

# SUPPLYHOUSE

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# TIMES



## BILL CONDRON

MEET ASA'S INCOMING PRESIDENT

- ▶ Annual AIM/R-*Supply House Times* rep roundtable
- ▶ ASA's advocacy efforts continue

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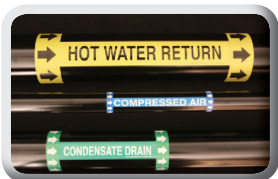
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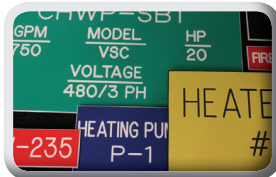
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## FROM THE EDITOR || BY NATALIE FORSTER

# Outside our bubble

Marketing our industry needs to reach outside the usual audience.



As I've been back out attending in person events this Fall, I've noticed the conversation surrounding what we're doing as an industry to bridge the labor gap and recruit more talent has a common theme.

Everyone you talk to knows about the labor shortage, has ideas on what to do about it, wants to break the stigma surrounding a plumbing career, etc. And I see many posts on LinkedIn showing off gleaming employee reviews, fun workplace events and more.

In one recent conversation, a distributor explained the situation well, saying, "We as an industry have the content, we just need to market it better."

Sitting at the AD PHCP North American Meeting in October, attendees at my table asked me what I'm hearing about the labor shortage in the plumbing industry. With the above mentioned point fresh in my mind, I got to thinking and said: "You know, I hear a lot of the same things from many different people."

Distributors and suppliers tell me what they're doing internally and on social to show appreciation for employees and display the great careers available, and I often share those perspectives in articles or columns. But even so, this publication is one written for the members of the PHCP-PVF supply chain — the people who are already more than well aware of the issue.

Posting on LinkedIn is great as well, but your LinkedIn network

is likely largely made up of industry peers and business partners. So in order to truly reach the audience that needs to hear the message, we need to get creative and be intentional about reaching outside of our industry bubble.

In that same conversation, the distributor told me he, too, had been guilty of down-playing his career in plumbing. "People may ask what I did for a living and I'm like, 'Oh, I sell toilets,'" he said. "We need to stop that. It's so much more than selling toilets and we know it. We need to be intentional about taking the time to share what our careers are really about to the people who don't know."

No one likes to brag on themselves, but taking pride in your role within the plumbing supply chain and its ability to create a lasting and fruitful career out loud is a good step to get the message out.

So as we continue to gather at networking meetings and the topic of finding help and replacing our aging workforce comes up, take the time to brainstorm ways to blast the message and ideas we have outside of our plumbing bubble.

You have the content, it's time to create the marketing plan to attack the PHCP-PVF labor issue. 📣

*Natalie Forster* is chief editor of Supply House Times. You can reach her at [forstern@bnpmedia.com](mailto:forstern@bnpmedia.com) or 224-201-2225.



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The Granite Group executive team. From left: Mike Kelly, Alicia Criniti, Amir Rosenthal, Bill Condron, Chris Ploss, Tracie Sponenberg and Scott Morris.  
*Photo by John Hubbard*

# CONTINUING the MOMENTUM

## Meet your 2022 American Supply Association President, The Granite Group's Bill Condron.

BY NATALIE FORSTER

Heading into his year as ASA President, CEO of New England PHCP distribution giant The Granite Group, **Bill Condron**, plans to continue the upward trajectory that both ASA and his company are on.

Condron began his career in the industry stocking shelves in the warehouse of the family business. While he never intended to join the industry, his plans changed as he worked his way up through the company over the past 20 years.

Much like his own humble beginning in the business, The Granite Group itself was built from scratch. With little knowledge of the plumbing industry and limited financial resources, Condron's father, **Kevin Condron** and his father-in law **William Kennedy**, purchased Worcester, Massachusetts-based Central Supply in 1971. With just one location, the company generated one million in annual sales. Through key acquisitions throughout the 1970s and

80s, The Granite Group continued to grow.

Bill Condron credits much of the company's early growth to his father Kevin Condron. "My father really built the business," he says. "When I started, I told him I wasn't signing a lifetime contract for the business. He said, 'Good, I'm not offering you one.'"

Obviously, his plans to join the company changed, and Condron says he's extremely glad they did.

## FROM THE GROUND UP

Starting with an entry level role gave Condron the opportunity to learn first-hand about the inner workings of distribution.

"Learning the business from the ground up benefited me in a couple of ways," he says. "One, I hope it gave me some credibility. When you have the same last name as the owner, people look at you differently, and I get that. The last name gives you the opportunity that not everyone gets, however, what you do with that opportunity is totally up to you."

Condron says his time as a branch manager was the most fun job he's ever had. "I really enjoyed my time as a branch manager," he explains. "That role is very tangible, and at the end of the day you see exactly what you sold and accomplished. There was a team building aspect of it too that I loved."

Moving up through the company, Condron notes it's important to remain relatable, approachable and true to yourself. "One of the strongest, most important traits in leadership is being authentic. And that means being imperfect, because we all are," he says. "Knowing what you're good at and what you're not good at, and being willing to admit when you need help or make a mistake, are keys to remaining approachable."

Condron emphasizes the importance of supporting your people. "The entrepreneurial spirit we have in our company encourages people to step up when they have an idea, and not worry if things don't turn out as planned. Just keep trying to do what is right for your customer and everything else will take care of itself."

## ORGANIC GROWTH STRATEGY

Today, The Granite Group has nearly 50 locations across New England, 15 showrooms and more than 600 employees. Eight of the branches have been opened within the past two years.



Jeremy Hebert, Roger Arsenault, Bill Condron and Nick Handville at a regional Granite Group Trade Show in 2019.

Condron says in addition to a strong outside salesforce and completing successful acquisitions, adopting an organic growth strategy a few years ago has led to the company's exponential growth.

"During normal (pre-COVID) times, we often have customer dinner meetings where we ask them what's working, what's not and what they want to see from us," he says. "We ask them where they want to see us go next. Our customers give us the roadmap for our future expansion."

Condron notes that one of the best parts of this growth strategy is the opportunity for progression it offers team members. "We're filling a need when we open a branch in an area where customers feel underserved," he says. "Choosing the right location and offering great service sets you up for sales to come in. But what's really special is giving a team member the opportunity to run their



Bill Condron, Ray Cote, Kevin Cunningham and Alan Fecteau at The Granite Group Driver Championship Rodeo in 2018.

own branch and become a leader in their market, which is really powerful."

The Granite Group succeeded in opening four new locations per year in 2020 and 2021, and Condron says the plan is to strive for opening five-to-six new locations per year moving forward.

In order to fuel this growth, Condron notes it's important to build a team of great people that make up the company. "We've invested in recruiting to help keep our pipeline full of qualified candidates, and that's been really beneficial."

According to Condron, these great people, along with the company's service-first mentality, are what keeps The

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## COVER STORY

Granite Group thriving in a competitive marketplace.

“Building up, supporting and engaging our people is what we are here to do,” he says. “We focus on staying humble, not taking ourselves too seriously and having fun. We work hard; were spending more time with our co-workers than our families, so it’s important to keep things fun and light in order to stay strong and motivated.”

During orientation, Condrón tells new employees that they did not come to work for a wholesale-distributor, they came to work for a service business. “The reality is that the products we sell can be found many other places and often at lower prices than what we have,” he says. “So in our business model, what differentiates us has to be our people. We put an unapologetic emphasis on our people.”

Condrón adds that the company’s growth strategy naturally attracts the type of people that it needs. “People who want to raise their hand for the next opportunity to grow in their career are the people who are attracted to organic growth strategies like ours,” he says. “Our culture and the people who build it fuel the growth we’ve been able to achieve.”

### PASSION FOR TECHNOLOGY

Condrón is passionate about technology and innovation, which led him to be involved in ASA’s Issue Strategic Action Team for its technology initiative, which was the action behind the opening of its D.NEXT Innovation Lab at the University of Illinois Urbana-Champaign. The program explores the roles, practices, perceptions, trends and technologies that power today’s supply chain.

“Technology is clearly disrupting and changing every single industry,” he says. “As an industry, we are nowhere near the cutting-edge of available technology. Through the innovation lab, ASA is providing a resource for independent distributors to ask questions about technology and have some really bright, intelligent people research and find the answers.”

Condrón also points out that technology and innovation go hand-in-hand and can help take some of the pressure off this tight labor market. “Innovation with technology can help make up for some lack of labor by increasing productivity,”



Bill Condrón with Sharmaine Sanders receiving the 2021 ESGR Patriot Award for supporting National Guard employees.

he says. “We don’t know all of the answers surrounding technology, but we should be asking the questions, and **Beth Ladd** — ASA’s vice president of innovation — and her team are doing a great job leading ASA members in that effort.”

### FORWARD MOMENTUM

Condrón and The Granite Group have been actively involved in ASA for more than a decade. He says he’s impressed by ASA’s momentum and refusal to rest on its laurels.

“The work they’re doing on these new initiatives is really impressive and commendable,” he says. “They could just say, ‘Hey, we’re good. We’ve got an advocacy arm, an education arm, etc. We’re all set.’ But the fact that **Mike Adelizzi** and his team challenge themselves to push into new areas and offer new benefits to members is really, really powerful.”

Condrón adds that everything ASA does is for the benefit of its members, and in turn benefits the entire industry. “The networking aspect is a huge benefit as well,” he says. “As long as you’re in the PHCP-PVF industry and a member, you’re welcome in and you’re going to see your peers and counterparts at NETWORK.”

When thinking about his goals for 2022 as

ASA President, Condrón laughs and says it’s pretty simple: Don’t mess things up.

“ASA has been doing an incredible amount of work for members. From its new growth assessment tool, VITALITY, to the continued market and business intelligence it offers, my goal is to simply keep this force going.”

Condrón adds that there isn’t anything he sees that needs fixing, or anything that is currently missing from the association, and he wants to ensure his year as president only pushes these initiatives forward. “I want to offer the highest level of support for the things that have already been done and the things that are in the works,” he says. “In addition to that, I look forward to being really involved, getting back out and meeting more people from our great industry.”

Condrón is proud to represent ASA and passionate about its efforts towards solutions for the industry’s greatest challenges.

“As a distributor, this is genuinely your association,” he says. “ASA is doing work on your behalf, and it’s important that you support them. The incredible benefits being offered coupled with the vast networking opportunities is something that cannot be found anywhere else on the scale of what you’ll experience as an ASA member.”





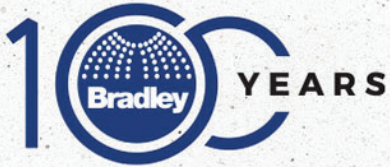
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# ADVOCACY *in action*

ASA's government affairs office ends year of positive legislative outcomes with huge victory, continuing to be a voice for members.

BY NATALIE FORSTER



The word “essential” has taken on a bit of a new meaning since the onset of 2020 and the coronavirus pandemic. When talking about how business behaved throughout the ups and downs of the past 20 months, many mention how thankful they were to be an essential business, and how this title allowed doors to remain open and business to continue.

**Steve Rossi**, director of government affairs at ASA, along with more than 1,800 engaged ASA members, are largely to thank for that.

When uncertainty struck, Rossi wasted no time corralling members to come together for the industry. “ASA members sent about 8,000 letters to federal legislators to make sure our industry was categorized as essential,” he says. “The legislators responded in an incredible way. The efforts of our members played a huge role in allowing businesses to remain open.”

Since that time, there has been no lack of legislative issues for ASA and its members to tackle next. On September 22 of this year, instead of its usual in-person visit to Capitol Hill, 27 ASA member companies participated in a virtual fly-in in conjunction with association partner National Association of Electrical Distributors, which was a huge success.

## 2021 VIRTUAL FLY IN ACTION ITEMS

In conjunction with NAED ASA held 50 different virtual meetings with congressmen and senators.

“Prior to the fly-in, we hosted a training session where we briefed participants on the top five areas of concern for our industry that we would be discussing during the virtual fly in,” Rossi explains.

According to **Paul Kennedy**, CEO of ASA distributor member Dakota Supply Group, holding the fly-in virtually made it more efficient. “We were able to accomplish more in a compressed amount of time,” he says. “In-person is always preferable, but when you’re on The Hill it can be difficult running around to varying offices, making it through security, etc. So with the virtual meetings, we were able to be more efficient with our time.”

Kennedy adds that during the virtual fly in, he felt as though there was more overall participation from senators and/or congressmen.

**Jeremy Fuller**, manager, purchasing for Texas Plumbing Supply, says the virtual option for the fly-in offered a win-win solution. “It is much faster and easier to connect from the comfort of our

own offices. If we can save the precious minutes and hours and other resources spent traveling and still have our voices heard, then it is win-win,” he explains. “This platform also allowed us to take better notes during meetings and have larger groups sit in on visits, where normally space and time is much further constrained. We took the opportunity to propose in-person site visits to our senators, allowing constituents to meet with them at our branch locations in the future.”

Members spoke with legislators about a few key items: LIFO — last in, first out inventory evaluation, President Biden’s spending bill, the bipartisan infrastructure bill, corporate tax laws and estate tax regulations.

“About half of our members use LIFO,” Rossi explains. “There are some proposals to change or repeal how LIFO is approached, which essentially would require businesses to pay taxes on profits that weren’t even realized yet — some could have inventories of \$10 million or more that they would have to pay taxes on, which would be devastating.”

The regulations surrounding estate tax are also of particular concern to the industry, as so many businesses are family-owned, Rossi notes. “In cases where the owner of a small business passes away and wants to leave it to their family member, many would likely have to sell the business just to afford taxes on it,” Rossi says.

Fuller says the estate tax, death tax and REINS Act were top concerns he aimed to address during the fly-in. “As a family business, we can’t afford to pay simply for being a successful multigenerational company,” he says. “If publicly traded corporations don’t get hit with a 40% valuation tax with each passing generation, neither should small, independent and family-owned businesses. The tax cuts and Jobs Act helped stimulate business growth, allowing for prosperity of all team members and families supported by those businesses. We need those protections extended to spur continued growth.”

Fuller adds that the REINS Act instills confidence in both the executive and legislative branch by maintaining a balance of power. “Significant economic impacts

should require a specific majority vote. We spoke with both Senator Cruz’s office and Senator Cornyn’s office, and their staff members were happy to hear from us and invited us to stay in touch,” he says. “We look forward to continued communication that was made possible by the ASA government affairs team.”

Additionally, Rossi says the members discussed proposed financial regulations with legislators. “There are current proposals that would require reporting of all business and personal financial transactions of more than \$600,” he says.

Throughout the virtual meetings, members discussed concerns related to these topics, and according to Rossi, they were well-received.

thriving. Independent distribution is really important, and the fly-in gave a voice to independent distributors across the country.”

## TIMING IS CRITICAL

Although ASA focuses heavily on federal government affairs, it also steps up to bring members a voice on important state legislative issues as well. To access ASA’s State Legislative Tracker, visit [www.asa.net/Advocacy/Issues-Agenda/State-Issues](http://www.asa.net/Advocacy/Issues-Agenda/State-Issues).

One of the vital state legislative concerns ASA undertook came to fruition with a positive outcome in mid-October when another California “Get the Lead Out” bill — CA AB100 — was signed into law with timeline amendments that benefit PHCP

*“Advocacy is part of being an active ASA member. When legislators hear from members of their communities who are out creating jobs, it’s powerful. The more members legislators hear from, the more impact we’re going to have.”*

— Paul Kennedy, CEO, Dakota Supply Group

“It was really productive. We spoke with both Democrats and Republicans,” he says. “Obviously, you’re not going to have everyone agree on these things, but we had productive conversations with people from both sides and they were receptive to the majority of our concerns.”

Kennedy notes that while it’s impossible to know what the outcome will be of these issues, the fly-in was about amplifying the voices of the PHCP-PVF supply chain. “We were able to discuss topics from our industry’s point of view,” he says. “We discussed how the estate tax would negatively impact some businesses and why protecting the current corporate tax laws will keep generational businesses

manufacturers and distributors.

