

2021 CES:
FROM VEGAS
TO VIRTUAL

SERVICE & SUPPLY DRIVE
DISTRIBUTORS/BUYING
GROUPS

CONNECTED CAR
DASHBOARD
DELIGHTS

EXAMINING
BRAND
LOYALTY

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Publisher of *Dealerscope*, and *Connected Design*
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PULSE | JANUARY 2021

A Year to Forget – and to Remember

It's time to leave 2020 behind – and not a moment too soon.

At this very same time last year, we had no inkling how 2020 would shake out – the shutdowns, the quarantine orders, the immeasurable losses.

Viewing what ultimately transpired in the very narrow context of our industry, however, 2020 was memorable as much for what those in the consumer technology business had to endure, as it was for how well they actually endured it.

Bringing all their smarts to bear were our trade's famously nimble retailers who, in record time, came up with ingenious workarounds for how to sell CE and appliances mindfully and safely, while still keeping their livelihoods afloat. And – indeed – as it turned out, retailers collectively discovered how essential their services and goods really are. Everyone – dealers, vendors, buying groups, distributors, etc. – is entitled to take a bow for extraordinary acts of survival in 2020 under the direst of circumstances.

With prayers that we all emerge whole, and wiser, for this experience, we wish a happy – and safe – New Year to you all...

Nancy Klosek, Editor in Chief

A New Year – and a New CES

It is January, and it feels weird not to have to run around to get myself ready for the early-morning flight to Vegas for CES. In 2021, we will experience CES from our homes and our offices through the CES virtual experience. I will be the first to admit that I will miss the face-to-face meetings with all the wonderful people in our industry.

This January issue includes a great column on how CES has become so important as a major auto show for OEM manufacturers. We're including a contributed column by industry veteran Frank Sterns as well, on the topic, "The Sound of Success: Five Things to Look for in a Brand Partner in 2021."

We are also giving you a preview inside CES, so you'll be sure what not to miss. If you have not done so, I invite you to go to www.dealerscope.com and subscribe to our digital issue. In the months ahead, we will feature more content that will be on this platform. Also, we will be doing a CES "digimag" that will feature highlights from the show and will recognize all of our 2021 IMPACT Award winners.

Lastly, congratulations to our 2021 Hall of Fame Honorees this year. We are happy to acknowledge and value your contributions to our industry.

Have a great CES!

Tony Monteleone, Publisher

20-35

DEALERSCOPE 2021 HALL OF FAME

Presenting profiles of our 2021 honorees – individuals within the CE industry who have forged careers of note in our trade while exhibiting a work ethic that brings persistent focus to the jobs they do every day.



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Unique Product/ Innovation of the Month: 'Copy That' App



First of all, it's super cool that OWC has turned themselves into a zero-emissions Mac and PC technology company, and we just love their new 'Copy That' app that lets you easily copy precious photos and videos from your iPhone / iPad directly to external storage devices.

The Dealerscope Hero of the Month: CISCO

The San Jose-based tech giant has committed over \$227 million to global COVID-19 response, including contributions to the #FirstRespondersFirst initiative, created to provide frontline workers free childcare and other resources so they can continue performing their essential duties.



Unboxed

The Dealerscope editorial team recently unboxed the Ausounds AU-Flex Headphones – check out the DS.com home page to see and read the review.



Audio/Video

Speakers/Headphones/Earbuds
Soundbars
Receivers
→ 4K, 8K TVs
Voice Control
Telecommunications
Connected TV
Projectors
→ New Epson Printers, Projector
Streaming Media
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Gadgets

Accessories
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Digital Health & Wellness
eGaming
Travel Electronics
Robotics
Mobile/Connected Car Tech
→ Intel at CES
Smartphones
Smart Apparel
iHealth
Wearables
Digital Cameras
→ Leica SL2-S
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Technology/Services
→ Nationwide Performance Groups
Artificial Intelligence
→ Josh.ai, Nano
Augmented Reality
Virtual Reality
Digital Signage
Kiosks
Training
Consumer Marketing
Omnichannel Marketing

Dealerscope, January, Volume 63, Number 01, (US ISSN 1534-4711) (USPS 0447-690) is published nine times a year by CT Lab Global Media LLC, PO Box 3920 Cherry Hill NJ 08034, 718-216-2046. Periodicals postage paid at Cherry Hill, NJ and at additional mailing offices. POSTMASTER: Send address changes to CT Lab Global Media LLC, PO BOX 1322, Lowell, MA 01853-1322. SUBSCRIPTIONS: Free to qualified recipients. All others, U.S. 1 year \$85, Canada/Mexico one year \$115. All other countries, one-year air mail \$140. Back issues and single copies when available, mailed by publisher for \$10 Each. Authorization to photocopy articles for internal corporate, personal, or instructional use may be obtained from Copyright Clearance Center (CCC) or call 978-646-2600. Articles may not be reprinted without publisher's permission. For Reprint information, contact Tony Monteleone, tmonteleone@cclab.media. All rights are strictly reserved, and reproduction in whole or in part is expressly prohibited without prior written permission from the publisher. Copyright 2021. Printed in the U.S.A. Byline contributor's views should not be construed as representing the opinion of the publisher.

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CONNECTING THE DOTS

It's hardly a stretch to declare that connectivity will be a dominant theme once again as we move through 2021. We clearly live in a hyper-connected, always-on, customer-driven world today, as a new playbook is being written for how to "connect" with consumers. The customer experience today has to be consistent, connected and cohesive.

It's simply not enough to launch a marketing campaign any more; you need to link them. By that I mean you need to link the consumer conversations you're having in-store and online, your various communication channels, your various marketing vehicles and all the touchpoints your customers experience during their shopping journey. This is essential in delivering that aforementioned consistent, connected and cohesive message.

The last thing consumers need in 2021 is more ads, emails, sales pitches, etc. They need (and crave) memorable/favorable experiences when they shop. This is what leads to initial interest, which leads to further investigation, which ultimately leads to the desire to purchase.

The way your customers engage with your location has changed; thus, changing the way you need to engage with them is critical. And it's worth noting that, for your customers, the old concept of whether or not a product is "affordable" has now shifted to whether or not it is "worth the cost" – this is the line of thinking today.

The IoT Way

This IoT-enabled world that is beginning to really take shape, of late, is all about connecting to, and finding out more about, consumers. From a retail standpoint, particularly when we're talking about the physical location, IoT-enabled beacons and geofences are becoming increasingly popular with retailers, allowing them to better understand customer movement and browsing patterns while shopping in-store.

Adding tech such as the aforementioned beacons and geofencing, along with NFC tags and QR Codes into your physical location is far cheaper than you might think. More important is the fact that the payoff in customer data is invaluable. We'll circle back on this topic in an issue later this year.

The point to all of this is that smart retailers are connecting all these dots – they are delivering consistent, easy-to-absorb messaging in all their marketing efforts. They are using behavioral in-store data to make brick-and-mortar customer visits more targeted and more productive.

In short, they are generally just realizing the "Next Big Thing" isn't coming – it's already happening.

RETAIL RUMBLINGS

THE LATEST RETAIL TECHNOLOGY



BOPIS SOLUTION PROVIDES DELIVERY ETA

JOANN, an American specialty retailer of crafts/hobby items with 865 stores across the country, has partnered with Radius Networks, a location-based technology company in retail, to launch their curbside and Buy Online Pickup In Store (BOPIS) solution, FlyBuy. FlyBuy Pickup enables JOANN to:

- Determine exactly when a customer is coming to pick up their order with an accurate ETA and updates along the way
- Prioritize order fulfillment based on the arrival of each customer
- Meet the customer with their order the moment they arrive
- Deliver a smooth, safe, personalized, and contactless off-premises shopping experience. [joann.com](https://www.joann.com)

IKEA AR FURNITURE APP

IKEA has introduced an AR app named Place, which enables Apple users to set IKEA furniture in their apartments and preview an interior before buying products. Thanks to this solution, potential customers can choose furniture more easily. <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=UudV1VdFtuQ>



LG 3D DISPLAY SHOWROOM

LG Business Solutions USA recently unveiled the LG DigiTour, a unique 3D showroom and immersive platform that allows visitors to remotely interact with the latest commercial display technologies from LG. "The cancellation of in-person events this year challenged us to find new, innovative ways to connect with our customers. We used this opportunity to reimagine the future and build an interactive virtual event platform with a high-level of photo-realism that immerses users in the environment," said Damaris Toma, experiential marketing lead at LG Business Solutions USA. "With the LG DigiTour, users can travel through virtual showrooms and discover the latest display technologies for businesses/retailers of all sizes, types and budgets." <https://www.lg.com/us/business>



GAMERS BUY NOW, PAY LATER

Sezzle Inc., a Buy Now, Pay Later solutions provider, has announced a partnership with GameStop to provide the world's largest retailer of video games access to its flexible and innovative digital payment solution. Sezzle's payment platform increases the purchasing power for millions of consumers across the U.S. and Canada by offering interest-free installment plans at both online and physical stores. [Sezzle.com](https://www.sezzle.com)



ROBOTIC MASK POLICE

In Japan, at least one retailer has turned the job of getting customers to wear masks and social distance over to robots. The store is the official dealer of the soccer team Cerezo Osaka, and the robot doing the job is Robovie, developed by Kyoto-based Advanced Telecommunications Research Institute International (ATR). Robovie warns customers when it detects through a camera and 3D laser beam technology that they are not wearing masks or abiding by social distancing rules. <https://www.atr.jp/index.html>

BETTER INVENTORY ON AISLE 3

Simbe Robotics, Inc., a company that leverages robotics and AI to provide retailers with real-time insights into inventory and operations, has unveiled an upgraded version of its autonomous inventory-management robot named Tally that is more accurate and durable than its predecessor. This newer version is equipped with an on-board data processor and better optics than its predecessor. [simberobotics.com](https://www.simberobotics.com)

Audi will announce a short-term lease program designed for customers wary of ride-share vehicles. It will be called Audi reLease and will feature gently used sedans and SUVs.



CES 2021: ON THE VIRTUAL ROAD

THE VIRTUAL CES REMAINS A VITAL SHOW FOR ALL THINGS CONNECTED CAR-RELATED



BY BRETT SOLOMON

Brett Solomon is the lead reporter and writer on 12V products and retailers for Dealerscope. He has been covering the mobile electronics industry for over 20 years.

The International CES has become as important as a major auto show for OEM manufacturers to show off their latest technologies. Additionally, the show remains the place that Tier 1 suppliers and aftermarket companies promote their technology wares. This year we can't drive or fly to Vegas, but we still have our

ears to the streets to see what will be important at the virtual show.

Mind-Reading

Familiar brands such as Harman, Bosch and Continental all are vying for OEM attention

for precious real estate on the dashboard. Taiwan-based Mindtronic AI is also vying for that space in addition to vying for the driver's attention. The CES Innovation Award winner has designed a cockpit with a new Human Machine Interface (HMI) that uses 3D animation, personalization, and most importantly, gaze

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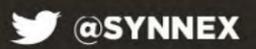


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interaction to keep an eye on the driver. As our ADAS (Advanced Drivers Assistance Systems) move us more towards autonomous vehicles, the chances of nodding off at the wheel increase exponentially. We need new technologies to snap us out of our driver trance quickly until vehicles can drive themselves.

The company is bridging biometric technology and the HMI to allow seamless handovers from autonomous driving back to human driving. So, as you start to doze off, a loud audible alert gets your mind and body back in gear. A vehicle knowing when it should make the driver aware to intervene is the next step in our evolution to Level 5 autonomous cars. The Mindtronic cockpit alerts the driver through both audio and visual cues on a newly developed Heads-Up Display called the DMX. It will be another option for OEMs and suppliers to choose from in future instrumentation and driver displays.



The FCC also will be looking into if even more bandwidth and spectrum is needed for future ITS applications. The birthdate of the autonomous car will help determine that outcome.

The FCC, Car Electronics and Communications

Who would have thought that the government bureaucracy would be involved in vehicle safety systems? But, with the onslaught of V2X communications, the federal government

had to step in to ensure uniformity. About 20 years ago, it was thought that DSRC (Dedicated Short Range Communications) would be the standard for V2X and Intelligent Transportation Systems (ITS) communications. Toyota even went so far as to design the technology that was already being implemented into most of its fleet this year based on a Wi-Fi standard (those unused black boxes in Camrys will probably confuse techs 20 years from now). Many aftermarket ADAS (Advanced Driver Assistance System) manufacturers were also eyeing Toyota as the creator of the de facto standard of V2X communications.

