
ZAG NEWS

July sales will need more than luck!



Welcome to the summer edition of the ZAG newsletter. With many of the States facing floods and extreme weather, catching a break for sales is difficult. Do not fear, because we are now entering the heart of summer, where sales will heat up!

Check out what our President has to say on new trends and conservation efforts in the retail industry. ZAG Daddy also shares some show secrets, so do not miss his article. Sue gives some secrets on how to “let it go” in her mark down section. David has a lot to say about plastics in

Conservation Corner: read and be amazed. Tommy is doing

a little binning in this issue, so see his tips. Please enjoy your summer selling season and remember ZAG is always here to help you and your retail operation.

In the picture to the left, Ross will bring you luck and Melinda will keep the Force strong for your summer sales!

Save the Dates:

Vegas Market

July 28th - Protect Independent Store from 4pm-5pm, cocktails to follow from 5pm-6pm (Pavilion 1, meeting Room)

July 30th - Learn and Earn from 8:30am to 10am (Pavilion 1, meeting Room)

Las Vegas, Gift and Souvenir Show

October 3rd -Networking Breakfast at 8:00am to 9:30am (TBA) and Visual Display Ideas at 11am (Sample Store)

October 3rd - **ZAG Mixer**, opens at the end of the show (TBA)

TN Shows

November 6th – Buyer Breakfast, *Retailing by Numbers* at 8am (Pigeon Forge)

November 7th - Made in USA Tour at 11am (Gatlinburg, Main Stage)

November 8th – ZAG Breakfast, *Keeping Retail in House* at 8am (Gatlinburg), Zootique Tour at 11am (ZAG Room, Gatlinburg)

ZAG Meeting

November 6th - Pigeon Forge starts at 5:30pm and you must **RSVP**

ZAG Mixer

November 7th – Rain forest Adventures at 6:00pm

Special thanks to: Las Vegas Market, Clarion/UX and Emerald Expositions for hosting our 2019 ZAG events.

A Message from our ZAG President



Happy summer!

The 2019 season is in full swing – despite rain, floods, tornadoes, etc! It is a busy time for all ZAG members and hopefully your season is off to a good start. Someone asked me the other day “what are the best new items in the gift shop this year?” I was excited to share the many new offerings which seem to have caught the visitor’s eye – new graphics on t-shirts (narwhals, llamas, sloths), smaller cross body bags, sequins on plush and accessories, and of course – Baby Shark product! While there are also many repeat items which continue to drive sales volume, our visitor definitely responds to what’s new!

Now that we are in season, it may be tempting to sit back and focus on the day-to-day business, but keep an eye on maintaining inventory levels to maximize the business through the end of the season. Mid-season reorders, utilizing last year sales data to forecast a likely trend, will insure a healthy bottom line to the very end of the season. Balance the potential of new items against proven categories from prior years to calculate the most realistic future need.

If you haven’t checked out the new and improved ZAG website, please take a look as we add content and make the site more functional. Our new sponsor section is updated quarterly to spotlight newest additions to our valued sponsor list. We’ve included a brief descriptive and the company logo to help you recognize each addition. We see this as a way to bring more value to our newsletter.

Lastly, there was a lot of discussion during our annual meeting last November, on steps individual institutions are taking to be more conservation minded. Ideas included sustainability efforts, fundraising through the gift shops (change for conservation and round up programs) and switching to non-single use plastic options for carrying home gift shop purchases.

At my institution, we’ve had success selling reusable straws (silicone, stainless steel and glass), switched from plastic to compostable utensils and from single use plastic bags to reusable, recycled plastic totes in the gift shops.

These steps (both small and large) are moving us in the right direction, and coincide with larger efforts at the institution and across the country. It’s important for us to walk the talk of conservation change!

In closing, I hope everyone has a successful summer season and I look forward to seeing and hearing from you at the fall shows. Please reach out if I can be of help in any way.

