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VISION News Consumer Products e-Report

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Welcome to the Issue No. 8 of the Vision News Consumer Products e-Report. Vision is sent monthly to executives within the consumer products and nonwovens industries. Vision reviews the news and events of each month in the disposable diaper, adult incontinence, feminine hygiene, household wipes/cleaning products and filtration markets, among other end uses that utilize nonwoven fabrics.

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QUICK, WIPE OFF YOUR DESK ... NOW!

According to a new study by University of Arizona germ guru Dr. Charles Gerba, the average desk harbors 400 times more bacteria than the average toilet seat.

"For bacteria, a desk is really the laptop of luxury," says Gerba. "They can feast all day from breakfast to lunch and even dinner."

Gerba found that unless desks were wiped clean with a disinfectant during the day, bacteria levels climbed higher and higher, peaking after lunch. The study, funded by a grant from The Clorox Company, found that surfaces in personal work areas had higher bacteria levels than surfaces in common areas. Telephones came in as the top home for office germs, followed by desks, water fountain handles, microwave door handles and computer keyboards. Surprisingly, toilet seats consistently had the lowest bacteria levels of the 12 surfaces tested in the study.

For the study, Gerba and his team separated office workers into two groups. One group used disinfecting wipes to clean their desks, phones and computers; the other did not. Within two days, the wipes users were found to have a 99.9% reduction in bacteria levels.

Other study highlights:

Bacteria levels decreased drastically (99.9%) if surfaces were treated with disinfecting wipes once a day.

Among people who did not use wipes, bacteria levels increased an average of 19-31% on their telephone, computer mouse, keyboard and desktop surfaces throughout a typical workday.

The area where you rest your hand on your desk has -- on average -- 10 million bacteria. Yikes.

K-C THINNER PULL-UPS HIT SHELVES NEXT MONTH

In the latest innovation to the training pants market, Kimberly-Clark has unveiled Huggies Pull-Ups disposable training pants. The primary improvement is the use of proprietary technology to make Pull-Ups nearly 30% thinner for an improved overall fit under children's clothing.

The new Pull-Ups will be available in May. In addition to the thinness, the training pants have more colorful graphics that make them more like Big Kid underwear with an enhanced gender-specific look.

"Parents want a product that's more like real underwear so their children can understand the difference between diapers and training pants and stay motivated during toilet training," said Robert Thibault, president of Child Care at Kimberly-Clark. "Fueled by consumer feedback and backed by our absorbency technology and nonwovens expertise, we've produced a superior-

performing product that looks and fits more like real underwear, while providing outstanding protection." (See later article on K-C-sponsored research into toilet training.)

P&G LOOKING GOOD, MAYBE, SAYS BUSINESS WEEK

Diaper giant Procter & Gamble has turned around its financial performance in the past year under new CEO A.G. Lafley, but how much and for how long? Those are the questions asked in an insightful article in Business Week last week titled "The Tide is Turning at P&G ... but robust profits, based on cost-cutting, may not last."

Among its more pertinent points:

- * P&G's stock has risen 43% in the past year, to \$90 a share.
- * Lafley has cleaned house by getting rid of slow-growth products such as Crisco shortening and Comet cleanser, while providing additional resources to core brands such as Tide. He has also sought out faster growing, more profitable areas such as beauty and hair care.
- * For all the bright lights, analysts are concerned that P&G is creating most of its profit growth in existing brands through discounting. Sales in the most recent quarter rose by just 2%, while unit volume rose 4%.
- * "Recent product launches such as the Swiffer electrostatic dust mop ... have had limited success."
- * Adds Biz Week, "When P&G establishes a new market, nimbler competitors quickly move in: The latest iteration of Swiffer, for instance, was quickly outflanked by Clorox Co.'s new ReadyMop cleaner."

P&G RUNS OUT OF TOYS IN PAMPERS PROMOTION

Apparently, there is such thing as a promotion that is too successful. Procter & Gamble confirmed last week that it had received complaints from customers about running out of toys offered as part of its Pampers sales promotion. The company offered parents Fisher-Price toys through the "Pampers Perks" program if the parents collected points printed on diaper packages. P&G underestimated how many parents would mail in points and didn't have enough toys to distribute when the program ended Jan. 31.