The FCC has told Toyota to hold off as 5G gains momentum, and it does suck for the automaker who must foot the bill for the now-outdated telematics equipment. The FCC ruled that the lower DSRC part of the spectrum would be better used for consumer Wi-Fi, and the higher 5G part of the spectrum would be a better solution for V2X communications. A few months

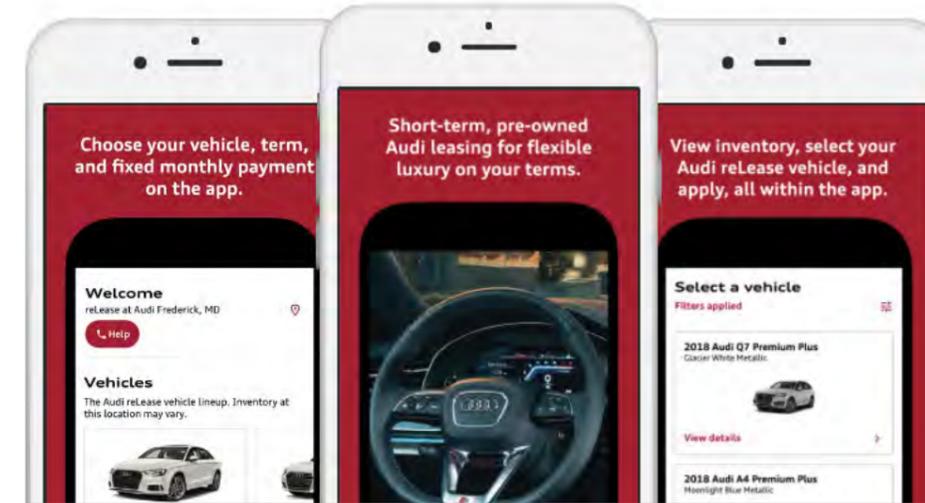
back, we looked at Harman's roadmap for the 5G spectrum and implementing new telematics safety into vehicles. According to the FCC, "The new rules also will improve automotive safety by reserving the upper 30 MHz of the [5G] band for Intelligent Transportation System (ITS) services and designating C-V2X as

the technology standard for safety-related transportation and vehicular communications. C-V2X uses cellular protocols to provide direct communications between vehicles and obstacles like other vehicles, cyclists, pedestrians, and road workers, and to receive safety information from roadside transmitters. C-V2X has gained momentum both domestically and internationally.

While the Commission designated Dedicated Short-Range Communications (DSRC) services as the technology standard for ITS services over 20 years ago, DSRC has not been meaningfully deployed, and this critical mid-band spectrum has largely been unused for decades. Today's action therefore begins the transition away from DSRC services — which are incompatible with C-V2X — to hasten the actual deployment of ITS services that will improve automotive safety." The FCC also will be looking into if even more bandwidth and spectrum is needed for future ITS applications. The birthdate of the autonomous car will help determine that outcome.

Uber & Lyft in a Pandemic – Some Say No. Enter, Audi reLease.

Mobility as a Service (MAAS) has become wildly popular – until you introduce a pandemic into the equation. As a manufacturer, Audi has always been a leader in introducing new technology at CES. This year, who would have thought that the company would pivot to its financial services arm for something truly unique? That something is short-term leases designed for customers wary of rideshare vehicles. It will be called Audi reLease and will feature gently used sedans and SUVs. Audi has gotten itself into the car rental game in the past with its Silvercar service available at airports. That service is unique because you don't need contact with any human to rent a car. The customer bypasses the long-line counter desks and reserves a vehicle right from their phone.



Audi thought the same could be done for short-term leases. "We have heard loud and clear from consumers that there is a gap in the car ownership and usage landscape. Whether it's because of concerns stemming from COVID-19, the cultural shift toward changing jobs and geographic locations more frequently, or other life changes, traditional lease and finance terms aren't meeting the need for flexible access to vehicles," said Anthony Bandmann, president and CEO, Audi Financial Services. "We are excited to be at the forefront of the industry and provide consumers a cost-efficient way to select the luxury vehicle they want and drive it without having to make a long-term commitment." Daniel Weissland, president of Audi of America notes: "This new offering is part of Audi of America's continued efforts to help put the customer at the center of how we do business. The global pandemic has transformed how our new and

VOXX is proud to bring Auto Oxide to the U.S. market. Having a solution that is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and contains no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) is a major win for our dealers as they are able to offer their customers a clean vehicle on return.

existing customers travel and this program offers them a new way to access premium mobility." Right now, the reLease program is to be available in Maryland dealers outside of Washington, D.C. and if it goes well, will come to a dealer near you.

VOXX Debuts Auto Oxide to Help Combat the Virus

VOXX will be showing its usual automotive aftermarket electronics, in addition to a new disinfectant for retailers who have become detailers, called Auto Oxide. It is safe to use on all automotive interior surfaces and according to VOXX, is effective at killing coronavirus, influenza, norovirus, H1N1, hepatitis A, B and C, and RSV by eliminating the source. "Our dealers, customers, and consumers come



"The global pandemic has transformed how our new and existing customers travel and the Audi reLease program offers them a new way to access premium mobility."

first, and with that comes their health," Aron Demers, senior VP at VOXX, says. "These days, clean work areas are now more important than ever and VOXX is proud to bring Auto Oxide to the U.S. market. Having a solution that is registered with the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA) and contains no volatile organic compounds (VOCs) is a major win for our dealers as they are able to offer their customers a clean vehicle on return." While some naysayers promote that cleaning could be theater, it shows your customers you will take the extra step on the installation. More importantly, some vehicles are sketchy when they pull into the bay, and it is nice to have something handy to spray down high-touch surfaces before installation techs get to work.

Accele Electronics Help Combat the Virus at the Drive-Thru

As in-car protection seems to be the rage, Accele Electronics has also developed a special hand sanitizer dispenser for the car. The

SNG400 Touchless Hand Sanitizer is designed to fit in standard cupholders in late-model vehicles and is powered by 4 AA batteries. It sure makes it easier after you pick up your items at the drive-thru or bank. It is great to have something dispense sanitizer before you put dirty hands all over the steering wheel or infotainment unit. Accele is also promoting the SNG400 to car fleets where vehicles have multiple drivers.

Honda Debuts the New Civic

One of the most customized vehicles in mobile electronics shops is the venerable Honda Civic. No other model is as popular for audio



customization because of its prolific presence in the market coupled with its typical youthful buyer. Plus, the fact they are so darned reliable – someone once joked if it was even necessary to put oil in the Civic to still get it to run to 300,000 miles (yes, you need to). Honda has given the world its first glimpse of the all-new 2022 Civic with the unveiling of a prototype on Twitch last month to keep in sync with its youthful customers. It is showcasing a fresh, sporty and upscale new look for its popular Civic. The prototype model teases the arrival of an all-new Civic lineup, beginning in late Spring 2021, with the launch of the Civic Sedan followed by the sporty and personal Civic

Hatchback, performance-focused Civic Si, and the ultimate high-performance Civic: Type R. The 11th-generation Civic draws inspiration from timeless elements of Honda design, including a low and wide stance and an open and airy cabin.

The new Civic will build on that appeal with an even sportier, fun-to-drive new chassis, more powerful and fuel-efficient powertrains and multiple new Civic-first features and technologies. On the infotainment front, the 2022 Civic's new fully digital instrument panel is free of visual clutter, minimizing cut lines and breaks to give drivers a clean and clear view of the road ahead. An all-digital driver's meter

cluster and a new 9-inch full-HD display audio touchscreen is mounted atop the low-set instrument panel. Honda blended the display into the dashboard, but you can expect dash kit manufacturers and OEM integration specialists to answer the call immediately to develop aftermarket solutions. We expect Apple CarPlay and Android Auto to be on board top-level EX models, but it is not quite clear how the bulk of the lesser LX models will be sold. But we are confident there will be plenty of opportunities for aftermarket mobile electronics retailer to capitalize on the wildly popular and still customizable Civic.

The Industry School Launch

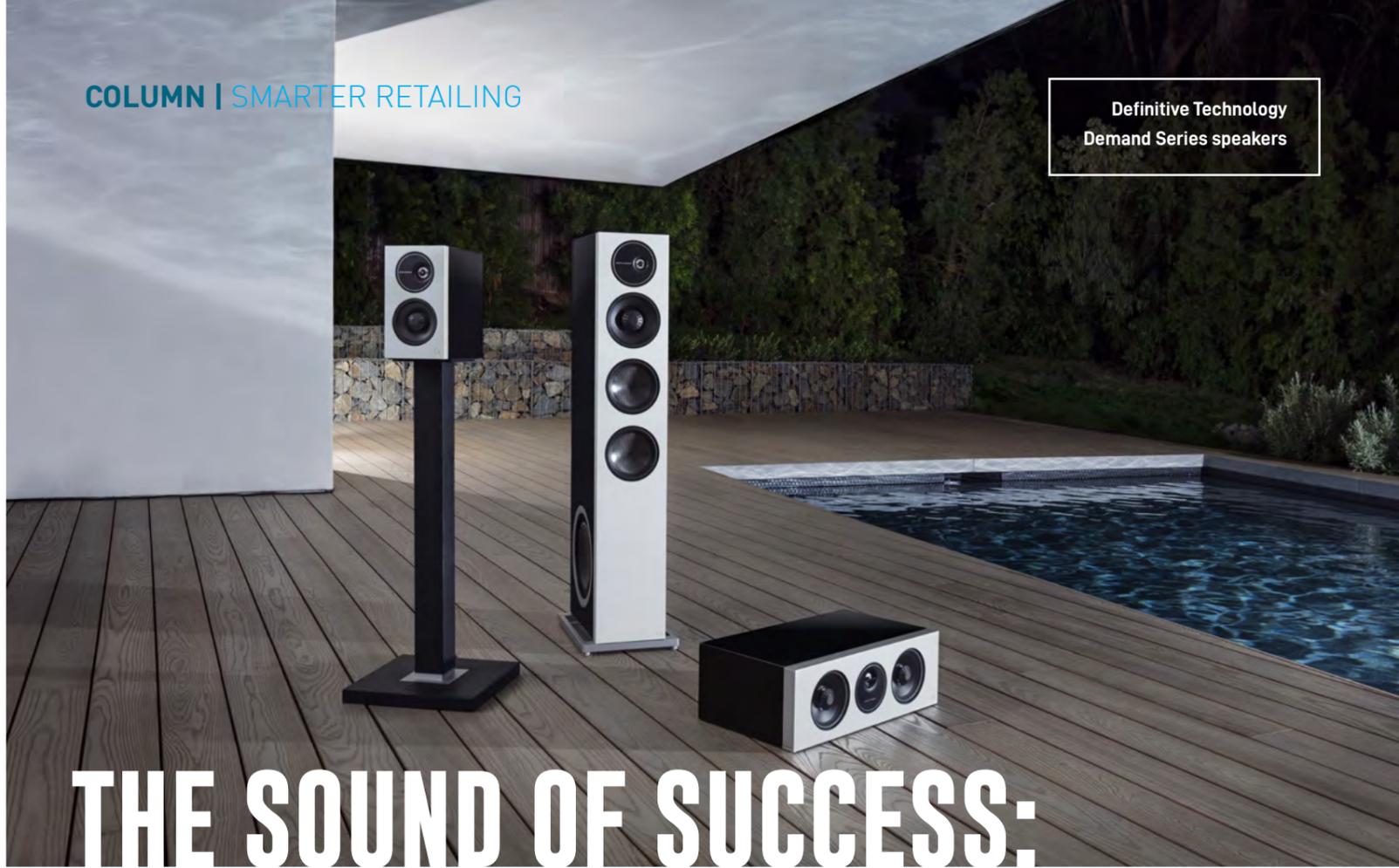
We have previously spoken about the upcoming The Industry School, specifically for 12-volt retailers. The mobile electronics portal for learning will be a welcome destination for both manufacturers and retail staff. Head Proctor Solomon Daniels has set a launch date of Jan. 11 to take advantage of products that will be launched virtually at CES 2021. He states, "If you are a manufacturer, The Industry School means being part of a larger, collaborative community in which we bring learners to you, and your trainings stay on to potentially educate thousands of industry professionals

One of the most customized vehicles in mobile electronics shops is the venerable Honda Civic. No other model is as popular for audio customization because of its prolific presence in the market coupled with its typical youthful buyer.

over time. Best of all, detailed analytics of your training efforts give you the ultimate measure of your training ROI. For industry professionals, The Industry School is a single online destination to learn career-advancing information and train on the products you sell, on your own schedule and from wherever you are, anytime.