Thanks,
Judy

Ready, Set, Go....



It's Registration Time for fall shows

Even though July is usually miserably hot and humid here in Kansas, I like July because it gives my staff time to play catch up and we have time to think back, and to reflect on the busy spring and early summer season that we managed to live through. Some of us even have time to fondly reminisce about all those double parked school buses, lost cell phones, children without chaperones, and sticky counters, and they weren't all that bad.... OK maybe they were. July always slips away too fast and suddenly it's fall! And the counters are sticky again and we are out of mediums, and where are those backorders?

So just like that, it's time to place orders for fall and beyond, and to start making plans for fall gift shows. Suddenly I do need to talk to my rep and a long list of vendors. Yes it's *only* July but time is slipping away. So please don't anyone call to chit chat and ask me about sequins versus tie dye, or China, or what will be the new thing next year. People, I now have extra things to do. I need to book flights, find hotels, fine tune my buying skills, and hope that I schedule my show days with some sort of order. Thankfully all of the fall shows have listened to both buyers and vendors with numerous amenities being offered that ultimately help us to efficiently buy for the next season. Maybe just maybe you will even find bargains along the way. Here's a few suggestions that may help you as you prepare for a successful fall show season.

Don't put off registering for shows, even though it's easy to do. Once you have registered, most of the shows send you information regarding show planning, apps, buyer give a ways, and maps of the showrooms to help you plan your appointments. I know what you are saying right now...." Sure once I register, the phone starts ringing with requests for appointments and sales pitches." I say deal with it. Appointments are a necessary evil, the problem is to not under book, over book, or book without knowledge of the show's floor plan. Don't forget to leave a few gaps in your scheduling, in order to catch up after long appointments, or to leave gaps to have time to kick a few tires and check out new vendors. Take time to read through each show's website, which shouldn't take long and may result in your finding out about show specials, mixers or where the buyer's lounges are located.

For those of you who don't have the opportunity to go to shows, thanks for reading this far. It doesn't hurt to check out the show sites, and it's an easy way to come across new vendors, merchandise, or new reps. If you know of any ZAG buyers who are going to the shows, contact one of us and let us know what you are looking to buy. We will be glad to steer you in the right direction to find merchandise that may be featured at one of the fall shows.

So there you go. It's still July and it's still hot in Kansas but the show registration season is here and the fall season is quickly approaching, so get ready.....

ZAG Daddy



Conservation Corner

By David Whitaker

SINGLE USE PLASTICS and ZAG

Why do we need so much plastic in product packaging?

The ZAG Board approached three large suppliers in the toy and plush industry, last season to begin a dialogue on ways to reduce the amount of plastic used in packaging, plush toy fill and shipping. The reaction was positive and mirrored discussions begun with Aquarium partners. The timeline is long – at least 12 months or more and often achieved on a rolling basis. Response by the market has been good. In 2019 we continue this project and look forward to expanding our scope of vendors.

What have we seen in 2019?

Improved boxed toys by removing acetate windows and plastic ties



Polybags-A category needing a better packaging solution

Changing the traditional bag to zip closure Replacing plastic with a drawstring mesh bag



All ri



Clamshell Packaging removal; this solution is in transition and actually makes a more attractive package



Our Mission:

The ZAG mission is to educate our industry about the importance of the reducing single use plastic in packaging and partnering with key suppliers to find reasonable alternatives which are more ecologically sound and not cost prohibitive.

The toy category is low hanging fruit – a bigger challenge is the plush industry where plastic beads are still used as fill in some product, case pack quantities are packed with inner quantity bags, and tagging and labels are not always using recycled materials.

Improvements have been made: changes in plastic bead composition to use less plastic, sourcing alternative fill materials such as biopolymer plastics, and making a rolling change to tags made from 100% recycled paper and soy ink.

How can you make a difference?

