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THE A TMB Publication

NOVEMBER 2011
 VOL 66, NO. 11

WHOLESALER[®]

News of Plumbing • Heating • Cooling • Industrial Piping Distribution



Smith-Cooper and Bell Pipe & Supply strengthened their partnership working together to supply Dunn-Edwards' new 336,000-square-foot, \$45-million LEED certified paint manufacturing facility in Phoenix. Pictured are (from left) John Boyce, Smith-Cooper; Franklin Bell, Bell Pipe; Bob Cooper, Smith-Cooper; Clay Fenstermaker from Dunn-Edwards; and Fred O'Connell of Bell Pipe. See feature on page 48.

Ferguson fiscal year results: 9% growth

NEWPORT NEWS, VA. — Ferguson's parent company, Wolseley plc, announced its financial results for the 2011 fiscal year.

Despite sluggish market conditions, Ferguson ended the year with revenues of \$8.8 billion, a 9% increase in like-for-like sales over last year. This marks 16 consecutive months of positive like-for-like sales, which measures growth through Ferguson's existing stores or branches that have been open for at least one year.

(Turn to Solid growth... page 57.)

Johnstone Supply Inc. hosts conference with key vendor partners

PORTLAND, ORE. — The 2011 Johnstone Supplier Partner Conference communicated the cooperative's current and future plans for growth and profitability, worked to strengthen relationships and to provide direct access to top company executives and collected attendees' input and ideas to enhance the cooperative's vendor relationships and overall performance.

(Turn to Vendor... page 57.)

To implement advanced technologies

Rheem opens new R&D lab

INDIANAPOLIS — In September, Rheem opened a new research and development facility focused on developing integrated

solutions for the company's heating, cooling, water heating and pool/spa heating product lines. Located just north of Indianapolis, the lab is the newest addition to Rheem's Advanced Tech-

nology integration (ATI) organization.

The ATI organization was created in October 2010 with a mission to facilitate and lead the development and implementation of advanced technologies and systems solutions across the company's product divisions. More specifically, the team is developing new, hybrid solutions that further integrate HVAC and water heating that can help homes and businesses reduce energy consumption while increasing comfort.

(Turn to R&D lab... page 57.)



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Tapping the wellness trend

New products and marketing strategies answer growing consumer demands

The bathroom has become so much more than a place of practical necessity. Over the years, the idea of luxury in the bath has become accepted — if not expected — with garden tubs and double vanities becoming the norm, as well as an insatiable consumer demand for upscale fixtures and finishes. Today, that concept is evolving beyond mere luxury to encompass an overall sense of wellness.

As our lives become increasingly hectic, people have come to realize that making time for themselves and taking care of their health should be a daily priority. The bathroom is the new epicenter of this movement, as homeowners look to create a personal oasis where they can relax, regroup and rejuvenate in the privacy and convenience of their own homes.

Our industry is meeting this rising tide with an exciting array of new product lines that cater to personal health and wellbeing. Many are also re-inventing their sales strategies to create hands-on experiences that educate and entice potential buyers. As forward-thinking dealers, designers and manufacturers have come to realize, staying on top of the surging wellness trend is not only beneficial to the health of our customers but also to the health and longevity of our business.

Consumer motivation

Different people have different motivations for investing in a home spa. For some, indulgent therapies allow them to shut out the demands of the outside world. Others want to express their own personal style with a one-of-a-kind retreat. There are practical reasons too, such as convenience, privacy and the significant health risks associated with unabated stress. Creating a wellness-themed bathroom is about making small but important lifestyle changes that can have a great impact

- What motivates your customers?
- Wellness products more popular
- Giving customers a taste of luxury
- Keep up with trends
- Tubs, showers can coexist peacefully
- Appearance counts

on one's overall quality of life.

Today's consumers have indicated that they are willing to invest in products that offer the benefits of enhancing their health and wellbeing. In this post-recession era, people of all ages are focused on stress relief more than ever. As homeowners realize that remodeling is the best option for achieving the home of their dreams, they will invest in products that go beyond offering aesthetic pleasure to those providing longer-term benefits and experiences.

"The concept of luxury nowadays is about the quality of the time dedicated to oneself in spaces of one's own where moments of indulgence to relax, rebalance and recover energy are possible," observed Larry Allen, managing director of Gessi USA. "Personal needs, once considered only as functional, increasingly concern the emotional sphere."

Rebecca Whiteleather, president of B&C Custom Hardware in California, finds that many of her customers, the majority being well-educated and well-traveled, are exposed to wellness products while staying in fine hotels and want to incorporate those products into their own personal space. Their expectations of a spa-like home retreat are more sophisticated than a simple upgraded showerhead.

