

HARDLINES **Blish·Mize** Strategies

DISTRIBUTING RETAIL PROFITABILITY

FALL 2016, VOL. 16, 2



Ready for Business

Colorado Retailer Remodels,
Expands Product Selection

Page 8

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I'm proud that, as an American citizen, I can exercise my right to vote and choose our government leaders—and especially this year, as we choose the next President of the United States.

As a small business owner, you know you have the right to choose your supplier and business partner. Blish-Mize strives to provide the best services and quality products to make you successful. We are proud to be your winning candidate!

In this issue of *Strategies*, we'll visit a few of our customers who have chosen Blish-Mize as their supplier of choice. Roaring Fork Valley Co-op, on our cover, has been a customer of ours for more than 30 years. We've had a strong relationship and we recently helped them through a big step—a major remodel. Their story is all about all-American success. Check it out on Page 8.

We also feature BES Supply Store, on Page 12, which is surviving in a tough economy. Their story talks about the importance of diversification and is filled with all-American inspiration and ingenuity!

And Kingman Lumber, on Page 18, is the story of a customer that returned to us after exploring business with another distributor. Find out why they made the decision to come home.

Be sure to read about the updates to our transportation services and the new look and services of our website. Here at Blish-Mize, we strive to make doing business with us easy, and we work efficiently to bring you success in your business.

As you plan your trip to our Fall Buying Market, we hope you take advantage of everything we offer during the market weekend. We work very hard to provide you with a first-class buying and educational event.

Your vote counts at Blish-Mize, so let us know what else we can do to make your Buying Market more profitable for your store. In this issue, you'll find a survey where you can provide feedback about the market and about this publication. We want to hear more from you—what are your favorite parts of the Buying Market? What would you like to see covered in *Strategies*? Fill out this card, turn it in at the market.

Or, if you'd prefer to complete the survey online, you can do so at www.blishmize.com/survey. Anyone who completes the survey will be entered to win one of two \$50 gas cards.

Exciting times are ahead for your business and our nation. We look forward to seeing you at the Buying Market in September.

Jonathan D. Mize
CEO and President

HARDLINES Strategies

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On the Cover:

Baldo Barragan of Roaring Fork Valley Co-op in Carbondale, Colorado, recently completed a store remodel and updated the store's inventory selection.

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A New Partnership in Outdoor Living

DDI Offers Opportunity to Bring More Products to Your Store



DDI Inc. is based in Dubuque, Iowa, and its new partnership with Blish-Mize allows retailers to purchase more products than ever in the lawn and garden/outdoor living category. Groups can work together to meet minimums and order a variety of products from a number of countries.

As an independent retailer, you may have wished at times that you could purchase particular products but have been unable to do so, because the required product minimums were more than you needed for your store.

But thanks to Blish-Mize's recent partnership with DDI Inc., you now have the power to buy those very products in the lucrative lawn and garden/outdoor living category!

DDI Inc. is a Dubuque, Iowa-based import/export company that specializes in developing custom programs for retail groups and distributors. With this partnership, Blish-Mize retailers now have access to a variety of lawn and garden and outdoor living products.

Wayne Lueckenhoff, vice president of purchasing at Blish-Mize, and Steve Fishwild, senior account executive at DDI Inc., talk a little more about this new partnership and how it will benefit Blish-Mize customers.



Please share a little about the partnership between Blish-Mize and DDI Inc.

Wayne Lueckenhoff (WL):

It started in the spring of 2015. DDI approached Blish-Mize to offer us the ability to use them to purchase lawn and garden and outdoor living products. DDI is a container business, and it has allowed us the opportunity to service our retailers in unique categories. DDI offered us a large variety of products, including patio furniture, birdbaths, lawn ornaments and chimes. Blish-Mize had not had a source for those that would allow us to buy these products and keep our customers competitive, but now we do.

DDI offers a large variety of products from a number of countries. They consolidate all these products together

and mix the order in the container, so you don't have to buy just a container of patio furniture, for example. DDI lets us order a much larger number of products. The order minimums to customers are very small. They offer a good variety and great quality of products—I feel both of these are their strong points.

We had a successful first year with DDI, and we are looking to grow on that as we order product for 2017.



How does ordering through DDI Inc. work?

Steve Fishwild (SF):

We aren't a branded company. We like to partner with teams like Blish-Mize that can bring products in under their own umbrella. We bring a lot of imports from different manufacturers. A container of product is a standard import unit of measure—that's a lot of product for a 12,000- to 15,000-square-foot hardware store to order at one time. We are able to work with groups across the country to come together to cover minimums.

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Blish-Mize knows its retailers trust them to partner with a company who will do a good job and provide a needed service in an efficient and knowledgeable way. We are headquartered in the Midwest, just like Blish-Mize, and just like many of its retailers. A lot of times, an import organization is an overseas company with an office somewhere in the U.S. We are the opposite—we are headquartered here and have other offices around the world.

We hope to take this opportunity for more Blish-Mize retailers to be exposed to DDI and what we have to offer. We have around 1,200 active SKUs for this order cycle. Outdoor living is a fashion category, so products have a life cycle of three to five years. We like to stay in front of that with the right colors, models and sizes. There are some more traditional items, like black wrought-iron, that will never go away. Then there are the trendier items. For some reason, decorative chickens have become extremely popular. We have those in sizes from 8 inches tall to 8 feet tall.

What benefits will this partnership offer Blish-Mize customers?

SF: This is a seasonal program, so while a lot of independents are used to buying product as needed, if they can anticipate business just a bit, and order pre-season, we can provide them with a great level of savings. We offer a variety of product and our packaging is consistent, which allows retailers to build a full program, rather than just offering an item here or there. Being headquartered in the Midwest makes it easy to offer support. Blish-Mize has trusted us with their business, and we certainly want to provide their retailers with the quality and service they are used to. At DDI, we don't want to be known as the cheapest—we want to be known as the best.

When should customers place orders?

WL: This is a booking program, rather than our normal stocking process. Retailers order in advance—they are



Blish-Mize retailers can order outdoor living products in a variety of colors and styles.

ordering now for the 2017 season. The ordering deadline for the full selection of product is Aug. 10, allowing for February delivery to stores. However, we will have some select items still available to order at the Fall Buying Market. DDI items ordered at the show will have a slightly later ship date of March 2017. The limited number of items available at the market will include 30 or so of the best-selling SKUs. In the future, retailers can order from late June through early August for delivery the following year.

I would encourage our customers to come to the market and look at these products. It's good to touch and feel them to really understand the quality, and they can see the variety of product offered. Any retailers with specific questions can speak with their sales representatives.

Is there anything specific you'd suggest retailers keep in mind as they place their orders?

SF: It's important to keep up with the trends that are important to your customers, and this merchandise assortment can help you do that.

We have a breadth of product available to fit all retailers' needs. For example, in our patio furniture selection, we have 14 shades of tan for retailers to choose from. It's the most popular

color and probably always will be. However, we are seeing more gray in new construction, so we have a couple of shades of gray available as well.