P&G spokesman Bill Hopping said the company was pleased with the response from consumers and is contacting those who called in an effort to satisfy them. The Fisher-Price toys were offered on a "while supplies last" basis and are all gone, Hopping said. He declined to say how many customers called to complain.

A DIFFERENT TAKE ON PGI'S FINANCIAL PROBLEMS ...

Despite the financial woes of Polymer Group, Inc., industry experts say there's a strong future for the company's technology. According to an article in the Charlotte Observer, although PGI finds itself in bankruptcy courts, its troubles are more akin to a fast-growing dot-com's than a textile mill's.

That's because, as the newspaper points out, while traditional weavers see sales sliding, Polymer's sales grew 65% in the past five years, to \$862 million. Even with that growth, analysts say, the company overestimated the demand of its products. PGI built up debt, and raw material prices rose.

... WHILE SHAREHOLDER NEGOTIATIONS CONTINUE

Meanwhile, last week Polymer Group Inc. reached a deal with a group of dissident bondholders that had tried to place the North Charleston-based fabrics maker under bankruptcy protection. The crux of the deal is simple: Bondholders allowed their petition for involuntary bankruptcy to be dismissed, while PGI agreed to negotiate with them.

The group, which together holds \$120 million in bonds, filed a petition earlier this month to put the struggling company under bankruptcy protection. The group claimed they wouldn't be treated fairly under a proposed restructuring plan unveiled March 15 to cut debt by \$550 million and pass controlling interest in the company to its largest bondholder, CSFB Global Opportunities Partners, a unit of Credit Suisse First Boston investment bank.

DIAPERS, FEM CARE AMONG MOST POPULAR DELIVERY PRODUCTS

Apparently, baby diapers and feminine hygiene products rank right up there with pizza in the new business plan of fledgling delivery service Pizza Shmizza in Santa Barbara, CA. Entrepreneurs Brendan Searls and Sean Ebadi formed Pizza Shmizza as a business that delivers gourmet pizzas, videos, DVDs and other items to local homes.

"We always thought it would be great if someone delivered videos to your house," Mr. Searls said in describing how the partners came up with their idea. Operating a movie delivery business alone, however, wouldn't pay the bills because of the low price of video rentals, so the key would be to combine the videos with other, higher-ticket items, he said. The No. 1 answer, of course, had to be pizza, perhaps the No. 1 item for home delivery.

Adding to movies and pizzas and salads recently are other common grocery items. Among them: Ben & Jerry's ice cream, microwave popcorn, milk, eggs, diapers and feminine products. "Our goal," Searls says, "is to keep you on your couch."

DIAPERS RANK HIGH IN GLOBAL BRAND SIZE

Behind Coca-Cola but ahead of such icons as Tropicana orange juice and Wrigley's gum, both Procter & Gamble's Pampers and Kimberly-Clark's Huggies rank among the 20 largest global brands, according to a report by AC Nielsen. There are 43 billion-dollar global brands, and 19 are worth \$2 billion or more (sales in \$billions).

Coca-Cola, \$15 billion; Marlboro, \$15; Pepsi, \$5-15; Budweiser, \$3-5; Campbell's Soup, \$3-5; Kellogg's, \$3-5; Pampers, \$3-5; Benson & Hedges, \$2-3; Camel, \$2-3; Dannon Yogurt, \$2-3; Fanta, \$2-3; Friskies, \$2-3; Gillette, \$2-3; Huggies, \$2-3; Nescafe, \$2-3; Sprite, \$2-3; Tide, \$2-3; Tropicana, \$2-3; Wrigley's Gum, \$2-3

DRUGSTORE.COM BABY STORE RELAUNCHED

drugstore.com, inc., an Internet retailer for health, beauty and wellness products (www.drugstore.com), has re-launched drugstore.com Baby Store. The revamped site sells top-of-the-line brands through one cohesive online destination for baby and pregnancy essentials.