A hands-on approach to sales

Tony Vanario, president of Richmond Tile & Bath, promotes wellness to his clients by first educating his sales staff on the benefits of a holistic approach to health — the measurable effects of meditation and massage — and then lets them speak with the sincerity of true believers. Of course, nothing is as convincing as first-hand experience. An authorized BainUltra dealer, the company installed a private Relaxation Room where customers can actually enjoy a massage bath in the freestanding Ayoura tub or experience the pleasure of Vedana®, which combines five relaxing therapies in one water-free wall unit.

"The Relaxation Room is a wonderful sales tool that really drives home the benefits to the customer," said Vanario. "The greatest skeptics always come out wanting to own a BainUltra product. Our goal is to continue introducing innovative products that require a one-on-one showroom experience, thus putting the customer in a position to make

better, more informed choices."

Rebecca is also a firm believer in the power of such interactive displays to sell customers on the wellness concept. Her showroom is one of the first in the country to offer BainUltra's new Inspirence Bathroom™, with intensive therapies that utilize air, heat, water, light, sound and scent. "Let's face it. Some of these products can be expensive and somewhat unfamiliar," she said. "Letting customers take a 'test drive' eliminates any uncertainty."

On trend

Alice Liao, executive editor of *Kitchen & Bath Business*, notes that, while an interest in spa-like bathrooms has been going strong for a number of years, the focus has shifted from general aesthetics to an emphasis on specific products.

"Over the last two years, wellness has become a major factor in the

Well-educated, well-traveled customers are exposed to wellness products while staying in fine hotels and want to incorporate those products into their own personal space.

bathroom, as evidenced by the popularity — emerging or continued — of certain product and product features," she said. "The demand for chromatherapy is thriving, and it continues to be integrated into showers, steam showers and tubs. If Europe is any indicator of trends to come, it will not be going away anytime soon."

Other key trends incorporate technology into the bathroom. Alice likes products that feature the ability to play music, a phenomenon that includes showers, tubs and even toilets. Next year, Villeroy & Boch will bring to the U.S. market its +Sound mirror, which is equipped with six speakers and Bluetooth capability to allow users to play their iPods without having to plug them in.

"Digital controls also play into the interest in wellness in the bathroom," Alice said. "Different users require different temperature settings and bathing experiences, and a control system that remembers personal preferences can be enormously useful in a home with more than one bather and a shower that has more than one showerhead."

Dornbracht makes innovative use of technology with its Ambiance Tuning



BY LINDA JENNINGS
Kitchen & bath specialist

Technique that literally "choreographs" the showering experience. Electronic controls regulate the water volume, temperature and stream sequence through a modular system of sprayers, jets and outlets. Bathers can create their own custom program or choose pre-programmed sessions that are designed to relax, energize or balance the body.

LEED-certified designer Pam Durkin, a principle at New Line Design and past president of the ASID Florida South Chapter, is pleased to see the wellness trend translating into eco-friendly products that look good and are good for the environment. "Natural materials continue to be a

solid investment," she said. "There are some amazing products coming out. I just completed an ASID show-house using Ann Sacks tiles, a leather herringbone on the walls, coupled with a concave-shaped recycled glass tile. Fabulous!"

Veronika Miller of Modenus.com is seeing a distinct trend amongst consumers toward an overall better quality of life as it relates to health and interior spaces, resulting in a continued desire to create a spa-like ambiance at home. She has built an impressive following on the social media front reporting on design trends from around the world.

"We see the home-spa concept being carried beyond the bath and into the home with overall more relaxed, less formal designs that embrace or reflect the outdoors. And even into the kitchen, where healthful materials and appliances are becoming more prevalent and can strengthen the holistic aspect of design," she noted.

Showers vs. tubs

There has been some discussion about the peaceful co-existence of showers and tubs. Some predict that, (Turn to Consumers... page 34.)

Consumers talk, K/B industry listens

(Continued from page 32.)

as showers evolve to provide a greater relaxation experience, they may eventually replace bathtubs altogether. The *Wall Street Journal* recently reported on a trend among high-end hoteliers to replace traditional tubs with elaborate showers featuring oversized stalls, marble walls, body sprayers and multiple showerheads. Some even have chandeliers, hammocks for lounging, and — for the high-rise penthouses — floor-to-ceiling windows. The report found that hotels with high volumes of business travel tend to favor shower-only layouts, while hotels popular with families continue to include tub designs, as did resorts targeting leisure travelers who enjoy the luxury of a good soak.

Alan Anderson, a principle at leading Florida architecture firm CA3, reports that while his clients want the luxury of spa-like showers, they aren't quite willing to let go of their tubs. A popular compromise solution



DSI Sozo tub

during his bathroom renovation projects has been to remove the large traditional tub in the master suite and replace it with a roomy shower, while at the same time adding a soaker or air jet tub to a secondary bathroom.