Rossi notes that a similar bill was introduced last year — CA AB 2060 or “Get the Lead out 2.0” — and ASA had 170 members send 2,400 messages to legislators, successfully defeating the bill, which would have required the design and certification of endpoint fixtures to a new international standard that was scheduled to take effect in 2021, three years earlier than the original 2024 target date.

Similar to AB2060, AB100 institutes the sale of only endpoint fixtures that comply with the NSF 61 2020, but originally the bill had a required date of January 2022.

“The original timeline would have been extremely difficult for our members;

# SPEAKING WITH ONE VOICE



distributors would have been banned from selling certain products they currently had in inventory,” Rossi explains. “So we are extremely pleased with the outcome and the 2023 deadline, as it allows manufacturers time to get compliant products into the supply chain while providing wholesaler-distributors a reasonable amount of time to reduce inventory of non-compliant products.”

CA AB100 ensures early compliance with the NSF 61 2020 standard in California. The bill requires that by Jan. 1, all NSF 61 2020-compliant products will be labeled according to the standard itself, with the mark ‘NSF/ANSI/CAN 61: Q<1’. The bill also requires that all endpoint products manufactured on or after Jan. 1, 2023 be certified to the NSF 61 2020 standard, and that by July 1, 2023, all endpoint products available for sale be certified to the NSF 61 2020 standard.

ASA spent months intensely negotiating with California legislature and working closely with coalition partners Plumbing Manufacturers International, California Retailers Association and California Building Industries Association to deliver a mutually beneficial outcome for distributors, manufacturers and the state of California.

ASA Chairman **Bill Glockner**, president and CEO of San Juan Capistrano, California-based Hirsch Pipe & Supply, says ASA was “incredibly helpful in pushing the timeline for compliance with AB100 back by more than year.”

Glockner, whose distributorship has 25 locations throughout Southern California, notes Hirsch executives met with faucet and water line manufacturers at the recent AD North American Meeting in Grapevine, Texas, and raised the issue of their compliance to AB100.

“Most of them already comply or are working on the testing and process changes to comply by the end of next year,” Glockner explains. “We are working with these manufacturers to make sure our inventories will be able to come into compliance by the date that ASA helped negotiate for distributor sell-through. In short we feel fortunate that ASA’s advocacy efforts protected Hirsch and other California distributors and manufacturers from an impossible timeline and feel the new timeline is achievable.”

**AJ Benton**, branch manager for Fountain Valley, California-based PHCP-PVF distributor Smardan Supply says he appreciates ASA’s work to negotiate a later date for the bill’s requirements. “The new 2023 date really helps manufacturers,” he says. “And as distributors, we are facing a lot of uncertainty and disruption, so this extension essentially means there is one less issue to worry about in the immediate future.”

## MAKING AN IMPACT

Although ASA is happy with its recent legislative wins and the positive response it’s been getting, now is definitely not the time to slow down. Rossi encourages members to stay up-to-date on issues and stay engaged as an ASA member.

Rossi knows staying informed with government affairs can be challenging at times. “Things can change so quickly, and it’s often hard to cut through the noise when consuming political content,” he says. “So I send out a weekly eNewsletter to our members — the Washington Weekly Update — which summarizes what’s going on in Congress and the Senate, aiming to give members a quick update that cuts right to the chase about what’s going on in

Washington relevant to our industry”

Dakota Supply Group’s Kennedy says he relies on ASA to keep him up to date on important legislative news. “Reading the Washington Weekly Update from start to finish each week gives me a really relevant, quick update on issues most important to me and to our industry,” he says.

Fuller urges ASA members to stay vocal and consistent when fighting for legislation that benefits the industry. “Workers can often take for granted the fact that our legislators share our points of view on every issue, when, in fact, there are simply too many issues and too many angles for their offices to keep track of,” he says. “I’m guilty of complacency when it comes to representation. If we aren’t staying vocal and contacting our senators and other reps to let them know potential negative effects, we can’t be certain they are aware.”

As ASA continues to advocate on behalf of the PHCP-PVF industry, Rossi encourages members to engage if they aren’t already. “ASA is giving your company a voice,” he says. “We are working to promote reasonable regulations and fight back against regulations that might affect the growth of our member companies. These issues not only affect business owners, but employees as well. The more ASA members we have fighting with us, the better; more numbers gives more weight to our voice.”

Kennedy agrees, saying strength in numbers is key. “Advocacy is a part of being an active ASA member,” he says. “When our legislators hear from members of their communities that are out creating jobs, it’s powerful. The more business owners that legislators hear from, the more impact we are going to have.”

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# WEARING *Many* HATS

Annual AIM/R roundtable discusses major role shifts and heightened expectations for reps.

BY NATALIE FORSTER

The days of manufacturers' reps hitting the pavement making sales call after sales call are long gone. Today, reps are often taking on reporting, marketing, training, data analytics and through times of disruption, damage control.

During the annual *Supply House Times*-AIM/R roundtable discussion, which took place in-person in San Diego, California during the association's annual conference, reps from across the country agreed

that the role of the manufacturers' rep is expanding more rapidly than ever before — as is the opportunity for growth and new business.

**Dean Parker** CPMR, president of Minneapolis, Minnesota-based firm Michel Sales Co. explains reps are responsible for more tasks than ever before.

"We're taking on the marketing roles, data analytics and reporting," he says. "Years ago, a lot of the product marketing



From left: Ray Gonzalez, Dean Parker, John Altepeter and Ian Price. Photo by Natalie Forster.

more information be readily available — the reporting reps are doing now for manufacturers is one example,” says **Ray Gonzalez**, CPMR, sales manager for Boca Raton, Florida-based Carr Co. “Additionally, we are striving to be an extension of the distributor salesforce.”

Gonzalez says technology and the enhanced level of connection the industry is capable of today has played a huge role in the expansion of the rep role.

**Ian Price**, vice president sales and marketing for Commerce, California-based Carrhill Co. says rep agencies have essentially become a critical resource for all levels of manufacturer and distributor businesses. “Our sales role has rapidly evolved over the past year and a half,” he says. “We’ve become both a physical and digital resource to help train and extend the staff of the distributor and end user, and that training flows into their inside and outside sales departments and customer service.”

The reps agree that these increasing expectations and roles make for a stronger partnership overall.

“This whole paradigm has pushed us to become more efficient and more capable,” Price says. “And it certainly places more load on our staff as reps, but it’s given us the opportunity to become an even more valuable partner than before.”

## MORE ROLES, MORE PEOPLE

With the many hats reps are wearing today, it’s become a necessity for agencies to hire new talent for roles they may not have had internally before.

“We’re having to bring on marketing people, web designers and analytics experts,” Parker points out. “The factories are watching what we’re doing digitally. At Michel Sales we’ve got a younger woman that handles data analytics, data entry and social media and she’s been extremely helpful in taking on these new roles.”

In the incredibly tight labor market the country is experiencing, it isn’t easy for reps to find talent to fill these roles. According to Price, hiring qualified family and friends has proven successful for Carrill Co.

“This is a very family-oriented type of business model we’re in. Both past and future leadership will be family members or extended family and friends, so

we’re doubling down on that to identify who within our organization to discuss opportunities with,” he says. “And not necessarily just within our organization, but who outside industry do we know that don’t have a professional path already planned out. We engage with them and say, ‘Hey, you have to let me tell you a little bit about the industry and a look inside the business.’”

Parker adds that it is difficult to find the right people for the many different roles an agency might be looking to hire. “We’re fortunate in our industry that we’re able to offer competitive wages,” he points out. “When someone comes along that isn’t a fit, you can tell within the first couple of weeks, and when you find that hard-working, talented person, you want to hold onto them tight.”

Gonzalez notes that when hiring and training the next generation, there is a balance that needs to happen. “It’s important for the youth coming in to realize that while they bring a new skillset and talent to the team that we need, there are decades of experience within the company that they need to learn from,” he says. “If they’re willing to latch onto someone and learn, that young person becomes even more valuable because they have this new knowledge plus the talent they had coming in.”

## INTERCONNECTED SALES STRATEGY

As new tasks are added to their plates, reps are adjusting their sales strategies.

“We’re wired to be salespeople. We’re wired to help create demand for product. We’re wired to convert customers over to our products,” Gonzalez says. “But now, we’ve become analytics people, so we have to find a way to make that work and blend that into our agency because at the end of the day, we need to sell the product and convert customers.”

Altepeter points out that inside sales teams have become even more connected than they were before the pandemic. “I’m seeing a rise in the virtual relationship from inside-to-inside people,” he says. “It’s always been a strong relationship, but when we lacked face-to-face time on the outside sales side, the inside teams really stepped up and made sure everyone was connected;

material was provided for us, now we’re creating it ourselves.”

Hendersonville, Tennessee-based A6 Sales President **John Altepeter** agrees, emphasizing the data analytics role reps are now taking on. “We’re shifting more to a business analyst with our distributors than just a shoulder-to-shoulder selling mechanism,” he says. “Our distributor customers are wanting information given to them from a financial or operational benefit standpoint. A lot of our role is becoming more technical and analytical overall.”

All participants agree that reps are expected to provide much more information than ever before.

“The industry as a whole is requiring

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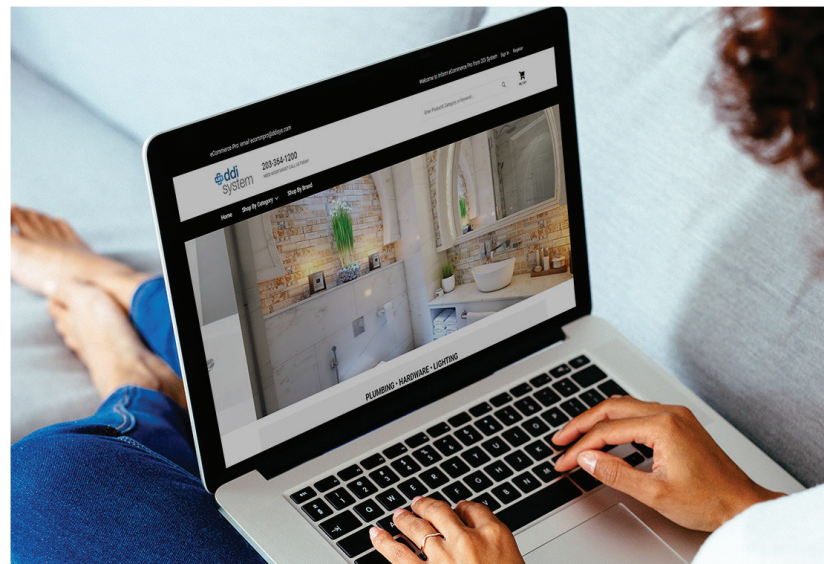
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During AIM/R's annual conference in San Diego, attendees participated in two sessions of roundtable discussions with reps and suppliers. *Photo courtesy of AIM/R.*

they were built for that type of virtual connection role while the outside sales teams had to adjust.”

Parker adds that as customer service and response time has become more vital, the inside sales teams have done a great job at extending their roles to take on customer service requests.

Gonzalez agrees, saying the inside teams have played a huge role in the level of communication needed in business today. “They’ve done a great job of being that vehicle of communication back to our manufacturer, even more so than normal,” he says. “They have longstanding connections with the people who can move things around and help fill an order. They talk to them on a regular basis, so it’s important for us to make sure the inside folks have the tools needed to get the job done.”

## STRATEGIES FOR A DISRUPTED MARKET

According to Altepetter, as distributors are facing issues retaining enough inventory, the rep role has shifted from helping make inventory turn to helping distributors get inventory.

Not surprisingly, communication is the common denominator when it comes to

working through supply chain disruption.

“There’s more communication happening from all sides right now,” Parker says. “It actually gets redundant for us because we’re explaining things to the purchasing agent, then the director of purchasing and then to the president of the company; making sure the information gets on everyone’s radar.”

Gonzalez agrees, saying reps now communicate with people on all levels of the project. “We’re communicating with all of the channels, not just the wholesaler. We’re relaying information back through the contractor and at the builder level, reiterating when needed to make sure everyone knows what’s going on.”

Parker adds that although everyone understands the disruption or bad news is not the reps’ fault, it does get old being the one to deliver unfortunate updates. “We must take the good with the bad,” he says.

Gonzalez summarizes the disruption well, saying it’s unprecedented for everyone involved. “No matter how long you’ve been in the business, we are all seeing things that are unprecedented. It doesn’t matter how many decades you’ve been in this. We all think we’ve seen a lot of things, but this has been something we just couldn’t have seen coming.”

Despite the disruption facing the industry, Price finds a way to identify the positives.

“I like to think that there’s some really positive things that have happened, too. It commands the question of who your alliances are in your supply chain,” he says. “Historically, just-in-time inventory worked and cash management was king. Well, at this point, though cash is always king, inventory is right up there with it, because standing inventory now is cash — you have product to sell or you don’t. And this creates growth opportunities and partnerships.”

Price adds that Carrhill Co. is focused on being a valuable ally with its distributors, offering available product solutions different than what many have been used to for years; when that go-to product is unavailable, the company offers some alternate acceptable solutions they may not have thought of before.

Under current restraints, some manufacturers are choosing to focus on loyal, existing customers rather than finding new business, so reps have the opportunity to explore and provide new business avenues. “As we move forward, I believe some distributors may reconsider single alignment with just one manufacturer,” Price says. “This will encourage new conversations with our trade partners we may not have done business with before, creating new value-add relationships, available inventory capital and shared growth opportunities.”

When it comes to helping distributors be as proactive as possible while working through disruption, Altepetter says being a one-stop-shop for information has helped tremendously. “We’re corraling all of our line information into a single source,” he says. “We put out an updated document daily with all of our inventory information, factory increase percentages and lead times. Distributors have really appreciated this.”

The reps agree that for the most part, customers are understanding, and the industry is still all about relationships.

“Thankfully, it’s still about relationships,” Gonzalez says. “And it’s on us to make sure it stays that way. We have to be relevant. We have to keep ourselves fresh by hiring newer people and people that get it. Just continuing to keep up with the changes.”

“The positive side is that there’s still business — many of us had really great years last year,” Gonzalez adds.



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## RELEVANCY IS THE ROAD TO SUCCESS

As reps work to remain relevant in a growing digital, virtual marketplace, the participants say it's all about being purposeful with your message.

"We're working to increase and enhance the relevance of whatever we are pushing out digitally," Altepeter says. "When face-to-face wasn't an option, emails increased and many people missed the message if they missed your emails.

Not exhausting our customers is key in making sure they find relevance in our digital message. We're looking at open rates and creating short messages with a clear call-to-action."

Price notes that brand awareness has been a great focus in order to remain relevant. "In some cases, manufacturers have been rather disconnected from end-users," he says. "So we're encouraging them to invest in us as a local market

extension of their business, providing and supporting high performance CRMs, data sets, training and connectivity to our distributor partners and end users supporting our increasingly virtual and contact-free marketplace."

Price adds that with the increased amount of digital communication came the ability to be more efficient. "We're working to build a community and have relationships and access to the end-user," he says. "At the end of the day, time is money, so however we can most quickly and accurately flow information through the chain is best; whether it's texts, phone calls or emails."


When discussing the continuous battle with online and big box retail, Gonzalez says he's impressed with the services distributors are offering.

"The wholesalers have done a great job rising to the challenge of customer expectations that Amazon has created," he says. "They've got GPS tracking, iPads

and photos of when inventory gets loaded on and off the truck so customers are kept up-to-date."









With all of the market changes, new expectations and challenges ahead, reps agree that new business opportunities are just as plentiful.

"The future of our piece of the channel will definitely come from adapting and diversifying," Altepeter says. "Having a service department, training department and training centers — the things that our manufacturers and distributors can't regionalize — are things we as reps can do.

"One of the biggest things I've seen help our distributors is reminding them of the tremendous value they bring," Altepeter continues. "They can get lost in the day-to-day of things, but we remind them of the value they bring that big box can't offer; just take the time to pull them aside and say 'What you're doing is good; you're adding value and that warrants a premium price.'" 

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# PLUMBING TRENDS

## *from the field*

BY NATALIE FORSTER



A recent residential shower remodel job completed by Best Plumbing and Best Bath.