Red is one of the most vibrant, actively selling colors in the market. However, we also offer navy blue and green, as a way to give our customers some flexibility. You can stay conservative, be neutral, go with a trend that's up-and-coming—whatever you'd prefer. We don't want to dictate what our customers do; we want to support them in what they do.

As customers place their orders, we would remind them to think about how long their selling seasons are. The customer in Texas may need something in January that a customer in Nebraska won't need until later in the spring.

Our orders are a one-shot deal, so it's important for retailers to think about how long their seasons are and order accordingly. Take notes for the next year, too—if you were sold out of hammocks by Father's Day, you may need to order more next time. If your last cooler sale was around Labor Day, you probably planned pretty well. Bring your sales history to the market, and we can help you determine how much of a certain line you might want to order.



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Roaring Fork Valley Co-op Still Evolving After 60 Years

Whether it is the owner of one of the area's large ranches or just a hobby farmer tending to a handful of chickens, the customers coming into Roaring Fork Valley Co-op are sure to find everything they could want.

Located in the rural community of Carbondale, Colorado, Roaring Fork's management team has positioned the business as the place to go for residents' hardware and farming needs.

The team further solidified this position recently when they decided to undertake a major remodeling project that would usher in a new era for the co-op, which has been serving the community for more than 60 years.

A Farm-Friendly Operation

The idyllic town of Carbondale is located about 30 miles outside of Aspen and traces its emergence back to the gold rush days of the 19th century. Back then, the town served as a central point for the area's sheep ranchers and potato farmers.

Today, this rich agricultural tradition is still evident in Carbondale and, though the demographics have changed throughout the years, Roaring Fork Valley Co-op still counts ranchers and farmers among its primary customers.

To meet the needs of these shoppers, the store stocks a little bit of everything from across all the core hardware categories, as well as equine products, lawn and garden items, apparel, and an extensive selection of pet products.



Roaring Fork Valley Co-op in Carbondale, Colorado, has worked with Blish-Mize for more than 30 years. The Roaring Fork staff recently completed a store remodel, with help from Blish-Mize.



The remodel to Roaring Fork Valley Co-op included shifting departments and bringing in new products. The Roaring Fork and Blish-Mize teams did the work in stages, and the store stayed open throughout the process.

The co-op also features a gas station and convenience store, making it a one-stop shop for visitors.

A true co-op, consumers don't need to be members to shop at Roaring Fork, but for just \$25, they can purchase a lifetime membership that entitles them to share in patronage dividends.

These dividends are derived, at least in part, from the continued ability of the store to be competitive and attract customers. The desire to meet customers' needs was the major impetus behind the decision to remodel the location, according to Baldo Barragan, store manager.

New Look, New Products

The remodel to Roaring Fork began a few years ago, with updates to the co-op's electrical and computer systems and repaving the store's parking lot.

While these first steps in the process weren't necessarily the most noticeable

to customers, they made a big difference in the co-op's ability to operate efficiently.

With improvements made to the business' infrastructure, the remodel quickly turned to the salesfloor.

Inside, Barragan and his team shifted around some of the departments, brought in plenty of new products and added the convenience store.

"We brought in more new items in hardware, too," says Barragan. "We got two new front counters, and we brought in new lines, like Milwaukee power tools. That line has been a good seller."

When it came to updating and enhancing assortments, the Roaring Fork team also relied on help from Blish-Mize, which sent a team to spend a week helping remerchandise the store.

After moving all the old merchandise to the warehouse located behind the store, the team installed new fixtures that would accommodate the enhanced product selection.

Blish-Mize sales representative Denver Randol, who helped with the remodeling project, says it was a challenge to keep the store open during construction, but the Roaring Fork staff managed.

"They had to do the work in stages," Randol says. "They did all this work while the store stayed open."

Barragan says he appreciates the help he and the rest of his staff received from Blish-Mize throughout the process.

"They helped with everything," he says. "I was very grateful; it was exhausting."

While Barragan admits there was a bit of an adjustment period for some of the co-op's longtime customers, he credits his staff with helping ease shoppers through any potential growing pains. "We have quite a few people on the floor who can take our customers where they need to go," he says.

One of the most noticeable additions that came about during the remodel was the convenience store. This unique area

helps draw customers to the rest of the operation and includes booth seating; a soda machine for fountain drinks; and refrigerated displays of sandwiches, snacks, and more.

Barragan says they've offered free coffee at the business for some time, so when the remodel came up, they chose to really expand on this idea and add an area for

“I can always find products I need at really good prices at the markets. We are always looking for new products to bring in to the store, too.”

**—Baldo Barragan,
store manager**

customers to sit and have not only the coffee, but other food and drinks.

“Along with free coffee, we sell fountain drinks, doughnuts and other snacks,” he says.

Long-Time Teammates

The remodel was far from the first time the Roaring Fork crew has teamed up with Blish-Mize on a project. In fact, Roaring Fork Valley Co-op has been doing business with Blish-Mize for more than 30 years.

Barragan says the company's relationship with Blish-Mize helps the co-op stay competitive, especially in a market with quite a few price-sensitive customers. While Roaring Fork is more than 20 miles from the nearest big box, Barragan points out that he still needs to make sure his prices are on par with any competitor, and he can rely on Blish-Mize to help.

“They give us great prices,” Barragan says. “I can call Denver (Randol)

at any time. He helps me a lot with all kinds of things.”

Barragan also says he attends every Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market to take advantage of the special market-only deals, and also to see what's new.

“I can always find products I need at really good prices at the markets,” he says. “We are always looking for new products to bring in to the store, too. It's always a challenge to find that next new product that will be a hit with your customers. It's important to know your customers and know what they might be looking for, or what they might like.”

And just as Barragan enjoys working with Blish-Mize, Randol and the Blish-Mize team appreciate their relationship with Roaring Fork.

“This store is the centerpiece of Carbondale,” says Randol. “I'm looking forward to many more years of working together.”



The convenience area was added during the remodel and includes fountain drinks and refrigerated displays for sandwiches, snacks and more.

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Display**

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A Little Bit of Everything

Blish-Mize Helps New Mexico Retailer Diversify

Like many businesses that service customers in the oil industry, the team at BES Supply Store in Carlsbad, New Mexico, has learned to take the good with the bad.

Boom times for the nearby oil companies translate to increased traffic at the store as employees stock up on supplies. During times when the oil industry is struggling, however, the team at BES, which also has a second store in Artesia, New Mexico, about 40 miles away, has had to develop strategies to keep the registers ringing. In large part, this answer has come through diversification of the store's product mix—a solution made much easier because of its relationship with Blish-Mize.

A Plan for Diversification

Within BES Supply Store's 18,000-square-foot salesfloor, customers can find thousands of SKUs covering just about every category. This broad array of merchandise is all part of management's plan for diversification.

With the volatility of dealing with oil companies, purchasing manager Robert Baze and store manager Anne Shoemaker say they have to stay on top of customers' wants and needs to continue to compete. Sometimes this means special ordering products, while other times, it means adding niches that help differentiate the store from the offerings of local competitors, like the nearby Walmart.