"People are downsizing these days, and they want to make the best use of

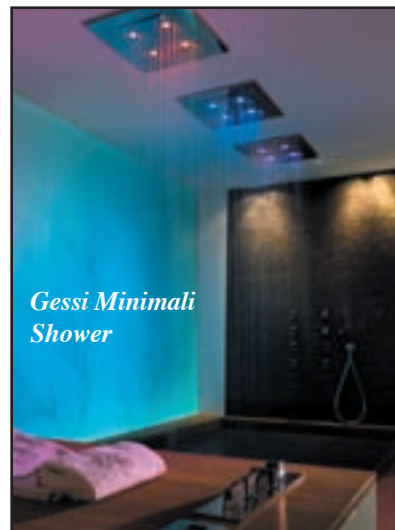
"I have to wonder if the growing popularity of high-tech toilets and bidets isn't part of the wellness spa trend. It's almost as if the toilet is the last frontier."

their space," he said. "Taking out the tub frees up room to add a large walk-in shower, double sinks, private toilet, maybe even a make-up or dressing area. And they still have access to a bathtub if they so choose. I think it is safe to say that showers and tubs can live harmoniously together, each meeting a different range of needs. What is certain is that both will continue to evolve."

Manufacturers are responding to

the public's clamor for sophisticated shower systems. Methven introduced a new concept in showering with its revolutionary Maia system. Its water-saving showerhead is imbedded with a vitamin C cartridge to neutralize harmful chlorine in the water and deliver a cleansing facial massage. A complementary Shower Infusion Kit continues the wellness concept with powerful combinations of essential oils, extracts and pure New Zealand water to create a personalized mood-enhancing spa experience.

In a similar vein, Gessi offers a new Private Wellness line of luxurious multi-functional rain showers. Square showerheads allow the bather



Gessi Minimali Shower

to select water flow, from a light summer shower to a drenching waterfall, all to the accompaniment of fixed or changing chromatherapy lights.

Bathtubs are evolving too. Freestanding tubs are enjoying a significant surge in popularity and often serve as the nucleus of wellness therapies. The new Essencia tub by BainUltra promotes a soothing feeling with its organic oval silhouette, dual row of air jets and Hydro-thermal massage.

Another new (yet not so new) trend among tubs is the concept of outdoor bathing. Victoria + Albert are the pioneers here, reinventing an ancient ritual for modern times. All of their



Victoria + Albert Barcelona tub

tubs are durable enough for al fresco settings, thanks to their ENGLISH-CAST® composition, making them a natural fit for an outdoor venue. This trend may be inspired in part by the hospitality industry, as visiting guests discover the pleasures of outdoor bathing from the privacy of secluded balconies and courtyards.

Getting the look

Creating a luxurious home spa means selecting the right products, but it also means getting the right look. While aesthetics can vary from traditional to contemporary, based on one's style preferences, designers agree that the overall look should be clean and simple. Experts recommend soothing colors, plush linens and uncluttered sight lines with closed storage for stashing personal gear. Create a focal point by choosing one show-stopper piece that adds drama and beauty to the space. For example, Lenova's new Cobblestone Green Onyx sink is a one-of-a-kind creation with its centuries-old cob-



Lenova Cobblestone Green Onyx sink

blestone shell and rich green onyx bowl with mosaic pattern. Both earthy and elegant, the sink adds a sophisticated Wow factor that is in keeping with the overall serenity of a spa-like space.

Options galore

Manufacturers from all aspects of the bath industry are joining the wellness movement. BainUltra's Akasa™ collection is meant to provide com-

Bathtubs are evolving too. Freestanding tubs are enjoying a significant surge in popularity and often serve as the nucleus of wellness therapies.

Get the Look!

For more information on the trends mentioned here go to:

- **BainUltra**
1-800-463-2187
www.bainultra.com
- **Diamond Spas**
720-864-9115
www.diamondspas.com
- **Gessi**
714-808-0099
www.gessiusa.com
- **Lenova**
877-733-1098
www.lenovasinks.com
- **Victoria + Albert**
800-421-7189
www.vandabaths.com

plementary products to complete a wellness-themed bathroom, such as a relaxation chair with footrest and an espalier for yoga and stretching. The Universal Massage Table is designed to fit over the top of any of their freestanding tubs to provide a comfort-



BainUltra Akasa universal massage table

able surface for a relaxing massage, or it may be used at ground level as a platform for meditation.

Even toilet manufacturers are taking an interest in wellness, such as TOTO's Neorest, Senso Wash and Inax' Regio. Kohler raised some eyebrows for its Numi™ toilet with its motion-activated lid and all manner of luxuries, including a heated seat, foot warmer, deodorizer and integrated air dryer. As Alice Liao mused, "I have to wonder if the growing popularity of high-tech toilets and bidets isn't part of the wellness spa trend. It's almost as if the toilet is the last frontier." ■

Linda Jennings is president of Jennings & Company, a public relations agency specializing in the decorative plumbing and luxury hardware industry. Over a 20-year tenure, she has worked with the most significant editors and journalists in the consumer home market identifying trends and providing newsworthy products. Jennings welcomes your feedback and can be reached at linda@jenningsandcompany.com.