"We wanted to provide our customers with a convenient shopping experience for all the baby basics," says Julie Johnston,

director of Merchandising for Health and Personal Care for drugstore.com, inc. "With talk of the impending baby boom this summer, we look forward to being a convenient resource for the many individuals who will have a baby coming into their lives one way or another this year."

The new Baby Store will include Bath and Skin Care; Breastfeeding; Diapers and Wipes; Gear, Toys; Gifts; Health and Safety; Mealtime; Natural Baby; Potty Training; and Pregnancy Essentials.

THE GERBIL TEAMS WITH PREPARATION H

Baseball icon Don Zimmer, nicknamed the gerbil because of his facial similarity to the little rodent, goes to bat this summer for Preparation H in an ad campaign. Currently the New York Yankees bench coach, Zimmer, a 54-year veteran of baseball, is featured in a new TV spot for the Ointment, Cream, Cooling Gel, Medicated Wipes and Suppository forms.

The 30-second Zimmer Preparation H spot is set in a baseball dugout. Baseball announcer Gary Thorne gives the play-by-play as Zimmer becomes uncomfortable and then seeks relief with Preparation H. "When I was approached by Preparation H, I thought this was a natural fit for me since I do use the product," Zimmer says. "I also saw this as a great opportunity to poke a little fun at myself while being able to help others that are afflicted with this ailment."

P&G AND KPMG OFFER SUPPLY CHAIN SOLUTION

Procter & Gamble and KPMG Consulting are promoting a manufacturing supply chain solution pioneered by P&G that promises "to bring companies immediate gains in manufacturing productivity, and potentially billions in bottom-line savings. The agreement combines P&G's set of "reliability engineering" tools, which have already saved P&G worldwide more than \$1 billion, with KPMG under the PowerFactorE brand name.

Developed in conjunction with Los Alamos National Labs, the predictive tools and analytical methods adapted by P&G consist of a range of statistical and management tools that can be applied to existing manufacturing operations, as well as new capital equipment projects. PowerFactorE has reportedly helped P&G transform manufacturing efficiencies on a range of assembly lines that make consumer products ranging from diapers to fruit.

INDUSTRY RESEARCH

NEW STUDY, SPONSORED BY K-C, LOOKS AT TOILET TRAINING

Parents wondering when and how to begin toilet training their children should look beyond current medical literature for the answers, according to findings by Medical College of Wisconsin researchers in Milwaukee, published recently in Pediatrics, the official publication of the American Academy of Pediatrics (AAP). The article is the first study to document the sequential acquisition of the entire range of toilet training skills in normally developing children.

Supported by a grant from Kimberly-Clark, the study found that most children do not master their readiness skills until after their second birthdays, and that girls achieve nearly all toilet training skills earlier than boys. The study also found that the range of normalcy might vary by as much as a year. Although many children show signs of readiness before their second birthdays, the study found that most children -- especially boys -- are more likely to be ready between the ages of 24 and 30 months.

Here's where the K-C connection comes in: The report says that when a child has exhibited signs of readiness, the parent should make the switch out of diapers into disposable training pants such as K-C's Pull-Ups, cloth training pants or underwear and stay consistent with their choice. Parents should then coach the child through the potty training process with effective techniques such as praise and rewards.

NONWOVENS BEING STUDIED AS INSECT REPELLANT

An interesting new application for meltblown and resin technology is emerging from the research work of the New York State Integrated Pest Management (IPM) program at Cornell University. This group is investigating the use of meltblown fiber webs as barriers to invading insects.

Describing their webs as "cotton candy" polymer, the scientists form a fibrous meltblown web around the stem of young plants that are susceptible to the attack by relatively large insect pests. The polymer that has been employed thus far is an ethylene vinyl acetate (EVA) resin, typical of a commercial hotmelt material. The web is formed by means of a hand-held nozzle (Dynatec System, ITW Dynatec, Hendersonville, TN) aimed at the base of the plant. A multi-dimensional barrier is formed at the strategic location on the plant where it can interfere with insect behavior.

The researchers are working to produce fibers with optimum characteristics (fiber density, diameter, color, etc.) for pest-repellence. Research is also underway on the incorporation of other beneficial materials in the polymer web. For environmental protection, timed-degradation of biodegradable formulations is being investigated. The researchers feel that considerable potential also exists with this system for keeping other large pests, such as birds and deer, from damaging plants and shrubs.