## Residential contractors share what they need from distributor and rep partners to tackle booming market.

Although lack of available product and labor are ongoing factors within the residential plumbing sector, there is certainly no lack of opportunity. According to the 2021 North American Plumbing Fixtures Market Report, compiled by Grand View Research, the plumbing fixture market ended 2020 with a \$22.4 billion value and it is expected to grow at a rate of 7.5 percent from 2021 to 2028. The report credits this growth to the increasing number of construction projects of residential buildings, hotels, restaurants, and airports, along with the growing need for modernized bathrooms and kitchens.

Residential plumbing contractors agree, adding that routine service calls have increased as well.

**Larry Shoemaker** second-generation owner of Bethlehem, Pennsylvania-based Deluxe Plumbing & Heating and *PM Magazine's* 2021 Residential Contractor of the Year, says his team spends a lot of time on service plumbing calls.

"We've experienced an increased amount of routine service calls as people spend more time at home," he says. "Water heater replacements, re-piping jobs and installation of leak detection

devices are all popular calls for us right now."

Marian, Iowa-based Best Plumbing and Best Bath is largely working on remodel jobs rather than new construction, according to Owner **Jeff Berndt**. "As new home inventory availability dwindles, people are looking to upgrade their homes that were built in the 1980s through the early-mid 2000s," he says. "They're taking out large tubs and adding in custom, walk-in showers."

Berndt adds that the aging-in-place mantra is leading to more shower remodel jobs as well. "We're seeing more people choose to stay in their home rather than move to a facility or community, so grab-bars, walk-in showers and ADA compliant products are a rising trend," he explains. "People are aiming to enhance the overall shower experience. There's a lot of opportunity in the shower market, from digital valves and control components to new finishes and fixtures."

**Hunter Botto**, current PHCC president says there is a large focus on the service and repair side. "With so many new products coming to market there is always a large focus on service and repair training," he says. "At the beginning of the pandemic we



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experienced a lot of interest in our PHCC educational classes that revolved around service and repair.”

Echoing a focus on service and repair, **Chad Peterman**, president of Indiana-based Peterman Brothers HVAC, says his team is performing many service, repair and replacement jobs on the residential side.

### PRODUCTS IN HIGH DEMAND

Contractors agree that certain water heaters, faucets and PEX products are in high demand and are most difficult to obtain right now.

Shoemaker says that repair parts are incredibly hard to get in some cases, and distributors should aim to increase stock of repair parts that plumbers need in real-time. “These aren’t parts that people need often, so supply houses may not keep a large stock of them,” he says. “But when they’re needed, it’s urgent, so the plumber will go wherever has the parts available in order to get the call completed for the homeowner.”

Shoemaker adds that it’s hard to gauge how many repair parts will be needed at any given time, but plumbing contractors will often buy up multiple common parts so they have them on their truck whenever the need arises.

According to Peterman, water heaters have been the product segment impacted

the most from pandemic. “Water heaters continue to be difficult to stock,” he says. “We’re completing a lot of water heater replacement jobs, so we’ve been buying in bulk whenever possible to stay prepared.”

As contractors work to complete projects during times of disruption, Berndt says contractors need proactive communication from distributor partners. “All of the shipping delays and long lead times are out of the distributors’ hands,” he says. “So what we need from them is just constant communication on what they have in stock and what they’re getting. Even if it’s something we haven’t placed an order for, if they think we may need it, let us know you have it so we can proactively buy product and be more prepared for future projects.”

Price fluctuation continues to challenge contractors as they quote for jobs. “When distributors are able to give us price holds it’s extremely helpful,” Shoemaker says. “When we can hold a certain quantity at a certain price it’s huge. In addition to that, I would encourage distributors to continue to bulk up their inventory. Stock more product and diversify product lines.”

Peterman points out that there is always new product coming out, and what’s most important to the contractor is ability

to provide the highest level of service. “Product technology is great, and we get trained on new products all of the time,” he says. “But what’s most important is service to the customer, so whatever helps us be the most efficient and prepared is key.”

### CONTRACTOR BUYING HABITS

In order to complete as many calls per day as possible, Shoemaker says he tries to keep his contractors’ trucks stocked with product. “When it comes to ordering product, I try to keep them off the counter as much as possible during the day,” he says. “We have daily shipments coming in to our facility ensuring we have what we need day-to-day.”

When ordering product for those daily shipments, Shoemaker says the majority of orders are placed online or directly through a branch that Deluxe Plumbing has an existing relationship with.

Botto says that contractors are simply buying from wherever they can get the best service.

As they continue to stay busy, Berndt says contractors are utilizing e-commerce while on the jobsite. “We do place orders at the counter, via email and phone calls and through wholesalers’ websites,” he says. “We buy almost exclusively through wholesalers, so it’s been great to utilize their websites and be able to order from the truck or on the jobsite really quickly.”

Peterman says the majority of his company’s orders are placed through an ERP software, ServiceTitan. “We use ServiceTitan to place our orders. All of our vendors are affiliated with the software, so when we place an order, it goes directly to the vendor and is fulfilled, which makes things really convenient.”

### FROM THE MANUFACTURER

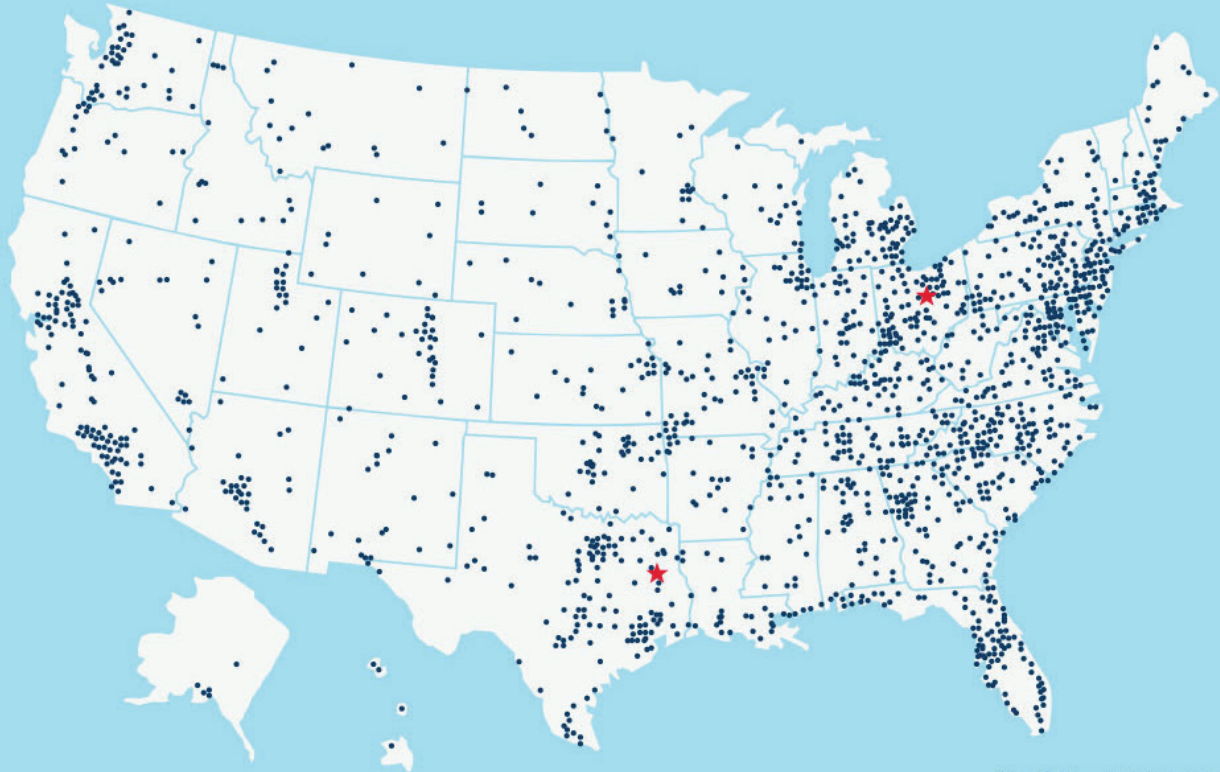
Aging in place and an increasing desire for privacy are two residential trends manufacturers say are prominent. “The biggest trend we hear about, especially with the baby boomer generation and rise in homeownership, is aging or living-in-place,” says **Marlee Gannon**, senior manager, product and channel, Oatey Co. “In light of the housing market’s current state, many homeowners are looking to implement renovations that can extend the life of homes, so they have the opportunity



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## FEATURE: RESIDENTIAL PLUMBING TRENDS

to remain in their homes longer. For example, from a bathroom design perspective, homeowners might opt for a curbless walk-in shower, install grab bars or choose fixtures that increase accessibility, such as adjustable showerheads.”

**Megen Rapp**, senior trade marketing analyst at Kohler, says wellness continues to be the main focus, and open concept living isn't necessarily the most popular design any more. “As homes and rooms have evolved to be multi-purpose, many consumers are feeling that open-concept living no longer offers the versatility (and privacy) they need in their homes,” she says. “They're instead looking for ways to help create an escape. Creating a spa-like bathroom that includes a freestanding bath or immersive shower system can help create that space for renewal.”

Timeless, clean and smart are the three words Rapp uses to summarize current residential plumbing trends.

“Timeless isn't just about design, it's about

quality craftsmanship as well. Uncertainty in the economy and public health is driving consumers to desire timeless, long-lasting products,” she says. “A clean and hygienic home is as much an emotional and psychological comfort as it is a physical and practical necessity. It's about feeling a sense of control over your environment.

“Technology can be an important component of wellbeing, but it can also detract from wellbeing if it becomes too invasive in the environment,” Rapp continues. “Thoughtful, subtle technology that offers meaningful convenience and efficiency can support wellbeing without becoming a distraction.”

Gannon agrees, saying consumers are after spa-like experiences and the ability to update finishes and fixtures to the latest design trend.

“Product and labor shortages in the trades are driving demand for more time-efficient products and services,” Gannon adds. “One of the keys that's critical in product design

is listening to our end-users and getting their feedback consistently. Our team feels strongly that we can't develop products in a vacuum. We need to be on job sites and see how products are being used. Then come back to our office to create ideas and prototypes. Then return to the job site to get consistent feedback.”

Just as contractors note above, manufacturers agree that communication is the best way to serve distributors, contractors and ultimately, end-users. “The key to a successful relationship with our distributors hinges on communication. Our teams are actively listening to our partners so we can help to solve concerns and work collaboratively toward a better process,” Rapp says. “We encourage all of our distributor partners, our esteemed trade professionals, customers and consumers to join us in working on mutually beneficial solutions so that we can continue to deliver on our promise of being a trusted and reliable partner.”

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**SUPPLY  
HOUSE TIMES  
PROFILE**

# GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions' Jim Skaggs



GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions team. Photo courtesy of GE Appliances & Water Solutions.

GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions is a solutions provider of HVAC, water heater, water filtration and ductless heating and cooling solutions for residential and light commercial use. A new division of GE Appliances launched in late 2020, it is supported by more than 600 SKUs, 298,000 square feet of new U.S. manufacturing space, and a commitment to quick-access solutions and technical support. GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions carries a line of electric tank and tankless water heaters, with plans for the introduction of a gas line early next year. *Supply House Times* recently caught up with **Jim Skaggs**, vice president of sales for GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions. Skaggs talks about a variety of topics, including the new division's embracement of wholesale-distribution, the current state of the supply chain and what the future holds for GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions and the heating and cooling industry in general.

## What triggered the decision to engage more with the wholesale-distribution channel?

**JS:** GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions saw an opportunity to fill a void for many customers in the wholesale-distribution channel. Based on feedback from industry research, we learned that distributors were lacking alternative product options and partners that can help them grow their business. So, we decided to launch a portfolio of more than 600 SKUs for the pro channel and back it up with unparalleled support.

## How is GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions best interacting with and utilizing the wholesale-distribution channel?

**JS:** For any size business — small, large or somewhere in the middle — there is a need for a supplier that can help provide support when and where it is needed. We have more than 400 dedicated



Skaggs says GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions values its manufacturer representative firms' support of the pro channel, and plans to utilize reps as a go-to-market strategy. *Photo courtesy of GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions.*

employees who provide service and support for our products, and we provide individual training for all our product lines. For us, the most important thing about building this relationship with a customer is so much more than being there. It's about listening to their needs in order to determine how to show up in the right ways.

**Are you dealing with the same supply chain issues other manufacturers in our industry are dealing with right now?**

**JS:** We offer one of the nation's largest distribution networks, ensuring we can deliver what you need, when you need it.

Our 12 distribution locations are capable of reaching 90% of the U.S. in just days. Additionally, we favor all customers equally, regardless of company size or order quota. You can rely on your relationship with GE Appliances Air & Water to pull the same weight whether you're a local business or a regionally renowned wholesaler.

**What are distributor customers telling you in terms of what folks want when it comes to water heaters/heating/cooling products? What is important to a contractor and to an end user right now?**

**JS:** From what we've heard, customers are

hungry for new product options that are available now. Backed by the resources of GE Appliances, our Air & Water Solutions division is ready to meet this demand in availability with our breadth of portfolio and premium tech support and training. As for the end user, not only do we provide a name that is known and trusted, but we also support that reputation with product ease of use and peace of mind. For example, SmartHQ technology ensures our products are easier to service and integrated with consumers' increasingly automated and digitized world.

**Is GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions concentrating on the residential market, non-residential multi-family, institutional, etc., market or a combo of both?**

**JS:** Our product offering features the latest technology and innovations suitable for large-scale light commercial applications, as well as multifamily and residential use. It all depends on what you're looking for; our portfolio is made up of more than 600 different product SKUs across 12 key air and water categories including VTAC and PTAC, ductless systems, water heaters, water treatment and more.

**Where does GE Appliances Air & Water Solutions see the heating and cooling industry heading in the near term and longer-term? What's the next big thing with technology?**

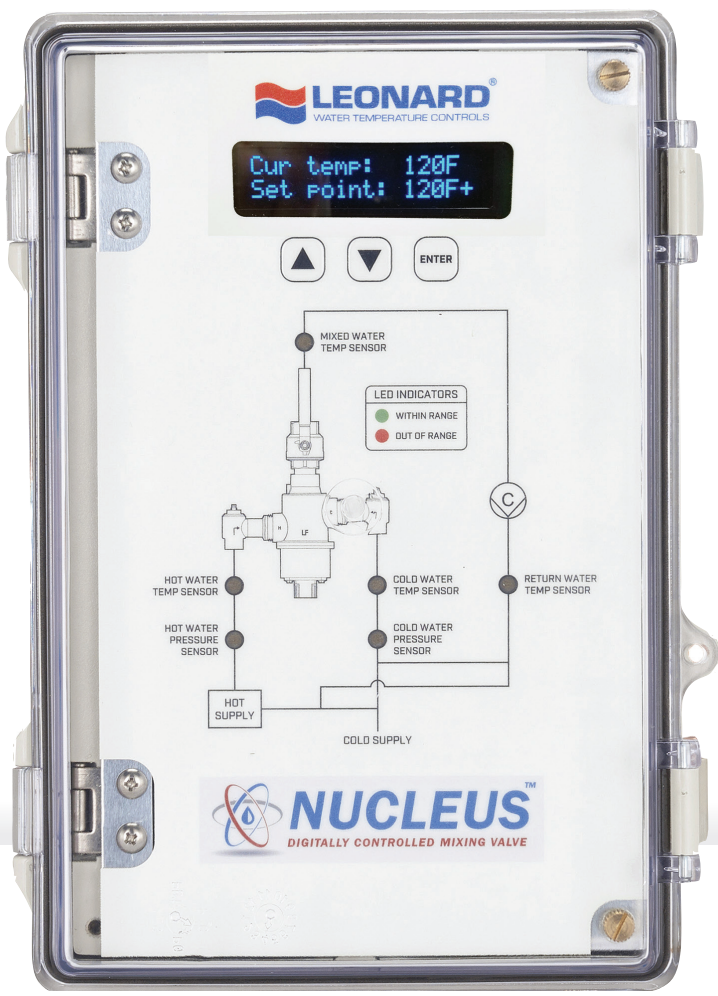
**JS:** We're proud to be a part of this extremely dynamic heating and cooling industry, and it's why we are excited to partner with the pro distribution channel and pro contractors to offer best-in-class solutions during times of changing regulations and evolving end-user needs. Innovation, efficiency regulations, and the end user's desire for clean air and water will drive our continued investment in this industry.