In fact, Baze says Walmart has even begun sending customers to BES Supply Store when they are looking for a specialized item.



Purchasing manager Robert Baze and store manager Anne Shoemaker rely on Blish-Mize to quickly and efficiently provide them with the products their customers are looking for.

The ability to offer customers a unique product selection, quick turnaround on special orders and competitive pricing are key reasons BES does business with Blish-Mize, a relationship that began seven years ago.

“They provide a quick turnaround for orders,” Baze says, “and you know when your order will arrive. And for things we don't have, I can check the Blish-Mize system, see that they have something, and get it here overnight.”

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Niche Opportunities

While BES is known for its service and selection of power tools, hand tools, safety supplies, and more, its strategy for diversification has prompted the addition of several niche lines that started as a way to drive footsteps to the store but has turned into adding more style and flair to its offering.

“Anne brought in some designer-brand jeans,” Baze says. “I wasn’t sure about it, but they are selling very well.”

“They are fashionable, and they are high dollar,” says Shoemaker. “And they are popular. Men really do care about style.”

They’ve also added other niches, ranging from an enhanced selection of Milwaukee tools to ice, and a variety of other products.

“Other people in town carry Milwaukee, but not the larger, more diversified selection we do,” says Baze. “And ice has been fantastic. Customers come in and get cases of water and two or three bags of ice on their way out the door.”

Finding New Ways to Serve Customers

While the addition of niches and expansion of product lines has helped smooth out some of the ups and downs caused by the oil industry, the store’s business from the oil fields certainly hasn’t gone away.

In the oil industry, safety is a must, and BES has positioned itself as the go-to source for safety supplies and gear. BES Supply Store sells safety signage, protective clothing, fire extinguishers and more.

Along with these safety supplies, the BES team also considers other product offerings that can help the oil crews run their operations more smoothly. For instance, the BES staff delivers several pallets of water each week to the workers in the fields. “That’s one more service we can offer,” says Shoemaker.

Reaching Out

In addition to seeking out ways to differentiate their store with the

products they offer, the BES Supply Store staff also thinks outside the box when it comes to merchandising and promotions.

“We are slowly theming our store,” Shoemaker says. “We’re embracing employees to help us merchandise in creative ways. We all have great ideas and work well together. It’s been fun.”

Developing unique displays catches customers’ eyes while they are in the store, but to keep the BES brand in front of customers throughout the year, the staff also engages in several unique promotions, including a monthly raffle.

Each month, the BES staff picks a seasonal item that corresponds to that month. Customers can enter a raffle to win this prize, and the store keeps them engaged and collects their information.

To further expand the reach of the business and to better service existing customers, BES launched



Pelican coolers are a popular seller at BES Supply Store, especially for those who work in the oil fields and need to keep drinks cool throughout the day.

DEWALT

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

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

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MARKET SHOW ORDER BONUS

FIRST 15 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,000 ORDER IN BLACK+DECKER AND 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.)



FIRST 5 CUSTOMERS TO PLACE A WAREHOUSE OR DROP SHIP \$1,500 ORDER IN BLACK+DECKER AND DEWALT OUTDOOR PRODUCTS

(ANY MIX. CAN BE PURCHASED IN MULTIPLE TRANSACTIONS.)

RECEIVE A DCR018 AND DCR006 AT NO CHARGE!

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



CUSTOMER PROFILE

an outside sales program about a year ago. According to Shoemaker, the program has worked out very well for the Carlsbad location, as well as BES's second location in Artesia.

While the outside sales staff keeps in touch with customers in the field, the BES team also takes care to listen to customers throughout the year in

“Most of the vendors at the shows have been there for some time, and we’ve built those relationships over the years.”

—Robert Baze, purchasing manager

any way they can. The team doesn't just listen to feedback; it responds with action.

The BES team recently decided to change store hours to better suit their customers' needs, based on feedback they had received. They even took accessibility one step further and added an after-hours number customers can call if they need something right away.

“When you’ve got someone in the oil field who needs something, they need it now,” says Shoemaker. “It’s an emergency, so we want to be available for them at any time.”

A Partner in Success

From the store's ability to offer unique niches, to quick turnaround on special orders, to competitive pricing, there are a lot of benefits BES's management team finds through their relationship with Blish-Mize.

One particular benefit both Baze and Shoemaker say they appreciate about working with Blish-Mize is the ability to control costs, especially when it comes to freight. “Freight is a huge issue around here,” says Baze. “We’re out in the middle of nowhere. It’s amazing what some companies may charge to get something here. Blish-Mize really helps us out.”

He also appreciates the customer service Blish-Mize provides and knows he can call any time, any day, and get quick answers to his questions.

Another big benefit—Buying Markets.

“I walk in knowing who I want to see first, and once I finish with those visits, I can wander the aisles and see what the new products are,” Baze says. “What’s nice is that most of the vendors at the shows have been there for some time, and we’ve built those relationships over the years.”



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He especially enjoys finding show specials. “It’s nice to be able to buy enough for several months at a time at a discount and have whatever we need in stock.”

The ability to find special discounts at Buying Markets is a major benefit for BES, but Blish-Mize also helps the operation keep its prices in line with competitors on a day-to-day basis.

Baze says he enjoys working with a company that has been around for many years, too, because he knows they have a strong history. “They’ve been around for more than 100 years. They know what they’re doing. They’re also friendly and helpful.

“Any time a question comes up, we call them, and they take care of it right away,” he says. “They follow up with us later, too. We really value our relationship with Blish-Mize and enjoy working with them.”



BES Supply Store makes the most of its space by stocking products on shelves outside the front of the store, under an overhang.



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Back in the Family

Kansas Retailer Converts Back to Blish-Mize

When it comes to making decisions, the staff at Kingman Lumber moves quickly.

For example, in November 2009, Mark and Irene Arensdorf, along with his nephew, Brian Arensdorf, and his wife, Diana, purchased one of two lumberyards in Kingman, Kansas. The following February, they decided to buy the second—Kingman Lumber—and consolidate the two.

By March 1, they had begun taking over the second business.

Last year, Mark and Irene's daughter, Ashlee Mertens, suggested they buy inventory from a feed store in town that was going out of business.

"We talked to the owner, and we were in full swing the next week," says Mertens, who also serves as Kingman Lumber's general manager. Her cousin, Colt Dodge, now runs the feed side of the business.

Given the family's track record, it should come as no surprise that, when they realized they had made a mistake after switching from Blish-Mize to another distributor, it didn't take them long to rectify this mistake and make the switch back.

Bigger Isn't Always Better

Kingman Lumber and General Store (the "General Store" moniker was added as a way to better incorporate the feed business into the store's name) is the only home improvement retailer in a town of about 4,000 people, which Mertens describes as "torn down and built back up again," because it has gone through a bit of an economic revitalization in recent years.



The store's look is ever-evolving, as the staff continually tries new merchandising techniques.

While the store sells a little bit of everything, the majority of its sales come from the LBM and feed departments, with paint, paint supplies, and plumbing not far behind.