- Ask your vendors about changes to toy packaging and the timing of new packaging standards being available.
- Lobby for additional changes with your key suppliers
- Test the available new packaging options
- Make your associates aware of the new and improved packaging
- Talk it up with your leadership team as a positive step in support of your institution's mission to be a conservation and sustainability leader.



Merchandising Tips

By Tommy Brown

What to do with bin items?

Many retail shops suffer with what to do with bin items. For those of you that do not know what bin items are; bin items are small inexpensive items in a retail location, costing \$5.00 or less. If you have a shop that lacks counter dump bins, or has no divided dump tables, do not have a heart attack, there is help. This help is slat-wall bins, these bins connect nicely to your existing slat-wall and gets those bin items into a nice organized area within your shop. Now your bin items look like a million dollars!

Email Tommy at tbrown@stlzoo.org for more details.



It's SHOWTIME....



By Judy Rancour

Believe it or not, the Fall show season is right around the corner. Scheduled just after most of our institutions have bid farewell to their visitors, we turn toward planning for the following year. We all have a focus on spending our travel budget wisely, and it is critical to make the most of our time in market. The current show calendar has a lot to offer:

Atlanta Gift show July 9-15
Las Vegas Gift show (LVMkt) July 28-Aug 1
Las Vegas Souvenir & Gift Show Oct 2-5
IGES/Smoky Mountain Gift Show Nov 5-9.

How can you make your travel experience as meaningful as possible? Here's a few suggestions to help you maximize your time at the show:

1. Plan, plan, plan – review your current season performance by vendor to understand where you were most successful. Look at sales dollars, sell-thru % and gross margin (profit) dollars
2. Be honest with yourself – your best sellers may not have been your most profitable items – were you price too aggressively? Can you afford to adjust for next year?
3. Where do you see opportunity to grow a category? Does something else need to shrink?
Making these evaluations before looking at product will help guide your time while in market, and will make conversations easier when deciding to make a change.
4. Once you've got your recap from the current year in hand, decide how to most effectively spend your time while in market. If you have a big growth area, it may be more important to add time for looking at new vendors, than working with repeat business that can be done at home or by phone.
5. Give yourself time to “look”. Walking the show either at the start or before you leave is an important way to get a snapshot of overall trends, to get excited by new product and to network with your peers. (I always gauge a new item by the “it caught my eye from the aisle” perspective. If it's catching my attention in a positive way, my visitors will likely also find it interesting).
6. Make some time for your own development. A value added component of the major trade shows are the many networking and professional development sessions held at no cost to the buyer. Whether you are new to the market, or wanting a refresher on a topic – we all need to continue to learn and develop our skills.
7. Lastly – have fun! The gift and souvenir industry is filled with genuinely nice people. Take some time to say hello to ZAG sponsors – even if you are not currently writing their line. It is much appreciated!

Let it go, let it go....

By: Sue Fahje



MARKDOWNS—what are Markdowns and why are they important?

As we start transitioning from summer to fall, it is important to understand how markdowns play a part in our business plans.

What is a Markdown?

A markdown is a reduction of the original retail price of merchandise. Compared to a sale or a “Manager’s Special”, a markdown is a permanent price reduction.

Markdowns are important because inventory has a “shelf-life”. Old product can steal space from new items. By taking a markdown, you’re making room for new inventory to sell at full

margin.

Markdowns are a certainty in retail. I know that sometimes I buy something I love but the guest doesn’t love it so much. But a markdown strategy done correctly can keep your dollars freed up to keep your shop inviting and introduce new merchandise. The guest that visits your store will decide early on if your items are a winner.

Retail markdowns also happen for a number of reasons.

- There might have been a buying error where too many units of an item were purchased and demand is not that great.
- Sizes, styles or colors of apparel could be wrong or only one size is left of an item.
- A product may have been priced too high to start with.
- Shops may just want to move seasonal merchandise, for example, fleece in the summer.