The ability to integrate a whole home of appliances, water heating, water treatment, and heating/cooling systems in one central, digital location — our SmartHQ platform — offers owners more line of sight to how these products work, how they can help reduce utility costs and identify mechanical challenges or potential product failures prior to them happening. We are excited to drive trends in technology for the air and water product categories. 📱

# THE CASE FOR THE MASTER MIXING VALVE

Legionella prevention, scald protection and energy savings among benefits of master mixing valves.

BY RICK COTA AND ERIC COSTA

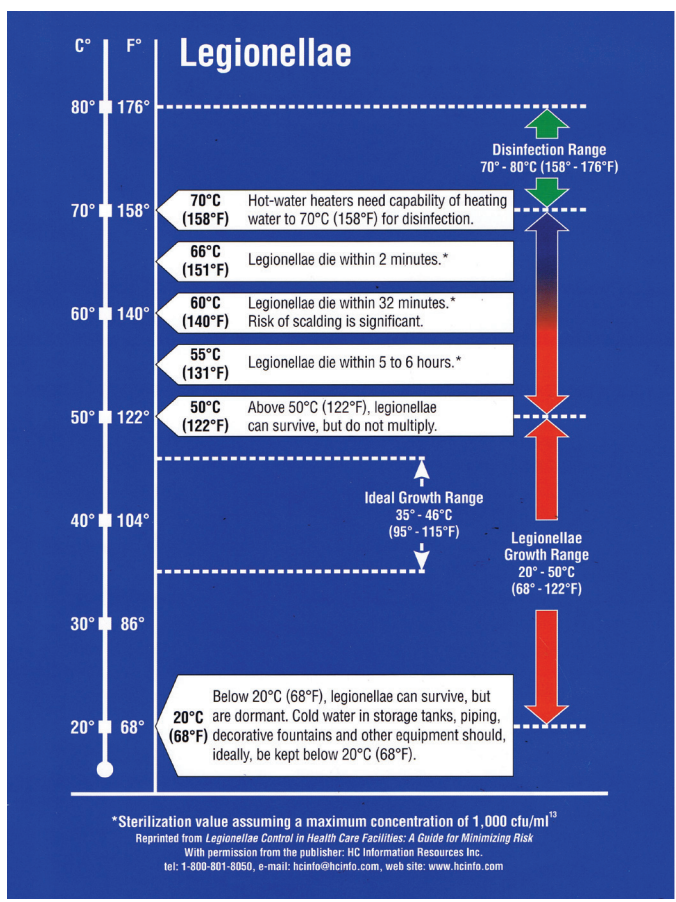


Hot water has been around since man first harnessed the power of fire, but when at elevated temperatures it is dangerous and even deadly. Today's hot water heaters offer a diverse range of technologies that perform leaps and bounds ahead of their predecessors, but what temperature should they deliver? Some facilities may simply set the heater to a usable temperature, but while this may seem like an acceptable practice, there is an issue that needs to be addressed: Legionella.

One of the biggest concerns for hot water systems in commercial buildings is legionella bacteria. Legionella is a bacterium that enters the human body by inhalation and aspiration of water droplets and is responsible for Legionnaire's Disease, a bacterial infection of the lower respiratory system that often gets misdiagnosed as pneumonia; one in 10 people who contract Legionnaires Disease will not survive. Figure 1 shows a legionella growth chart, which displays their growth behavior. These organisms live and multiply in water between 68-122° F, and thrive in water 95-115° F. At 121° F, legionella bacterium stops multiplying, but is still present in water.

## LEGIONELLA GROWTH IN WATER WITH RELATION TO TEMPERATURE

There are many ways to combat legionella in a domestic hot water system. UV ray treatment is a method used to treat

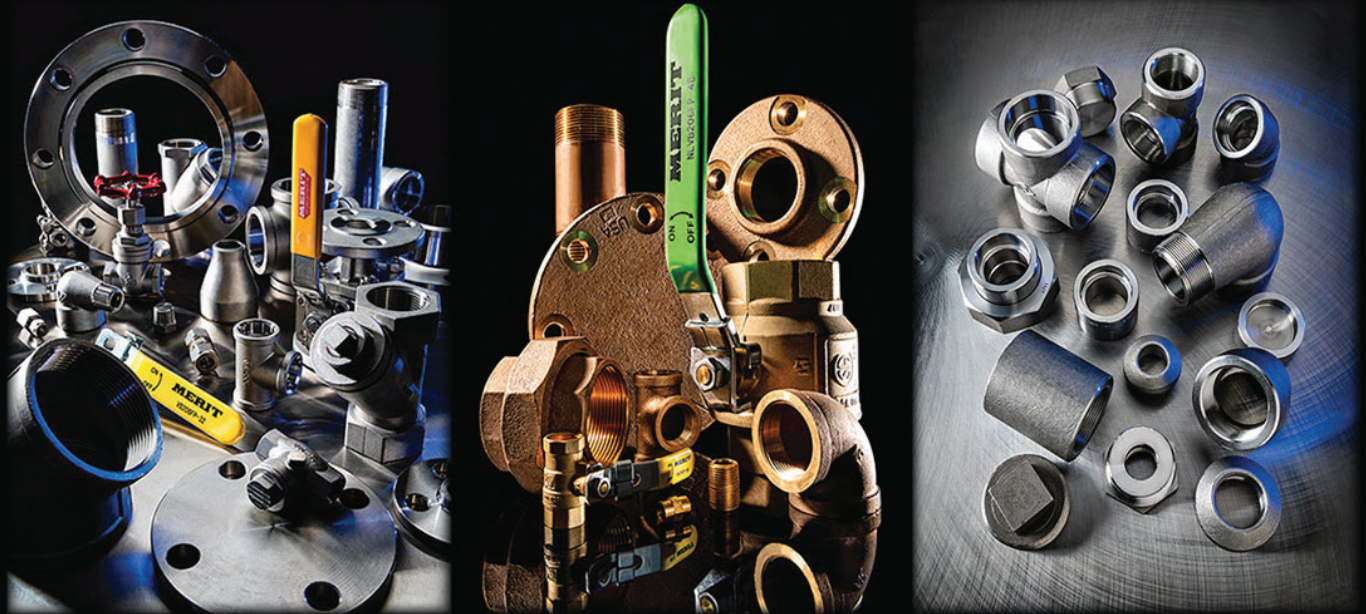


\*Sterilization value assuming a maximum concentration of 1,000 cfu/ml<sup>13</sup>  
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Figure 1.

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**FEATURE: MASTER MIXING VALVES**

bacterial removal, however, additional heat is the most common method. Since the first clinical study was done in 1977 by the Allegheny County Health Department, more and more commercial water heater systems are heating to temperatures above 140° F to kill the bacteria. Since then, the plumbing design industry generally follows the ASHRAE 2000-12 guideline, which suggests thermal disinfection by sending hot water 165-175° F through the domestic hot water system.

These higher temperatures, while necessary, pose a scald danger for end users. This is where a master mixing valve becomes extremely valuable. A master mixer is regularly used to reduce the temperature down to a more usable area (between 124-130° F), and then circulated throughout the building. A portion of the return water from the domestic hot water line is sent back to the hot water source to be reheated, which helps keep legionella growth in check.

Master mixing valves provide a buffer between the high temperature heat source and end point fixtures. Hand washing faucets in public restrooms will typically have the hot water supplied from a small point of use mixing valve. The presence of these valves will tempt designers and contractors to skip the installation of a master mixing valve. While this does work initially, the building is at a higher risk of scalding end users since these small valves are often forgotten and not well maintained. Over time these valves will fail and potentially allow “full hot” through them. If “full hot” is 140° F or above, the risk of scald is significant. By installing a master mixing valve, “full hot” is tempered down to the fixtures keeping a set temperature safe for end users. For reference, Figure 2 shows a water burn chart so that the danger can be fully appreciated.

**BURN TIMES AT DIFFERENT HOT WATER TEMPERATURES**

Master mixing valves also keep domestic hot water temperatures consistent, even with large inlet temperature changes. As part of the ASSE 1017 certification, all master

TEMP (°F)	Approx TIME for 1st Deg. Burn	Approx TIME for 3rd Deg. Burn
100	Safe for bathing	Safe for bathing
120	8 min	10 min
125	2 min	4 min
130	17 sec	30 sec
140	3 sec	5 sec
155	Instant	1 sec
160	Instant	0.5 sec
180	Instant	Instant

Figure 2.

mixers must control the outlet temperature within a specified range from the initial set point when there is a 25° F increase to the hot water inlet temperature. The allowable variance can range from  $\pm 3^\circ$  F to  $\pm 7^\circ$  F, depending on the size and flow rate.

The majority of thermostatic master mixers hold to within  $\pm 3^\circ$  F, and digital master mixing valves are known to hold within  $\pm 2^\circ$  F. Without a master mixing valve, a large increase in hot water temperature can be a dangerous situation. Pressure balanced shower valves are of particular concern since they do not offer thermal protection; large increases to the domestic hot water temperature will be directly felt by the end user. If a master mixing valve is installed the large increase in hot water temperature from the heat source is tempered down and end users are better protected.

Energy and cost savings are other benefits of installing a master mixing valve. Instead of having to heat 100 percent of the hot water needed for the building, the heater is only needed for a fraction of that when a master mixer is present in the system. Consider a system that requires a domestic hot water temperature of 125° F. If the hot water supply is set to 140° F with a

mixing valve installed downstream, 83% of the volume needs to be heated, assuming the cold water temperature is 50° F. At 160° F only 68% of the domestic hot water needs to be heated. This reduction will save the facility energy and the system becomes environmentally friendly. In addition, since the heaters are heating a lower volume of water, a smaller unit may be sufficient and wear and tear to the heater and related equipment is reduced.

Installing a master mixing valve on a domestic hot water system is simply good practice. They add an extra layer of safety to any system. Having a master mixer allows facilities to heat and store water at elevated temperatures, which kills legionella bacteria, while delivering safe hot water temperatures for multiple applications. If a heating system malfunctions and a large increase to the hot water temperature is seen, a master mixing valve will flatten the spike to the domestic hot water system. The inclusion of a mixing valve will also save energy and lengthen heater equipment service life. 📌

*Rick Cota is vice president of technical services for Leonard Valve Co. and Eric Costa is a mechanical engineer on the Leonard Valve Engineering Team.*



# DOWN THE PIPE

## A. O. SMITH ACQUIRES CANADA-BASED GIANT FACTORIES

A. O. Smith announced it has acquired Giant Factories, a Canada-based manufacturer of residential and commercial water heaters, with trailing 12-month sales of about \$105 million.

“The addition of Giant strengthens our leadership position as a global supplier of residential and commercial water heaters. The acquisition also supports our corporate strategy by increasing our North America market penetration, creating additional capacity and enhancing our distribution capabilities,” said **Kevin J. Wheeler**, A. O. Smith’s chairman and chief executive officer. “Along with its rich history, established relationships and talented team, Giant’s values and business approach align with ours, and we look forward to welcoming Giant’s employees to the A. O. Smith family.”

**Claude Lesage**, Giant Factories president, commented: “We are extremely excited about the benefits of a powerful combination with a world leader in global water technology. This natural and logical partnership with A. O. Smith will enhance prospects for our customers, employees, and suppliers.”

The addition of Giant to A. O. Smith’s existing water heater operations enlarges the company’s presence in the Canada water heater market, which is characterized by a high percentage of replacement demand.

The acquisition of Giant also supports A. O. Smith’s decarbonization efforts by increasing the amount of water-heating products in its portfolio that are supplied by a renewable energy grid – Giant’s end markets are mainly served by a grid that is primarily hydro-sourced and non-carbon intensive.

## MUNCH’S SUPPLY RAISES MORE THAN \$24,000 FOR ST. JUDE

Employees from New Lenox, Illinois-based Munch’s Supply participated in the virtual St. Jude’s Walk/Run to End Childhood Cancer on Sept. 25.

For the past eight years, Munch’s Supply has supported the event. “We are proud that our employees and customers have wholeheartedly supported our annual tradition to help St. Jude Children’s Research Hospital and the groundbreaking work they do to treat children with cancer and other life-threatening diseases,” said **Keith Kramer**, Munch’s Supply chief operating officer.



Munch’s Supply raised more than \$24,000 for the virtual St. Jude’s Walk./Run to End Early Childhood Cancer. Photo courtesy of Munch’s Supply

Although 2021’s event was virtual, the Munch’s Supply team worked to raise more than \$24,000 – its highest-ever fundraising amount. This put Munch’s Supply in second place out of the 127 St. Jude Walk/Run teams in the Chicago area.

New this year, Munch’s Supply raised funds through a Senior Leadership Match Days campaign with its management team. The company also offered an online Munch’s Supply/St. Jude Summer

Fun Store where employees and customers could purchase special items (such as T-shirts and electronics items) with purchase proceeds going to St. Jude. Other activities included raffles for customers and employees along with traditional participant donations.



## BRADFORD WHITE’S KOZAK WINS AIM/R GOLDEN EAGLE AWARD

**Matt Kozak**, vice president of sales for Bradford White Water Heaters, has been named the 2021 recipient of the prestigious Golden Eagle Award by the Association of Independent Manufacturers’ Representatives (AIM/R).

The AIM/R Golden Eagle Award, presented annually at the group’s conference, recognizes senior-level plumbing manufacturing executives who have actively supported independent reps and their important role in the supply chain. Kozak was honored at the 49th annual AIM/R conference, held Sept. 28-Oct. 1 in San Diego.

“AIM/R provides valuable resources on issues such as succession planning, sales techniques and running a solid business, all of which are of vital concern to their manufacturer partners,” Kozak said. “The support and tools offered by AIM/R enable reps to improve their business practices and strengthen the partnership and communication between reps and their manufacturers. We are such big believers in the group’s value that Bradford White strongly encourages all of our reps to belong to and be active in AIM/R.”

Kozak is the fifth executive from Bradford White to be selected for the award. Previous Bradford White Golden Eagle Award winners include **Bob Carnevale**, **Nick Giuffre**, **Bruce Carnevale** and **Jim McGoldrick**.

## Rinnai RINNAI ANNOUNCES COMMERCIAL BUSINESS PROGRAM

Rinnai is now offering a national accounts program to its commercial business partners. The program is designed to be a turnkey hot water solution for its commercial customers and includes both repair and replacement services.

Rinnai’s one-stop hot water experience for hotels, restaurants and other commercial customers provides 24/7, 365 hot water support. Regardless of whether the water heater is a Rinnai unit or not, plumbers will be deployed from Rinnai’s vast network to assess the situation and repair product, the company adds.

If a replacement is needed, the plumber will work with the customer to identify the best solution for their business, plus the program delivers pricing quotes and 100% guaranteed system sizing. Additionally, Rinnai handles all aspects of the businesses’ hot water from selecting the plumber to processing payments for the job.

“Hot water is a necessity and a vital part of our customer’s business,” said **James Woodruff**, senior director of commercial business for Rinnai America. “We offer our expertise in water heating as a service to our customers that is turnkey and simple. This allows them to worry less about their business operations while we ensure their hot water is there when they need it.”

“Through our extensive contractor network, we can coordinate our premium response program and offer a service that is much-needed by our customers in the industry,” Rinnai

*Continued on page 64*



## FROM THE ASA PRESIDENT || BY CHRIS FASANO

# Establishing and delivering a bold vision

## ASA core values drive momentum, preparing members for the future.

It's easy to rest on your laurels when things are going well. Some may not think to stretch your organization out of fear that you will get in the way of a "good thing." Remember the old adage — "If it ain't broke, don't fix it."

I have been involved with ASA for well over a decade and I can safely say that our association is always looking to the horizon. We look to see any potential threats to our members and our association. We seek opportunities to serve our membership in new and innovative ways. Through our strong core of volunteer leaders and staff, we are constantly and consistently reviewing our bold strategic plan to ensure our relevance and value to our membership.

puck is going to be. What is going to disrupt us and where do we need to invest to support our members? After all, most members are deeply focused on running their businesses, and there is little time to think about "what's next."