Even though there isn't much competition in the immediate market, the team at Kingman isn't content to rest. Things are constantly changing at the store, says Mertens. "We are always in the middle of something. Years ago, my dad and Brian formed a construction business, Arensdorf Construction, that works closely with our lumberyard. My dad says he's going to slow down, but I don't think he ever will."

One of the biggest changes to Kingman Lumber came in early 2015. The management team was looking to possibly take the business in a different direction, and the family chose to start working with a different distributor.

"We signed our lives away to go with them," says Mertens. "We went to their

show and did the conversion probably six weeks later. By April, we had decided it wasn't the best fit for us, and started the conversion back to Blish-Mize."

"I felt like the sales rep [with the other distributor] was spread so far out across such a large area that I never saw him," she says. "We are a small-town lumberyard. We didn't want to be just a statistic or a number. It just wasn't the right fit."

However, she says Blish-Mize is just the fit her family's business wants and needs.

"Blish-Mize is geared toward businesses like mine, and they can offer more for our business," she says. "They had been our distributor for years, even before my parents bought the business. We knew it was time to make the switch back."

Two conversions in two months meant a busy spring for Kingman Lumber. But Mertens says everything went smoothly.

"It took about three weeks, from start to finish, for the Blish-Mize team to finish up

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CUSTOMER PROFILE

our conversion,” she says. “That included scheduling, meetings, everything. Blish-Mize did it all. They brought in their team and got everything re-stickered, all inventory put back in order. We were very pleased. We knew it would be a busy few weeks, and it was, but all went well.”

More Changes

With the big changes behind them, Mertens says the team is ready to take on the day-to-day changes still taking place.

Mertens says she and other staffers are constantly shifting around displays and trying new merchandising techniques.

The constant changes aren't surprising when you get to know the family, she says. “We are a one-speed family, for the most part. My dad; my sister, Kristen Friess; and me [who all work at the store] are always on the move. My mom, who also works here, occasionally tells us to slow down, but we can't.”

This constant motion led to another recent change, when Mertens arranged for Blish-Mize to deliver two truckloads of inventory each week, instead of just one, as they'd previously done.

“One truck was getting kind of limited,” she says. “Our business is growing, and we needed to do more. Adding that second truck has really helped with supply and demand.”

She says she appreciates that Blish-Mize offers strong customer service and keeps Kingman Lumber competitive in its pricing.

“Thanks to Blish-Mize, we are able to offer our customers quality products at fair prices,” she says. “They help us, a small business in a small town, to be more competitive. They offer great customer service as well. Our sales rep is great. I enjoy visiting with him, and any time I call and tell him what I need, he helps me out right away. We are a priority, not a number.”

She also appreciates help from Blish-Mize's IT department, who she called on several times during the conversion.

Mertens says she's looking forward to the future of the partnership between Kingman Lumber and Blish-Mize. “We really value our relationship with Blish-Mize and all they do for us.”



Kingman Lumber began stocking feed after the other feed store in town went out of business. Feed is now one of the store's strongest departments.

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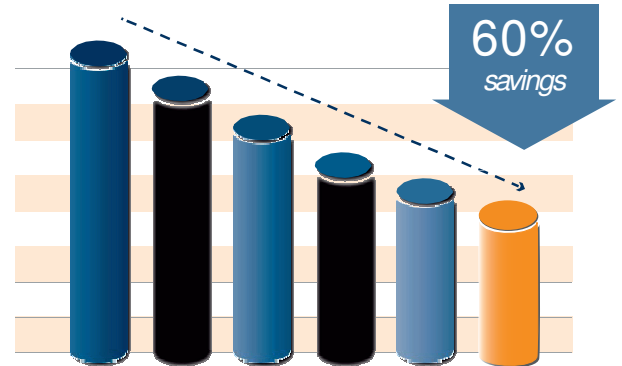
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LED vs. Fluorescent Lighting

LED Lighting	Fluorescent Lighting
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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

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Be Part of a Star-Spangled Celebration of Savings

Get Ready for the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market, Sept. 15-17

If you're feeling patriotic, it's time to pack your bags and head to the Blish-Mize Fall Buying Market, which will be held Sept. 15-17, at the Overland Park Convention Center.

With an American-inspired theme, this year's Fall Buying Market will serve up savings, new programs, educational opportunities and much more, according to Blish Connor, communications director.

"We are so excited for our Fall Buying Market," she says. "I think we have really worked hard to capture the American spirit with this show, and I'm looking forward to seeing everyone there. It's going to be a great weekend!"

As with past markets, Blish-Mize will showcase its most popular programs, such as Hardware House, alongside aisle after aisle of vendor displays and exciting new opportunities.

One popular area that will return to the Fall Buying Market is THE 24, which features a special selection of popular products offered at deep discounts.

"With the return of THE 24 and all the new items we will be showing, plus our seminar lineup and the chance for retailers to meet with their Blish-Mize representatives, this Buying Market is something you just can't miss," says Connor.

A Savings Revolution

Of course, one of the biggest draws at the Buying Market is the opportunity for big savings. But if you want some



There will be plenty of products and special pricing to check out at the Fall Buying Market, which will be held Sept. 15-17 in Overland Park, Kansas.

incredible deals, THE 24 is the place to find them.

This area, which debuted at the Spring Buying Market, will once again feature unbelievable deals on 24 popular items from various manufacturers and categories.

The savings on these items can be used to drive foot traffic with seasonal promotions, add profits to your bottom line, or pass along fantastic deals to your customers.

"After strong positive feedback at our Spring Buying Market, THE 24 is returning in the fall, and it will be even

more exciting than before," says Jason Drury, marketing director at Blish-Mize. "We will have great deals on some of our most popular products. Retailers will be able to find low, discount pricing on these products, so this is one area of the market they should definitely check out as soon as they arrive."

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.

Booth # 101

ABS DWV



INSERTS



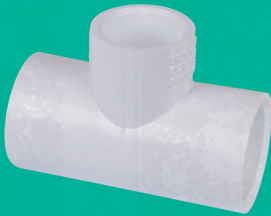
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These particular deals are available only at the Buying Market, so make sure to take advantage of this opportunity for big savings while you are shopping the market floor!

Cash Coupons

Another way to save big while at the Fall Buying Market is by taking advantage of the popular Cash Coupons. These Cash Coupons feature some of the Buying Market's most popular items. With each purchase you make of these key items, you'll be entered into drawings for cash and other prizes. You can find the coupons in your online or printed SmartBook.

Additional cash spiffs will be available on certain coupon items as well. Participating vendors will pay the cash spiff when you place your order at their booth. To learn more, refer to your SmartBook, or go online to www.blishmize.com.

More Can't-Miss Areas

In addition to the special deals you'll find throughout the market, there are plenty of other areas you'll want to make sure to see. One of these will be the Hardware House display, which will showcase new additions to Blish-Mize's private label line, including ceiling fans, lighting, vanities and decorative bath hardware. These products provide new opportunities for you to enhance your assortments with high-quality items that help differentiate your selection from the competition.

And, if you are on the hunt for even more new items to bring back to your customers, make sure you check out the New Items area, which will be brimming with the latest additions to Blish-Mize's offerings.

