. It includes how-to videos and blog posts to provide DIYers with inspiration.*

them to tag your store in the final product. If you offer workshops or have a DIYer on staff, put together short videos or a photo series to share projects from start to finish. Keep a cheat sheet of the products used for the project so your staff can easily locate all of the items for customers who come in wanting to replicate the project.

## PlanItDIY

This inspiration and how-to website sponsored by the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) is full of DIY projects presented in blog posts and how-to videos by industry experts. Consider creating a media station by providing a tablet or computer in your store for customers to easily access the how-to videos, which cover projects like how to choose the right sander or how to replace a light fixture. Each video directs readers to connect with their local independent hardware retailer to find the

tools and knowledge they need, so your customers will already be in the right place to accomplish their task.

## DIY.org

Engage the next generation of DIYers and independent hardware store customers. DIY.org is an online community focused on encouraging kids (of all ages) to discover new skills and learn what they like to do, from painting and Claymation to app development and videography. While some of these projects fall outside the scope of what a hardware store can offer, take some inspiration from what the space itself offers to kids. A similar space could be implemented in your store as part of a rewards program just for kids or as part of a monthly kids' workshop. Consider building a family-oriented creation space in your store, and have a project of the week set up for kids to work on while their parents are shopping.

# BRAND POWER YOU WON'T FIND ANYWHERE ELSE.

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Visit us at booth #151

# Everything You Need

## Central States Offers a Variety of Metal Roofing Products

**A**s metal roofing continues to gain popularity for a variety of applications, there is a significant opportunity for retailers to supply this growing market.

Thanks to a partnership between Blish-Mize and Central States Manufacturing, there is an easy way for you to expand in this lucrative business. And, if you are already serving this market, it's easier than ever to get all the supplies your customers need, from one reliable source.

Central States Manufacturing, a leading supplier of metal building components, including both roofing and wall panels, partnered with Blish-Mize in 2010 to serve as a one-stop resource for retailers looking for metal building products for use in the agricultural, commercial, residential and industrial markets.

The Arkansas-based company can provide Blish-Mize customers with a complete range of products that are specific to certain projects, or a wide variety of some of the most popular items their customers will need.

"We sell a lot of metal building components to a lot of different customers who work with Blish-Mize, including lumberyards and hardware stores," says Bill Burke, national sales manager with Central States Manufacturing. "These stores may be looking for materials that are very job-specific, and we can work directly with the store to make and sell exactly what they're looking for.

"Many of Blish-Mize's customers may need materials for traditional pole

barns or cattle barns," he says. "They may be doing residential roofing or more agriculturally based projects. In any instance, we've got them covered. We offer a broad array of products to take care of their needs."

Central States Manufacturing offers premium products that ensure you are offering your customers the highest-quality supplies. For example, Central States' metal roofing products are made of dent- and fade-resistant steel that's rust-blocking.

"We know our materials can withstand any elements or factors, whether it's hail or anything else that can happen," Burke says.

Central States works to provide the same high levels of products and customer service that Blish-Mize provides its customers.

"We try to mimic what Blish-Mize does," he says. "We provide great service, and that's something Blish-Mize

has always been known for. They sell premium products and have helpful sales representatives who are easy to work with. We strive to do the same things."

Burke says he especially enjoys working with Blish-Mize and its customers because of the integrity of the people he works with.

"Our Blish-Mize customers are often some of the most trusted people in their towns," he says. "When a homeowner goes in to their local lumberyard or home center to ask advice about fixing something in their home, they put their trust in the retailer. For us, that's one of the great things about partnering with Blish-Mize—the customers are wonderful people, and their integrity is just tops."

If you're interested in learning more how Central States Manufacturing can help you, contact your Blish-Mize sales representative, visit [centralstatesmfg.com](http://centralstatesmfg.com) or reach out to Bill Burke directly at 618-530-5947.





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# Don't Miss These New Hardware House Products

See Updates to Lighting, Bath Hardware and More



*The El Dorado line of lighting is a new lighting family from Hardware House that comes in ebony glaze and satin nickel finishes.*

**A**t Blish-Mize, the Hardware House team never stops looking for ways to help retailers expand their offerings and differentiate their assortments with high-quality products.

The team has been particularly busy over the last year, rolling out a variety of new products, including new lighting families, new bath hardware and more. To help keep you aware of some of the most recent additions to the Hardware House lines, we talked with Wayne Lueckenhoff, vice president—purchasing and Hardware House merchandise manager, and merchandising assistant Sara Rebant.

Want to learn more? Make sure to check out the Hardware House display of products at the Blish-Mize Spring

Buying Market, or look online at [hardware-house.com](http://hardware-house.com).