INTERNATIONAL NEWS

MIXED RESULTS IN JAPANESE DIAPER BUSINESS

A slight increase in the production of adult diapers was offset by a 3.3% decrease in baby diaper co-production in Japan, leaving a 2.1% decrease in total diaper production in 2000 in Japan. These figures are part of a Far East Report on Nonwovens in Diapers by author Kin Ohmura in the March 2002 issue of Nonwovens Industry magazine.

Among other findings:

* During the first half of 2001, 2.6 billion baby diapers, a 4.5% increase from a year earlier, and 1.1 billion adult diapers (an 8.4% decrease) were produced.

* Total production for the first half of last year was 3.7 billion items, overall a slight 0.4% increase.

* The types of nonwovens technologies found in diapers typically include spunbond, SMS and thermal bonded. In 2000, 69,100 tons of nonwovens were used to manufacture diapers.

The March issue of Nonwovens Industry also contains an excellent Adult Incontinence Manufacturers Directory.

TOUGH TIMES FOR P&G IN THAILAND

Procter & Gamble (Thailand) expects to see flat sales for the year ending on June 30, citing the poor economic environment and heavy competition. It expects to miss its earlier growth target of 5-10%. Average growth in the non-food product categories contracted by around 2% in the last 12 months. Among the categories not faring well are Safeguard antiseptic soap, Pampers disposable baby diapers, Whisper sanitary napkins, Pringles potato chips and Secret deodorant.

NEW OWNERS TAKE OVER AT FIBERTEX

Fibertex, located in Aalborg Ost, Denmark, has been purchased by Aktieselskabet Schouw & Co. The company was owned by the East Asiatic Company, which established Fibertex as a wholly owned subsidiary in 1968. Schouw is a diversified holding company. The management of Fibertex, including CEO Knud Waede Hansen, will continue to head the company.

BP SELLING PERFORMANCE FILMS BUSINESS

BP Chemicals recently sold its performance films business to U.K. packaging firm Parkside Flexibles Ltd. The sale includes BP's manufacturing plants at Darton, U.K. and Zlotow, Poland, which produce flexible polymer packaging for the European food and hygiene consumer markets.

DUPONT OPENS LYCRA PLANT IN SINGAPORE

DuPont opened its third Lycra plant in Singapore earlier this year, increasing production in the region by 50%. Target markets will focus on the Asia Pacific region. The \$80 million facility is the second of its kind in Singapore and only the fifth in the world. A sixth plant using similar technology is under construction in Shanghai, China to open next year.

FINANCIAL NEWS

RMED BUYS BACK STOCK

RMED International has bought back 1,366,501 RMED common shares from two ex-directors and returned the shares to RMED treasury. RMED markets and sells baby products under the brand names Tushies Diapers, TushiesWipes & TenderCare Diapers through health food stores.

MEETINGS UPDATE

INDA UNVEILS INTC DETAILS

The leading technical meeting for the nonwovens industry is taking shape and INDA has released some details o the

International Nonwovens Technical Conference (INTC), set for September 24-26, 2002 at the Renaissance Waverly Hotel in Atlanta. This year's INTC continues the tradition that was begun in 2000 by event co-sponsors TAPPI and INDA.

The sessions for the conference include: Binders & Additives; Polymers & Fibers; Properties & Performance; Process Technologies; Filtration; Finishes & Surfaces; Mats & Insulation; Absorbents; Porometry; Automotive Interiors; Protective Barriers; Process Modeling; and Sustainability. Some of the companies presenting papers are American Kuhne, Dispotech Fabrics, Georgia Tech; Glo-Tex, Hills, Inc., Monadnock Non-Wovens, Nalco Chemical and Owens Corning Veil.

Also featured will be a Nonwoven Products Tutorial, Student Poster Presentations as well as a Table-top Event and Reception. For a schedule of events: www.inda.org.

For more information on INTC 2002: INDA, (919) 233-1210; Fax (919) 233-1282; info@inda.org.