Negotiating Dating on Purchases

Use of dating on your purchases from our vendors will help offset the timing of markdowns. Dating means the vendor gives you extra time to pay your invoice. If you

attend buying shows, vendors will often offer extended dating as a show special. For example, Vendor X has a normal net 30 days after shipment for the invoice to be due. Vendor X as a show special may have net 60 or net 90. Because the vendor gives you more time to pay, you actually may be able to sell through your product and use the profit to pay your invoice.

Markdown timing

It is critical for our industry to identify and react on poor performing items when we still have attendance to move the product. I use a 60-day window and the measurements of a big holiday weekend (Memorial Day) to measure performance of my seasonal and regular items. Because the 4-day period is one of my largest sales periods, I decide that if I had a very poor performance on items, (after checking display presentation), I would take a 20% MD and revisit sell thru in 30 days. At that time an out of stock date is decided (usually the end of the season) and I set up a progression of price decreases to hit that date.

Another factor is your turnover ratio. A high turnover of inventory means less markdowns will be taken, while a lower turnover rate may mean deeper or more frequent markdowns. This strategy is dependent on factors such as weather and timing of peak merchandise sales periods. For example, I would most likely not mark down beach towels and flip flops after Memorial Day weekend with the summer ahead.

Clearance Presentation

You can add value to clearance items through “presentation”, even when merchandise is marked down.

Be sure to keep your clearance items organized. Carefully fold or hang apparel merchandise by color and/or size. Size rings also are helpful for the guest to find their size quickly.

Merchandise plush, giftware and toys the same way you would in the parent home.

Finally, no clearance area is complete without the proper signage to create interest for the guest.



In closing, markdowns can increase sales and maximize profits with a strategy. What is your plan?

DON'T MISS ZAG | MSA NETWORKING BREAKFAST PANEL, \$15 HOTEL RATES AT NATION'S LARGEST SOUVENIR SHOW

Believe it – you can stay at popular Las Vegas casino Excalibur for \$15.00 per night during the nation's largest souvenir show. The Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show is offering big travel savings for zoo and aquarium retailers who pre-register and attend the October 2-5, 2019 edition. To qualify for this special rate, visit www.lvsouvenirshow.com to register and then visit the travel page to book your room through Connections Housing to take advantage of this special savings.

Mark Your Calendar & Join Us for Networking Breakfast & Panel Discussion for Zoo and Aquarium Gift Shops on Thursday, October 3, 2019

Las Vegas Souvenir & Resort Gift Show will partner again with leading industry associations, Zoo & Aquarium Buyers Group (ZAG) and the Museum Store Association (MSA) to invite museum, zoo and aquarium shop buyers to enjoy a complimentary hot breakfast and an open panel discussion on **Thursday, October 3 from 8:30 -10:30 am**. The panel presentation will feature some of our industry's top retailers sharing retail sales, marketing and business-building strategies to help zoo, aquarium and museum store buyers make the most of the coming year! To claim the hotel offer and RSVP to the breakfast, click here http://info.urban-expo.com/lv19_specialhotelrate

IGES 20th YEAR CELEBRATION



The 2019 International Gift Exposition in the Smokies (IGES) has announced its 20th anniversary celebration events and giveaways throughout the show on Nov. 5-9, 2019, at the Sevierville Convention Center in Sevierville, TN, and the LeConte Center in Pigeon Forge, TN. This year's show is designed to pay tribute to IGES long-time attendees, exhibitors, as well as to the IGES founders - reviving old traditions and starting new ones!

And don't forget to bring your best dancin' boots for the IGES 20th Anniversary Hoedown at Sevierville Convention Center - in partnership with the City of Sevierville. The party starts at 6pm on Nov. 7, featuring live entertainment, dancing, cash giveaways, and more surprises! The 20th Anniversary Hoedown will include a montage in recognition of the decades-long history, the show, and its founders – Jerry Mayer and Susan Mills.