Built-in tools help you retain information, build your knowledge base and celebrate your learning achievements." Everyone in the industry is invited to the launch. "Launch Day is more than just the day we open to learners," explains Daniels. "It will mark the first time we as an industry have a training destination available and always accessible to every mobile electronics professional. We want to have a strong start to our industry's new learning community."

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THE SOUND OF SUCCESS: FIVE THINGS TO LOOK FOR IN A BRAND PARTNER IN 2021

Stay-at-home orders during pandemic continue to spell opportunity

BY FRANK STERNS



Frank Sterns is the President of Definitive Technology and Polk Audio at Sound United and is charged with accelerating each brand's growth globally. Prior to his role at Sound United, Sterns served as Vice President, A/V Specialty/Custom Integration at Sony Electronics, where he spearheaded Sony's growth in the custom integration channel by calling upon his many years of experience in the category and his great relationships with channel leaders.

I got into this business because I love music and music reproduction, especially loudspeakers. However, in my 30 years dedicated to CI and premium channels, I've actually found that building lasting relationships has been one of the most rewarding and integral parts of bringing joy to the world through

sound. After all, the most innovative, high-performance products from iconic audio brands like Denon, Marantz, Polk Audio, Classé, Definitive Technology and Bowers and Wilkins can't sell themselves without knowledgeable, dedicated individuals to make it happen. Given the undeniable shift to a lifestyle centered around

being at home more, for better or for worse, I believe 2021 will prove to be another very strong year for our industry. There are new opportunities for us to educate a broader swath of consumers on the joys a great home entertainment system brings... even in the midst of a pandemic!

Brand Recognition

Ask yourself, "Am I working with a brand that resonates with my customers?" Instead of doing all the work of pioneering a brand your customers may not know or trust, invest in heritage brands and strong brand identities that make your selling life easier. Look for a brand with a solid reputation and a long history of innovation. Also, keep an eye out for brands that offer products that provide solutions as well as brand identity. This also includes brands that leverage their digital presence to educate customers on the importance of working with an authorized dealer.

Accessible, Passionate Leadership

Relationships are crucial in our industry. How accessible is your brand partner's leadership? How enjoyable will it be to do business with this brand day in and day out? It should be clear that your partner's contact team consists of people who are passionate about the products they sell and the work they do every day. Work with companies that care about their brands, their dealers, their customers and their products, and who you can rely on to take your call or answer your email, should issues arise.

Training & Tech Support

Dealers should look for manufacturers who invest in and understand the importance of training. The brands you want to partner with in 2021 should be able to do two things extremely well. Firstly, they must be able to teach your

staff how to seamlessly use their products in projects. Secondly – and maybe more importantly, they must be able to teach your staff how to sell products to your customers. On a related note, brands should also offer dealers easily accessible technical support, especially for more complex products, like AVRs and processors. The best training teams today



Manufacturers should be judged by their ability to provide a full suite of great products that are competitively priced and offer superb value to consumers and strong profits to dealers.

offer an array of content across social media, in-house courses and remote learning opportunities, including YouTube.

Product Assortment and Profitability

Manufacturers should be judged by their ability to provide a full suite of great products that are competitively priced and offer superb value to consumers and strong profits to dealers. It's important to understand firsthand the value of a complete and up-to-date product assortment and to leverage size and scale in manufacturing, engineering, and supply chain to deliver for your dealers and end-user cus-

tomers. Innovation, coupled with world-class support, takes scale. Look for partners that have the muscle to deliver on your behalf.

Product Performance, Reliability and Value

The success of any partnership starts with a reliable, high-performance product that you, as a consumer, would want to own yourself. That way, you can feel great about selling it to your clients. Ultimately, your reputation depends on the reliability of the products you sell and install, so carefully choose manufacturers with the skill and scale to build consistently high-quality products every time, and back them with service and support. In our world, a product's value can extend even beyond its functional quality, offering customers pride of ownership, the feeling of being part of a community, and a deeper connection with music and entertainment. Find a manufacturer who checks all of these boxes, and you'll reap the rewards.

With customer interest in at-home entertainment on the rise this past year, dealers should expect and demand only the best from brand partners and simply continue to pursue their mission of bringing joy to the world through sound. Healthy dealer partnerships will remain a key component of that success story.

What will your 2021 success story sound like?



Virtual Platform Opens 2021 Trade Show Calendar as All-Digital CES Debuts

So, this country's largest consumer electronics show will be entirely virtual this year, as the venerable International CES is a strictly-digital affair for 2021. Such is life in a pandemic, and a road we're all, unfortunately, getting used to traveling down since early last year.

CES has always been a show that entices every sense, as the various show floors always offer so much to see, hear, touch, taste and even smell. For 2021, that will largely be limited to seeing and hearing, but there will be hordes of new products, provocative keynotes, engaging industry sessions and a plethora of new technologies that will take the CE space in many new and exciting future directions.

Thus, from Jan. 11-14, 2021, we suggest you keep the coffee brewing and your mouse ready to roll, as one thing is certain: there will be plenty to keep you busy, right from the comfort of your own home.

ARE YOU CES-READY?

We wanted to take the pulse of a few folks from different segments of the CE industry regarding their feelings on this unique CES – what they're excited about, what they'll be looking for and how their CES approach will differ, not being at the show physically.

Greg Scoblete, a veteran CE industry journalist who has been covering CES for over a decade, explained both the negatives and the positives with the 2021 CES being a virtual event.

"Well, this is going to present some challenges, I can tell you that," Scoblete began. "This industry is about handling, touching and seeing, up close and personally, the year's new products and innovations. While it's great that the show is happening, and I'll take it under the circumstances, this will be a challenge." Scoblete added that there are several things he won't miss, citing the city of Las Vegas (in general), long cab lines, ambient and incessant casino noises and, of course, pressroom food. "I'll miss being at CES... but I won't miss being at CES, if you get my drift," he added.

Another veteran scribe of the CES wars, Theano Nikitas, is looking forward to taking in the annual tech extravaganza in a virtual format.

"I'm actually looking forward to a virtual CES since it will be easier to cover more of the show than I would be able to in person," the profes-

sional photographer and journalist explained. "Transitioning to covering CES virtually will also be easy, given how relevant and frequent virtual briefings, presentations and launches have become during 2020." Nikitas has a specific category she'll be pointing her mouse toward, and as is always the case, she expects there'll be lots of "technology distractions" along the way.

"While I'm most interested in photo and video products, especially new product launches, I'd like to expand beyond those two areas to look at the latest developments in technology including AI, as well as other product categories such as mobile devices and accessories," she added. "Not having to spend half my time running from one convention hall to another certainly makes covering a virtual CES more efficient."

She did add that, unfortunately, there are certain aspects of CES that can't be duplicated virtually. "The ability to have hands-on time with new products, one-on-one conversations with vendors and the ability to try out and photograph new gear will be sorely missed," Nikitas pointed out.

Intel News at CES

Among the more significant announcements that have been made in the weeks leading up to the 2021 CES is the news that Intel will conduct a pair of news conferences, during which they will reveal some major news.

On Jan. 11, Prof. Amnon Shashua, senior vice president of Intel and chief executive officer of Mobileye, will talk autonomous driving, and plans on "taking attendees on an intimate tour of his garage lab and connect today's progress and technology with tomorrow's vision." Shashua will discuss the unique interplay between advanced driver-assistance systems (ADAS) and the company's autonomous vehicle technology, and how this connection has shaped Mobileye's future strategy. Later that same day, Gregory Bryant, executive vice president and general manager of Intel's Client Computing Group, will outline how Intel is executing and driving innovation in process technology, packaging and architecture to deliver more transformative computing experiences for consumers and businesses. "As we enter the era of distributed intelligence, computing is pervasive, and intelligence is distributed. Put simply: Everything looks like a computer and everything is in the cloud," Bryant explained.

During this conference, Bryant will expand on how Intel is delivering for its customers as the company embraces the incredible growth opportunities this current data revolution we're experiencing has created.

Microsoft Platform

CTA had announced back in October 2020 that it had selected Microsoft as its technology partner for this first-ever, all-digital CES. Microsoft will provide solutions, support and the underlying cloud technologies that will enable this all-digital event platform.

"CES is a truly global event, unique in its scale and audience diversity," said Karen Chupka, executive vice president of CES. "For an all-digital CES, we sought a platform that allows attendees from around the world to participate easily and securely."

"After a rigorous search process, we selected Microsoft for its technical expertise, global scale and experience in creating compelling digital event," said Gary Shapiro, president and CEO, CTA. "Microsoft is a global innovation leader and longtime supporter of CES. We look forward to working with them to bring CES 2021 to the world."

Microsoft Corp. Executive Vice President and Chief Marketing Officer Chris Capossela added, "Digital events are an opportunity to re-imagine what's possible. By harnessing the power of the Microsoft cloud and broader partner ecosystem, we're excited to help CTA transform CES into an all-digital event. From hosting our own global, virtual-only events to empowering our customers and partners in leading theirs, we have a lot of learnings to share, and look forward to creating an event full of the compelling experiences that people have come to expect at CES."

CES 2021 KEYNOTES



JANUARY 11,
6:30-7:30 PM EST
VERIZON

Verizon Chairman and CEO Hans Vestberg will deliver the CES 2021 kickoff keynote address, discussing 5G as the framework of the 21st Century, the essential tech of the present and accelerated tech of the future to move the global community forward, such as telemedicine, tele-education and more.

Hans Vestberg is chairman and chief executive officer of Verizon Communications, a leading provider of wireless, fiber-optic and global Internet networks and services. Prior to assuming the role of CEO in August 2018 and the role of Chairman in March 2019, Vestberg served as Verizon's chief technology officer and president of Global Networks from 2017, with responsibility for further developing the architecture for Verizon's fiber-centric networks. At Verizon, he has focused on delivering seamless experiences for customers over network assets consisting of the country's leading 4G LTE network, the largest 5G test-bed in the U.S., the nation's biggest residential fiber network, a global internet backbone and undersea cable network carrying much of the world's internet traffic, and fiber assets in 45 of the top 50 markets in the U.S.



JANUARY 12,
8:15-8:35 AM EST
CTA

Join CTA President and CEO Gary Shapiro and CES Executive Vice President Karen Chupka, along with special guests, as they kick off CES 2021. They will discuss the tech trends shaping our future, how innovation has accelerated in the last year, and how to get the most out of your CES 2021 all-digital experience.

Gary Shapiro, President and CEO, Consumer Technology Association, directs a staff of more than 160 employees and thousands of industry volunteers, leading his organization's promotion of innovation as a national policy to spur the economy, create jobs and cut the deficit. Karen Chupka, EVP CES, Consumer Technology Association, oversees the sales, marketing, production and management of CTA's events and conferences including its annual CES tradeshow.



JANUARY 12,
9-10 AM EST
GENERAL MOTORS

General Motors Chairman and CEO Mary Barra will present the opening keynote address. Barra's keynote will share a closer look at GM's transformational strategy to advance mobility for communities around the world. Laying the foundation for an all-electric future is just the beginning.

Mary Barra has served as CEO of GM since Jan. 15, 2014, and Chairman of the GM Board of Directors since Jan. 4, 2016. Barra began her career with GM in 1980 as a co-op student at the Pontiac Motor Division and has since held various roles within the company, including executive vice president of Global Product Development, Purchasing & Supply Chain, vice president of Global Human Resources, and vice president of Global Manufacturing Engineering.



JANUARY 12,
11 AM-12 PM EST
AMD

AMD President and CEO Dr. Lisa Su will keynote during CES 2021, presenting the AMD vision for the future of research, education, work, entertainment and gaming, including a portfolio of high-performance computing and graphics solutions.