PATENT REVIEW

Easily opened wipes canister

Assignee: S. C. Johnson & Son

Abstract: A dispenser of moist wipes, towelettes, or liquid impregnated fibrous tissues, comprising a container, a lid having an orifice therein for withdrawal of the wipes, and a cap over the orifice to prevent evaporation of liquid from the container. The wipes may be placed in the container in roll form, and withdrawn sequentially and individually by pulling through the orifice and tearing apart at perforations between the wipes. The lid is removably attached by a snap fit to the container, and the lower edge of the lid is protected by an outwardly extending circumferential protrusion on the vertical side of the container adjacent the lower edge of the lid, so as to inhibit accidental removal of the lid. An opening is provided in the protrusion to permit removal of the lid as desired.

Patent Number: 6364101; Issue Date: 2002 04 02; Inventor: Schultz, Marissa A.

Cleaning and hygienic device

Abstract: An improved cleaning device which can be used as a personal hygienic unit, as a unit for cleaning a diaper area of an infant, and rinsing soiled diapers, or as a cleaning unit for clearing clogs in a toilet or drain pipe. There is included a flexible hose which is connected to a water supply and to an inlet of a flow control valve. An outlet of the flow control valve is connected to a rigid hollow handle for delivery of water through the handle to a spray head rotationally secured to the handle so as to deliver water upwardly from the spray head openings when the device is in use. A secondary unit is independently connected to a water supply for delivery of water to a hand-held spray nozzle to allow cleaning of a diaper area of an infant and rinsing soiled diapers. The improved device incorporates an improved mounting assembly for facilitating the placement of the device on a toilet, and other features to provide efficient operation of the improved device.

Patent Number: 6357057; Issue Date: 2002 03 19; Inventor: Krist, Robert Stephen

Method for making fluid distribution materials

Assignee: Procter & Gamble

Abstract: The present invention relates to a method of and an apparatus for providing fluid distribution materials with improved wicking properties in a preferential fluid distribution direction. Such fluid distribution materials are particularly useful in absorbent core structures such as used in disposable absorbent articles like baby diapers, incontinence products or catamenial products. The invention is concerned with applying a special mechanical treatment to distribution materials, by which the softness and the fluid handling properties of the materials are improved.

Patent Number: 6355200; Issue Date: 2002 03 12; Inventors: Schmidt, Mattias; D'Acchioli, Vincenzo

Absorbent article having deformed hinge and zones of extensibility

Assignee: Procter & Gamble

Abstract: Absorbent articles such as sanitary napkins, panty liners, adult incontinence devices, and the like, which have flaps are disclosed. The absorbent articles have a deformed hinge that is located between at least a portion of the main body portion of the absorbent article and the flaps, and zones of extensibility for relieving the stresses that develop in the flaps when the flaps are folded down and under a wearer's undergarment.

Patent Number: 6358234; Issue Date: 2002 03 19; Inventors: Terada, Nami; Olsen, Robb Eric; Chow, Shirley Lee; Bamber, Jeffrey Vincent

Chemically modified pulp fiber

Assignee: Kimberly-Clark Worldwide

Abstract: The wet strength softness absorbency, absorbency rate and other valuable properties in paper products, tissues, wipes, towels, etc. can be improved by using, in the paper forming process, a cellulosic material comprising a carboxymethyl cellulose material associated with a monomeric or polymeric cationic additive material. A process of the invention comprises a fiber surface carboxymethylation and an aqueous medium followed by blending the modified fibers with a cationic additive under varying conditions and wet forming the tissue and towel products. The additive is typically a cationic additive that preferentially associates with a carboxymethyl group on the cellulose surface. The affinity between the positively charged cationic groups in the polymeric or monomeric additive material to the negatively charged carboxyl group in the carboxymethyl cellulose modified fiber improves various attributes of the paper products.

Patent Number: 6361651; Issue Date: 2002 03 26; Inventor: Sun, Tong

THAT'S ALL FOR THIS MONTH

The next issue of the Vision Consumer Products e-Report from INDA will be sent May 10. In the meantime, feel free to contact editor Michael Jacobsen at 201-612-6601 or email at [mjacobson@inda.org](mailto:mjacobsen@inda.org).

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