Shop Smart with the SmartBook

There's obviously a lot to see at the Fall Buying Market, so you want to make

sure you are prepared to get the most out of your trip. The best way to do this is by utilizing your customized SmartBook.

The SmartBook, which is available both in print and online, is created just for your operation and includes your past 12 months' history of purchases out of warehouse, as well as ordering amounts over the next three months, and the next six months, to help you better plan your purchases. SmartBooks will start shipping Aug. 10. If you haven't yet registered to receive yours, do so right away so you can start planning your market trip.

"If you use the SmartBook ahead of time to help you plan your purchases, it will save you time when ordering at the market, and will give you more time to see new items, network with other retailers, and take advantage of other educational opportunities," says Clay Uhrmacher, vice president of sales and marketing at Blish-Mize.

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Bright orange or bright orange with blue tracer



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Blish-Mize Fall 2016 Market Schedule of Events

Thursday, September 15, 2016

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m. Paint training meetings with Valspar and Pratt & Lambert for paint stocking customers, and prospective paint customers

Friday, September 16, 2016

8:00 a.m.-8:30 a.m. Customer appreciation coffee and Krispy Kreme donuts. Connect with your salesperson; strategize your market experience

8:30 a.m. Market Opens

9:45 a.m. "A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends" Presented by NRHA's Dan Tratensek

12:00 p.m. Lunch

3:30 p.m. "Powerful Methods That Can Change Your Business! Learn how the Blish-Mize Online Advertising Studio Can Bring Efficiency to Ad Building"

5:30 p.m. Market Closes

5:30 p.m. Boulevard Beer Tasting

6:00 p.m. Customer appreciation BBQ, cash prize giveaways and a performance by The American Legion Band of Greater Kansas City!

Saturday, September 17, 2016

7:30 a.m.-8:30 a.m. . . Customer appreciation coffee and Krispy Kreme donuts. Connect with our leadership team, IT department, and customer service reps

8:00 a.m. Market Opens

9:00 a.m. "A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends" Presented by NRHA's Dan Tratensek

11:00 p.m.-12:00 p.m. All-American Brunch

12:30 p.m. "Powerful Methods That Can Change Your Business! Learn how the Blish-Mize Online Advertising Studio Can Bring Efficiency to Ad Building"

2:45 p.m. Cash and prize giveaways!

3:00 p.m. Market Closes



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Discover What's New

Along with all of the products and deals you will be able to see at the Fall Buying Market, Blish-Mize will feature a variety of retail services that you can utilize to help better run your business. The Buying Markets offer the perfect opportunity to talk with Blish-Mize team members about how these services might be right for your company. At the market, the Sales Booth will serve as the central location for attendees to get all the answers to questions they might have about the Blish-Mize retail services offering.

Learning Opportunities

While there are plenty of deals, products and programs to discover at the market, it is also a great time to network with other retailers and learn from industry experts about the latest in retail trends.

Sales Booth

If you need help with your advertising, website, signage or another related service, visit the Sales Booth. Staff at the Sales Booth can offer information on 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
- PartScripton Parts Program
- Warren Automotive
- Store Design & Merchandising
- Demographic Information



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"With Hardware House Products It's in the House"

Check Out These Can't-Miss Learning Opportunities

Paint Training

4:00 p.m.-7:00 p.m., Thursday, Sept. 15

Join experts from two of Blish-Mize's key paint vendors, Pratt & Lambert and Valspar, as they provide hands-on training sessions to existing and prospective Blish-Mize paint customers. Paint personnel from these stores are invited to attend.

There will be two separate meetings during this time, and beverages and heavy hors d'oeuvres will be served. Learn how to increase paint sales by attending this event! Please register for paint training at www.blishmize.com.

"A Look at Leading Edge Home Improvement Retail Trends"

9:45 a.m. Friday, Sept. 16

9:00 a.m. Saturday, Sept. 17

This seminar, presented by Dan Tratensek of the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA), will take

a look at what trends are currently leading the home improvement industry and how you can embrace and showcase these trends and use them to add to your bottom line. Be prepared for the future of retail!

"With the retail landscape changing so rapidly, it's vitally important for retailers to stay up to date on the latest trends and understand what leading-edge retail companies are doing to drive sales and keep customers satisfied," says Tratensek.

"Increase Sales With Effective Advertising"

3:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16

12:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 17

Jody Maude from Distribution America will discuss the different advertising tools available to retailers, including the Blish-Mize Online Ad Studio, which saves you time and money and makes advertising an essential workhorse for your business.



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There will once again be multiple educational opportunities at the Fall Buying Market, including presentations from representatives of the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) and Distribution America. Learn more on Page 27.

What Do You Think?

Blish-Mize wants to hear from you! We'd like your feedback on how well we are serving you through our Buying Markets, electronic communications, *Strategies* magazine and more. A survey card is available in this issue of *Strategies*. Simply fill it out and drop it off at the Registration Desk at the market. Or, if you'd prefer, you can complete the survey online by visiting www.blishmize.com/survey.

Everyone who completes the survey—either by filling out the card or going online—will be entered in a drawing for one of two \$50 gas cards.



Educational seminars from the North American Retail Hardware Association (NRHA) and Distribution America will offer opportunities for you to improve your business.

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Booth #729

Blish-Mize to Partner with J.B. Hunt for Delivery Service

Partnership Brings Safe Drivers, Continues On-Time Deliveries



J.B. Hunt driver, Don Ripley, left, shakes hands with John Holbrook, Blish-Mize's J.B. Hunt account manager. Blish-Mize made the changeover to J.B. Hunt in August.

Blish-Mize is excited to announce a new partnership with J.B. Hunt Dedicated Contract Services to handle delivery services to our customers.

“We feel the changeover to J.B. Hunt is a positive and exciting one,” says Jonathan Mize, CEO and president at Blish-Mize. “First and foremost, it brings better technologically based services, access to detailed route efficiency analysis, and significant route improvements.”

Greg Lutz, Blish-Mize executive vice president of operations, agrees. “For drivers, it will be a better, stronger program overall.”

The program formally switched hands on Aug. 8, 2016. J.B. Hunt drivers are

now proudly wearing Blish-Mize/J.B. Hunt apparel, and are ready to assist unloading customers' weekly deliveries. There is also a new on-site J.B. Hunt account manager, located at the Blish-Mize Distribution Center in Atchison, Kansas, who is responsible for the drivers.

Mize emphasized that service remains the company's top priority. “Our service will grow stronger with this change,” he says. “Our No. 1 concern is for the success and happiness of our customers.”

Your Advertising Resource

Learn About New Options at the Fall Buying Market



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 M12 1/4-In. Hex Impact Driver Kit. (2492-22)
 M12 Hackaw Kit. (2420-21)



7⁹⁹
Turbo-Heart Oscillating Sprinkler
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26-Oz. Spectracide® Wood & Grass Killer Ready-to-Use
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16⁹⁹
16-In. Oscillating Pedestal Fan
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12⁹⁹
IRWIN SPEEDBOR®
 8-Pc. Speedbor® Set Set includes 3/8-In., 1/2-In., 5/8-In., 3/4-In., 1-In., 1-1/8-In., 1-1/2-In. (4281945) (P41000)

The Blish-Mize Online Ad Studio program offers retailers a simple, low-cost solution to creating custom advertising materials. Jody Maude of Distribution America will host an Online Ad Studio seminar at the Fall Buying Market.