That discussion prompted ASA to embark on a journey to support what our volunteers identified as the biggest issues facing their futures: Attracting new talent.

Five years ago, we saw major disruption coming as an ASA survey estimated the retirement of half of our labor force over the next 20 years. The pandemic rapidly escalated this trend. Luckily, we began to invest ASA staff and financial resources to develop tools and support to build our industry's brand and attract those new workers.

The results have been staggering: ASA reached more than 2 million people through social media ads promoting the great career opportunities in our industry. More than 22,000 clicked on our ads and visited our Supply Industry Careers website at [SupplyIndustryCareers.com](https://SupplyIndustryCareers.com) where they are directed to ASA member websites. Our marketing team is expanding our reach by leveraging individual member success stories.

Creating a buzz and having the tools for members is one part of the solution. ASA also launched a monthly careers newsletter to educate and share best practices to attract workers.

In 2020, we built the D.NEXT Innovation Lab on the campus of the University of Illinois. This program has already started to provide members with insight on customer trends to help us respond more quickly to changing markets. One particular project worth noting looks at how our industry's major competitors are competing for our customers' business. The lab also researched how other industries are engaging customers

with the goal of supporting ASA members in their own sales efforts.

Most recently, we introduced the VITALITY Growth Assessment Tool in an effort to help our members build one exciting future for their companies.

Few trade associations can rival ASA's dedication to the success of its members. This is the result of a strong focus on ASA's four core values: Networking, benchmarking, advocacy and education. It's also the product of our commitment to continually look not only at today but almost more importantly, looking to tomorrow. 📌

In that timeframe, ASA invested more than \$6 million in new programs and services to support our members. ASA has expanded its value with an expanded educational program, enhanced business intelligence reports, an emerging advocacy program and highly engaging networking programs. Our members are sharing their support and accolades. More so, I recently attended a buying group meeting and participated in conversations where members were extolling the benefits of ASA. What better than to have ASA members sharing our success!

Several years ago, we engaged volunteers to look beyond our success and to identify where we need to go next. Everyone knows the famous Wayne Gretzky quote about going to where the

*Chris Fasano is president at Waterbury, Connecticut-based Torrco and is the 2021 ASA president. Contact Chris at [cfasano@torrco.com](mailto:cfasano@torrco.com).*





## California AB 100 signed into law

After months of negotiation and intense work on the part of the California legislature, American Supply Association and its coalition partners, AB 100 has been signed into law by California Governor Gavin Newsom.

ASA worked with its coalition partners at Plumbing Manufacturers International (PMI), the California Retailers Association (CRA) and the California Building Industries Association (CBIA) to achieve a result to benefit all parties and reduce the amount of lead in drinking water statewide.

Introduced by Assembly member Chris Holden, AB 100 ensures early compliance with the NSF 61 2020 standard in California. Specifically, the bill:

- Requires, Jan. 1, 2022, all NSF 61 2020-compliant products will be labeled according to the standard itself, with the mark 'NSF/ANSI/CAN 61: Q<1' (labeling requirement);
- Requires, on Jan. 1, 2023, all endpoint products manufactured on or after this date, be certified to the NSF 61 2020 standard (manufacture date); and
- Requires, on July 1, 2023, that all endpoint products available for sale be certified to the NSF 61 2020 standard (sell-by date).

This is a positive result that provides manufacturers time to get compliant products into the supply chain and provides wholesalers/distributors a reasonable amount of time to reduce inventory.

ASA was represented in Sacramento by California Strategies, which coordinated a successful legislative strategy that included stakeholders from across the spectrum, culminating in the passage of the legislation in both chambers and signed by the governor into law.

As a result, AB 100 will substantially reduce lead in drinking water, across California, for generations to come.

## ASA opposes potential ban on press-connect and mechanical joints in refrigeration systems



On Oct. 15, the American Supply Association submitted public comments opposing two Tentative Interim Amendments (TIA) that if passed, would remove the use of press-connect and mechanical joints in refrigeration systems under the 2018 and 2021 versions of the IAPMO Uniform Mechanical Code (UMC). The UMC is not a widely adopted model code however, it is the model code used by California. Additional opposition to the proposed TIAs included the Copper Development Association, AHRI, HARDI and UL.

The balloting of the TIAs by the IAPMO Technical Committee was completed on Oct. 15. The Technical Committee members have been provided the public comments received to determine, based on the public comments, if they wish to change their vote. The actual vote of the TC has not been published.

As background, both the 2018 and 2021 versions of the UMC allow for the use of press-connect and mechanical joints in refrigeration systems.

A TIA is intended to be a tool to bypass the normal deliberative consensus process when there is a documented emergency.

HARDI opposed the TIAs based on no documented evidence of an emergency existing and also lack of technical merit.

The next steps in the process is to complete the TC member review of public comments. Following public comment review, the results of the TC ballots along with the public comments will be submitted to the IAPMO Standards Council for final consideration and action. ASA will remain on top of this issue as it moves forward.

# ASA's Kendzel wins IAPMO sustainability award

American Supply Association Director of Codes and Standards Jim Kendzel, MPH, CAE, was named the recipient of the IAPMO **Joseph Kneidinger Sustainability Professional of the Year Award**.

The Joseph Kneidinger Sustainability Professional of the Year Award is presented to the professional that best fulfills or symbolizes the commitment to environmental sustainability. The nominated professional must be an IAPMO member.

The board selects the recipient at its spring meeting and is presented at the IAPMO annual education and business conference.

"I am honored to receive this award," Kendzel said. "I have spent almost my entire career devoted to the development of codes and standards that have a positive impact on public health and the environment, and have been involved in sustainability activities going back to when we were trying to define the term. To join the community of past award winners is humbling."

Kendzel most recently worked with a group of committed IAPMO volunteers as the chair of the WE-Stand Alternate Water Source Task Group, which led to critically needed revisions to the WE-Stand model code covering black water and storm water recycling systems.

"I accept this award on behalf of my children and grandchildren which is why we devote our efforts to environmental sustainability," Kendzel added.

IAPMO CEO **Dave Viola** noted IAPMO leadership recognized the enormous contributions Kendzel has made to the industry and specifically to WE-Stand.

"The task group leadership Jim provided was extremely valuable and appreciated," Viola said. "The work will be the foundation for our industry's contribution to ensure we meet all the environmental challenges ahead of us. IAPMO thanks Jim Kendzel for his work and dedication and congratulates him on this well-earned recognition."



## ASA Thanks Our 2021 SUPPLIER PARTNERS

\* Supplier Partners as of Oct. 13, 2021


Interested in becoming an ASA Supplier Partner (manufacturers and master distributors) or an ASA Sustaining Supplier Partner (manufacturers reps)? Contact Mike Miazga at [mmiazga@asa.net](mailto:mmiazga@asa.net) for details.

# SWPD hosts annual awards dinner



Danny Contreras



Sharon Long



Steve Ferry

Photos courtesy of ASA

The Southwest Pacific Distributors, a regional affiliate of the American Supply Association, recently held its annual awards dinner in Long Beach, California.

“It was great to finally see so many industry friends in person again,” said **Bill Rante**, sales manager at the Carrhill Company and a member of the SWPD/ASA Advisory Council. “The overall support was tremendous and those who were able to attend, enjoyed a great evening of fun and fellowship. Congratulations to all the award winners.”

Smardan Supply’s **Danny Contreras** was the winner of the SWPD/ASA Pioneer Award, while **Sharon Long** (now retired) of Signature Sales was named the SWPD/ASA Woman of the Year Award recipient. Hajoca was named the SWPD/ASA Distributor of the Year. Hajoca was represented at the dinner by **Steve Ferry**, Hajoca division manager-West.

Mueller Industries’ **Mary Graham** was named the winner of the Industry Honor Award. She was not able to attend, but accepted her award via a prerecording that was shared during the event.

“This year’s award-winners truly represent the best in character and leadership our industry has to offer,” said **AJ Benton**, branch manager at Smardan Supply and chair of the SWPD/ASA Advisory Council.

InSinkEerator was the overall sponsor of the event. A raffle for cash prizes was held throughout the evening. AB&I Foundry, Carrhill Company, InSinkEerator, Mainline Sales, Specification Sales and ASA contributed to the raffle.

The SWPD/ASA Leadership Conference takes place March 31-April 1, 2022 at the Renaissance Esmeralda Resort & Spa in Indian Wells, California.

## ASA THANKS OUR 2021 SUSTAINING SUPPLIER PARTNERS\*



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## ASA PLATINUM SUPPLIER PARTNER PROFILE: Building together for one future

BY SALLY BOYER, Manager of Marketing Communications — NIBCO



The recent chaos and gloom that we've experienced during the global pandemic has taught us several important lessons, including resilience and strength.

It's taught us to be stronger, to be hopeful and to look to the future, which is why the American Supply Association's key initiative, "Building One Future," is particularly poignant at this time.

As an industry, we must come together to build that future.

As an ASA Platinum Supplier Partner, NIBCO is proud to be supportive of this long-term, 10-year, strategic action plan to help members remain competitive well into the future. In the plan, ASA has identified several critical issues that our industry must face together to shape a better future. Talent recruitment, networking and education are among these.

Developing talent is an investment that NIBCO continues to support, understanding its significance and impact on the future of the industry. NIBCO CEO **Rex Martin** has long been an instrumental and driving force behind the company's ongoing support of apprenticeship programs and trade schools, realizing that investing in our youth is constructing the path for the future. In response to the labor shortages facing our industry, which have intensified since COVID, NIBCO adopted a sales-training program aimed at bringing young people into the industry through our college recruitment efforts.

Networking is yet another ASA initiative that is key to building the industry's future. Recognizing this, NIBCO's Executive Vice President **Ashley Martin** (and fifth-generation family member leading the company) cofounded ASA's Women in Industry division more than eight years ago, providing women in our industry the connections and opportunities to meet and exchange ideas to advance their knowledge and careers.

This strategy to empower women and recognize the important role they play in our industry also translates to NIBCO internally, where Martin is a strong advocate of bringing women into the company to launch their careers. She is the executive sponsor of the NIBwomen's Group, an internal group founded by **Alice A. Martin** that celebrated its 10-year anniversary in 2020.

Keeping members well informed of the latest industry technologies is another key pillar that ASA and NIBCO commonly believe to be critical to the betterment of the industry. Education is a constant challenge, but never so challenging as it was during COVID. To stay connected and educate our customer base, both distributors and end users, NIBCO quickly implemented online webinars that allowed for transferring critical information about products and technologies in a timely, safe method. Today, these educational webinars can be accessed online.

NIBCO is incredibly proud of its rich legacy in this industry. With a history of success and innovation in the plumbing industry, NIBCO is focused on bringing products and technologies to market that make installations easier and more efficient. Ninety percent of NIBCO's valves, fitting and flow-control products are proudly manufactured in nine U.S. manufacturing plants strategically located from the East Coast to the West Coast.

NIBCO is also proud of its strategic partnership with ASA, leveraging its resources, but also giving back by sharing our knowledge, our passion and our commitment to the industry. Together, we are stronger. Together, we are building a successful future.



## ASA distributors report robust sales increase

Respondents to ASA's monthly sales report survey reported a median sales increase of 28.2% for August 2021 vs. August 2020. In comparison to the previous month (July 2021), respondents reported a more modest median sales increase of 6.3%.

On a year-to-date basis through the end of August, half the respondents reported sales growth of more than 19.5%. On a trailing 12-month basis, respondents reported an average sales growth of 13.5% and a median of 15.6%. Half the respondents reported TTM changes between 8.4% to 20.5% for sales growth.

Inventory rose 30.2% for August 2021 vs. August 2020. The median three-month-average days sales outstanding dropped slightly to 40 days for August.

Industrial PVF distributors reported a median sales increase of 41.4% for August 2021 vs. August 2020. On a year-to-date basis, industrial PVF distributors reported a 10.7% median sales increase. On a trailing 12-month basis, industrial PVF distributors were up 7.1%. Inventories for industrial PVF distributors rose 25.6%, comparing August 2021 to August 2020 totals.

Here's a snapshot of how survey respondents characterized business for the reporting period:

- "Business is very strong, which was further boosted by the impact of the hurricanes. Supply and staffing is a challenge."
- "Continued supply chain and inflation pressures along with job market issues."
- "Our sales and order bookings are recovering nicely each month."
- "Sales are strong."
- "Sales are up although inflation is leading to some of the increase. Inventory delivery has improved, but we are still behind on deliveries."
- "Still dealing with COVID fallout as well as supply and demand limitations."
- "Strong sales performance has continued through Q3. Margin remains very strong."
- "The number one problem/issue at this moment relates to the supply chain and product availability."

Would you like to receive ASA's Monthly Sales Report? Contact **Mike Miazga** at [mmiazga@asa.net](mailto:mmiazga@asa.net).



# THE ASA FILES || BY MIKE MIAZGA

## Honoring a pair of industry national treasures First Supply's Joe Poehling and InSinkErator's Joe Maiale earn Fred V. Keenan Lifetime Achievement Award.



Joe Maiale. Photo courtesy of ASA.

The American Supply Association's Fred V. Keenan Lifetime Achievement Award is the highest honor that can be given to a member of our industry's national trade association.

Not an annual award and one that is voted on by a special selection/nomination committee, the Keenan award is presented to individuals with a long history of service and dedication to the PHCP-PVF industry. To be considered, individuals must have exhibited strong influence on the current status of the industry, project a positive industry image, be responsible for positively affecting the industry in general, and have provided a history of dedicated service to ASA.

And boy did the selection committee hit it out the park with this year's nominees: First Supply Chairman Emeritus **Joe Poehling** (a former ASA president) and InSinkErator Vice President of Wholesale Supply **Joe Maiale**. Both will be honored at ASA's NETWORK2021 in Las Vegas Nov. 10.

Prior to penning this, I wrote a story about Joe and Joe for the new edition of ASA's quarterly ASA Review publication, but was left with a ton of additional thoughts from folks about these two industry legends.

Before I get to those, a couple of anecdotes from my interactions with Poehling and Maiale over the years. My first big interaction with Joe Poehling came when First Supply and Kohler opened the first-ever Kohler Signature Store in the Minneapolis-St. Paul suburb of Edina, Minnesota. This was the first of the



Joe Poehling. Photo courtesy of First Supply.

now many Kohler Signature stores to open across the country (First Supply now operates four of these stores in four states).

During the grand opening party event that was filled with people and was chaotic with all the hustle and bustle going on, Poehling still made time for me and filmed a video about the store's concept and what it meant for First Supply to open it. I'm sure if you

searched the *Supply House Times*' YouTube channel you will be able to find that video.

Fast forward to First Supply's big 120th anniversary vendor gala in Madison, Wisconsin in December 2017 (boy, was it cold that night), and Poehling again took time out of his busy schedule to sit down "backstage" for nearly an hour to chat with me. If I can find the audio file from the night, I will post it. Some great business insights included there. I have to say this was one of my favorite interviews I have done.

My first big interaction with Joe Maiale came at ASA's offices in suburban Chicago when I did a story on the continued great things ASA's Education Foundation was doing. My interactions with him that day made it instantly clear why continues to be revered throughout our great industry.

Both Joes have made tremendous impacts over the years when it comes to ASA's progress. Poehling served as ASA president in 2009 and chairman in 2010. He also played a key role in the advancement of the Karl E. Neupert Endowment Fund. Maiale is the only member of the ASA Vendor Member Division to have

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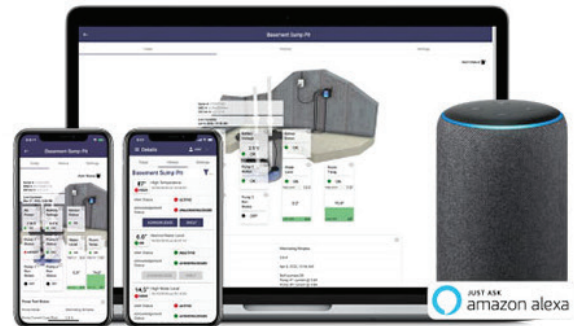
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served two stints on the association's Executive Committee, and as president and chairman of the ASA Education Foundation, he was only the second manufacturer to hold that leadership role. I also have enjoyed my occasional interactions with Joe about restaurant hot spots in the Chain of Lakes region of northern Illinois.

