

INDA's Small Business Newsletter

Covering Issues That Affect You

March 2009

INDA SMALL BUSINESS E-REPORT

Welcome to the INDA Small Business e-Report. This monthly e-publication provides INDA members with insight and advice on operating a successful small business in today's nonwovens industry.

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Quote of the month:

"These times, though unnerving for some, will create great opportunities for many companies." Be one of those companies. Shumeet Banerji, CEO of Booz & Company,

INDA NEWS FOR SMALL BUSINESSES

ANYONE CAN VIEW NONWOVENS VIDEO AND GLOSSARY FOR FREE

Sometimes it is challenging for smaller nonwovens companies to teach their employees and customers – especially newer ones – about their industry, so INDA is providing a great educational tool for free. Everything anyone needs to know about the basics of nonwovens – from fibers to processes to end-uses – is now available.

A video titled "Nonwovens! What Are They?" and the comprehensive "INDA Nonwovens Glossary" are being offered to everyone via INDA's website. The goal is to spread the word about the nonwovens industry as well as the educate those inside the business on the reach and scope of nonwovens technologies.

"Nonwovens reach into so many applications and end-uses and we want to make our educational resources available to people in other industries who will benefit from our products," says INDA President Rory Holmes. "In addition, this video and the Nonwovens Glossary are an invaluable resource for companies within our business to educate their own employees."

A must-see for any company that produces or uses nonwovens, the "Nonwovens! What Are They?" video provides the basics of nonwovens in just eight minutes. The video explains manufacturing processes such as air laid, dry laid, wet laid, needlepunch, spunlace/hydroentangled, spunbond, and meltblown.

The video also touches upon the various end-uses where nonwovens can be found, including aerospace, apparel, automotives, construction, electronics, filtration, geotextiles, healthcare, home furnishings, hygiene, protective apparel and wipes. It also highlights the many benefits of nonwoven fabrics.

The 69-page INDA Nonwovens Glossary is a comprehensive dictionary that serves as a vital information resource for nonwovens companies and their customers. It is written in easy-to-understand language and it contains definitions and illustrations of nonwoven technologies.

To access the Nonwovens What Are They? video visit:

<http://www.inda.org/video/NonwovensVideo.html>

To download the Glossary of nonwoven terms, visit: <http://www.inda.org/Glossary.pdf>

WELCOME TO NEW INDA MEMBERS

INDA would like to welcome the following companies as new members:

CTA Acoustics (www.ctaacoustics.com)
Catbridge Machinery (www.catbridgemachinery.com)
Consumer Specialty Products Association (www.cspa.org)
Dolan GmbH (www.dolan-gmbh.com)
Formfiber Denmark A/S (www.formfiber.dk)
Gepco (www.gepcoinc.com)
Indorama Polyester Industries Ltd. (www.indorama.com)
Jones Fiber Products (www.jonesyarn.com)
Mahlo America, Inc. (www.mahloamerica.com)
NanoStatics Corporation (www.nanostatics.com)
Product Imaginengineering
Reckitt Benckiser (www.reckittbenckiser.com)
Texas Tech Fiber & Biopolymer Research Institute (www.fbri.ttu.edu)
University of Leeds (www.nonwovens.leeds.ac.uk)
William M. Edwards Enterprises LLC

NOMINATIONS OPEN FOR 2009 WOW INNOVATION AWARD

The nomination process for the 2009 WOW Innovation Award runs through April 1 as the industry once again will recognize and honor the most innovative advances in technology and products in wipes. This is an excellent opportunity for smaller companies to gain recognition and promote awareness of their new wipes products.

Presented as part of the annual World of Wipes International Conference, the WOW Innovation Award will honor the most innovative advances within the entire wipe value chain, including raw materials and ingredients, roll goods, machinery, packaging and finished products.

Organized by INDA, the World of Wipes International Conference is the premier global networking and educational conference for the entire business of wipes. It is scheduled for June 22-24, 2009 at the Grand Hyatt Atlanta in Atlanta, Ga.

For the first time, the WOW Innovation Award is being sponsored by Nonwovens Markets (www.risiinfo.com), the twice-monthly newsletter that covers developments in the nonwovens industry around the world. It analyzes complex industry issues, and offers insight into company strategies, market growth and technology trends.