Are you looking for ways to bring more customers through your doors, get shoppers to stay longer when they are in the store, and add more items to their shopping baskets?

If so, the Fall Buying Market is the perfect place to learn about the range of advertising tools Blish-Mize has to offer that are designed to help you achieve all these goals.

Custom-Designed for Your Market

If you're looking for quicker, more convenient ways to create circulars, fliers, bag stuffers and more, look no further than the Blish-Mize Online Ad Studio program, which offers retailers a simple, low-cost solution for all their print advertising needs.

The Online Ad Studio allows users to create these custom materials quickly and easily, and then use the same content and designs to create online advertising materials as well.

“Not only does this make it easier than ever to customize your print content, but it also enables you to seamlessly translate this content into online ads to keep your brand and messaging consistent across

all media,” says Jody Maude of Distribution America, who will be hosting an Online Ad Studio seminar at the Fall Buying Market.

To learn more about the program, ask questions, and get a comprehensive overview of how effective advertising can make a real difference in your business, join Maude for the seminar, “Increase Sales With Effective Advertising,” which will be held at 3:30 p.m. Friday, Sept. 16, and 12:30 p.m. Saturday, Sept. 17.

Grab Shoppers' Attention With Video

If you're ready to kick your in-store advertising up a notch, you'll want to stop by the J3 Point-of-Sale—Ganymede Technologies Corp. booth and see the

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latest in in-store point-of-purchase (POP) advertising.

The Ohio-based software company offers digital signage that allows retailers to easily install and show video clips in their stores.

With its program, all retailers need is a flat-screen TV to mount wherever they'd like—maybe by an endcap or a paint counter—and they can offer digital advertising anywhere in the store.

“Digital signage has been around a few years, and it's becoming more affordable now that TV prices are dropping,”

Ganymede has put together a variety of content packages that offer personalized content to meet any retailer's specific needs.

says Fred Fischer, president of Ganymede Technologies Corp., whose software product is J3 point-of-sale software.

“Our program promotes in-store products or services or serves as a medium to display products.”

Buying a TV and bolting it to a display is the easy part, Fischer says.

The more difficult part is providing strong content on the monitors that will grab shoppers' attention and help convert more sales.

This is an area where Fischer's company can help as well.

Ganymede has put together a variety of content packages that offer personalized content to meet any retailer's specific needs, such as highlighting featured items or focusing on a product's features and benefits.

This content is professionally updated and is available to retailers for a monthly fee through the J3 POS program. It will run on any computer and does not require the J3 point-of-sale software system.

To utilize the program, retailers install a small receiver unit, provided by Ganymede, to the back of the video monitors and download the content directly to each unit. This way, the content is downloaded one time, and then the retailer can choose to play it as often as they'd like. This saves the bandwidth that would be used if the content was streaming constantly.

“You may want to use one ad display in the morning, and another in the evening,” says Fischer. “For example, you may want something more contractor-oriented during the day and more focused on your retail customers in the afternoon and evening.”

To learn more about how video monitors can help improve sales and how the program works, stop by the J3 POS booth (booth #139) at the Buying Market to get more information, see demos, and sign up for the program.




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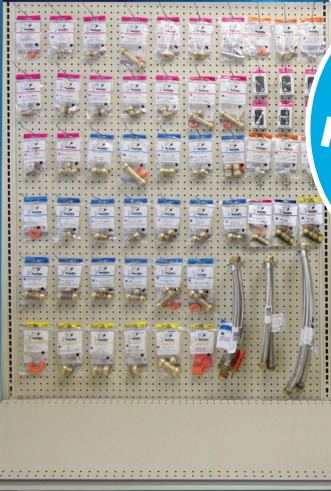


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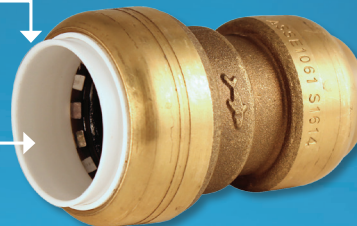
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New Styles Return to Show

Hardware House's Updated Lines Will Again Be on Display at the Fall Buying Market

Last spring, attendees to the Blish-Mize Buying Market got the opportunity to see a number of new and updated products, unveiled as part of the Hardware House private-label line.

At the Fall Buying Market, retailers will get a second chance to see all of these exciting enhancements, as well as additional products, within the Hardware House offering.

Hardware House covers a variety of popular categories and gives retailers the opportunity to differentiate their assortments, enhance their margin opportunities, and expand their selections in these areas.

"We strive to keep the Hardware House selections relevant, on trend, and high-quality," says Blish-Mize CEO and President Jonathan Mize. "Our offerings and updates right now are very strong.

The margins and profit-making capabilities for our customers will always be a focus, allowing them to compete with the big-box retailers."

The newest additions to Hardware House product lines were launched last spring after a close examination of industry trends in areas such as indoor and outdoor lighting, according to Wayne Lueckenhoff, vice president of purchasing at Blish-Mize.

These updates were well-received in the spring, he says, and retailers should be ready to see even more new lines at the market in September.

"We have had great acceptance with our new lighting designs, new pendants, and especially our new outdoor products, including LED bulbs and dusk-to-dawn outdoor lighting," says Lueckenhoff. "The new remote control ceiling fans are selling very well, too."

Why Hardware House?

The Hardware House line includes products from several popular categories: lighting, ceiling fans, faucets, bath hardware, vanities and vanity tops, cabinet hardware, and locksets. Products making a return at the Fall Buying Market include new lighting families, a revamped ceiling

fan program, LED and dusk-to-dawn outdoor lighting, several new styles of pendant lights, and bathroom vanities in three new finishes and five different styles.

The Hardware House brand is built around the ability to offer the highest-quality products in the industry, all of which can be purchased individually or as part of an assortment.

The products are priced competitively and offer strong margin opportunities (30 to 40 percent on most products). In many cases, these products carry a retail price at or below big-box prices.

With a variety of price points, Hardware House branded products can complement existing selections and offer retailers the opportunity to sell unique styles customers won't find anywhere else. The Hardware House team works hard to stay ahead of the curve, offering products that reflect the latest trends and consumer demand.

What Your Customers Want

Lueckenhoff says the Hardware House team looked closely at homeowners' wants and needs when putting together this latest round of line updates.

"We were looking for what consumers wanted," he says.

After a successful introduction at the Spring Buying Market, he's looking forward to another strong market in September. "We got off to a good start this spring and are looking to build on that momentum. Retailers who may have been on the fence about their Hardware House purchases in the spring can take a second look at the offerings in September and take advantage of some great opportunities."

To learn more about Hardware House and see all that's on display, visit booth #401 at the market.



Hardware House's updated lines will be highlighted at the Fall Buying Market.