Looking for new vendors? Sevierville Convention Center is where you'll find them! Sevierville will also continue to host the Buyer Bucks rewards program, Cash and Carry Pavilion, offering gifts-to-go and wholesale merchandise, and the expanded Made in America Pavilion - featuring the new Gourmet Section and more than 100 brands. Don't forget to "Walk with Big Foot" in Pigeon Forge, too! Visit exhibitors in Yeti Village and Sasquatch Village inside the LeConte Center for a chance to win prizes daily.

"For 20 years, IGES has thrived in the gift show industry, and we could not have done it without the passion and dedication of our customers. Our 20th anniversary celebration is all about saying 'thank you' to those who have been here since the beginning, as well as those just discovering IGES for the first time," said Karalynn Sprouse, Executive Vice President, Emerald Expositions.

Registration is now open to attend. For assistance, please reach out to our new Buyer Concierge Manager Ruth Wheeler, ruth.wheeler@emeraldexpo.com (323) 817-2208, and specialist Miriam Velazquez, miriam.velazquez@emeraldexpo.com (323) 817-2932. Register here: http://bit.ly/IGES_WA7

IGES looks forward to welcoming back ZAG partners and thanks them for their long-term support.

Welcome New ZAG Sponsors



ARTS OF ECUADORTM

Featuring high quality hand-made products from some of the finest Ecuadorian artisans.

Zoos, Aquariums and Wildlife Park gift shops are among our best customers for products made from materials that are:

- Eco-friendly
- Organic
- Sustainable
- And promote preservation of wildlife habitat

Our business is dedicated to paying suppliers fair trade prices. Profits go to an educational fund for the children of our artisan families.

Among the most popular items for zoos and aquariums are our hand knit animal, fish and bird hats. You can select from more than 40 varieties. And we feature ALL of the animals that are on the ZAG list of 2019's favorites, including Llamas, Sloths, and Red Pandas.

Other popular products include Tagua (vegetable ivory) keychains and carved statuettes. Tagua is renewable, sustainable and provides jobs for Ecuadorians.

Please stop by our booth at the Las Vegas Gift Show in October. If you would like to examine a sample of one of our animal hats or other products, contact us directly at 952-513-7268 or via email: wdeanmn@gmail.com or 49cadean@gmail.com

Information is also available on our website: www.artsofecuador.com



FLASHINGBLINKYLIGHTS (FBL) HAS BEEN AN INDUSTRY LEADER SINCE 2001 WITH OVER 1500 LIGHT-UP AND GLOW LED PRODUCTS INCLUDING BRACELETS, NECKLACES, RINGS, HATS, DÉCOR, TOYS AND MORE. EXCELLENCE IN CUSTOMER SERVICE AND PROVIDING CPSIA COMPLIANT, HIGH-QUALITY PRODUCTS ARE PART OF FBL'S MISSION STATEMENT. ARE YOU LOOKING FOR A CUSTOMIZED LIGHT-UP GIFT FOR YOUR SHOP OR A BRILLIANT GIVEAWAY FOR YOUR NEXT FUNDRAISER? PLEASE GIVE US A CALL AND WE WILL HELP MAKE YOUR GUESTS' VISIT A MEMORABLE ONE. FOR MORE INFORMATION, PLEASE CONTACT DONNA TYSER BY EMAILING HER AT DONNA@FLASHINGBLINKYLIGHTS.COM OR CALLING (888)755-9449.



Mark Feldstein & Associates, inc.

Mark Feldstein & Associates, inc. (MFA), located in Sylvania, OH, is a 33-year old Product Development Company and importer of innovative home & seasonal décor, and giftware for the home, office and personal use.

MFA's popular licensed clocks with sounds have become a staple product in many retailers and catalogs. Some of the companies MFA holds current licensees with include Audubon™, Coca-Cola®, Ford Motor Company, Peanuts®, Precious Moments, and Thomas Kinkade™.