The process and criteria for the 2009 WOW Innovation Award are simple:

1. The nominated product must be involved in some portion of the process and production of a wipe product. Competition is open to all wipes, including nonwoven, woven, knit, foam and other wipe technologies.
2. The product has to have been introduced to the trade or to consumers in 2008-09.
3. Nominations should consist of a short abstract of the nominated product and a product sample sent to Michael Jacobsen, INDA, 22 Paterson Avenue, Midland Park, NJ 07432; 201-612-6601. The abstract should be emailed to mjacobsen@inda.org.
4. Companies can nominate their own products. While any number of products can be nominated, only one product per company will be selected as a finalist.

Nominations will be judged on their contribution to the advance of wipes technology and finished product. Other criteria include innovation in meeting wipe value chain needs, commercial viability, creative use of technology, and sustainability.

The nominees will be reviewed by an INDA selection committee and six finalists will be selected to make presentations at the World of Wipes International Conference in Atlanta. Conference attendees will then vote on the recipient of the award and the recipient will be announced on the final day of the Conference.

For more information on the WOW Innovation Award, contact project coordinator Michael Jacobsen at 201-612-6601; mjacobsen@inda.org.

For more information on or to register for the World of Wipes International Conference, visit <http://www.inda.org/events/wow09/index.html>.

SMALL BUSINESS ADVICE

MANAGING DURING TOUGH TIMES

With the business climate continuing to be particularly challenging for smaller, manufacturing-based businesses, for this issue we turn to one of our favorite business consultants – Sam Geist, of Geist & Associates (www.samgeist.com) – for some real-life advice that managers and owners can use to get through these tough times. The following is excerpted from one of his newsletters.

As tough as it is out there, I've learned two things — the sky isn't going to fall and we can't sit around and wait for a turnaround, we have to initiate a turnaround. Here are three ways to do just that.

1. Combat Employee Fear and Confusion

Fear paralyzes — it's counterproductive. Employees I've spoken to repeatedly confirm that they need to know what's going on. They need the issues addressed straightforwardly. They need to know where they stand, where their organization stands (even if it's not good).

Studies indicate that the vacuum created by the lack of concrete, reliable information can suck the life out of employee morale. These same studies reveal that when employees are kept in the loop their contribution to their organization increases substantially. Clear and consistent communication to employees is critical.

Stress is an employee debilitator. Find ways to relieve workplace stress. A few suggestions clients have shared with me include having regular one-on-one meetings with each employee; giving occasional time off as a reward; holding special group lunches and giving instant positive feedback with praise communicated loud and clear. Keep staff happy — to be working with you.

2. Grow Your Business

Especially during tough times when your gross margin is lower, don't be a spectator. Be aggressive. Find ways to keep old customers as well as ways to bring in new customers.

Understand how customers determine value in tough times — create value in sync with them. Feature what you know they are willing to buy/what service they are willing to use, rather than what you'd like them to buy/use. Translate McDonald's strategy — special high values, low-priced meals, regionalized by market — to your own situation to grow your business.

After conducting an intense two-day workshop for a client recently on "how-to grow their business during a recession," participants brainstormed and concluded that only by doing more with what they've got (maximizing their resources) and by raising their execution level could they grow. They recognized that they already had the tools they required to grow — they just needed to use them better, implement them better.

Apple Inc., an innovative player in the technology field, took a big step forward a few years ago when they opened Apple stores to showcase and sell its products. Even now, while we're in recessionary mode, Apple stores are as busy as ever because its customers are eager to learn and eager to buy.

Have a clear vision of where your organization needs to be when the recession is over. This clear vision helps you to make tough choices and execute them with conviction.

3. Stay Ahead of the Curve

Right now is the time to be on the ball — keep your eyes open, your mind sharp. At the exact moment one business enterprise throws up its hands in defeat, another one throws up its hands in celebration for the opportunity it has discovered. Look for opportunity everywhere — it often hides in the most unlikely places.

Zipcar found opportunity among a growing group who were interested in carsharing as an alternative to car rental or car ownership. Think of it as a cab service in which you drive the car yourself.

At the same time a client of mine can't find opportunity. He bemoans the fact that he doesn't have enough customers to sustain his insurance business. He laments, "We've been here at the same location for over two years yet customers haven't found us."

Did it ever occur to him that it is his responsibility to find customers, it's not theirs to find him. Bury the "can't find us" attitude.