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The Easiest Path to Sales Growth

Learn How to Increase Transaction Size

Whether you are selling hardware or hula hoops, every retail business starts the year with the goal of increasing top-line sales.

And while all retail businesses are different, there are only three methods you can use to achieve this goal—raising prices, driving additional business into the store or increasing transaction size.

While retailers should certainly focus on improving in all three of these areas, the quickest way to drive top-line sales is by selling more products to the customers who are already in your store—increasing transaction size.

Here are a few quick tips for things you can do to increase transaction size:

- **Impulse displays.** Add a couple of impulse items, or a small impulse display, at the checkout counter. Try selling local or seasonal items. Think about your market; for example, if your store is in a popular tourist area, add a small display of postcards or keychains that tourists may want to bring home as a souvenir. Even small products that only cost a few dollars can create a big impact as they add up.
- **Items of the week.** Have your cashiers promote one item per week to customers at checkout. This item should be something universally needed, small and a lower price point. Items such as batteries, work gloves, plant food, or even candy make perfect choices. Cashiers should be pleasant and just remind customers that you have a great



Watch NRHA's video to learn how you can increase transaction size, and to hear from retailers who found success with the methods described in the video.

deal on an item and ask if they would like to add it to their purchase. While many customers might decline, many will also say “yes,” and the size of their overall ticket will increase.

- **Out-of-the-box merchandising.** Try including some of your more unique products in your displays. Create themed endcaps, or ask your employees to come up with some interesting ways to show off your products.
- **Offer demonstrations or how-to workshops.** Teach your customers how to build a birdhouse—always a popular kids’ activity—or offer an informational session about how to choose the correct plants for their landscaping. Don’t forget to promote add-on products at this time.
- **Offer flash discounts.** On busy days like Saturdays, make announcements over the store PA promoting discounted items for a limited time. Try something like, “24-packs of bottled water are on sale for the next 30 minutes for just \$2.99.”

By putting a time limit on the promotion, customers will be more apt to add it to their baskets.

To learn more about increasing transaction size and to find out more about some real-life examples of retailers who were successful in doing so, take a look at the North American Retail Hardware Association’s (NRHA) video, “Increasing Transaction Size,” which you can find online at www.hardwareetailing.com/focus-on-average-transaction-size-and-increase-sales. To download a PDF that goes along with the video, visit www.hardwareetailing.com/codb-transaction-size.

To learn more about how to use industry benchmarks or metrics like transaction size to compare your business’s performance to others in the industry, get a copy of NRHA’s *2016 Cost of Doing Business Study* when it’s available in September. Find it at NRHA.org.

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Looking to the Future

Blish-Mize Helps Star Lumber Plan for the Next Generation



Jeff Goebel attended NRHA's Retail Management Certification Program, where he participated in leadership and management classes and completed a Business Improvement Project.

One of the biggest challenges of working in a family business is ensuring a proper succession plan is in place for when the next generation takes over.

It's important to think about good communication, educational opportunities for up-and-coming family members and who fits best in each area of the business.

These responsibilities may present challenges at times, but Star Lumber, a fourth-generation family business headquartered in Wichita, Kansas, has taken several measures to ensure the company is in the best position it can be as it looks toward the future.

Currently leading the business are Patrick Goebel, who serves as president and COO, and his cousin, Chris Goebel, CEO and chairman.

"I'm responsible for all operations, and doing it this way allows Chris to keep a pulse on what's going on, while giving me both freedom and responsibility," Patrick Goebel says. "In many ways, we are co-leaders.

"I think the Blish-Mize team acts differently because of that—their family commitment shows in the success of their business and the success of other Blish-Mize customers. It sets Blish-Mize apart from the rest."

**—Patrick Goebel,
president and COO**

"I think it's good for everyone to have a boss and to have the accountability that comes with it," he says.

Another key to the company's success is its relationship with Blish-Mize, another family company that has been in business for many years.

Star Lumber celebrated its 75th anniversary in 2014, while Blish-Mize is celebrating its 145th anniversary this year.

"I can tell you there's a visible difference between Blish-Mize and other distributor options that are not family businesses," Goebel says. "The fact that Blish-Mize has been a successful family business for as long as they have is inspiring.

"I think the Blish-Mize team acts differently because of that—their family commitment shows in the success of their business and the success of other Blish-Mize customers," he says. "It sets Blish-Mize apart from the rest."

Something for Everyone

One of the first steps to successfully planning for the future is finding the

best fit for each employee, Goebel says. And he stresses that those employees have the opportunity to do well in a variety of areas.

“You want to make sure no one feels left behind in the process, as you search for the right roles for each person,” he says. “We make it clear that being a manager isn’t the only measure of success. Not everyone is wired to be a manager.

“You can be very successful in sales, production, accounting or another area,” he says. “We try to help people find the right fit, and we provide as many resources as possible in doing so.”

He says family members are encouraged to take chances and see where they might best fit in the business. “We encourage them to apply for open positions—sometimes you don’t know you are good at something until you try it—or sometimes we will actively seek someone for a particular role.”

He also works closely with Star Lumber’s accounting firm (which has a family business consulting arm) to help family members define what area of the company might be the best fit for them.

Specifically, they utilize two types of profiles employees can fill out. The first is an interest inventory survey, which helps people identify their interest and offers suggestions on what types of careers they may want to explore.

The second is a personality profile. The test-taker also participates in a debriefing and coaching after taking the test to gain further insight into their test results.

“These tests help people better understand themselves and find the correct role,” Goebel says.

“They provide some insight—maybe you excel in this particular area, or maybe this is something you should stay away from,” he says.

And, Goebel emphasizes that many of these ideas are scalable.

You may not have a nine-store operation, as Star Lumber does, but that shouldn’t hold you back from trying a few of these suggestions.

“The leadership profiles can be \$45, or they can be \$1,500,” he says. “You can go online and find some similar tests that can give some insight into your style.”

He says one of the biggest steps is carving out time to talk with family members about the business and offering opportunities for feedback.

You can try something as simple as inviting everyone to meet for lunch—yet another tactic Star Lumber utilizes. Goebel regularly hosts extended lunches for all active family members—those who work at Star Lumber—to attend.

“We want to make sure our team has opportunities to ask questions or bring up anything that’s going on,” he says. “We might bring in someone from the community as a resource, or do some fun exercises that spark discussion.”

He says one of the biggest goals is to offer the chance for anyone to ask questions about any topic related to the business.

“A family business can be a great thing, but it can also be a challenge,” he says. “It’s good to recognize that things may come up, and the natural way to deal with it is talk about it.”

Gaining New Ideas Through Time Away

Sometimes it can be important to take a step away from the family business to learn a little more in a different setting.

“It’s tough in a family business, because if you grow up here, you don’t always get the opportunity to explore and test yourself,” Goebel says. “Sometimes having those extra tools can really help.”

Goebel was part of an executive master’s program at Wichita State University. “I gained a lot from it,” he says. “I also spent some time working at a different job outside the company before returning to Star Lumber.”