Dr. Lisa Su has held the position of AMD president and chief executive officer since October 2014, and she serves on the AMD Board of Directors. In 2014, Dr. Su was chief operating officer responsible for integrating AMD's business units, sales, global operations and infrastructure enablement teams into a single market-facing organization responsible for product strategy and execution. Dr. Su joined AMD in January 2012 as senior vice president and general manager, global business units and was responsible for driving end-to-end business execution of AMD products and solutions.



SALUTING THOSE WHO GO ABOVE & BEYOND

REALLY LIKING THE LATEST HALL OF FAME HONOREES

With regard to the world of sports, the Hall of Fame is synonymous with excellence. Those selected have performed at an exceptional level for a lengthy stretch of their careers. The Dealerscope Hall of Fame honorees are selected using similar criteria. Every year, the staff of the publication chooses our HOF Honorees based largely on the positive impact they have made during their careers in the consumer electronics industry.

They are typically faces that are as familiar around the entire CE industry as they are within the walls of the companies they work for. One thing they all have in common is a work ethic that brings persistent focus to the job they do every day, as well as placing an emphasis on maintaining a high level of quality when it comes to the work they produce.

We have added six more Dealerscope Hall of Famers for 2021 who do exactly that.

DEALERSCOPE 2021 HALL OF FAME



CONGRATULATIONS TO
TOM HICKMAN
PRESIDENT AND CHIEF MEMBER ADVOCATE
OF NATIONWIDE MARKETING GROUP



On behalf of Next Level Distribution, we would like to congratulate Tom Hickman on his well-deserved induction into the 2021 Dealerscope Hall of Fame.

Congratulations to you and all of the other amazing 2021 inductees. Thank you for your contribution and inspiration to the industry!

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AN UNMATCHED LEVEL OF COMMITMENT

KEVIN DUFFY | CEO | SOUND UNITED

BY MICHAEL MCENANEY

Kevin Duffy has been with Sound United since 2003 and has served that company in a number of roles prior to his ascent to CEO in 2016, including as Chief Financial Officer, President of Directed Electronics, and Senior Vice President of Corporate Development, Marketing, and Investor Relations. As he has for his entire career, Duffy has made significant contributions to Sound United and has consistently showcased a steadfast commitment for improving the organization's performance and delivering high-quality products to their customers. At the time of his appointment to CEO, Duffy said, "I have had the privilege to work on some of the most compelling products in consumer electronics with incredibly passionate and competent employees, customers, and partners. I'm looking forward to continuing to propel each

of Sound United's brands forward in the audio category, while also providing support to the Directed leadership team." Some four years later, he has done exactly that. When Duffy was a young boy growing up in Southern California, that aforementioned propensity for commitment surfaced early, as he began playing football as an eight-year-old. So committed to the sport was Duffy, that he was eventually recruited to play at Princeton University. "I was absolutely blown away when I visited the campus, and looking back, it's clear that attending Princeton changed my life, because the experience opened my eyes and my mind, exposing me to so much academically, culturally, and socially that I wouldn't have experienced otherwise," he recalls. "In fact, I often encourage my own kids (he has three) to

go away for college; it's a special time for them to experience the world." Duffy got his start in the CE business as a consultant for Clarion and later joined Directed Electronics, the predecessor company of Sound United. "At the time, we didn't own any audio brands like we do now, but we started building what would become Sound United through acquisitions, developing a platform of the most premium and luxury audio brands in the world. So, I've been with the company now for nearly 20 years," he says. What he's learned during the last two decades is pretty clear – a rolling stone truly doesn't gather any moss; as he explains: "What I find so incredible about Sound United is that we don't sit still — we're constantly evolving — and we're a completely different company than we were at the start. And that willingness to grow

and adapt speaks to why we're well positioned to succeed in the future." When it comes to thinking about what has stood out in his career, Duffy is quick to credit the people he works with, saying, "Looking back, I'm most proud of the team we've assembled at Sound United. The people I get to work with every day are passionate about music and audio, and they care deeply about our company, the industry, and most importantly, the quality of the products and services that we deliver to our customers." He adds that Sound United's brand acquisitions have also been a career highlight for him. "Together, we made something out of nothing; it's been a wild and satisfying ride and I can't wait for what is next," Duffy says. "We've identified powerhouse brands like Denon, Marantz, Polk Audio, Definitive Technology, Classé, and now Bowers & Wilkins — brands that have prospered for decades, developed by great people and amazing products — and we've created a portfolio that allows these brands to flourish."

Style Points

Regarding his management style, Duffy explains that Sound United's company values drive his own style, saying his personal style centers on four major points. These, he states, are as follows: "One – True North, which means we are intellectually honest. In other words, we aren't political, we are direct, and we strive to eliminate bureaucracy wherever possible. Two – The Band Comes First, in that we are very collegial. I love working with my team; teamwork is something I have always enjoyed, whether it's at work or playing sports. It's critical that each person knows their role and how to work well with others. We are a global enterprise, so we need to be able to extend that collaboration cross-country and cross-continent. Three – Own the Stage, which refers to personal accountability. I don't ask people to do things I wouldn't do myself. I wake up each morning feeling energized, hoping to do even better than the day before. And lastly, four – Bias for Action, which speaks to a relentless pursuit of perfection. Someone, somewhere, is always inventing something new, so we need to stay ahead of the curve. Lastly, I think our culture is

humble. We know the people who matter most are our customers and our employees."

Influencers

There are always influencers that impact a career, and Duffy points to a few, both inside and outside the CE industry. "In the CE industry, I admire Dave Limp, senior vice president of Devices and Services at Amazon.com. He's willing to take risks. I also admire Mike Mohan, president and COO of Best Buy. He's a straight shooter," he says. "And in terms of who has influenced me most, I'd have to say my Dad. My Dad grew up on a farm in Iowa. When I was a kid, he drove me and my brothers to Southern California, where he took a job teaching Latin. He's a very hard worker who is incredibly persistent, honest and an eternal optimist." When it comes to the keys to achieving success in this industry, Duffy again talks about team and the importance surrounding himself with top-notch talent. "The sum equation of your performance is everyone you work with. It's the weighted average of everyone you work with. This philosophy means it's important to hire the absolute best people you can and then let them lead. Putting all of those talents together in a way that leads to better outcomes for your customers is probably the best advice I've received. Without it, the company can't grow," he says.

Future Success

As for the future, Duffy sees technology leading the way, opening up new opportunities, saying, "Looking ahead, I believe music and entertainment will continue to become increasingly important to everyone, and it's all being enabled by technology. The pandemic has certainly sped up music and movie distribution in the home, and for better or for worse, our new reality brings new opportunities. The customer journey to upgrade their audio experience — what we like to call the 'flight to quality' — has also sped up." Interestingly, he looks at the evolution of the cheeseburger as a perfect analogy to the evolution of the audio industry, explaining, "Back in the 1940s, you'd buy a cheeseburger at a diner, and it was very

specialized. Then, McDonald's changed the game by shifting customers' focus to convenience, speed, and price. And yet, since then, it has become fragmented again, and now the gourmet, bespoke burger has swung back to being specialized."

"The good news is that the baseline of what listeners are looking for has shifted, and we're back to quality again."

Duffy sees audio going through something very similar, as there was a time when audio was commoditized, and audio products became diminished in value. "The good news is that the baseline of what listeners are looking for has shifted, and we're back to quality again. For example, audio customers simply expect compatibility with wireless streaming services now. As a result of this baseline shift, listeners today are starting to demand great acoustic quality again to re-elevate their entertainment experience," he points out. He sees that challenge at Sound United being one of exactly how to demonstrate that quality in a compelling way for consumers. "What is the true nature of what we sell? If our customers aren't aware of what's possible when it comes to audio and home theater, it's a disservice to them because they'll end up spending money on something that doesn't necessarily provide an excellent return on their investment. We want customers to love what they buy," he concludes. Once the pandemic is behind us all, Duffy adds that he is looking forward to once again being able to attend music festivals with his wife, as their rather eclectic "likes" list includes everything from Dermot Kennedy and Mumford & Sons, to Guns N' Roses.

CHAMPION OF THE INDEPENDENT RETAILER



TOM HICKMAN
| PRESIDENT & CHIEF MEMBER ADVOCATE
| NATIONWIDE MARKETING GROUP

BY MICHAEL MCENANEY

If you've had the pleasure of attending one of Nationwide's PrimeTime events, you've undoubtedly been introduced to Tom Hickman. And even if you weren't formally introduced, you have most certainly seen Tom at the event – it's unavoidable, as the man is everywhere. Whether delivering a keynote, heading up a session, or on the show floor taking with retailers, Hickman has been doing it all for Nationwide since 2012.

In short, Leo Durocher was wrong. Simply stated, this is a nice guy who has clearly finished first. Hickman explains that his beginnings in

retail were spent helping out in any way he could in his step-parents' family-owned appliance stores in Florida in the '80s.

"I worked at one of the stores after school and on the weekends. I started out sweeping the warehouse, baling cardboard and unloading trucks. After several years, I moved on to driving a truck and delivering appliances. It was a great introduction to the world of independent retail," he recalls.

Hickman adds an all-too-familiar tale regarding the business that directly connects him to his present role at Nationwide.

"My family's business went out of business in 1991. Part of that was due to the big-box stores that opened up down the street from us. But another factor, I think, is that we weren't a member of a buying group," he explains. "And maybe if we had been, we would have fared better. So, my passion for independent retailers and the value that buying groups like Nationwide Marketing Group bring to the channel, that's real. It's earned. And it's why I wake up and do what I do every single day."

Hickman later moved to Miami and began working for BrandsMart USA where, as a retail

Congratulations 2021 Dealerscope Hall of Fame Inductees



Tom Hickman
President &
Chief Member Advocate
Nationwide Marketing Group



Peter Weedfald
Senior Vice President,
Sales & Marketing
SHARP Home Appliances

For your tireless service and dedication to the Independent channel. We are inspired by your leadership and proud to work beside you every day.



salesperson, he sold computers and televisions, eventually working his way up the ladder to a manager position.

"After a few years, I had the opportunity to join Toshiba, a global leader in electronics. I started out as a trainer and then moved up to become a key account manager for the Southeast, Latin America and the Caribbean," he explains. "Over time, I led the Toshiba business for key national accounts, including Best Buy, Target, Costco and Amazon, and then also started to call on buying groups, including Nationwide." This was Hickman's initial introduction to the two men who would become mentors for him and who ultimately brought him into the Nationwide family – Robert Weisner and Les Kirk. "Over the years, I attended PrimeTime as a vendor, spoke to members, worked the trade show floor, and I became pretty close to Robert and Les," he said. "And while I was very happy at Toshiba, when they asked me to come lead the consumer electronics business for Nationwide, it felt like I was coming home. And I just couldn't pass up the opportunity."

And Hickman most certainly has no regrets about that decision, as his time with Nationwide has been fruitful – for both his many accomplishments as well as the people he has had the pleasure to work with.

"One of the things I'm most proud of during my time at Nationwide is the team that we've built. I used to judge success based on whether we were top in sales, or if our company was performing really, really well, but now I think that whoever builds the best team wins," he says. "And when I look around at the team of experts that we've assembled to support and fight for the independent retailer, I am in awe. And I can say with confidence that I'd much rather be known for being good at picking talent than any specific business metric. Because if you pick a quality team, the success that you've been searching for will naturally come out."

Influenced by Many

When it comes to the people in the industry that have influenced him the most during

his career, Hickman immediately admits he's been most fortunate in that area.

"I've been very lucky to have a number of mentors in the industry. Number one is Randy Johnson down at BrandsMart. He's not just a really, really bright guy and an industry icon, but he's also my grandfather. So, I'm very fortunate. Whenever I have a problem, he's the one I talk to."

"One of the things I'm most proud of during my time at Nationwide is the team that we've built."

Hickman adds, "I also had the benefit of meeting and getting to know Lee Guttman, one of the men who actually started Nationwide back in the 1970s. I was a pretty young guy when I was calling on Nationwide, so I didn't know him super well. But he was very influential guy and did a lot for independent retailers." He also credits a few close friends at Nationwide, as well as a few mentors from earlier in his career.