It has always been important to seek out opportunity no matter the business endeavor, but now it is more essential than ever.

LEADING DURING A RECESSION

When the economy improves, will your business be on top? That's the question asked in an interesting white paper from Kim Slack, a Methodology Consultant, writing in an online newsletter from Forum (www.forum.com), a company that helps organizations achieve the results of their growth strategies faster, more effectively, and more completely. The vital parts of the paper for small businesses are excerpted here.

As dramatic changes in financial and energy markets work their way through the economy, senior leaders face difficult choices in confronting higher expenses and news of a global downturn: Should we cut prices to maintain market share? How deeply can we cut costs? What about layoffs? As a leader, how can I mobilize my employees to address the looming threats in the economic environment for the good of my organization? How can I discourage defensive internal politics that protect others' narrow interests?

How can I lead my company to emerge from the end of the downturn on an upturn?

Leadership tests can be severe during downturns, and there are no easy answers. Past recessions have taught leaders to:

- Narrow the Focus to provide the greatest value for key customers by ensuring that resources and capabilities are efficiently deployed. Relaxation in good times and desperation in bad times can lead to losing focus. Taking a disciplined approach clearly makes a positive difference. Research on past recessions confirms that businesses that move quickly to reduce costs and control spending weather a downturn more effectively.

Winners in a downturn narrow their business portfolios, focusing in areas where they can develop a clear lead. They also walk away from bad business—while losers chase unprofitable sales in an attempt to hold market share.

- Bring People Together to counter the internal competitiveness and defensiveness that often accompany belt-tightening efforts. When budgets are tighter, it is not uncommon that employees become defensive, territorial, and competitive. Negative politics intensify at all levels, sapping valuable energy and focus. Employees begin seeing internal groups as threats, and so fail to meet the challenge of facing looming external threats from competitors, customers, and suppliers.

The “keep your head down and keep your boss happy” mentality only serves to feed the rumor mill; it doesn’t allow for increased learning about the workings of the company, its customers, or the issues it faces in delivering quality — learning that could provide significant advantage.

- Manage the Temperature to establish a climate in which employees address difficult issues that may have been hidden in easier days

In times of crisis, followers often expect “strong leaders” to make the tough decisions necessary to protect them and the organization. Leaders are tempted to take things into their own hands and begin legislating change themselves. This does lower the “heat” temporarily, making everyone feel more comfortable.

But it is often a mistake: Leaders required to make a strategic decision rarely get a complete picture if they lack a supporting analysis of the situation. Neither do they make the decision alone; to enable wiser decisions and increased buy-in, it is necessary that leaders secure the cooperation and support of many others.

Building coalitions to move things forward has indeed been found to improve organizational performance.

Organizations can sometimes cool things off too much, and suppress conflicts and challenges they ought to work through in order to move ahead. As a senior leader, you sometimes do need to heat things up, drawing people's attention to an issue that may indeed generate strong emotions — but one that also needs to be addressed, in order to create alignment. Effective leaders choose their actions.

Applying these lessons promises a tremendous upside: uncovering new competitive opportunities that result in a stronger business when the economy improves.

INDA MEETINGS CALENDAR

2009

[Needlepunch 2009](#), March 24-26, Marriott Grande Dunes, Myrtle Beach, South Carolina

[INDA Nonwovens Course](#), March 31 - April 2, INDA Headquarters, Cary, North Carolina

[Elementary Nonwovens Course](#), May 13-14, INDA Headquarters, Cary, North Carolina

[World of Wipes 2009 International Conference](#), June 22-24, Grand Hyatt Atlanta, Atlanta, Georgia

[INDA Nonwovens Course](#), September 15-17, INDA Headquarters, Cary, North Carolina

[INTC 2009 International Nonwovens Technical Conference](#), September 21-24, Grand Hyatt Denver Downtown, Denver, Colorado

[Filtration 2009 International Conference & Expo](#), November 17-19, Navy Pier, Chicago, Illinois

2010

[IDEA 2010 International Conference & Expo](#), April 27-29, Miami Beach Convention Center, Miami Beach, Florida

THAT'S ALL, FOLKS

We would love to hear from you. Just email us at mjacobsen@inda.org to let us know how you are getting along. Michael Jacobsen, Editor, INDA Small Business e-Report