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News of Plumbing • Heating • Cooling • Industrial Piping Distribution



Fort Worth, Texas-based Morrison Supply Co. has built a highly diversified distribution business, with 80 locations and 30 showrooms across Texas, Oklahoma, New Mexico, Kansas and Louisiana. Last year, Morrison significantly expanded its appliance offering by acquiring Builders Discount Appliance Mart in San Antonio. Read much more about Morrison and the Appliance Mart on page 32.

Allied Group buys Specialty Piping Products

HOUSTON — The Allied Group acquired Specialty Piping Products, located in St. Charles, Ill. Now known as Allied Chrome, the company joins Allied Fitting, Warren Alloy Valve and Fitting, Tectubi Raccordi S.p.A. and TRILAD Fittings and Flanges as part of the Allied Group of Companies. (Turn to Allied Chrome... page 47.)

Modern Supply promotes water conservation

KNOXVILLE, TENN. — Modern Supply Company has teamed up with the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency's WaterSense program to offer consumers water-efficient product choices. Products are available in their Knoxville, Chattanooga and Johnson City, Tenn., showrooms and at branch locations in Sevierville and Crossville, Tenn., and Bristol, Va. (Turn to WaterSense... page 47.)

Some changes could be in store —

NKBA survey reveals 11 top kitchen and bath trends for 2011

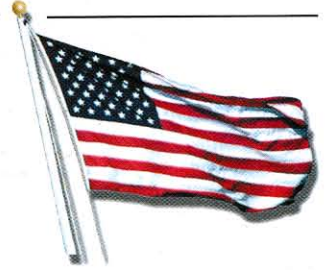
HACKETTSTOWN, N.J. — More than 100 designers, who are members of the National

Kitchen & Bath Association and have designed kitchens or bathrooms during the last three months of 2010, participated in an NKBA survey to reveal design trends in the marketplace for 2011. The results of this survey suggest that there will be some changes in the direction that kitchen and bath styles will take this year.

Following are seven kitchen and four bathroom trends poised to take hold in 2011. These are overall trends across the U.S. and Canada — although they won't necessarily appear in all geographic areas.

Kitchens

- **Shake it up** — The Shaker style began a rise in popularity in 2009 and gained momentum in 2010. By the end of the year, Shaker had supplanted Contemporary as the second most popular style used by NKBA (Turn to Changing... page 78.)



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The Front Page

More distributors are entering the appliance business as a way to gain a more diversified market base. Morrison Supply Co., based in Texas and with branches throughout the U.S., began selling appliances five years ago and recently bought the Appliance Mart to provide a ready customer base for its lines of high-end kitchen and laundry appliances, plus lighting and cabinet door/hardware products. Story begins on page 32.



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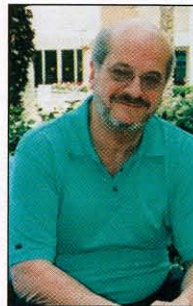
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See contact information on page 82

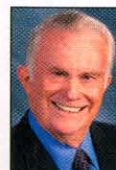
Martin's Corner

American Supply Association



John Martin is an enthusiastic booster of industry associations in general and the ASA in particular. Here he provides compelling reasons to join the ASA, along with insights from ASA executive vice president Michael Adelizzi, along with several industry insiders' thoughts on the ASA.....72

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Next Month

Watch to see who will be inducted into THE WHOLESALER's PVF Hall of Fame!

A K&B garden of delights

Leading kitchen and bath trends for 2011

With the Kitchen & Bath Industry Show approaching later this month, now is a good time to think about new sources of design inspiration and the latest trends in these products. The rules have changed somewhat from years past, when consumers were eager to outfit their homes in the latest “must have” look of the moment. In today’s economy, savvy homeowners are thinking carefully before spending their dollars, and they are looking for fresh — yet smart — ideas that will enhance the value, beauty and enjoyment of their homes. As an industry professional, you know that staying abreast of the hottest design trends is crucial in positioning your business to take advantage of rising consumer demand. You also understand the importance of presenting these trends to your customers in a way that highlights their value and longevity. Let’s take a look at the cutting-edge trends that are sure to make 2011 a year to remember.

Out with the old; in with the new

Trends come and go as old standbys are replaced with exciting new options. In the bathroom, built-in tubs have seen their day. Freestanding tubs are the new standard, as consumers rediscover the elegance and comfort of these vintage-inspired tubs. Modern manufacturers create freestanding tubs in a wide variety of sizes and styles, some paying homage to the traditional claw-foot design, while others are decidedly contemporary.

For example, the Toulouse tub by Victoria & Albert was inspired by the French double-ended bateau baths from the 1860s and offers a classic elegance that can easily accommodate two bathers. The Deauville tub, also by Victoria & Albert, has a more modern sensibility, with chunky wooden feet and European flair. Both are crafted from the company’s signature volcanic limestone mix that is easy to care for and warm to the touch.