### A VISION FOR THE FUTURE

**Katie Poehling Seymour**, Poehling's daughter and First Supply's president and CEO, recalls recently reading an old issue of this magazine from when her dad was ASA president.

"You'd think he had a crystal ball," she says. "He's able to assess the current environment and clearly see a path into the future that most of us can't. Joe is a visionary in every sense of the idea. He sees trends before anyone else. He hones in on metrics before their impact is immediately apparent and he takes risks that seem wild at times, but so often tend to be exactly the right decisions. He can push our company to think differently and make improvements that have made all the difference in our long-term growth. We are so lucky at First Supply to have been the beneficiaries of that vision for more than 40 years and to have him guiding us as our chairman emeritus for many years to come."

But Poehling Seymour sees even greater traits in her father that have made even larger impacts both at First Supply and throughout the industry.

"Joe brings incredible professionalism to our business, but it's never condescending," she says. "And he lives that balance every day. That's something you can't learn in school or training or coaching, and it's hard to describe, but anyone who has worked with him can recount it. His leadership has us all striving to bring professionalism to everything we do at First Supply every day.

"At the end of the day, Joe taught all of us to take care of our customers and the rest would work out," she continues. "He empowered every person at First Supply to do just that. Overall, he genuinely cares about people. I can say that he and my mom, Kate, instilled in our family that same sincerity that Joe brings to the business."

Poehling Seymour remembers this poignant advice Poehling gave her early on in her First Supply career.

"When you're visiting a facility, make sure to walk through the warehouse. You can see a lot — too much of one product, not enough of another, a big project staged to go out — but you can also check in with the team," she says. "Little things like that are



Award recipients Joe Poehling (left) and Joe Maiale.  
Photo by Mike Miazga.

not only good for our business, but create a culture where we all care about each other just a little more."

### THE PRAISES OF MANY

**Rob Grim**, InSinkEerator's senior vice president of sales, asked folks at the Racine, Wisconsin-based manufacturer and ASA Platinum Supplier Partner to provide their thoughts on Maiale. He was flooded with responses.

"Joe has been an incredible mentor whose love for the industry is contagious," was one response. "Having never worked in the industry prior to joining InSinkEerator, he took me under his wing by making himself available for questions as well as being a guide through numerous industry events. I am so grateful for all that he's taught me over the last five years."

And this one: "Joe Maiale is our go-to guy for all things wholesale. He is a fountain of knowledge about the plumbing industry and his door is always open for questions or to share insights. And he always has great stories to share for a laugh or two."

Here are two more from the pile:

"Joe is an outstanding role model not only for those he works with daily, but also for anyone that has been lucky enough to share time with him. He probably doesn't realize it, but his work ethic and dedication to excellence inspires those within his realm. He has been a profound influence and an inspiration to many. His ability to lead, to teach and to provide guidance makes one a better person to have known Joe Maiale."

"Most people in the industry in the future who have benefitted from his work will never know his name. But I will never forget his name. He is one of the truest and best people I know, and I have been fortunate enough to have been able to work with for many years."

Poehling Seymour jokes that if you have ever ridden in a car with her father, you know he picks up some extra time by "moving quickly." She adds fortunately or unfortunately she has inherited his driving tendencies.

That driving story sums up Poehling and Maiale pretty darned well — a pair of fast-moving, fast-thinking industry giants whose contributions to our industry will be remembered and felt for years and years to come. 🚗

*Mike Miazga is vice president of sales and membership at the American Supply Association and former longtime chief editor of Supply House Times and group editorial director of BNP Media's Plumbing Group. Reach him at [mmiazga@asa.net](mailto:mmiazga@asa.net).*

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## HEATING HELP || BY DAN HOLOHAN

# ‘Oh, the places you’ll go’

Our industry may take you to places you never imagined.

Dr. Seuss wrote a beautiful book by that title. It’s probably been the main focus of most high-school valedictorian addresses ever since. But I don’t think Dr. Seuss ever spent much time in unusual mechanical rooms or famous buildings. Those buildings all need heating and cooling, and that’s what we do. And, oh, the places you will go.

My departed friend, Ralph, once took me to see a small steam boiler that was under a tiny church near Ellicott City, Maryland. He serviced that boiler. Ralph told me the building stopped being a church in the 1990s, but it continues to be a very historical place. It’s part of Doughoregan Manor, which once was Charles Carroll’s plantation. Mr. Carroll was the only Roman Catholic to sign the Declaration of Independence. He built the church on his land because Catholics had to worship quietly during colonial times so as to not have problems with the Puritans. For a while, it was against the law to even be Catholic back then.

Ralph removed the padlock and pulled open the heavy metal door that was parallel to the ground. “Watch your step,” he said as I followed him down the stone staircase.

The room had a low, vaulted ceiling and an oil-fired steam boiler. The oil tank was lying on its side in a low stone niche that was built into the left-side wall. There were identical niches next to and above the oil tank, and more on the opposite wall.

“What’s with the niches?” I said.

“Oh, that’s where the bodies used to be,” he replied.

“Bodies?” I questioned.

“Yes,” Ralph said. “Members of the Carroll clan, gone to heaven.” He smiled.

“What the heck is this place?” I asked.

“Well, it’s a boiler room now,” Ralph said. “You can see that. But it used to be a crypt. It’s a little spooky doing service down here.”

I looked around and gulped.

“How do you like the way the boiler is piped?” Ralph said.

“Umm, looks good to me.” I said as I looked at the oil tank, laid out nicely in its niche. On its back. Not moving.

“There’s a haunted house in Ellicott City,” he said. “We service that place, too. Stuff moves around when I’m there. It’s really creepy. Want to go see it when we’re done here?”

Oh, the places you will go.

I never thought I’d get to be in a cell in a very crowded and scary New York City jail. But there I was on Rikers Island with their heating guy. The guards had moved the two prisoners out of that particular cell so we could do what we had to do with the radiator that was locked up as tightly as the prisoners. I was wearing a jacket and tie because that was the dress code for a manufacturer rep in those days.

“You the hacksaw salesman?” A prisoner with facial tattoos and bowling-ball muscles asked. He looked like the box I came in.

“Umm,” I said.

“What you mean umm?” he asked.

“Umm,” I repeated.

Even the guards laughed.

And then, there was the Chrysler Building in Manhattan — which is still the world’s tallest, steel-supported brick building. On Jan. 15, 1985, I watched from that iconic building’s highest window as 15 warehouses in Hoboken, New Jersey, just across the Hudson River, raged in sky-seeking flame. It looked like war.

I was up there because there was a Bell & Gossett pump in that tiny room. I’ll bet only a handful of people have ever been in that locked-tight space. The pump was the only reason anyone would ever want to go in there. Well, that and the view.

Oh, the places you will go.

Before One World Trade opened for business, the contractor who had done the heating invited me to visit for a private tour of what would be keeping the place that some call “The Freedom Tower” warm. He invited me because in 2001, I had written about steamfitters and what they meant to the Twin Towers. I wrote about how they drew arrows on the pipes with yellow crayons, each pointing toward heaven. Up and up and up until they were done with their own twin towers of steel pipe.

He took me everywhere and showed me everything — an experience I will remember for as long as I’m able to remember.



The Freedom Tower  
Source: Getty Images



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The Chrysler building. Source: Getty Images

And when I had seen as much as I could absorb, that magnificent contractor rolled back a secret panel at the very top of the building to expose a long concrete wall covered from end to end and from floor to ceiling with the signatures and comments of everyone who had worked on that building. I read their names and their thoughts and I welled up with tears thinking about what they had done. Thinking about the fury that had raised this Freedom Tower. Their names will be there forever. At the very top. They did it. They did it.

“Dan?” he said.

“Yes?” I replied.

He reached into his pocket and came out with a black Sharpie.

“It’s your turn to sign,” he said.

I get chills just typing those words and remembering that day.

The sky was clear and you could see forever.

Oh, the places you will go.

The Dakota Apartments on Central Park West is the building where John Lennon lived and died. It once had a steam engine that ran a generator to electrify the building, and then later, the whole neighborhood. The engine’s waste steam heated building. I stood in the engine’s footprint one day and just marveled at it all. The radiators that heat that building today are the same ones that heated it when the first tenants moved in back in 1884. I was there to help a contractor figure out how to make the place more comfortable. In my wildest dreams, I never thought I would ever get to wander within such a famous place. But there I was.

A long time ago, I did a seminar in Seattle. One of the guys who signed up for the class worked at Smith Tower, a 38-story skyscraper in Pioneer Square. That beauty, built by Lyman Cornelius Smith (of Smith Corona typewriters) has been there since 1914, and was the tallest building west of the Mississippi until 1931. It’s a city landmark. It also has a vacuum steam system.

“Nobody out here really knows much about steam heat,” the guy at my seminar told me. “Maybe you can stop by after the class and take a look?”

And who could say no to that?

What I found there was what I find in so many New York City buildings. A vacuum pump on the condensate-return starts with the boiler. It produces a vacuum throughout the entire system.



The Dakota Apartments.

That creates a greater supply-to-return pressure differential than you would have were the vacuum pump not there. That differential allows the original designer to downsize all the pipes, valves and fittings, which saves money on the installation. The drawback, however, is once it’s a vacuum system, it’s always a vacuum system. If you try to run it without the vacuum pump, you have to use higher pressure at the boiler and the distribution of steam throughout the building will probably be horrible.

The steam traps on the radiators and at the ends of the main are key to making everything work. Without good trap maintenance, the vacuum pump starts to feel very hot condensate, which causes the pump to fail. If you fix the pump without fixing the traps, history will definitely repeat itself.

I explained all of this to my host and told him what they should be doing. I was happy to help, and I got to wander through a magnificent old building with lots of history.

“Did you notice there’s a glass globe at the top of the building?” He when we had finished looking at the steamy stuff.

“I did,” I replied.

“Would you like to see inside it?” he asked.

“How big is it?” I questioned.

“Eight feet. We can go into it,” he said.

“How do you do that?” I asked.

“You have to climb a long ladder with rungs that are very close together because the space you have to go through is not much wider than our bodies,” he said. “You really can’t bend your knees. You have to wiggle your feet up and down to do it. There’s a trap door at the top. We can both fit in there.”

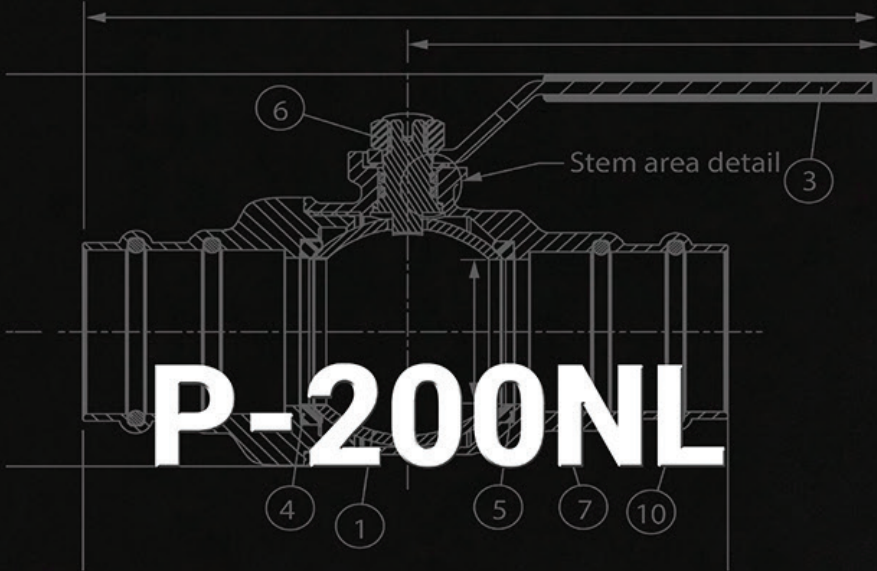
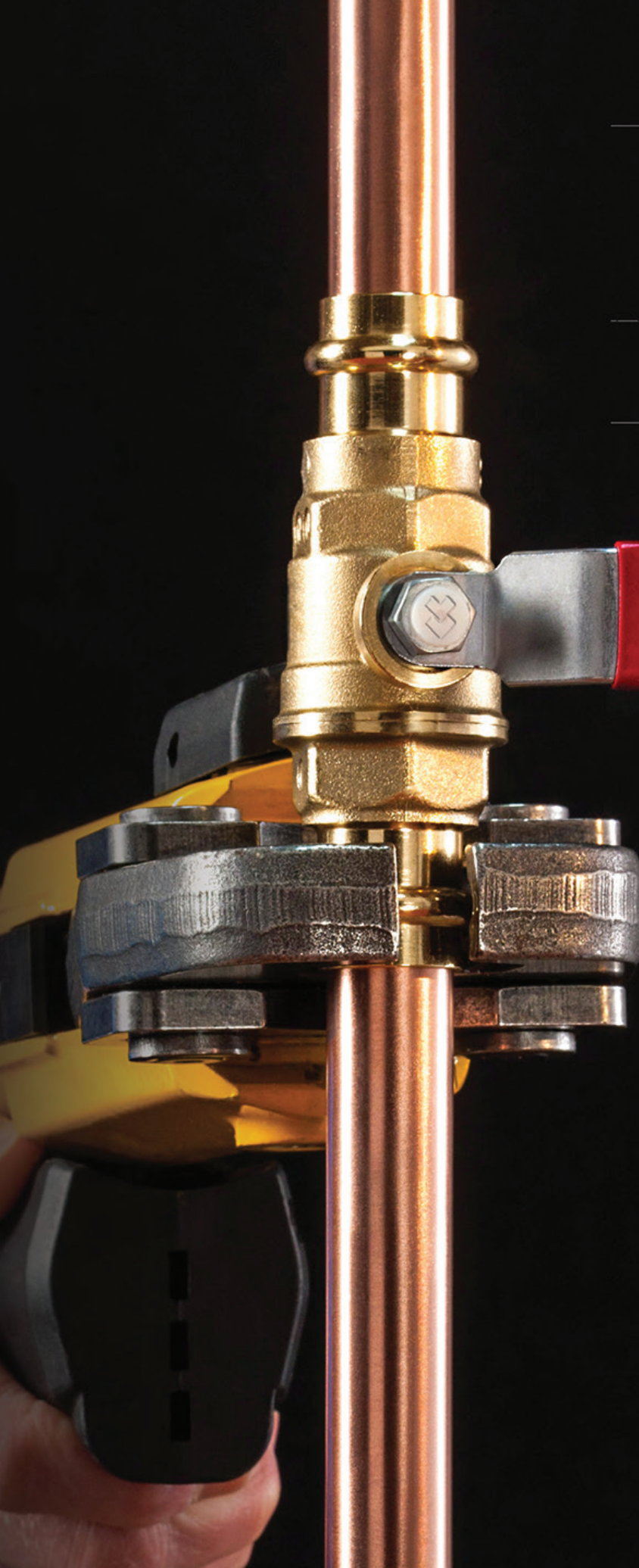
And that’s how I found myself looking at Pioneer Square from a perspective that few ever get to see.

“Is it okay that we’re doing this?” I asked.

“Absolutely not,” he said. “No one is supposed to be in here. Not ever. We’ll keep this to ourselves, okay? I appreciate your help with the steam.”

Oh, the places you will go. 🏠

*Dan Holohan can be reached at dan@heatinghelp.com. He loves hearing from you!*



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## EMERGING LEADERS || BY VINCENZO DAL POZZO

# Tackling industry issues head-on

ASA's Emerging Leaders gather in Nashville to share best practices.



Nashville, Tennessee — the home of country music, hot chicken and Johnny Cash. Along with those prominent illustrations depicting the city at face-value, this year it was also the home of the ASA Emerging Leaders' annual forum EMERGE.

With more than 150 industry-focused individuals in attendance, the city of Nashville housed a new bustling of chatter of its own, this time coming from the best practices roundtable sessions taking place within The Westin Nashville.