Last fall, Patrick Goebel’s cousin, Jeff Goebel, participated in the North American Retail Hardware Association’s (NRHA) Retail Management Certification Program.

The Retail Management Certification Program is a six-month, college-level course that works to develop future leaders in the independent home improvement industry, focusing especially on leadership and management capabilities.

It is designed specifically for independent hardware stores, home centers and lumberyards.

The class includes three visits to NRHA’s headquarters in Indianapolis and culminates with the presentation of a Business Improvement Project students work on throughout their time in the course.

Students also work on various assignments that relate directly to their business and receive guidance from a mentor and a business coach.

Patrick Goebel says he appreciates that Jeff had an opportunity similar to what he had—a little time away from the family business to learn and grow on his own.

“I think it’s a good way for a leader to gain more confidence,” he says. “Jeff got away from me, from his dad, from his brothers, and got to go try out some things on his own.

“This course gave him an opportunity to express his own views,” Goebel says. “He got to throw his own ideas out there and see what stuck.”

Blish-Mize offers a scholarship for the Retail Management Certification Program that covers half the cost of tuition for the course, which played a big role in Jeff’s participation in the program, Goebel says.

“It says a lot that Blish-Mize feels strongly enough about the program that they are willing to provide the scholarship opportunity—that’s a big deal,” he says.

To learn more about the NRHA Retail Management Certification Program, please contact Scott Wright at NRHA by calling 317-275-9417, or email swright@nrha.org.

To learn more about the Blish-Mize scholarship, contact Clay Uhrmacher at clay.uhrmacher@blishmize.com.

How Do You Go to Market?

Retailers aren't the only ones who stay busy at the Buying Markets. Blish-Mize employees have plenty to do, too. Mark Jackson, merchandise manager, pictured with John Heimann of JC Inc. in Moscow Mills, Missouri, is known for his "Master Market Manual" that he keeps on hand at every Buying Market.

"We all keep clipboards with a list of things we check off as we go," Jackson says. "We have booth numbers, contact information, schedules, and plenty of other organizing tools. I shrink down all my information on the copier so it's small enough to fit in my pocket. It's kind of become a standing joke between a couple of other buyers and me, but it's very simple and a good way to stay organized."



Merchandise manager Mark Jackson, left, is known for his "Master Market Manual," which he uses at each market to keep track of his schedule and to stay organized.

Blish-Mize Website Gets a Makeover

Recent visitors to the Blish-Mize website, www.blishmize.com, likely have noticed some changes that make the site more intuitive and easier than ever to use.

These enhancements began earlier this year and include upgrades throughout the site.

"We've given the website a pretty serious makeover," says Jason Drury, marketing director at Blish-Mize.

There's plenty of information to share, he says, and the new changes make it easier for any visitor to the site to find what they need.

One of the biggest changes is the home page, which features a completely new look and layout. One of the most noticeable additions is a slider that rotates through important news and updates about the company.

"This is especially helpful as we add news and information about the markets," says Drury. "It's easier now for prospective customers to learn about us without having to navigate too deeply into the website."

Additional changes to the contact page have also resulted in easier access to information about the Blish-Mize customer service and sales departments.

"We are receiving more emails than I've ever seen from people inquiring about doing business with Blish-Mize or who just have questions about the company. This tells me they are finding it easier than ever to get in touch with the right personnel," says Drury.

So far, he says feedback about the new website has been overwhelmingly positive.

"Everyone's been very receptive to these changes," he says. "The old website had served its purpose and was very functional—it was great—but it was time to take it to another level. We wanted something big, colorful and eye-catching, but that was also very easy for people to use, and that's what we have now."

Drury also points out that the Blish-Mize IT department was an integral part of this project. "They have really gone above and beyond, and they've done a great job. We're very appreciative of their hard work."

Oklahoma Retailer Receives Golden Hammer Award

Jimmy Boerstler, owner of Kennedy Lumber in Henryetta, Oklahoma, recently celebrated a milestone in his career: 50 years working in the hardware industry.

For his work, Boerstler was awarded with the Estwing Golden Hammer award.

Boerstler's parents bought the lumberyard in 1965, and Boerstler has been working there since he was 12.

Continued on Page 42



Boerstler recently received the Estwing Golden Hammer for 50 years in the hardware industry.

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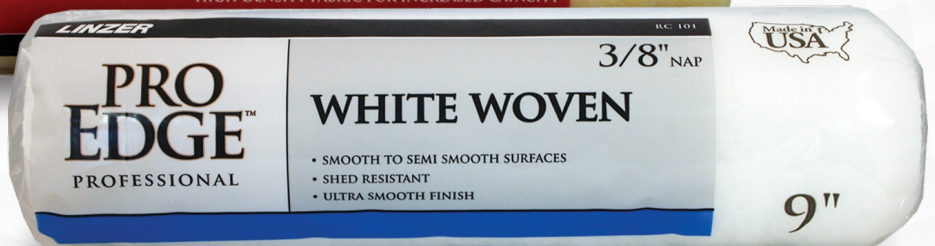
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Continued from Page 40

“Every day, Dad would get in the truck and say, ‘Let’s go to work,’ so we’d go to work,” Boerstler says. “When I went to college, I swore I’d never come back.”

But that’s just what he did. Around the time he finished school, he began working in the store again. Shortly thereafter, he bought a home in town. With a place to live and a place to work, he says he has built his life and business at the same time.

He officially became the full owner of the business about a decade ago when he bought out his sister’s share of the operation.

Boerstler says that, while the business has evolved since those early days, it still relies on an old-fashioned business model built around giving customers what they want. For example, customers can still buy a nickel’s worth of bolts or nails. “It’s a small town, and we’ve known most of our clientele for years,” he says.

He plans to keep working until he’s ready to retire, which is still a little ways down the road, he says. In the meantime, he’s staying busy with work. He says he almost forgot the anniversary until Janet Elias, Blish-Mize regional sales manager, mentioned it to him.

Boerstler says he’s grateful for the recognition. “Thank you to Estwing and Blish-Mize for this award,” he says. “It’s an honor to be recognized.”

Celebrating 145 Years

It’s a special year for Blish-Mize, which is celebrating its 145th anniversary. The company was founded in 1871 by three brothers-in-law, David Blish, Edward Mize and Jack Silliman, who had made their way from Chicago to Atchison, Kansas, where the company is still headquartered today. What once was a company outfitting wagon trains heading west, today has more than 800 customers across 14 states.

“We are excited to be celebrating our 145th anniversary and still going strong within our industry,” says CEO and President Jonathan Mize. “Our customers have been loyal to us, and we consider our No. 1 priority their success.”

Blish-Mize Wants to Hear From You

What’s your favorite part about the Blish-Mize Buying Markets? What do you most enjoy about reading this publication, *Strategies*? Blish-Mize would like your feedback!

In this issue, you’ll find a card with a short survey. Fill it out and bring it to the Fall Buying Market, and return it to the Registration Desk. If you’d prefer to complete it online, visit www.blishmize.com/survey.

No matter how you choose to submit your survey, everyone who completes it will be entered to win one of two \$50 gas cards.

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