Victoria + Albert Toulouse

Traditional showers have undergone a metamorphosis, with a major movement towards frameless shower enclosures. Metal-framed showers tend to be clunky in design and difficult to clean. Frameless showers look significantly sleeker and offer greater design flexibility. The Giada collection from Novellini comes in a variety of configurations to suit any bathroom space plan, including corner cubicles, freestanding panels, neo-angles or recessed designs. Another trend in shower design is the new classics, reminiscent of fine European hotels and timeless, vintage-inspired design. Sunrise Specialty leads this trend with a complete line of showers, faucets and tub fillers that feature the added



Victoria + Albert Deauville Dwell

safety of temperature control.

Standard sinks are also on the “out” list for both kitchens and baths. Trendy consumers are taking full advantage of fashion-forward options offered by manufacturers such as Diamond Spas. Its copper trough skirted sink is surprisingly durable, adds warmth and style to the kitchen and is generously sized to keep up with the largest of modern families. For the bathroom, Diamond Spas offers a contemporary oval sink in sustainable stainless steel with a bowed front that mimics the design of a coordinating tub.

Glass — a rising star

Textured glass is appearing everywhere, from countertops to tabletops.



Sunrise Specialty 633 Deck Mounted Tub Filler

from backsplashes to floor tiles. It offers a fresh, shimmering glimpse into a new wave of sophisticated design possibilities. Heavy granites and dark finishes are being replaced with products that are more transparent and re-



ThinkGlass counter top

flective. The trend here is towards light — clear finishes, whites, metallics — all coming together to create a sparkle that is airy and refreshing. Surprisingly durable and maintenance-free, glass is one of the most in-demand materials for kitchen countertops. ThinkGlass uses eco-friendly, 100% recyclable glass to create its custom pieces, including an amazing variety of textures and colors that ensures that each glass creation is a true work of art.

Sustainable stainless

Another timeless trend in 2011 is stainless steel; consumers are looking for sustainable options that will add lasting value to their homes.

Lasertron is ahead of this trend with their artist-designed etched stainless



Lasertron Painter Door

steel cabinet doors. The innovative collection provides a new creative outlet for artists and designers alike, taking art off the wall and blending it into cabinetry for interest and intrigue. Send in a favorite painting or graphic, and the company will custom-etch the signature work of art onto any selection of stainless steel cabinetry door fronts. The exciting new series has made its debut featuring the talents of renowned abstract artist Sharon West-

BY LINDA JENNINGS
Special to THE WHOLESALER

brook, recognized and collected worldwide, featured on PBS and in Florida Architecture magazine.

Haute hardware

In 2011 it’s all about the details, and decorative hardware continues to evolve with collections that add instant style and classic good looks for

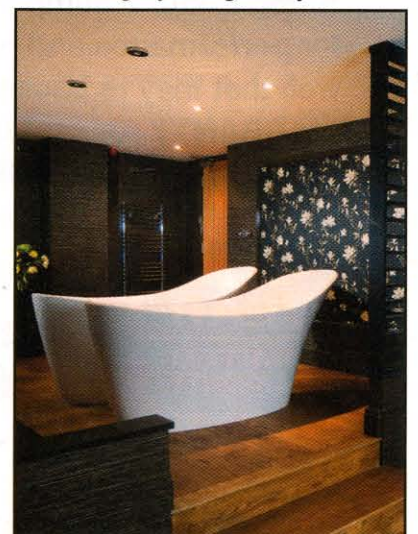


Reveal Designs FLW

you to enjoy, such as Atlas Home-ware’s new Browning and Shelley collections, both named after England’s most famous poets. They feature three pieces — a knob and two sizes of pulls — and are available in brushed or polished nickel and Venetian bronze.

Ashley Norton has unveiled new pocket door hardware that is easy to operate. Crafted of solid bronze, it is available in dark bronze, light bronze, matte black or white bronze finishes.

Reveal Designs has a new hardware collection honoring the architectural legacy of legendary architect



Victoria + Albert Double Amalfi

Frank Lloyd Wright. Born out of a partnership between Reveal Designs and the Frank Lloyd Wright Foundation (Turn to Wellness... page 79.)

Prepare for professional renovation

(Continued from page 8.)

It is often just that simple and happens with a click of the mouse. You get disqualified from the game due to a lack of technicality. For a reprint on e-marketing, e-mail me at Rich@go-spi.com

• **Stop thinking that you have a first-rate website and web storefront if it is more than a year old** – Yours may be good but might not be. The bar is being raised on a monthly basis so unless you have updated it recently, you are probably falling behind. If you are hearing complaints like, “Customers can’t find products. The data sucks. There are no pictures. It’s slow.” It is time for a professional renovation.

• **Stop forcing your Information Technology (IT) team to direct your website and web storefront** – Marketing should be responsible for your website and web storefront. With the evolution toward all sorts of “E-based” marketing activities, the marketing team needs to step up and direct the company’s efforts. Of course, the IT team will be involved in all the technical aspects of the “E-based” marketing but the rest of it is marketing. To their credit, many companies’ IT teams have sincerely worked to fill the void abdicated by the too-busy, non-techie marketing folks. Many IT

folks have done an amazing job given their limited customer contact, minimal product knowledge and lack of any marketing training. That does not change the fact that your company needs a marketing team that understands “E-stuff” and puts your company at the forefront of “E-marketing” for your target markets.