Within these roundtables, participants reported what they benefited from the most was being able to connect with manufacturers, rep agencies and wholesalers from different areas all at once — many of which they hadn't met prior to the conference.

The Emerging Leaders were open and honest about their expectations, business relationships, challenges and the reasons why they are in the industry and employed by the company they represent. They sparked collaborative conversations about the future of our industry that challenged everyone at the tables.

During one of the roundtable sessions, a table composed of solely wholesale-distributors shared the challenges they faced with employees and retention. The solutions that the table shared to combat this never-ending problem were ideas that they've either seen, discussed amongst their team themselves or have implemented at their own companies. Solutions discussed at this table included: Removing experience requirements for warehouse workers, increasing wages of long-term employees, and more frequent bonuses instead of quarterly.

Generational management made the list of discussion topics, stemming from what keynote speaker Jeff Havens touched on with the "old school" vs. "new school" generation of employees. Working remotely is now something more common and discussed openly, an avenue some distributors are exploring frequently when possible.

Another table discussed "staying relevant" as wholesale distributors. What kind of value can be brought to the table? Many ideas were

brought up; utilizing different technologies that are being applied to improve the customer experience through automation and integration along with adding value to the distributor's role within the supply chain.

Ecommerce platforms were a hot topic, including which ones were being used. Barcoding bins in customer vans and a spin of different "going to market" strategies with certain product lines also contributed as new ways to stay relevant.

Manufacturers reported it being reassuring to know that the challenges they faced during the pandemic were shared. Over the past year it is easy for people to feel like their individual companies were flying solo through these issues when, in reality, the obstacles faced are the same that every person and company is working through throughout the industry. They also shared that having different channels — manufacturers, reps and distributors was key. CRM integration amongst the channels and distributor selling technique trends were talking points overheard during the roundtable sessions.

Topics discussed throughout the roundtables also included retention bonuses, stay interviews, internal mentor programs, and virtual team bonding and building while working remote.

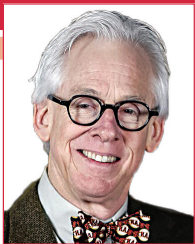
Overall, the resounding key takeaway from EMERGE2021 attendees is the plan to continue attending the annual EMERGE event. With the ability to constantly learn about the industry as a whole through the meaningful connections created during this annual forum, personal development and professional growth within the industry is bound to happen.

The EMERGE attendees are very passionate about what they do, and would love to see it continue to become more attractive to the up-and-coming generations.

EMERGE2022 returns to its regular May schedule with its May 16-18, 2022 program at the JW Marriott in New Orleans. 📍

**Vincenzo Dal Pozzo** is the ASA Director of Membership. He can be reached at [vdalpozzo@asa.net](mailto:vdalpozzo@asa.net).





# Expand your conference schedule

Different sizes and types of events serve different purposes.

As I helped arrange the name badges on the counter of the registration desk at the Decorative Plumbing and Hardware Association's (DPHA) 2021 annual conference, I gazed at a long escalator full of people focused on our desk. For the next few hours, I had the pleasure of watching people descending from above with eyes beaming — their smiles hidden behind protective masks. People gleefully made the journey to Austin, Texas, in the midst of a pandemic with business at home ridiculously strong. They were taking the time away to listen, ask questions and learn ways to improve their businesses.

*“The DPHA annual conference was a great icebreaker event for our industry. Coming off of a difficult year, the positive energy was much needed, and the intimate setting was perfect for making people feel safe. Lots to build on and look forward to.”*

— Lutz Bath & Kitchen's **Phil Hotarek**, 2018 DPHA Showroom Professional of the Year and 2021 DPHA Trailblazer Award recipient.

There are many other industry trade shows that are widely attended every year, but there is nothing as focused on the plumbing showroom business as the annual DPHA conference. The KBIS-IBS show presents products galore. The Architectural Digest and ICFF shows attract accomplished and influential designers and architects from New York City and beyond. These far-reaching shows present volumes of products in dynamically merchandised booths. But not one of these shows can claim to be the place to discuss the strategy, merchandising challenges, trends and nuances of operating a 21st century decorative plumbing showroom.

These mega conferences offer thousands of square feet of displays. Organizers want you on the exhibit floor, in the booths, talking with vendor after vendor. All the time reminding you that you cannot risk missing anything. If you happen to pass over a new product or emerging brand, it could mean a competitive weakness in your home market. *Oh my!* Presenting the latest and greatest products is the engine that drives these mega shows. The more the attendees interact with the vendors, the happier the vendors. And the happier they are, the more likely they will return to show year after year. It's a win-win situation. The vendors show their new products to targeted customers. and the sponsoring trade association gets stronger. But does anyone really improve their business acumen?

The DPHA conference actually shuts down its exhibit hall during the speaker and roundtable meetings, allowing every attendee the ability to participate and network. The vendors know the conference schedule offers ample time for their customers to see their new products. They also understand that face-time away from others outside the exhibit hall is important in building stronger vendor-distributor relationships. Every time I strolled into the lobby, I saw countless meetings and discussions taking place. Vendors, sales representatives and distributors were sharing, listening and learning how to improve their businesses.

At these smaller, laser-focused conferences, one can easily meet people who own and manage successful showroom businesses and constructively talk about ideas that you both have been pondering. Your time can be spent learning about new products, discovering what is hot in Houston or how other distributors are supporting their best salespeople so they can sell more. Your time is not governed by having to visit hundreds of booths, it is governed by what attendees want to learn and what intrigues them. The DPHA conference is about offering vendors, sales representatives and showrooms the opportunity and time to learn and make your showroom division a better and more profitable business unit.

DPHA 2020 Showroom Professional of the Year and DPHA President's Award recipient **Rich Campbell** of Belmont Hardware echos the importance of the event. “The DPHA conference promotes our showrooms,” he says. “We annually reconnect in a family-like atmosphere and elevate each other through discussions that are stimulated by the speakers and ideas from all segments of our membership. My company would not be the same without this conference.”

## || SHOWROOM DOLLARS & SENSE



The DPHA conference actually shuts down its exhibit hall during the speaker and roundtable meetings, allowing every attendee the ability to participate and network. Vendors know that the conference schedule offers ample time for their customers to see their new products. Photo courtesy of DPHA.

Then, there are buying group conferences. Here, much of an attendee's time is dedicated to meetings with preferred vendors discussing purchasing history, show specials and future sales. The overall purpose of the buying group meeting is to increase the purchasing volume of the group and members' overall product profitability. Yes, showroom brands and products are discussed, but they are not the sole focus. At the DPHA conference it is all showroom, all of the time.

First-timer **Julie Keil** from Earth Elements Design Center notes the in-person event was particularly enjoyable after months of virtual events. "This was my first time attending the DPHA conference, and I was excited to see familiar faces and make new connections," she says. "I have enjoyed the recent virtual roundtables, but being able to meet in person was very meaningful. I'm looking forward to participating more in DPHA and plan to see everyone again in New Orleans!"

Discovering new vendors and exciting products is energizing

and foundational to any premium and luxury business. This is what large business fairs are all about. Small, focused conference gatherings, such as DPHA, create networking opportunities while presenting new and trending industry information. All with the goal of improving your knowledge to better guide your company in an ever-changing market. That is DPHA's mission.

If you are simply looking for new brands and products at the same venues as your competitors, how can you differentiate your showroom from all the fast follower competitors in your market? This is where industry specific conferences can help you elevate your showroom to levels your competitors cannot even imagine.

Should you like to take this discussion further, please email me at [jwvals@gmail.com](mailto:jwvals@gmail.com) and we will talk. 📧

*Jeffrey Valles is a Decorative Plumbing and Hardware Association Lifetime Fellow. Contact Jeff at [jwvals@gmail.com](mailto:jwvals@gmail.com).*



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## EYE ON SAFETY || BY MICHAEL PLACE

# Prepare for the unexpected

## 5 helpful tips for emergency preparedness planning.

Safety and health-related emergencies aren't common in business. In fact, real emergency situations are quite rare. And while we can all breathe a sigh of relief in knowing this, that rarity also usually means that preparedness planning isn't a focal point in your workplace. This article will provide businesses and field workers with tips for crafting an effective emergency plan; many of which can also be applied to your lives at home.

**TIP 1: An Emergency Preparedness Plan (EPP) needs to have two important qualities — it must be executable and also a good training tool.**

To execute a plan efficiently and successfully, it should be laid out in a manner that is easy to understand. It needs clear guidance specific to each emergency referenced with clearly marked sections; each with their own directions.

Developing the plan should be a team effort as shared work elevates overall plan awareness throughout your workforce. It also breeds familiarity with its contents. Annual training should be provided to each employee where they'll obtain the most recent or up-to-date version of the plan, as well as a refresher of their own specific roles/responsibilities within it.

**TIP 2: Make sure your plan accounts for all of the major hazards that could impact worker safety.**

A page that lists the hazards your plan accounts for should be included. Common emergencies referenced include fires, health, tornadoes, hurricanes and earthquakes, but there are many more that often get overlooked. Your response plan should cast a wider net to incorporate incidents involving robbery, sabotage, rioting, utility failures (i.e. sewer, power, telecommunications, etc.), extreme heat or cold, floods and biological hazards. The list of hazards will vary by location as hazards in one region can be quite different from another. See the toolbox talk at [www.asa.net/Safety/Toolbox-Talks](http://www.asa.net/Safety/Toolbox-Talks) for a list of hazards that EPPs can account for.

**TIP 3: Identify the employees and third parties that may be involved in an emergency response.**

The first page of your EPP should list the emergency contacts at your facility. A page that

lists the public emergency services (i.e. fire department, emergency medical, police, public health department, etc.) and contractor contacts is also required. A good EPP will also list those with AED/CPR/First Aid certifications, team leaders and helpers assigned to assist in evacuating personnel, employees with shelter-in-place assignments and any associates with other special safety skills (i.e. volunteer fire fighter, fire extinguisher training, hazmat certifications, and EMT qualifications).

**TIP 4: Procedures should be detailed step-by-step and in chronological order.**

This would seem pretty obvious, but it is a common misstep in plan development. Procedures are the heart of your training program, as all associates must know their role in a given hazard and how they interconnect with other personnel assisting with emergency response. An example of a fire evacuation procedure is provided in the before-mentioned toolbox talk at [www.asa.net/Safety/Toolbox-Talks](http://www.asa.net/Safety/Toolbox-Talks).

**TIP 5: Practice repetition and elevation.**

The more your team repeats the procedures and training for emergency response, the more comfortable and confident they will become in their skills, assignments and responsibilities. And as they elevate their performance, so too should their supervisor be elevating the content and expectations. Each repetition should inject something new into the process. For example, move from announced fire evacuation dates and times to unannounced drills or consider adding a post-drill activity to discuss business continuity in the event of full or partial facility loss. It is also a good idea to cross-train team members on various emergency responsibilities. When the health and safety of your workers are in jeopardy, a trained and experienced team can make all the difference in the outcome. 📌



*Michael Place is the safety and compliance officer for Dakota Supply Group. Each month, a member of ASA's Safety Committee writes about a safety-related topic relevant to the PHCP wholesale industry.*

# NEW PHCP-PVF PRODUCTS



## PRESS TOOL

The RIDGID RP 351 is an in-line standard press tool engineered to deliver reliability and efficiency in the tightest spaces, the company explains. Featuring a 360-degree swivel head, it has an advanced brushless motor requiring no scheduled

maintenance; SlimGrip handle for enhanced balance and control; and most-advanced LED interface and lighting, RIDGID adds.

**RIDGID.** [www.ridgid.com](http://www.ridgid.com)



## PLIERS WRENCH

The LENOX pliers wrench is the ideal plumbing tool with large 3" jaw capacity, the company explains. The smooth jaws help provide damage-free operation to a wide array of plumbing fixtures including flush

valves. It's patented quick-adjust mechanism ensures fast, easy adjustment, even in the most confined workspaces.

**LENOX.** [www.lenoxtools.com/pages/pliers-wrench.aspx](http://www.lenoxtools.com/pages/pliers-wrench.aspx)



## PRESS JAWS

Milwaukee Tool's new Streamline ACR press jaws and ring made in partnership with Mueller Streamline is an addition to the company's FORCE LOGIC line of press solutions that allows users to

complete refrigerant line installations with a flame-free, efficient alternative to traditional brazing, Milwaukee Tool notes. The jaws and ring are designed for the full range of Mueller Streamline ACR press fittings from 1/4" to 1/8" and are compatible with the MILWAUKEE M18 FORCE LOGIC press tools.

**Milwaukee Tool.** [www.milwaukeetool.com](http://www.milwaukeetool.com)



## BAND SAW

The new XTREME 12V MAX\* 1 3/4" brushless bandsaw (DCS375B) is lightweight at 6.54 pounds with an integrated guard making it ideal for overhead and one-handed cutting jobs, DEWALT

explains. The 1 3/4" cut capacity allows for cuts through small metal diameters with additional room to cut 1 5/8" comfortably. The variable-speed trigger helps provide control when cutting through harder materials. **DEWALT.** [www.dewalt.com](http://www.dewalt.com)

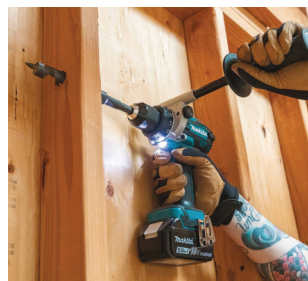


## DRILLING BITS

IRWIN's SPEEDBOR SUPREME line of premium wood-drilling bits includes 18" ship augers, 7.5" ship augers and self-feed bits. Engineered to make quick, clean holes, even in

nail-embedded wood, the bits have a bi-metal construction and high-speed steel cutting edge that maintains sharpness and withstands repeated nail strikes, the company explains.

**IRWIN.** [www.irwin.com](http://www.irwin.com)



## HAMMER DRILL

The Makita XPH14 hammer drill has a full 1,250 inch-pounds of torque (highest torque in its category, Makita notes) and can drill 2 9/16" self-feed bits with ease — a go-to application for plumbers. It's powered by the same fast-charging 18V LXT batteries that are compatible

with more than 275 LXT tools and products.