"And then, of course, Robert Weisner and Les Kirk from Nationwide, and Jerry Satoren and Rick Calacci, who hired me at Toshiba. Lastly, I would be remiss if I didn't mention the guy I grew up with in this business, Chris Larson. Our two decades of friendship navigating this industry have been a blessing and a constant source of growth and insight," he adds.

Putting Dealers First

When it comes to the best advice he's ever been given, in a career as long and successful as Hickman's, there's been a bunch. However, one conversation stands out.

"Right after I'd joined Nationwide, I was in Les Kirk's office one day, trying to figure something out. And I remember asking, 'How does this work? How does that work?' And I'll never

forget it. He said, 'Here's what you need to understand. If you take care of the membership, the rest of this business takes care of itself,'" he fondly recalls. "So, continuing to just keep the membership at the front and center of all the decisions that we make – that's been my North Star. And that's been pretty sage advice in growing this business to where it's at today." In thinking about what his legacy in this space might be, Hickman first mentions his family, saying, "My incredible wife, two amazing daughters and the rest of my family that I'm pretty passionate about. Without their support, I wouldn't be much of anywhere."

Regarding his career legacy, it's the charitable work that he's most proud to have put his fingerprints on.

"A lot of people know about Nationwide's work with No Child Hungry, and how our network has so far provided more than 1.3 million meals to feed hungry kids around the world, and that's something I've very proud to be a part of," he says. "Because harnessing our 5,000-plus members and 14,000 stores for the sake of business is one thing. But harnessing those people and organizations for the sake of helping others in need, it's incredible to watch."

A Peek at the Future

As someone who literally grew up in the CE business, Hickman is well-positioned to discuss the future it is headed into.

"Technology is going to continue to be incredibly anchored in our lives for a long time. Look at our day-to-day lives. Without technology, we wouldn't be teaching our kids, we wouldn't be working effectively, we wouldn't be having the same types of interactions that we currently have. So, I know it's going to continue to play an even more important role, not just in business, but in our daily lives," he says.

Hickman continues, "This is a boon for independent retailers. Look at what they've done to help people stay connected. When big-box stores shut down, independents continued to thrive and deliver and go inside people's homes because people needed things."

A TECHNOLOGY OPTIMIST



BRIDGET KARLIN

**| GLOBAL CHIEF TECHNOLOGY OFFICER AND VP
| IBM GLOBAL TECHNOLOGY SERVICES**

BY JESSICA GUYON

Bridget Karlin has had an outstanding career in the technology industry that spans 30-plus years and a résumé that includes several executive positions at a number of top companies. In the process, she's racked up numerous awards for her achievements, such as the 2019 National Technology Humanitarian Award, the 2019 Women in Consumer Technology Legacy Award, the Industrial IoT 5G Innovators award, the Malcolm Baldrige National Quality award, the Bell Labs Technology Innovator award, and, her latest, Dealerscope's 2021 Hall of Fame award. But for Karlin, it's less about looking into a rear-view mirror at a promo-

tion and awards path and more about having a career filled with meaningful work that motivates her to keep going.

A Unique Entry into Tech

Karlin grew up in Los Angeles and was a self-described "adventure-seeker," always looking for new trails to explore, mountains to climb, and places to run. She attended the University of California, Santa Barbara where she earned her Bachelor of Arts degree in Political Science/Business with aspirations to become a lawyer. After graduation, she took a job at a bank in order to pay for law school. Though

it was a field far different than the one she'd find herself in years later, banking helped get her hands dirty in understanding new products that leveraged advanced technology – a skill that would prove to be useful as she launched her own software company.

In 1984, Karlin co-founded Thinqe Systems, which would soon become a leading U.S.-based provider of mobile enterprise applications for sales force automation (SFA) and field force automation (FFA). Thinqe Systems expanded to 43 countries and became available in several languages. Top brands like Nestle, 7Up, Keebler, Anheuser-Busch, and many

others were quick to adopt the new technology that helped get their products on the shelves when and where people wanted them. Karlin spent the next 13 years acting as President and Chairperson of the company, which was later acquired by MEI.

Intel, IBM, and Beyond

Soon after leaving Thinqe Systems, Karlin became the General Manager of Intel's Internet of Things (IoT) Strategy and Integrated Products Division, General Manager of the Intel Hybrid Cloud Services business and GM of Intel's Data Center software portfolio. She was responsible for Intel's IoT Platform and Product Portfolio Marketing, GTM strategies and for managing the commercialization of IoT partner-branded offerings leveraging Intel's silicon, software and services that engage Intel's ecosystem of partners to accelerate market adoption.

"I always set up a management system where we have empowerment at all levels and opportunities for innovation in every role."

Karlin recalls an important piece of advice she was given by her boss at Intel, who said, "It's not about what you want to be, it's about what you want to do." Karlin internalized this advice and applies it today in her management style at IBM.

"I always set up a management system where we have empowerment at all levels and opportunities for innovation in every role," says Karlin. "It's important to ensure that everyone has work that is both challenging and interesting to them."

"I consider myself a technology optimist; I look at technology not just as a way to solve problems but for its capabilities in creating entirely new experiences."

In her current role as the Global Managing Director, Chief Technology Officer and VP of IBM's Global Technology Services business, Karlin is responsible for driving client digital transformation by leveraging AI, Automation, Cloud, Security and Open Source technologies, and for modernizing enterprise applications and infrastructure environments that enable new architectures, support cloud migration, containerization and re-factoring to operate on hybrid, multi-cloud, intelligent infrastructure services. Her efforts enable clients to benefit from increased security, cognitive efficiency, increased resiliency, continuous compliance with flexibility and control of their business.

Keeping IBM at the Forefront

Karlin has quite the workload, managing 750,000 servers alongside a global team of distinguished engineers, data scientists and advanced architects. She defines the technology vision, sets the strategy and provides the technical leadership that drives collaboration globally, keeping IBM at the forefront of the industry by building technical communities with developers and strategic ecosystem partners to flourish in thought leadership, innovation and business value to clients.

She leads innovation across the entire Software and Services Delivery lifecycle, leveraging Agile methods, DevSecOps and AIOps to facilitate the continuous engineering with

continuous development and adoption of hybrid, multi-cloud capabilities across Network, Compute, Mainframe and Storage domains. Karlin also makes it a priority to give back to the industry she loves and inspire others with her wealth of knowledge and experience. Karlin serves on the board of Dana Incorporated (DAN), a Fortune 500 company, and is the Chairman of the Executive Board of Directors of CTA/CES (the Consumer Technology Association). She also works closely with U.S. Government Administration and policy makers to influence legislation ranging from AI, Automation and Data Privacy to CyberSecurity and next-generation 5G, advising that policy keeps pace with technology innovation to enable business, environment and social transformation across a global marketplace.

"We're living in an extraordinary time," says Karlin. "It is the era of data and AI, and it's transforming entire industries. I consider myself a technology optimist; I look at technology not just as a way to solve problems but for its capabilities in creating entirely new experiences."

Prior to IBM, Bridget Karlin was general manager of the Internet of Things (IoT) Strategy and Integrated Products Division at Intel Corporation, where she also served as general manager for the company's Hybrid Cloud Services. Karlin has held executive positions at a number of other technology companies, as well, including CompuCom Systems and Thinqe Systems, which she founded. She also serves on Dana's Nominating and Corporate Governance Committee along with the Technology and Sustainability Committee.



(Image 1)
With Jon Myer, her predecessor as PARA president

(Image 2)
With Definitive's Michelle Troupe and InGear PR's Veronica Esbona

SHATTERING THE CE GLASS CEILING

**ROBERTA LEWIS | FOUNDER & PRINCIPAL
| ROBERTA LEWIS & ASSOCIATES, LLC**

BY NANCY KLOSEK

For Dealerscope Hall of Fame honoree Roberta Lewis, founder and principal of the PR, marketing and consulting firm Roberta Lewis & Associates, LLC, her current position represents the latest career achievement in of a four-decades-long string of successes in the consumer electronics trade. During that stretch of time, she has made a mark in so many ways and in so many areas, helping to redefine and shape the industry from the inside as a powerful woman in what has traditionally been a male-dominated field.

She grew up in Houston, and her first job in the industry was at three-store Houston-based Home Entertainment of Texas, regarded as one of the dominant regional consumer electronics (CE) retailers, and whose owner was the audio retailing entrepreneur, the late Joseph (Joe) Brown. "Joe was at the forefront of advancing a woman to the helm," she recalls, citing him as a career mentor. "He was followed and loved by many in the business, the city – and his staff as well. We worked hard for Joe, and for one another... Joe nurtured my passion and helped me grow my talents," she recalls. "He pushed and challenged me every day for 19 years... If it were not for him, I might not be in the CE industry."

She rose through the ranks to eventually become Home Entertainment's president, and was invited to join the PRO buying group "before other retailers of our size," she points out – and so, Lewis became a PRO Group board of director member.

Breaking Ground at PARA & Elsewhere

She was also invited to become a board member for PARA (the Professional Audio Video Retailers Association), one of the earliest national organizations of like-minded A/V retailers that took specialty dealers' needs to heart, offering them the chance for collegiality, idea-sharing and networking. There, she served as such, prior to being elected VP of the group and then, serving as its president in the late '90s. "I was the first and only female president of PARA, and [member] of the PRO Group board... It was a fun time."

At about that time, Home Entertainment, which had grown into a \$25 million seven-store chain, was sold to Tweeter Home Entertainment Group, and Lewis was appointed VP for the Texas region and National Custom Installation Manager.

It was at the '99 PARA Conference that Lewis was approached by ex-Harman executive and Knowledgelinks Founder Sunil Mehrotra, the creator of the GetPlugged.com Internet portal, designed to enable independent retailers to join forces in a collaborative model to compete, market and sell online. "Most retailers were afraid of the future of online business," she says – adding, "I was intrigued." Then came the offer – accepted – to join Knowledgelinks as Executive VP/Chief Marketing Officer. Lewis moved to Southern California and "together with a great team of people, we set off to pioneer CE Internet marketing and retailing." The enterprise made it through two funding rounds before being stymied by the dot-com bubble burst in 2000. "The business model was perfect," she reflects. "The dilemma was that consumers were not quite ready to hit the 'buy' button online yet... If Knowledgelinks could have sustained a decade longer, it could have saved many A/V dealerships and brands that closed."

The Vendor Perspective

Lewis then segued into the stage of her career where she would get to see CE life from the perspective of a vendor, joining United Speaker Systems/Phase Technology as Executive VP/VP of Sales; working for a speaker manufacturer and traveling the country providing her with what she terms "an invaluable experience." She says she highly regarded her time working with principals Bill and Ken Hecht: "We built some great products, grew sales, and enjoyed business every day with an incredible group of the best dealers in the country. It was a great time in our industry, as custom installation was in full bloom." When the business was sold in 2005, Lewis decided "to take a shot on my own." She parlayed her strengths in "marketing, sales, and growing people" into what others deemed a risky proposition, founding her current company that Fall.

Fast forward 15 years to the present, and Lewis heads up a thriving public relations and consulting firm that works with brands spanning the custom installation (CI), high-performance and CE-centric worlds. Having served this industry as a specialty/CI retailer, Internet pioneer, manufacturer and associations leader, Lewis is able to provide her clients with a wealth of wide and relevant experience that enables her to answer their current needs – and has readied her to respond to future ones. These clients, past and present, include: Origin Acoustics, Adept Audio, Cleer Audio, ATC Loudspeakers/Lone Mountain Audio, iRoom iO, Phase Technology, projectiondesign, Soundcast, Pro Audio, Visual Sports, Antelope Audio and Audiophile Systems.

Management Style

Lewis says she has always believed in leading by example. "If my staff was working, I was working, too... People will work hard and respect you if you are genuine and truly care for them and their families... I appreciate leaders who take the time to say, 'Thank you! Can I help you? Great job!' and share that you are important to their success. It is the team, not an

individual, that makes great business happen." Lewis' personal life is enriched by many individuals, and some of those she names include her husband, who is in the aviation industry, a son and two stepdaughters in college, a stepson who is in the oil industry, three grandchildren, and her mother. She adds that she values and has been influenced by "too many" CE executives to name in addition to her mentor, Joe Brown. "My list would have 30 or 40, if named. This industry is full of hard-working, caring and compassionate people."