Recently, our software company was conducting a web demonstration of our Web storefront software to an IT person who had been given the directive, “Get us on the internet.” He did a great job on the technical side but I felt sorry for him as we asked marketing questions relating to the company’s operation and marketing objectives. He had no authority over those areas and was embarrassed that the marketing team didn’t even show up because it involved computer terminology that was complicated.

• **Stop assuming that you understand what your customers need and want** – I am not a big fan of surveys since even the very best written surveys seldom get to the heart of a customer’s heart. The best way to get information from a customer about what they need and want is to ask them. This is tough since you have to ask sincerely, not be defensive, listen carefully and clarify the heck out of each complaint or suggestion to in-

sure that you really understand what the customer is saying. With this clarity, you can adjust how you operate to improve your company in ways that the customers will appreciate.

• **Stop thinking that pricing management is completed when your costs are updated in the computer** – Of course, getting the costs right is part of price management but centrally managed market-based pricing is the goal. Most wholesalers aren’t even close to the goal of providing competitive pricing and making fair profit for themselves. That’s what pricing is all about. And as I have said before, if you have sales of \$20M or more, you need a good full time pricing manager. They are hard to find and hard to create but after you have one in place, you will ask yourself why it took you so long to get it done. For a reprint on price management, e-mail me at Rich@go-spi.com

• **Stop kidding yourself, your people don’t understand the realities of your business** – They probably don’t know that they are routinely taking orders at profit levels that are below the break-even point for the company. They don’t understand the difference between gross margin and markup. They don’t understand that a 10% discount gives away 10 points of margin. They think that somewhere between 20% and 25% is the right gross margin for normal sales.

However, they have no problem selling at 12% to 15% when pressed. (So far I have not encountered an industry wholesaler who is profitable in that range.) You have two options: Train them, measure performance, hold them accountable or stop allowing them to do stupid things...remove the authority that allows them to hurt the company. I like option one the best but it takes a fair amount of work initially followed by continuous, relentless, ongoing review and coaching. In our experience, the minute you stop reviewing and coaching how people price, is the same minute that your profits start to ratchet downward.

As always, I know that you cannot stop doing all these things but take time to pick a couple that will have the biggest impact on your performance. ■

Rich Schmitt is president of Schmitt Consulting Group Inc., a management consulting firm focused on improving the profitability of distribution and manufacturing clients.
www.go-scg.com

Rich is also the co-owner of Schmitt ProfitTools Inc. (SPI), a business producing print, CD-ROM, web and palm-based catalogs as well as pricing management and analysis software for wholesalers.
www.go-spi.com

Bathrooms devoted to well-being

(Continued from page 62.)

tion, the new Taliesin Design™ hardware collection fuses wood in metal in bold geometric shapes.

Seeing double

Why have just one when you can have two? Consumers are expanding their expectation for double sinks in the master bath to include double

vanities as well as matching free-standing tubs. The idea of two vanities just makes sense — twice the storage, twice the personal space — but the concept of double baths is a new idea that is rapidly gaining ground. Victoria & Albert set the stage with its side-by-side Amalfi bathtubs. Having two tubs in a single bathroom is both luxurious and practical. Not only does it make a striking visual statement and add symmetry to the space, it also creates a private retreat where couples can bathe together in comfort without having to take turns or compromise.

Be well

One unhappy trend of our times is our tendency to work harder and longer without concern for our health or stress levels. Fortunately, a growing awareness of wellness is counteracting this with a line of products for the bathroom that creates a spa-like retreat using personalized therapies. From soaking tubs and air baths to aromatherapy and steam showers, consumers are appreciating the technology that allows them to bring re-

juvenating treatments into the privacy of their own homes. Bain Ultra’s Vedana system is the first product of its kind to focus on wellness. It doesn’t dispense water in any form but instead is a care center that provides five unique therapies designed to help people release stress and find their inner calm. More and more companies are joining this exciting trend to re-think the bathroom from a grooming center to a space devoted to peace and well-being. ■

Linda Jennings is president of Jennings & Company — a public relations, advertising and marketing agency, specializing exclusively in the decorative plumbing and luxury hardware industry. Throughout 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. Based in Sarasota, Fla., her agency represents the most progressive manufacturers in the kitchen & bath industry. Jennings is a member of the DPHA (Decorative Plumbing & Hardware Association) and was recently appointed to their Editorial Advisory Committee.



BainUltra Vedana

Get the look!

For more information on the trends mentioned here, go to:

Ashley Norton
800/393-1097
www.ashleynorton.com

Atlas Homewares
800/799-6755
www.atlashomewares.com

BainUltra
800/463-2187
www.bainultra.com

Diamond Spas
720/864-9115
www.diamondspas.com

Lasertron
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Novellini
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www.novellini.com

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