## Lighting Families

“One of the newest lighting families is the El Dorado, which is available in a stylish new finish called ebony glaze,” says Rebant. “It’s a fun, shiny color that has become quite popular. It looks like a black stainless steel. The El Dorado products are also available in a standard satin nickel finish. We also have a Lexington series of lighting, which includes additional finish selections

like oil-rubbed bronze and satin nickel, and the Avalon series, which comes in a chrome finish. The Galveston series features a black finish.”

### Ceiling Fans

“We have some new ceiling fans, including the River Chase and Horizon models,” says Rebant. “The River Chase features a round globe and is nothing like I’ve ever seen before. The Horizon has more of an industrial look everyone’s going for. It has square blades. The Santa Fe is more rustic and fits well in a room that’s designed in the popular farmhouse style.”

**“We’ve noticed a lot of consumers leaning toward that look with the Waverly and St. Regis designs. This darker wood can be very versatile, because if you have espresso furniture, you can decorate with lighter colors or even darker grays.”**

**—Wayne Lueckenhoff, vice president—purchasing & Hardware House merchandise manager**

### Bath Hardware

“We have added two new families in bath hardware: the Monterey Bay and the Santa Rosa collections,” Lueckenhoff says. “These are more modern styles that have been updated. Monterey Bay is a square style, while Santa Rosa is more rounded. There are chrome, satin nickel and classic bronze finishes.”

### Vanities

“We have five new vanities,” says Lueckenhoff. “The Waverly has an open bottom with a shelf. You can roll up towels or put baskets in there. These are designs that are becoming more and more popular.

It has two working drawers and three false top drawers, as well as a matching mirror. The Savannah style offers drawers on either the left or right side, covering a request we often get. That was a big question we’d gotten—can the drawers be on both sides? The St. Regis style has two finishes: espresso and tobacco. It’s a simple and classic design with a pedestal-style bottom. The Brookville comes in honey birch, and the Westport goes toward a more rustic feel and comes in warm walnut. It has interesting handles—they are very ornate. We also have a vanity mirror collection that matches all colors of the new vanities.”

### Trends

“The ebony glaze color, which is kind of like a black stainless steel look, is really hot right now, and so is the espresso—a much darker color of wood,” says Lueckenhoff. “We’ve noticed a lot of consumers leaning toward that look with the Waverly and St. Regis designs. This darker wood can be very versatile, because if you have espresso furniture, you can decorate with lighter colors or even darker grays. There are many decorating possibilities, and people like that.”



*The Waverly vanity in espresso is a popular choice for many consumers who are upgrading their bathrooms.*



*The espresso color (above, in the St. Regis design) is a favorite, as it's versatile to use when decorating.*

# Finding Some Quick Wins

## Put These Ideas to Work for Fast Returns

**W**ith spring just around the corner, the home improvement busy season is fast approaching.

You can hone in on big business development opportunities in marketing and advertising, merchandising and sales, and finding and retaining good employees. To do so, try implementing some—or all—of these ideas now to keep the traffic up throughout the year.

### Marketing and Advertising Get Social

If you don't already have a presence on social media, you're missing out on a big advertising opportunity. Social media doesn't need to take up a lot of your time, but your presence should be regular and consistent. Assign a specific person who can professionally manage your social media accounts and promote seasonal sales and events. Stay on top of guest comments and engage with them, especially concerning negative feedback.

### Neighborly Greetings

When a person changes their address with the U.S. Postal Service, they receive discounts for big-box stores in their change of address confirmation packet. Be sure your store gets to these newcomers, too, as well as established homeowners in the area. Include coupons in community mailers to remind them your store is prepared to help with any home improvement project.

### Friends & Family

Several times throughout the year, some retail stores promote a Friends & Family sale, which is when all shoppers receive



the employee discount on their purchases. Spring is a great time of year to create this sense of community at your store. Bill your spring cleaning or summer prep sale as a friends and family event, or, throughout the season, mark an item or a department on sale at the employee discount rate.

### Merchandising and Sales Everything Must Go

DIYers are creating with just about everything these days, so make it easy for them to find everything they need at your store. A recent shabby-chic trend is to build furniture out of used pallets.



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If you have pallets you plan to throw out anyway, put them on the salesfloor instead. Display them outside with your lawn and garden products, or merchandise them with your paint to get people thinking about their unlimited uses.

### Matchy-Matchy

Big-box retailers are known for their willingness to price match, and sometimes that's all it takes to get return customers. Study the ads for your local competition, and put up signage to let customers know you price match.

### Everything in One Basket

To track sales, encourage employees to walk the aisles and hand out baskets to shoppers. During high-traffic times, station an employee at the front of the store to greet customers and hand



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out baskets. Compare average ticket sales between shoppers who were handed baskets and those who weren't to see the difference.