**Makita.** [www.makitatools.com](http://www.makitatools.com)



## SAW BLADES

The L.S. Starrett Co.'s new series of "3X Power" bi-metal reciprocating saw blades feature teeth that cut more efficiently, enabling users to make up to three times the number of cuts than convention blades, and are engineered for use on corded or cordless saws. The company

states the blades also are highly resistant to breakage and feature a reinforced shank. **L.S. Starrett Co.** [www.starrett.com](http://www.starrett.com)



## DIGITAL LEVEL

Klein Tools Digital Level measures 0 to 90°, 0 to 180°, or dual-axis bullseye ranges with preprogrammed, commonly used target pitches for efficiency and ease-of-use. Paired with the Klein Tools plumbers kit, the level can be mounted to brass, copper, PVC, and other nonmagnetic pipes

and conduits, Klein points out. **Klein Tools.** [www.kleintools.com](http://www.kleintools.com)

# NEW PHCP-PVF PRODUCTS



## CONNECTED RESTROOM PRODUCTS

Sloan expands its existing lineup of connected products to include G2 and ECOS flushometers. These flushometers utilize Bluetooth

connectivity and advanced technology to enhance maintenance capabilities. The connected products enable facility maintenance teams to wirelessly monitor the health and status of restroom fixtures, troubleshoot issues, easily generate and share diagnostic reports, adjust sensor range and more from the Sloan Connect App. **Sloan Valve.** [www.sloanvalve.com](http://www.sloanvalve.com)



## AIR-HANDLING UNIT

Fujitsu General America introduces a new Airstage VRF multi-position air-handling unit featuring seven models ranging from 1 to 5 ton. It is designed to meet space, comfort, sound and efficiency

requirements in residential, multifamily, lodging and other light commercial applications while offering all the advantages of the VRF system technology. The new unit is capable of producing up to 0.8" WG static pressure, and at only 43" tall and 17.5" wide for a 2-ton model, it can be installed in tight spaces. **Fujitsu General America.** [www.fujitsugeneral.com](http://www.fujitsugeneral.com)



## EXPANSION TANK

Taco Comfort Solutions' new micro expansion tank is for potable water, heating and chilled water applications. With tank volumes from 2.6 to 6.4 gal., the tank features a replaceable, full-acceptance heavy-duty butyl bladder, eliminating the need for special internal linings. The tank is NSF/ANSI 61-G certified and constructed per ASME section VIII Div. 1. Standard working pressure is 150 psi with optional working pressures of 175 psi or higher. **Taco Comfort Solutions.** [www.tacomfort.com](http://www.tacomfort.com)



## PIPING SYSTEM

The ChlorFIT schedule 80 CORZAN CPVC (chlorinated polyvinyl chloride) piping system from GF Piping Systems provides an improved solution for the conveyance of hot and

cold potable water in a wide range of commercial and institutional structures, including hospitals, schools/universities, hotels, offices, prisons, high-rise mixed-use buildings and factories, the company points out. **GF Piping Systems.** [www.gfps.com/us](http://www.gfps.com/us)



## AIR-FLOW SENSORS

To help HVAC managers ensure conditions remain within required parameters in critical environments, Sensaphone offers sensors that measure air flow and differential pressure. These sensors are ideal for monitoring cooling towers, air- and water-cooled chillers, air handlers, refrigeration units, power generators, control rooms, clean room, computer rooms and data centers. The sensors are compatible with most Sensaphone monitoring devices. **Sensaphone.** [www.sensaphone.com](http://www.sensaphone.com)



## BALL VALVES

Delivering higher value for residential projects and helping commercial projects meet stringent demands, Uponor North America now offers a newly redesigned line of ProPEX ball valves for PEX-a plumbing and hydronic

distribution applications. Manufactured from premium, lead-free, dezincification-resistant brass, these full-port ball valves feature positive tube stops that ensure installers insert the valve into the pipe far enough without overextension. **Uponor North America.** <https://go.uponor.info/ballvalves>



## HEAT PUMPS

Bosch Thermotechnology's new ultra-quiet QV series heat pumps for commercial spaces are available in multiple sizes and both horizontal and vertical configurations. The commercial-grade QV series, a Florida Heat Pump geothermal system, is an industry leader

in sound reduction and represents one of the most comprehensive sound-performance offerings on the market, the company notes. **Bosch Thermotechnology.** [www.boschheatingandcooling.com](http://www.boschheatingandcooling.com)



## SHOWER TRAYS

Duravit USA's Architec Slim shower trays, developed specifically for the North American market, offer a modern design solution that enhances standard alcove application across residential, hospitality and builder spaces by providing a low profile with a 2" curb height, bringing a

smart solution to a wide audience, Duravit notes. **Duravit USA.** [www.duravit.us](http://www.duravit.us)



## FIRE PUMP

Armstrong Fluid Technology unveils its industry leading, Design Envelope Fire Pump unit along with Fire Pump Manager, a new, connected service for tracking pump performance. In addition to providing important new safety benefits, Armstrong's new Design Envelope Fire Pump holds the distinction of being the first self-regulating variable-speed fire pump to meet NFPA-20 (2019 Edition), Section 4.8 standards, the company points out. **Armstrong Fluid Technology.** [www.armstrongfluidtechnology.com](http://www.armstrongfluidtechnology.com)

# MOVERS AND "SHAKERS"

Compiled by Mike Miazga

## ▶ PEOPLE NEWS

• Northeastern Supply has named **David Shannon** the new commercial department manager for its plumbing division. Shannon will be responsible for creating and executing commercial and mechanical programs for the region's contractors and improving Northeastern's engagement into the commercial, mechanical and plumbing market.

With more than 25 years in the industry, Shannon comes to Northeastern with a background in commercial as well as the PVF sales management. "I look forward to working with NE team to become the premier commercial/mechanical distributor in the Mid Atlantic area," he said.

"We look forward to growth in our Commercial Department and great success with David leading the charge," said VP of sales **Alan Cowan**.

### • A. O. Smith's Hawk announces retirement

A. O. Smith Corp. announced the retirement of **Rick Hawk**, vice president of wholesale sales at A. O. Smith North America Water Heating (NAWH). Hawk has will remain with A. O. Smith through March 2022 to aid in the transition.

"Since joining the company over 40 years ago, Rick's vast experience has helped shape A. O. Smith into the customer-focused organization it is today," said **Dave Warren**, president and general manager - NAWH. "He has developed and mentored a sales team committed to meeting our customer's needs and achieving the company's goals and objectives. We thank him for his leadership and dedication to the company, and his friendship will be missed."

**Chuck Dean**, regional vice president of sales - Western region, has been named as Hawk's successor, effective immediately. Dean joined the company in 2008 as national accounts manager, before being promoted in January 2020. He earned his bachelor's degree in public relations from Middle Tennessee State University and master's in organizational management from Trevecca Nazarene University.

"In his 13 years with A. O. Smith, Chuck has proven to be a strong leader, taking on larger roles within the sales organization," Warren said. "In this new role, Chuck will continue to provide leadership with an intense focus on serving our wholesale customers across the U.S."

**David Flores**, regional sales manager - Western region for A. O. Smith's Lochinvar business unit, has been promoted to regional vice president of sales - Western region for NAWH. Flores brings 17 years of sales leadership experience from Lochinvar, the last 12 of which in the western U.S. He earned his bachelor's degree in industrial distribution from Texas A & M University.



SHANNON



HAWK



DEAN



RADEMACHER

### • Viega's Rademacher honored

Viega Manager **Daniel Rademacher** has won the PMG Leadership Award from the International Code Council for his work in training and educating plumbing professionals around the world.

Rademacher, who is the Trades Education Network program manager for Viega, was given the award at the ICC's annual meeting Sept. 18-28 in Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania. The award is given each year to an individual or organization for exceptional service to the plumbing, mechanical, fuel gas and swimming pool/spa (PMG) industry.

"Dan's passion for providing relevant and engaging learning opportunities so that plumbing professionals can achieve their career goals, no matter where they are located, is unmatched," ICC stated.

"I'm humbled to receive this award from the ICC, an institution which has done so much to advance plumbing and promote the well-being of people around the world," Rademacher said. "And I'm proud to be able to introduce safe plumbing practices where they are needed most."

Rademacher directs the Viega Trades Education Network, which partners with trade schools to provide tools, lessons and training to help educate future trades professionals

This is only the latest industry honor for Rademacher. Last year, he was elected vice president of the board of directors of the American Society of Sanitary Engineering - International. In 2019, he won a World Plumbing Council Education and Training Scholarship to travel to Rwanda for the purpose of developing and contributing further plumbing industry knowledge. Also, he was the International Association of Plumbing and Mechanical Officials (IAPMO) Industry Person of the Year in 2014.

He has 30 years of experience in the industry and is an accomplished instructor. He is certified as a plumbing/mechanical inspector and plans examiner by IAPMO. He has extensive experience using, implementing and interpreting the Uniform Plumbing Code, the Uniform Mechanical Code, International Plumbing Code, International Mechanical Code and International Fuel Gas Code.

## ▶ COMPANY NEWS

### • WILO USA acquires QuantumFlo

As part of an asset deal, WILO USA, a subsidiary of WILO SE, has acquired the operating business of QuantumFlo, a specialist in pressure boosting systems and intelligent pump systems. The company, based in Sanford, Florida, employs 32 people and offers high-quality products and innovative, user-friendly software solutions for the design and operation of pressure-boosting systems.

"With this acquisition, we are strengthening our regional presence in line with our 'region-for-region' approach," explained **Oliver Hermes**, chairman and CEO of the Wilo Group. "We are, thus, countering decoupling, the politically motivated disengagement from global tendencies, and can meet local customer needs with locally manufactured products in an even more targeted manner. In addition, the acquisition of QuantumFlo expands our customer base to accelerate market development in the U.S."

**David Carrier**, founder and president and CEO of QuantumFlo, said at the closing of the deal on Sept. 30: "As the leader in intelligent pumps systems in the U.S., and the creator of the world's first variable-speed

booster operating system, we are excited and honored to join our technologies with Wilo USA. This exciting new opportunity will allow QuantumFlo to further develop these innovations for a variety of markets throughout the Americas. The primary beneficiary of the sum of these companies is our representatives, specifying engineers and distributors."

"In the pressurized booster market in the U.S. the QuantumFlo brand represents leading technology, quality and a passion to provide solutions to their customers," said **Jeff Plaster**, managing director of WILO USA. "This is the same value proposition that Wilo's other strong brands provide in the OEM, water management and building services sales channels."

"As a recognized and established U.S. manufacturer of booster sets and HVAC systems, QuantumFlo is a real asset for the Wilo Group and we are already looking forward to working together," added **Mathias Weyers**, member of the executive board and CFO of the Wilo Group.

## FERGUSON RELEASES 2021 FISCAL YEAR RESULTS

Ferguson announced its fiscal year financial results.

### HIGHLIGHTS

- Revenue 14.3% ahead of last year with accelerated market share gains;
- Gross margins of 30.6% were 60bps ahead of last year driven primarily by the distributor's ability to service customers while managing price inflation, it noted;
- Good cost control ensured strong underlying trading profit delivery of \$2,099 million, up \$507 million and significantly outpacing revenue growth with profit before tax increasing to \$1,891 million;
- Cash generation was solid and the balance sheet remains strong with 0.6x leverage, Ferguson explains;
- Continued to consolidate markets, investing \$335 million in seven acquisitions;
- \$1.4 billion returned to shareholders during the year via dividends and share buybacks;
- Final dividend of 166.5c per share, bringing total dividend to 239.4c per share, an increase of 15%;
- New \$1.0 billion share buyback recently announced;
- UK disposal completed in January 2021 with operations now focused on North America;
- Additional US listing on the NYSE established in March 2021. On track for shareholder vote on US primary listing, spring 2022; and
- Virtual investor day scheduled for Dec. 9.



"We would like to express our sincere thanks to our 31,000 associates for their dedication and commitment, delivering

outstanding service and accelerated market-share gains amid a backdrop of COVID-19 and industry supply chain pressures," Group Chief Executive **Kevin Murphy** said. "We were pleased with earnings growth that significantly outpaced revenue growth to deliver robust operating leverage and margin, demonstrating the agility of our business model. Cash generation was solid, as we continued to invest in inventory availability to service our customers, while our balance sheet remains strong. We welcomed talented associates from seven acquisitions as we continued to consolidate our fragmented markets.

"The Group started the new financial year with strong momentum, with organic revenue growth at similar levels to Q4 2020/21. We expect a year of good growth overall, but we anticipate a tapering in the second half on tougher prior-year comparatives. We are mindful that the recent tailwinds from inflation on gross margins could moderate, but for the full year ahead, we expect operational improvements to broadly offset headwinds from inflation in the cost base. Given the strong momentum in the business and the agility of our business model, we are well positioned to have a year of good growth and the board continues to look forward to the medium term with confidence."

## EASTERN INDUSTRIAL SUPPLIES RAISES MORE THAN \$70,000 FOR TELEIOS MINISTRY



Eastern Industrial Supplies announced its 2021 Eastern Cares Charity Classic was a phenomenal success. All of the net proceeds from the tournament - \$71,381.42 - were donated to Teleios Ministry

and will be used to house, educate and support the children in the care of the Daily Bread Life Children's Home in Tanzania.

"We are overjoyed with the response of so many who partnered with us to be a blessing for the children in Tanzania," said **Mary Jean Rackley**, co-organizer of the annual golf tournament.

"Your investment is paying off in incredible ways and changing lives," Teleios Ministry co-founder Floyd Parker told players and sponsors during the tournament. "Not only for the 125- plus who are directly connected to the children's home, but also for the more than 350 orphans throughout Tanzania who are supported by the Daily Bread Life Children's Home."

A total of 26 teams gathered at the Saluda Valley Country Club in Williamston, S.C. on Oct. 11 to compete in the eighth annual Eastern Cares Charity Classic. The top three teams received a cash prize along with hand-carved ebony wood sculptures from Tanzania. The Merit Brass team - **Will Hicks, Chad Pierce, Shon Peppers and Joe Turner** - claimed first place and the \$800 purse. The Wells Fargo Team - Tommy Davis, Josh Paddock, Trip LaCoste, and Brad Harvey - came in second place and earned the \$600 purse. The Allied Group Team - **Allen Lee, Ian Barwick, Jason Parketon and Greg Walsh** - placed third and claimed the \$400 purse.

Allied Group was the tournament's Titanium Sponsor this year. Platinum Sponsors for the event were: Renfrow Industrial, Richard James Partners, SAM Giving and the Texas Pipe Family of Companies.

Eastern also thanked Stainless, Copper and Carbon Sponsors as well. This year's Stainless Sponsors were Merit Brass, Milwaukee Valve, Service Transport, Sunbelt Marketing, Tyler Pipe, and the Wall family. Copper Sponsors were AIRpipe USA, American Valve, ASC Engineered Solutions, Carolina Handling, Cross Way Christian Supply, Kelly Pipe, M&T Restoration Properties, Merfish United, Mueller Streamline, Nupi-Americas / NIRON, ProMarketing, PVF Marketing & Sales, Service Metal, Sovereign Financial, Stainless & Nickel Alloy Piping Products, the McDonald family, Viega and Winters Instruments.

Carbon Sponsors were Bradley-Hughes, Cherry Bekaert, Core Pipe, the Doser family, Emerson, Jennings-Dill, Keckley, Pennsylvania Machine Works, Premier Insurance Consultants, Race City Steel, Salem Corp., Sanitary Solutions, Saturn Freight, Southeastern Hose, Spirax-Sarco and TAG Logistics.

Eastern looks forward to hosting the ninth annual Eastern Cares Charity Classic in 2022.





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Continued from page 39

America Corporation’s President **Frank Windsor** said. “We are committed to creating a healthier way of living, and providing a worry-free, turnkey solution for our customers is a great step towards achieving that commitment.”

## WATER QUALITY ASSOCIATION OPENS NEW HEADQUARTERS

The Water Quality Association hosted a grand opening Sept. 13 for its new international headquarters and laboratory in suburban Chicago.

WQA President **Toby Thomas**, president of Kinetico, said: “We are at a pivotal moment in the marketplace. We are being called upon to help protect people’s lives and improve the quality of their lives. This new facility allows us to take not just a next step, but a ‘giant’ next step forward.”

WQA, a not-for-profit trade association representing the residential, commercial and industrial water treatment industry, moved to the facility at 2375 Cabot Drive in Lisle from a building it had constructed in Lisle in 1982.

WQA, an \$11 million association, employs 70.

Most WQA employees began working remotely in March 2020, but the laboratory remained open throughout the pandemic and during the year-long buildout and relocation process. Over the last several months, other WQA employees have been returning to the workplace, at least a few days a week, although the new facility’s technology allows seamless teamwork between remote and in-person employees.

The relocation was assisted by a “Building Our Vision” capital campaign, which contributed more than \$400,000 in funding

and equipment. Donors are honored in a mural on the building’s second floor.

## SONNHALTER RAISES MORE THAN \$26,000 IN TOOL DONATIONS

Sonnhalter, partnered with Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity for a 12th year during its annual Sonnhalter Tool Drive, which ran the entire month of August and collected \$26,500 worth of donations of tools and building materials. Since Sonnhalter began its efforts in 2010, it has collected \$336,500 in donations.

Organizations, businesses and residents were encouraged to donate new and gently used tools, as well as building materials, furniture and appliances, to Sonnhalter to help benefit Habitat for Humanity’s cause of eliminating substandard housing and homelessness.

“Every year, we at Sonnhalter are inspired and uplifted by the generosity of our great community in its efforts to help those in need with donated tools and building materials,” said Matt Sonnhalter, vision architect at Sonnhalter. “We would like to thank our clients, partners and community members for their continued support in helping Sonnhalter raise nearly \$336,500 for this great cause.”

“Sonnhalter’s Tool Drive is like Christmas in August! Instead of Santa’s sleigh, they bring a large truck full of tools for us and that’s the gift that keeps on giving all year around,” said John Habat, president/CEO of the Greater Cleveland Habitat for Humanity. “Sonnhalter’s Tool Drive helps to bring awareness to areas we have no access to and provides us tools to work on our houses, in our tool shop and to be sold to the general public.”

# AD INDEX

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