And as for the consumer technology business's future, she is optimistic. "Our industry will survive and grow. Our business is the HOME, for the most part, and making people's lives easier while there. As an industry, we must continue to evolve progressively to compete with the modern conveniences of home delivery, Internet shopping, security and on-demand home services. Just as Internet retailing unfolded and continues to expand, CE/CI retailing must also create and participate in collaborative opportunities to keep our ground – and gain more. The world is ours, as long as we don't allow the tech giants [to co-opt] our advantages."

Lewis heads up a thriving public relations and consulting firm that works with brands spanning the custom installation (CI), high-performance and CE-centric worlds. Having served this industry as a specialty/CI retailer, Internet pioneer, manufacturer and associations leader, Lewis is able to provide her clients with a wealth of wide and relevant experience that enables her to answer their current needs – and has readied her to respond to future ones.

"I would like to die on Mars – just not on impact."

Elon Musk



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TECH RENAISSANCE MAN

PETER WEEDFALD

| SENIOR VICE PRESIDENT, SALES & MARKETING

| SHARP ELECTRONICS MARKETING CO. OF AMERICA (SEMCA)

BY NANCY KLOSEK

Dealerscope 2021 Hall of Fame honoree Peter Weedfald of Sharp has what is one of the industry's most well-rounded and rich consumer technology résumés – a CV replete with major milestones revealing his wide-ranging and profound impact on our industry in the roles of manufacturing, retailing and even publishing. Indeed, he can trace his deep roots in and connection to tech products from his earliest working days, all the way to his present position, where he serves as Sharp Electronics Marketing Co. of America's Senior Vice President, Sales & Marketing.

His first career years were spent in sales at Lanier Business Products, pitching the merits of word processors – the then-newest de

facto office tool – door to door in NYC's West Side high-rise office buildings. It was there, he tells Dealerscope, that he first learned how to adroitly handle sales objections, excelling in a business where personnel turnover averaged 80 percent. "I was blessed to experience that," Weedfald recalls. And, he says, it primed him for future steps along his career path.

Through the '90s, he held executive positions at media company Ziff Davis across their print titles, which included PC Magazine, Windows Sources, MacUser, and Computer Shopper. Then he moved into the vendor side of tech, serving as an executive for consumer display company ViewSonic. Thereafter, Samsung – then a nascent U.S. brand presence, called

upon Weedfald's expertise and savvy to help it deepen its foothold in the American market. He served as Samsung's executive VP of sales, marketing and operations, as well as CMO for Samsung North America from 2001 to 2006, where he led a team that managed CE and home appliance product initiatives.

Following his tenure at Samsung, he took on a role at retailer Circuit City as Senior VP, Chief Marketing Officer, where he led a team of 260 in multiple areas including brand management, research, PR, management of the website, and advertising. And prior to joining Sharp six years ago, he was president of a GE joint venture formed to globally market and support GE HTDVs, and then assumed the mantle of

consultant for GE as President of Gen One Ventures, supporting the GE Ventures & Licensing Group.

Teamwork: The Key to Success

Weedfald credits the string of successes he has built upon in his CE career with what he characterizes as "the greatest highlight – the people I've been fortunate to run with and work with, and who believe in my style of leadership. The art of the possible is only possible if the promise you promulgate to your team can be effectuated. That's how we build our personal and business brands. I believe in being a team member but also the pilot for the storm, meaning leading from behind, and offering mentorship about how to be successful." He cites his Sharp colleagues as both inspirational and mentoring to him. Of Jim Sanduski, president of Sharp Home Electronics Co. of America, he says: "He is very strong mentor in the language of leadership and in the dignity of knowledge, and in how to treat people in our company." Also key guiding influences are the dealers and distributors – partners – he engages with every day, he says.

A Wide Scope of Experience

Weedfald's universe, clearly, encompasses his business accomplishments, but also extends far beyond those. He has been married for 40 years, and his numerous personal interests serve to complete the picture of an impactful CE business executive and person. He says he is most proud of some of the ways he has found to give back to society – namely, having a "heart for the innocent," through fundraising he's done for children's charities. He is author of a book, Green Reign Leadership, that offers executives observations on effective personal leadership, and he donates the sales proceeds to those charities. And he is also an accomplished pianist and composer, having produced and published 150 songs in the cloud and on YouTube. Weedfald crystallized for Dealerscope an overarching philosophy that has carried through a distinguished career to his activities at Sharp. "Sales plus marketing equals W-I-N. Many companies have their sales organizations on one side of the building and their marketing on the other.

We work really hard together as a team at Sharp to unite them as one force enveloped together, giving us the unbridled thrill to bring all that expertise and focus on the customer, 360 degrees... and unified."

Creativity and Relevancy

Creativity and relevancy are two aspirational goals that have driven and steered Weedfald all along in business, and he says those can serve dealers just as well moving forward, in today's challenging circumstances, and in what he terms as "the cold steel of a digital economy." He expresses confidence that revenue, profit and growth will come "for those who have the will, and who recognize what is needed, from a technology standpoint; they will be huge winners."



(Image 1)
During his media days, posing at the 1995 CES with singer Gladys Knight

(Image 2)
Weedfald at the 2018 Team Sharp sales meeting



CONSISTENTLY “WONDERFUL” FOR AN ENTIRE CAREER

NANCY KLOSEK | EDITOR IN CHIEF | DEALERSCOPE

BY MICHAEL MCENANEY

It was with tremendous excitement that the staff of Dealerscope made the rather easy decision to include our soon-to-be-retired Editor In Chief, Nancy Klosek, in the Dealerscope Hall of Fame.

After all, when you've been covering the consumer electronics industry for close to 40 years, and the first thing everyone says whenever your name comes up is, "Oh, I love her. What a wonderful person," you've clearly been doing something right. Born in Brooklyn, N.Y. and raised and still living in the Queens

house where she grew up, she admits to being a "sticker" – someone who thrives in familiar surroundings. You can add innumerable CES shows to that list of familiar surroundings as well. Her long and varied career in publishing began back in the late '70s, as after graduating from NYU, she took a job with a leisure boating trade publication.

"I learned about the value of B-to-B magazines early on, and the nuts and bolts of how to put a 'book' together in the pre-desktop-publishing era of manual typewriters, rubber cement, photo-cropping tools and china markers," she

recalls. "I had some great colleagues there – wonderful writers and reporters, including current CE Daily Managing Editor Paul Gluckman – all of whom eventually segued into consumer electronics publishing!"

An Affinity for Japanese Culture

She credits Gluckman with her eventual move to the CE industry, as he helped her land a job in 1983 working for AudioVideo International, a Japanese-owned CE trade magazine. "I remained there for 21 years. In that stretch, I cul-

tivated longstanding industry friendships with press colleagues, dealers and vendors. I also developed ties with my Japanese colleagues that endure to this day, as well as gaining a great fondness for Japanese customs and culture," she adds.

among such bright, funny editors here at Dealerscope, and to make friends with and pal around with reporters who work for the



Scenes from a 1989 Panasonic Japan media trip

In 2004, she phased into the post of a 'work-from-home' editor to report and write for Dealerscope Magazine and its then-sister publication for installation professionals, Custom Retailer. Some 16 years later, she will retire as the Editor in Chief of both Dealerscope and of CT Lab Global Media's custom integration trade publication, Connected Design.

When asked to name a few career memories that stand out among a long list, she says, "There are many, many highlights, but I would have to say my frequent travels to Japan, courtesy of Panasonic and Sony, are right up there. Also, being around this industry on the cusp of major technology intros – the first press conference I attended was the Philips Compact Disc technology debut – has been a privilege." However, as is so often the case, the people she has encountered along the way have left the most lasting impression.

"I have to say, also, what a joy it's been to work

competition," she admits. "I have also enjoyed collaborating side by side with sterling PR, marketing and sales people (including my current colleagues at Dealerscope and Connected Design), and have been fortunate to be able to engage with and write about industry legends. It was never a chore to get a terrific quote (usually over a bourbon) from colorful individuals like the late Joe Clayton of DISH and RCA."

One of the most enjoyable benefits of working as the editor of any magazine is the travel, and Klosek's fondest memories revolve around those trips.

"There are so many great memories from the travel, it's very difficult to pick just a few, but here's a partial list: The trips to Japan – always memorable. Then there were 37 years of attending (and wearing out shoe leather) at all those non-virtual CES Shows, press junkets, and distributor and buying group meetings that have taken me to Las Vegas and countless other U.S. cities, and to many corners of the globe – including Berlin, to cover our parent company's IFA show," she recalls. "And all these trips

were made so that I could report on a what is a really fun subject: consumer electronics. I have been very lucky."

As for the future of the industry she has so loved to cover, in typical Klosek fashion, she is concerned about her retail readers.

"I am hopeful that online CE shopping, which had a foothold pre-pandemic but has really gained ground exponentially as COVID has continued, will not end up totally usurping the showroom experience that the lion's share of Dealerscope's readers are so good at providing," she says. "High touch' is the mantra of the very best retailers, and it never ceases to amaze me how these entrepreneurs manage to so nimbly adapt to all manner of adverse circumstances. Long may they reign!"

She plans on keeping her foot in the door, post-retirement, as her aforementioned tendency to be a "sticker" will undoubtedly make it tough to stay away completely. Couple that with our desire to want her to hang around for a while longer. And to that, we add, "You're not getting rid of us that easily, Ms. Klosek."

DEALERSCOPE
Q&A
FEATURE

SCORING POINTS IN SERVICE & SUPPLY

How buying groups and distributors are delivering home runs for dealers and integrators in the face of COVID-19

INTERVIEWS BY NANCY KLOSEK

Dealerscope: What in general is most helpful to your business during COVID-19 about dealing with distributors, besides timely delivery and fair pricing? And what is most helpful about buying group activities during this time?



Franklin Karp

COO,
Audio Video Systems,
Plainview, N.Y.

Franklin Karp, COO, Audio Video Systems, Plainview, N.Y.: Our local distributors are literally on the same block as our offices... So proximity is a very important asset for us. Until June we were closed except for some jobs on Long Island. We had some people working out East, and were considered essential because of I.T., but Manhattan was shut down. By having our distributors open, if they had it in stock, you were golden, because shipments slowed down dramatically. Some vendors did close down, so just getting stuff from Point A to Point B became

a real challenge. And China was shut down, so as they ran out of goods, it became a bigger problem; some just didn't have the ability to fill orders. So it became important for us to be able to pull from a couple of different guys locally, if they had it. They kept us apprised of their inventory positions and that was very helpful. I can't speak for other buying groups, but I know what mine did. Early on, they put together roundtables of members across the country and had sessions conducted by management to talk about situations that each member was going through. And they also started talking about forecasting so they could get that data back to our vendor partners, so they could, in turn, have a better idea what we were thinking. In some cases, it was just sticking a wet thumb in the air and checking the wind, because you didn't know – in some parts of the country, they weren't closed down. So it was a matter of trying to help our vendor partners understand when we would start writing real POs again, helping them forecast their needs, and on the other side of the coin, they were giving us feedback about their

situations, so that promises were not made that couldn't be kept. Most integrators tried to operate lean, and not had had a lot of inventory. Service was an exception, which we did a lot of, during March through June. That never slowed down. There was lots of back-and-forth information sharing [with the group], and they were interested in what we were seeing, and we got good feedback from them about inventory positions, strengths and weaknesses. It was very valuable. We also had roundtables amongst dealer members, talking about what we were seeing within each market. We did [Zoom meetings] for the months leading up to literally the time of the Fall meeting, which was done completely virtually. The only complaint I heard about it was that we had too much content! It was very well received and well done, and I have to say that they went over and above to stay in touch with members and get us as much information as they could – and get feedback from us to the vendors. We had vendors and members talking together every other week – the information flow was going

both ways. It's really about communicating with your vendor partners. Everybody intrinsically should know that the reason somebody's business is down is because of this. Everyone understanding and knowing what's going on in a particular market is key. The buying group people reinforce that – and at the same time, they're doing their best to shepherd members into supporting vendors where and when they can. So it's a two-way street. Everyone's trying to maximize profits and in some cases there's nothing you can do to hit the numbers [because of COVID], and the manufacturers are saying, here's what we can do to soften the blow – and because you've been forthcoming with them and they want to continue the partnership, they're looking at ways to try and do something else. And that's important. They're willing to support their partners. Maybe they can't give the full effect, but maybe there's a way to help soften the blow.