#### Working Toward a Goal

At the start of the day, or even the week, alert employees to daily sales goals. Keep the goal in a prominent place in the break room or at checkout.

**Before you bring on seasonal help for the busy seasons, distribute employee surveys to get their take on how the store could benefit from any additional staffing.**

Compare traffic and sales to the same day the previous year and the same day of the week from the previous week. Establish an average ticket sale goal and an overall daily goal for employees to keep in mind as they help customers.

#### Hiring Good Employees

##### Survey Says

Encouraging open and honest dialogue with your employees goes a long way in cementing employee loyalty. Before you bring on seasonal help for the busy seasons, distribute employee surveys to get their take on how the store could benefit from any additional staffing. Let your employees know their feedback is taken very seriously and is used to evaluate and improve the work environment, as well as any store processes and procedures that are in place.

#### Off to a Good Start

Meeting regularly with your team sets everyone up for success and starts the day off on the right foot. Have a morning huddle every day or every week, and communicate sales goals and any special events or promotions. Be sure to ask if anyone has any questions, and encourage open discussion of any challenges or issues that aren't personnel-related.

#### Right on Schedule

Analyzing your payroll and scheduling processes can be a big time and money saver. When developing a new schedule, refer to the same week from the previous year, and be sure to schedule labor based on sales per hour. Make sure to accommodate breaks as well, and keep in mind any events or holidays that may affect the traffic in your area.

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# How Do You Go to Market?

George Washington and Abraham Lincoln were two historical figures featured at the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market. Here, they are pictured with Terry Mills of Mills Hardware and his two granddaughters. Mills, who is the owner of Mills Hardware in Arnold, Nebraska, says he goes to all the Blish-Mize Buying Markets, and that the visits are a family affair. “We always find good values at the Markets. We never go home empty-handed. And my granddaughters always enjoy coming with us, too.”



From left: George Washington, Abraham Lincoln, Terry Mills, Mills' granddaughter Lorelei and Mills' granddaughter Zeva at the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market last September.

## Blish-Mize is Listening!

We reached out to YOU, our customer, to get some feedback about what you like, and what else you're looking for, with our communication methods, including this publication, *Strategies*, and our website, blishmize.com.

Well, we've heard what you said, and we are responding to your comments and requests. For example, you said you wanted to learn more about new products, so we've added a New Products section to this magazine. Find it on Page 18. And we're continuing to provide more of your favorite types of features, including customer profiles, where you can learn about other Blish-Mize customers and their businesses, and industry trends, where you can find out what's popular in the industry and how you can use it to increase your bottom line.

Stay tuned for more changes to come, and feel free to reach out to us at any time.

If you ever have any comments or suggestions regarding *Strategies* or other Blish-Mize communication pieces, please feel free to reach out to Communications Director Blish Connor at blish.connor@blishmize.com.

## Getting Ready to Ride the Next Economic Wave

By Ed Freiermuth

Our new political leadership has begun to actively implement its plans, strategies and policies to expand the economy and “Make America Great Again.”

It remains to be seen if the action steps will produce sustainable growth of the GDP. However, after almost a decade of little or no expansion in the U.S. economy, the new efforts are likely to stimulate growth in many sectors.

So, I believe the time has come for small- and medium-sized businesses to begin thinking about ways to participate in a growing economy.

The first step is to do a fresh analysis of your business to confirm your balance sheet and income statement are both in good condition.

If they are, it's time to step on the accelerator—but not yet pedal-to-the-metal. However, you can get started by trying a few of the following upgrades or investments in your business:

- Human resources, particularly sales experience in your line of business.

- Enhanced IT capabilities to improve performance/internal controls.
- Additional business with existing customers.
- New or improved products.
- New or additional sources of bank credit or equipment financing.
- Opportunities to acquire financially challenged businesses in your industry.

Below are a few more actionable steps you can try:

- Establish a budget for the next 12 months, and reward employees with cash bonuses if their performance exceeds the budget.
- Ease up on tight controls over operating costs and expenses that have a direct impact on increasing sales.
- Prepare a marketing plan and create a stronger, more highly motivated sales force.
- Train operating personnel so you and your staff can offer high-level customer service that will exceed your customers' expectations.

*Continued on Page 42*





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*Continued from Page 40*

In sum, it's not quite time to become bullish on America yet, but it is time for business owners to become cautiously optimistic about the future and begin thinking of ways to participate in a faster-growing economy.



*Ed Freiermuth is a respected member of the Blish-Mize Company Board of Directors who has more than 40 years of experience in financing and advising small, medium-sized and large businesses. He has worked with the CEOs and other senior managers of hundreds of businesses, dealing with significant financial challenges or taking advantage of great business opportunities. Freiermuth is also the author of two books on business management: "Life After Debt" and "Turnaround: Avoid Bankruptcy."*

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