But MFA is much more than that as it has introduced many other innovative products like their award-winning Revers-A-Brella® Inverted No Drip Umbrellas, and one-of-a-kind Flameless LED Candles and Lanterns product line.

MFA's goal is to go way beyond the ordinary and be the most *gifted* supplier in the industry!



Turtle Tracks Family, a charming series of fun, factual books with a positive environmental message and matching plush toys with unique features. Written and illustrated by Sue Trew (a multi store retailer herself) and distributed by TOTALLY TURTLES USA, the series was conceptualized in 2012 at a “hatchling release”. Sue’s first book, Turtle Tracks, about a nesting hawksbill turtle was a huge success, followed by Happy Hatchlings book and the adorable plush hatchlings. Sue has continued to add new books, all with Discussion Facts in the back for extra value, as well as new toys and accessories, all to encourage the whole family to learn while having fun.

www.TotallyTurtlesUSA.com



The Toysmith story began in 1981 and for over 37 years the company has built a reputation of trust and customer service with retail partners, manufacturing and distributing high

quality toys and gifts. We are proud and humbled by our best-in-class customer service and apply that standard throughout Toymsmith. Toymsmith brands and products are sold to toy retailers, education markets, museums, zoos, aquariums, national parks, attractions, theme parks, gift stores, specialty catalogs and internet retailers.



Brick Loot specializes in unique plastic toy building block sets as well as custom LEGO and LEGO Compatible products.



Since 1987, Purr-Fection by MJC has provided quality plush products at exceptional value. Our team is committed to your success. We hope you enjoy our 2019 collection and let us show you why Purr-Fection is perfect for you.

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Founded in 1887, Roaring Spring Paper Products has been an integral part of the Roaring Spring community for more than 130 years. We employ over 200 people, many of whom have multi-generational family ties to our company. Now led by fifth and sixth generation descendants of our founder, the company prides itself on remaining a family-owned American manufacturing company. Nestled in the Allegheny Mountains, approximately 100 miles east of Pittsburgh, PA, our production and warehousing operations are 97% landfill-free. We are committed to sustainability and offer more recycled products than any other paper products company in the US. We are committed to meeting or exceeding our customers' expectations. We provide the highest quality products, the most courteous service, the fastest response times and complete and accurate communications. We are also a member in good standing of the Fair Labor Association. It is our mission to continue the family tradition of providing enhanced value to the note-taking experience.

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Green Tree Jewelry
San Diego Hat Company
True Brands
Joyce Johnson Designs
Paradise Cay Publications
Pillow Pets
Brick Loot
Mark Feldstein & Associates, inc.

Welcome New ZAG Members

Jadena Terrell – ZooWorld – Panama City Beach, FL
Janet Locke – Calusa Nature Center and Planetarium – Ft Myers, FL
Melanie Wesson – Tiger Creek Sanctuary – Tyler, TX
Christina Rogato – Electric City Aquarium – Moscow, PA
Brooke Garrett – Safari Wild Animal Park – Como, MS
Taylor Kaletha – Columbian Park Zoo – Lafayette, IN

Brittany, Byram – Mill Mountain Zoo – Roanoke, VA
Hanne Larsen – Aquarium of the Bay – San Francisco, CA
Tasha Davis – Sylvan Heights Bird Park – Scotland Neck, NC
Peta Wittig – St. Louis Aquarium at Union Station – St. Louis, MO
Sue Hedtke – Learning Shop – Appleton, WI
Larissa Steblen – The Virginia Living Museum – Newport News, VA



Thank you for being ZAG members and sponsors, the board is working hard for you!

After many years with ZAG and the Board, we sadly say good bye to Michael Davis. ZAG thanks you for your years of service and best of luck to you in your new pursuits.

Sincerely,

Judy, David, Sue, Terri, Steve, Tommy, Michael, Melinda, Ross