Aaron Sholtis

Founder & President,
HiDEF Lifestyle,
Harrisburg, PA

Aaron Sholtis, Founder & President, HiDEF Lifestyle, Harrisburg, PA.: An interesting comment was made by our buying group director, which was, when we see a huge event like a pandemic happen, we typically don't see a change in the way business is being done, or in how consumer habits are trending – it just speeds everything up. And that's kind of true of COVID. Ecommerce had already been a massive trend that showed no signs of slowing. COVID increased that dramatically. And retail was hurting prior to COVID, and that was definitely accelerated. On the flip side, in the housing market, people are questioning how long that market can sustain this. A realtor friend said Millennials are purchasing housing now where they hadn't before. Interest rates are low. Again, one area where things have sped up is

Millennials coming into their own with their purchasing power. Regarding COVID and these comments about acceleration, the technologies, or the logistical abilities of the distributors – and buying groups, to some degree – have been magnified. We have supply-chain issues, and ecommerce has exploded in almost every category, and information flow has obviously changed drastically. So the most valuable thing to us is staying current with information on a daily basis, because everything is hyper-sensitized now. For example, if a consumer is in stay-at-home mode, they're going to be more critical about receiving their service or their product exactly when they expect it. Early on, with the COVID lockdowns, every company's response was, expect longer delays. But that's vanished somewhat. Now, people are very critical about waiting on anything. But distributors have stepped up to the plate. Most of the ones we deal with, and vendors alike, are working from home or remotely. So it's not inconvenient for them to log on for 10 minutes and do an update if they have some down time at home. Everybody's trying to push information efficiently and on top of that, everyone seems to be more flexible now.

In what ways can distributors and buying groups be helpful in 2021 in softening the impact and business fallout from COVID, and the new challenges it will pose for you next year?

Karp: What can distributors do through the rest of the year? Very simple – make sure they stay current with their suppliers so that they have inventory. It's a battle in some cases – especially when you're talking video. There are shortages in certain categories – did they forecast properly, and maybe bought heavy in a certain screen size and have goods that other guys don't have?... That's taking your intel from your dealers and saying, 'Hey, I'd better buy a lot of 85s while I can

get them...' Guys who were in tune with their market maybe were in better shape. Then, the manufacturers don't say it, but it started long enough ago that they probably adjusted their production cycle...

Sholtis: Every one of the committees in the buying group has had calls in relation to events for 2021 – do we want to try to have physical events, what are the pluses and minuses, and so on. They're trying to fine-tune their information flow and communication with all the members and with the vendors as well. That's one thing; from the buying group side, they understand there can be too much information as well [because vendors are keeping dealers apprised of some of the very same information about availability]. The group has always been good at communicating with dealers and taking feedback to decide what's pertinent and what isn't. So filtering that out to the group is important, and so is making sure vendors are staying transparent and are adjusting based on everyone's needs as it relates to supply chain. It's more critical now than ever that we dealers make sure we know what the next 30 days or 90 days are going to look like. Regarding distributors, there's still a large need for most to embrace technology. We use software to help us automate inventory flow and order flow in and out of our system. The more automation everyone has in place, the easier it is to stay efficient and react faster, and that's something that unfortunately isn't universal across all. It's a huge cost savings to us, and it also helps us increase sales dramatically. If we know what's in stock the minute they do [it's helpful]. And also monitoring the order flow saves money and increases the customer experience...

For additional comments, check out the Dealerscope January digimag at this link: <https://digimag.dealerscope.com/january-issue-2021>



"In today's rapidly changing business environment, it is simply not good enough to be fast – you also have to be smart. Simply being fast with no strategic plan can result in a pointless game of running around in circles. I'm incredibly proud of the smart team of technology experts and educators we've built at HTSA. With our industry-leading education, powerful member and technology brand partnerships... HTSA will continue to conquer any business challenges that arise."

– Jon Robbins, Executive Director

No Matter the Challenge, HTSA Creates New Opportunities to Drive Member Success

Home Technology Specialists of America (HTSA) is the industry's leading international trade consortium comprised of nearly 100 members across North America. With a compelling mixture of market-dominant dealer and integrator members, supported by the participation of the finest technology manufacturers – coupled with a proactive Board of Directors and innovative leadership – HTSA successfully navigates always-changing and ever-challenging business environments. This fact is especially so in the case of business environments as unprecedented as 2020's COVID-19 pandemic.

How is HTSA able to remain the perennial industry leader?

First, HTSA group management starts by creating powerful group resources that are continuously updated as market conditions or technology trends change. HTSA has the industry's finest technology experts and educators on staff and available to members full-time. They are charged with creating, presenting, and supporting impactful educational initiatives that drive member success.

Second, a bold management team – in conjunction with the highly engaged Board of Directors – continually assesses technology and market opportunities to target those areas most likely to drive member growth and profits.

Three years ago, HTSA was the first organization to lead the industry into a dramatic expansion of the lighting category – which for many integrators at that time consisted solely of lighting control. With a bold plan crafted at the direction of Tom Doherty, HTSA's Director of New Technology Initiatives and an industry lighting expert, the group charted a new course that expanded well beyond control/automation by adding a large assortment of lighting fixtures, as well as profitable design services.

With custom-created educational programs designed in conjunction with the American Lighting Association (ALA), the majority of HTSA members became Certified Lighting Specialists. Thanks to this training and certification, members saw their share of local markets grow, the share of the client's budget expand – and most importantly, experienced tremendous revenue growth.

Just six months later, HTSA did it again, this time leading the charge into the then-nascent and now rapidly growing residential wellness segment. Partnering with leading wellness technology provider Delos, consortium members are now spearheading the expansion of the market for healthy home technologies that are more and more in demand by discerning clients.

No matter the challenge, HTSA creates new opportunities to drive member success.



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Tom Doherty offers members tips on how to succeed in lighting at the HTSA Virtual Fall Conference 2020



Jon Robbins delivers the State of the HTSA Union at the HTSA Virtual Fall Conference 2020



Keith Esterly delivers a humorous and impactful keynote presentation titled Let Go of the Vine at HTSA Virtual Fall Conference 2020



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DISTRIBUTOR/BUYING GROUP SECTION



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Even in today's unsettled and unpredictable marketplace, Members of Nationwide Marketing Group are thriving. In the face of immense challenges over the past year, Nationwide's vast network of dealers stood tall and embraced the unusual circumstances. Leaning on an array of digital, marketing, and financial and business services, dealers found opportunities to adapt and evolve while continuing to offer their customers innovative ways to shop with them — both in-store and online.

With more than 5,000 Members who operate some 14,000 storefronts, Nationwide's retailers represent the most influential voices in the Independent appliance, electronics, furniture, bedding, outdoor entertainment and connected services industries. The group's semi-annual PrimeTime events provide the largest gathering of Independent dealers in the channel's history — even when those gatherings have to happen in a virtual setting. Part product exhibition and buying show with some of the deepest deals of the year, and part educational conferences with a curriculum of hundreds of sessions, PrimeTime is attended by thousands of Members and Vendor Partners. It also provides Member-to-Member networking, access to key decision-makers and industry authorities, plus updates on the latest trends and issues affecting Members' businesses.



NATIONWIDE MARKETING GROUP

Tom Hickman,
President and Chief
Member Advocate

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- The Nationwide Learning Academy online, a mobile-optimized video learning platform with hundreds of new learning modules developed each year and hundreds of thousands of Member certifications annually.
- Nationwide's eXchange CE purchasing portal, featuring pricing comparisons and product information from the industry's leading CE distributors.

Now is a great time for Independents and an even better time for Members of Nationwide Marketing Group. Learn more at NationwideGroup.org.



Tom Hickman,
President and Chief
Member Advocate

DISTRIBUTOR/BUYING GROUP SECTION



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Public (NYSE: SNX)

Founded: 1988

Fred Towns, President

For Sales Inquiries:

Call: 800-234-0300

eMail: naesales@synnex.com

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New Age Electronics, a division of SYNEX Corporation, gives retailers the power to stand out from the crowd with a comprehensive product portfolio and customized solutions and services. Its teams conduct extensive research on the latest trends so retailers can stay ahead of the curve with the hottest products to satisfy preferences as consumers adapt to changing times. Premier services like merchandising, forecast management, supply chain management, concierge services, integration solutions, and electronic software download help make a positive impact on the retailer's bottom line.

As new products and innovations continue to transform the Consumer Technology industry, New Age Electronics provides leading offerings around smart home and connected products, devices supported by 5G and Wi-Fi 6, PCs and peripherals, gaming and accessories, audio, virtual reality, drones, and professional and medical-grade hygienic devices. Many of these products have new commercial applications with people working in hybrid and remote environments due to the pandemic. Regardless of the application, New Age Electronics delivers nontraditional tools and solutions to give customers the competitive edge. And with 30 years of industry experience, the company is an ideal launch pad for manufacturers looking to break into retail.

New Age Electronics' unique delivery program, Build a Box, enables retailers to "step out of the box" with customized solutions that provide unparalleled customer experiences. The program offers collaborative planning, forecasting and replenishment; bundling; pallet shippers; services; and electronic software downloads. It includes exclusive SKUs, custom packaging and smart home solutions, and also reflects important seasonal trends when consumers are motivated to purchase new products including Super Bowl, Mother's Day, Dads and Grads, Back-to-School and Holiday.

In 2021, New Age Electronics will advise retailers on how to deliver unparalleled technology experiences as consumer preferences continue to evolve due to the pandemic. The company will offer a series of virtual events including roadshows and all-star days. New Age will also be part of SYNEX Inspire, October 6-9, 2021, the company's largest partner event of the year.

New Age Electronics invites retailers to call to discuss how they can flourish in today's highly competitive retail environment and provide the best Consumer Technology solutions that effectively drive consumers to stores and online. The New Age Electronics team is your true partner in the retail journey to success.



Fred Towns,
President



Eric Kirkendall,
Senior Vice
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Lysle Elder,
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“We know your business and we make it our #1 priority by bringing you a diverse, cross-category product selection featuring solutions for every market and every customer.”



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Dennis Holzer,
Executive Director
412-531-2068

dholzer@powerhousealliance.com
www.powerhousealliance.com

PowerHouse Alliance members include: 21st Century (Garner, NC; Charlotte, NC; Atlanta, GA; Orlando, FL; Nashville, TN), AlarMax (Phoenix, AZ; Los Angeles, CA; Largo, FL; Atlanta, GA; Baltimore, MD; Beltsville, MD; Boston, MA; Las Vegas, NV; Manchester, NH; Hackensack, NJ; Bohemia, NY; Cincinnati, OH; Cleveland, OH; Columbus, OH; Pittsburgh, PA; Plymouth Meeting, PA; Dallas, TX; Houston, TX; San Antonio, TX; Charleston, WV), Davis Distribution (Newell, WV; Indianapolis, IN), ECD (Houston, TX; Dallas, TX; Austin, TX; San Antonio, TX), KOA CCTV (North Hollywood, CA; Glendale, CA; Anaheim, CA; Los Angeles, CA; Canoga Park, CA; Sylmar, CA; Las San Diego, CA; Vegas, NV), Mountain West (Salt Lake City, UT; Denver, CO; Scottsdale, AZ; Seattle, WA), Next Level Distribution (Jupiter, FL; Northbrook, IL; Elk Grove Village, IL; New Berlin, WI; Bloomington, MN), Pioneer Music Company (Chanute, KS; Lenexa, KS; Omaha, NE; Chesterfield, MO; Grimes, IA), Pro Audio Associates (Woburn, MA; Canton, MA), Sierra Select (North Highlands, CA), and Ui Supplies (Ramsey, NJ; Plainview, NY)

The PowerHouse Alliance distributes over 250 brands including: A2V, Samsung, Apple, Yamaha, MSE Audio, RTI, Hikvision, Focal, eero, VIZIO, JVC, Ubiquiti, Universal Remote Control, Luxul, Panasonic, SunFire, Sanus/Chief, Peerless AV, Legrand, Platinum Tools, DaLite, 2GIG, Nest, Wyrestorm, Digital Watchdog, Vanco, Middle Atlantic, Zigen, Yale, Kwikset, Just Add Power, Wilson, Power-shades, MantelMount, Techlogix, and more.

The PowerHouse Alliance

The PowerHouse Alliance is a national consortium of regional wholesale distributors delivering name brand products for custom installers, specialty dealers, large retailers, and industry buying groups in the residential and commercial audio/video, home entertainment, security, networking, IT and consumer electronics accessories markets. With 11 members that make up over 55 locations across the United States, the PowerHouse Alliance is the single largest distributor network with over 850,000 square feet of warehouse space offering over 250 top brands.

The PowerHouse Alliance stays updated on market changes and trends by staying in constant communication with each other, our vendors, and our dealers. As consumer demands shift, our members add new lines and products to meet the needs of the changing market and they also sell our house brand, A2V. The A2V brand was created to bring dealers high-quality products backed by long-term warranty, complimented by excellent dealer margins and an industry-leading rebate program. The A2V subwoofers, in-ceiling and outdoor speakers, HDMI cables, racks, mounts, and fiber are available at all PowerHouse Alliance member locations.

In addition to product support through top brands and the A2V line, the PowerHouse Alliance members support dealers with safe and easy access to all of the products and brands they need to complete any job whether through same day or next day delivery, curbside pick-up, or 24-hour ordering and will call. Members also support dealers with year-round, no-charge monthly trainings both online and at different locations (when possible during COVID) across the country so they can learn about the newest products, technologies, installation methods, and best practices available.

"Despite the challenges that this past year has presented, the PowerHouse Alliance continues to grow and support dealers with the expansion of our product distribution locations across the country," said Dennis Holzer, executive director for the PowerHouse Alliance. "The PowerHouse Alliance is a one-stop shop for dealers whether they're looking for home theater, networking, security or smart home products, we have over 250 brands available to meet their needs."



Dennis Holzer,
Executive Director

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UNBOXED

BY MICHAEL MCENANEY

A New Focus on Sharing

Brookstone's PhotoShare frame provides a collaborative family sharing effort

There have been quite a few starts and stops in the digital photo frame market over the years. However, the market today is offering much higher-quality products, at lower prices, with more of a focus on sharing, as opposed to merely displaying images.

The category's market size, according to researchers TechNavio, is poised to grow by \$47.19 million through 2023, progressing at a CAGR of over 1% during the forecast period. While not exactly astronomical numbers, the market is currently being driven by the high

adoption of smart devices and home automation products. The continued growth in the smart homes market, and more specifically smart home décor products, is a driving force in the evolution of the digital photo frame category. A smart home ecosystem provides the appropriate connectivity for all home décor products, as they can now be controlled remotely using smart connecting hubs. The smart frame is no exception.

Which brings us to the new PhotoShare frame from Brookstone, a digi frame product that

speaks directly to the aforementioned home décor product evolution. And with this introduction, Brookstone has made a key distinction, as the focus is clearly on sharing, as the name suggests. Countless previous digi frame incarnations put the focus on simply displaying digital images. The Brookstone PhotoShare makes the sharing of digital images central, and they also make it a collaborative effort, as the entire family can instantly send images to the frame at any time. And members outside of the immediate family can also get in on the fun once they add a PhotoShare frame to their

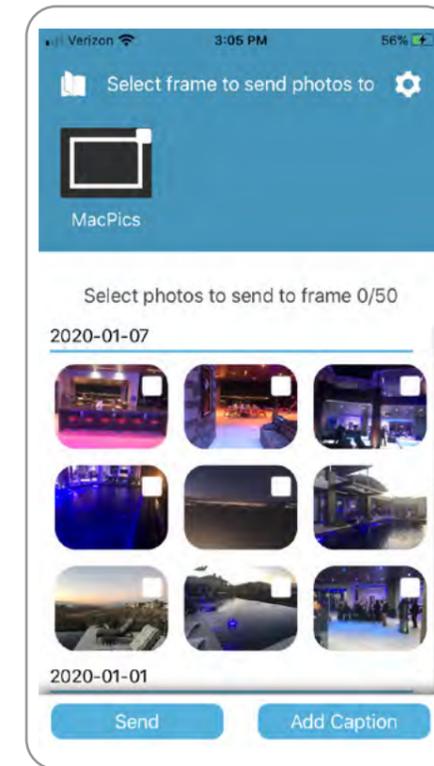
household, as the frame also includes a way to send images from frame to frame.

There are three frame sizes from Brookstone in the PhotoShare line – 14-, 10.1-, and 8-inch models – and this review was done using the 10.1-inch frame. On the back of the frame you'll find the power button, along with a few different connectivity ports: an SD card slot, USB slot, Micro USB port, and the DC barrel port for power. Brookstone also includes a base clip that oddly needs to be put together to allow the frame to stand upright. It's only two pieces but confounded me for a bit, but I digress.

The real power of the frame is found in the accompanying app, available on both Android and iOS, called "Photo-Share Frame." The app very simply walks you through the setup process, account creation and such, and once connected to your home Wi-Fi, uploading images to the device is a snap.

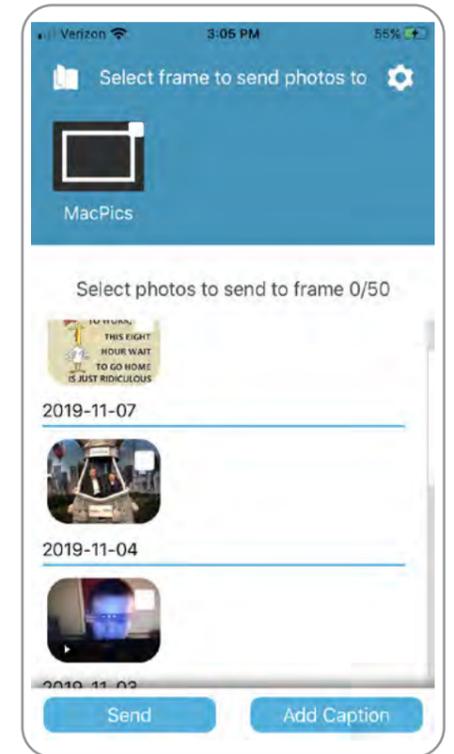
You'll see thumbnails of all the images on your phone in the app and when you want to move an image from your phone to the frame, you click on it and hit send. You can batch send as many as 50 at a time (frame holds 5,000 images). Images can be sent via email, Facebook or Google Photos directly to the frame as well.

Anyone you decide to share the app with can also send images to the frame, providing an easy way for friends and family to send you recent photos without your having to save and



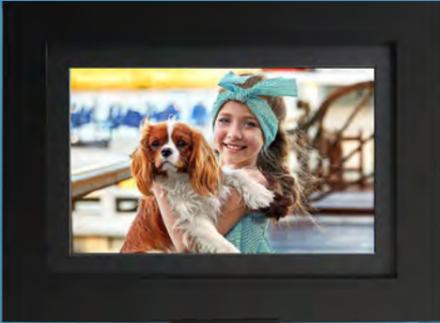
upload the pictures yourself. The device also features an on-screen clock that takes over the frame once the lights in the room have been shut off, a calendar, a built-in music and video player and the aforementioned USB and SD card ports for easy transfer of images from devices other than your phone.

The frame is priced at just under \$200, but we've seen it for as low as \$114, which is good news, as consumers have been reluctant to



spend much over \$100 in this category in the past. And the 8-inch model can be had for under \$100, so the category most certainly is getting more affordable of late.

The digital photo frame category was a crowded and confusing space a decade ago, with far too many inferior products making their way to consumers, resulting in a large percentage of unhappy users. The category has rerouted, and is now smoothly sailing along with the mother ship smart home category, and looking at a much brighter future as a result.



THE GOOD: The emphasis with the PhotoShare Frame is on sharing so loading images can be a collaborative family/friends effort.

THE BAD: The prices in this category still need to come down under \$100 - but at least Brookstone's 8-inch model has accomplished this.

THE PITCH: The digital frame category is in step with the current smart home décor product evolution and a smart device that has resurfaced in the minds of the consumer as a result.



Australia Lags Behind in Online Retailing But 'Dark Stores' Concept Gains Steam

Retail industry exhibits great diversity in The Land Down Under

There is far more to Australia than beaches, beer and shrimp on the barbie. There is a large retail sector as well as the 14th largest economy in the world. G'day to that, mate.

There are approximately 140,000 retail businesses in Australia, accounting for 4.1% of the total GDP (\$57.4B) and 10.7% of employment, according to IBIS World Research. The Australian retail industry also exhibits great diversity by: size of business, region, retail format, competition within sectors and in the nature of goods sold, the firm claims. Not unlike the rest of world, 2020 was a challenging year for Australian retailers, and the sector has actually been trending downward over the past half decade, as consumers now save more of their rising incomes, and their spending is increasingly directed towards a range of non-retail services. IBIS also points out that Australia lags behind a number of comparable countries in its development of online retailing. They estimate that online retailing represents just 6% of total Australian retail sales - made up of 4 percent domestic online (\$8.4 billion) and 2 percent from overseas (\$4.2 billion).

Other IBIS Findings:

- The Australian retail industry has met many competitive challenges in the past. Online retailing and the entry of new innovative global retailers are just the latest. The intensified competition is good for consumers, but is challenging for the industry which, as a whole, does not compare favorably in terms of productivity with many overseas countries. And the productivity gap appears to have widened over time.
- Retailers operate under several regulatory regimes that restrict their competitiveness and ability to innovate. Major restrictions which need to be addressed are: planning and zoning regulations which are complex, excessively prescriptive, and often anticompetitive; and trading hours

regulations which restrict the industry's ability to adapt and compete with online competitors and provide the convenience that consumers want.

Dark Store Concept

COVID-19 has most certainly challenged Australia's retail industry, but it has also provided opportunities and lessons in new ways to meet customer demand. IBIS explains that despite the pandemic, the retail industry remained the third biggest industry in the country in 2020. In responding to pandemic requirements, many retailers have adopted a mix of click-and-collect (book-and-shop, as it's referred to in Australia) and many have also moved their main portfolio into online distribution and/or e-commerce. Like the rest of the world's retailers, there has been increased demand for online shopping due to physical restrictions from the government, with many Australian retailers now establishing 'dark stores,' while closing some of their brick-and-mortar shops, to handle the increase in online shopping demands. A dark store is essentially a warehouse or distribution center that helps maintain the online shopping goods and they are similar in nature to shipping company storage; however, they are owned and managed by the retailer itself. These dark stores are not open to the public and instead have staff that pick inventory that is then sent to those who order online.

The Top Four Largest CE Retailers in Australia according to IBIS World Research

- Kogan.com Limited
- JB Hi-Fi Limited
- Apple Pty Limited
- Harvey Norman Holdings Ltd.

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Smart Displays a \$6.1B Market

According to the new market research report published by MarketsandMarkets, the global Smart Display Market size was valued at \$1.1 billion in 2020 and is projected to reach \$6.1 billion by 2025 for an astounding CAGR of 41.0% during the forecast period.



Smart Devices Rising

Parks Associates reports that 30% of U.S. broadband households own at least one a smart home device and 52% intend to purchase a smart home device in the next 12 months.



Over 1B 5G Connections

According to researcher IDC, the approximate number of 5G wireless connections in 2019 was 10 million. The research firm now predicts that number will grow to over 1 billion by 2023, for a 217.2% compound annual growth rate (CAGR) over the five-year period spanning 2019 through 2023.



\$26M Appliance Market in 2025

According to research from Statista.com, total revenue in the Household Appliances segment was projected to reach \$19.4M for 2020. Statista adds that revenue is expected to show an annual growth rate (CAGR 2020-2025) of 6.2%, resulting in a projected market volume of \$26.1M by 2025.



Retail IoT Market \$94B in 2025

The global Internet of Things in retail market size is expected to reach \$94.44B by 2025, according to a new report by Grand View Research, Inc., exhibiting a 21.5% CAGR during the forecast period. The evolution of this market has led to increased spending on connected technologies to monitor products, customer behavior, premises, and supply chain. Implementation and adoption of connected technologies solutions allow retailers to analyze and monitor existing processes to enhance them with incremental investments. (Image Courtesy of AbsolutData)

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