

# MGA Messenger

From our e-mail box to yours . . .



2007 Winter Convention Wrap-up

Editor: Roberta Simpson-Dolbeare, Brookside Marketing

## FAST FORWARD -- What Does the Future Hold for Your Company?

### Flexibility Essential in Planning

We live in a fast-paced world for sure. And trying to make sound business plans for the future is not an easy task. But careful planning is essential. Perhaps the best approach for planning for the future is to build in an element of flexibility as well.

### Is Anything Traditional Anymore

“These times they are a changing” goes a familiar saying. A statement that is certainly true in the direct marketing of gardening products to home consumers. No longer are sales to home gardeners accomplished strictly through a customer receiving a catalog in the mail, completing a paper order form and mailing the order back in a business-reply envelope.

### Multi-Channel Marketing a Must

Our industry is a maze of multi-channel marketing, with a rapidly growing percentage of orders being placed by phone and on-line. And as the modes of ordering continue to change, so do the demographics of the buyers themselves.

### MGA is Fast Forwarding, Too

The MGA board of directors realizes our organization must keep up with the times. This is why we encourage members to participate in strategic planning sessions at the convention. We also strongly encourage feedback from attendees to let us know what business topics they would

*Continued on page 2,*

### MGA Members Thrive on Learning and Sharing

A philosopher once said, “When a person quits learning, they might as well turn out the lights.” That thought certainly has merit in the ever-changing direct marketing industry. If ever a direct marketer thinks he/she doesn’t need to continue learning new techniques for generating new customers and how to better market to those potential customers to motivate them to buy, it is definitely time to turn off the lights and go home. Needless to say, the future will be pretty dark for direct marketers who lose the desire to learn and improve.

That is hardly the case for the direct marketers who attended the recent Mailorder Gardening Association (MGA) winter convention, held at the Swissotel in Chicago. The meeting buzzed with learning opportunities! Roundtable discussions were just one of the many sessions during which attendees could learn from other experts in the industry and share knowledge from their experiences.



Left-right: Karen Park Jennings, Park Seed, and Mary Walters, Image Botanica, attended a discussion about “Winning Results with Customer Satisfaction Programs”, led by Randy Anderson, Taction (on right).



“Best Practices for E-Mail Marketing Campaigns” was a popular discussion spot during the roundtable sessions. This discussion was moderated by Michael Fordon, BlueHornet.



At right: Michele Salmon, Lenser, explains the “Basics of Catalog Page Analysis”.

At left: MGA Pres. Don Zeidler, Burpee, moderated the “Web Analytics & How to Use Matchbacks” discussion.



Above: Postal rate increases are always a concern to marketers who utilize print catalogs. Tom Murray (center), Banta Catalog Group, discussed printing options, co-mailings and other techniques to help offset postal rate increases.

# 2007 Green Thumb Award Winners Announced



Potatoes, peaches, bird feeders and cowpots were among the 10 new gardening products (five new plant varieties and five new tools and accessories) recognized as 2007 MGA Green Thumb Award Winners.

MGA Green Thumb Award recipients were chosen by an independent panel of garden writers and editors. The winning products were selected based on their uniqueness, technological innovation, ability to solve a gardening problem or provide a gardening opportunity, and potential appeal to gardeners. The MGA Green Thumb Awards recognize outstanding new garden products available by mail.

Bringing home awards in the Plants, Bulbs and Seeds division were:  
*Tulip 'Fire of Love'* from Brent and Becky's Bulbs;  
*Sugar Pearls Apricot* from Henry Field's Seed & Nursery Co.;  
*Organic 'King Harry' Potato* from Wood Prairie Farm;  
*Rudbeckia 'Prairie Glow'* from Select Seeds & Plants; and  
*TruGold Peach* from Henry Field's Seed & Nursery Co.



*Jim Gerritsen, Wood Prairie Farm, accepted the Green Thumb Award for the organic 'King Harry' Potato. Presenting the award is MGA President Don Zeidler.*

Honored in the Tools, Supplies and Accessories division were:  
*The Squirrel Buster™ Plus Wild Bird Feeder* entered by The Lawn and Garden Performance Group, available from Audubon Workshop;  
*Cowpots* from Gardener's Supply;  
*The Garden Patch™ Planter* from The Garden Patch;  
*Thermoplanter* from Lilypons Water Gardens; and  
*Square Foot Success Kit* from Gardener's Supply.

The awards are sponsored by the Mailorder Gardening Association. For information more about the Green Thumb Award winners or the program itself, visit the MGA website at [www.mailordergardening.com](http://www.mailordergardening.com).



*Sometimes you just can't take life seriously. Jim Feinson, Gardener's Supply, and MGA President Don Zeidler, appear to be 'cowering' around about the 'Cow Pots' for which Gardener's Supply received a Green Thumb Award.*

## FAST FORWARD

*Continued from page one,* like to have addressed during the convention educational sessions. The mission of the Mailorder Gardening Association is "to make mail order gardening businesses the most successful they can be".

### MGA Conventions are Great Value

Compared to the cost of attending other trade association conventions, the MGA semi-annual meetings are a great value. "I don't know of another trade association that provides its members with the opportunity to learn from direct marketing experts, network with peers and be able to conduct business in one location at such a reasonable price," said MGA Vice President Dan Wells. "The conventions are one of the best benefits of membership in the MGA," Wells added.

### Fast Forward to Summer Meeting

The MGA Board is working on plans for the 2007 Summer Convention, scheduled for July 10-13, in Madison, WI. Please contact the MGA office if there is a specific educational topic you would like the board to consider including in its programming.

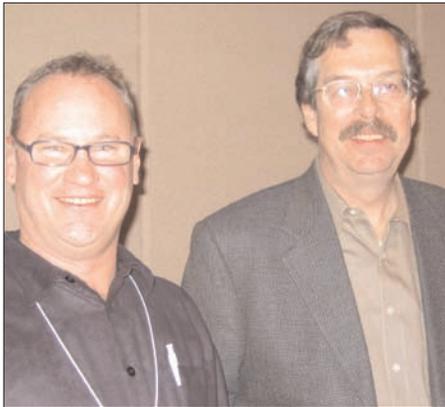


## OG Hosts 'Welcome Back' Reception

*Thanks go out to Diamond Sponsor, Organic Gardening Magazine, for hosting the Welcome Back Social on Wednesday evening. Representing OG were (l-r) Ashley McEwan, Tammy Hobar and Jeff Tkach.*

# Marketing to Web Buyers

Web buyers do not necessarily have the same demographic make-up as that of traditional mail order buyers. According to Jim Coogan, president of Catalog Marketing Economics, web buyers are changing the catalog world. Coogan described two kinds of web buyers -- those that are 'catalog driven' and those that are



MGA Vice President/Program Chair Dan Wells, New Growth, with Jim Coogan, president of Catalog Marketing Economics. Coogan, a featured presenter at the winter meeting, discussed marketing to web buyers.

'pure' web buyers. Catalog-driven buyers respond more like traditional catalog buyers, whereas pure web buyers come to your site without a source code to which you can track them. Coogan also stressed that pure web buyers are "only a click away from a competitor".

Web buying is the biggest trend to hit the direct marketing industry. Coogan cautions catalogers from getting caught up in the 'Field of Dreams' mentality, however, which is the belief that just because they built a web site, customers will come.

For more information about marketing to web buyers, contact Coogan at Catalog Marketing Economics, 505-986-9902, or at [jcoogan@earthlink.net](mailto:jcoogan@earthlink.net)

# Gardening How-To Sponsors Breakfast

Hats off to Gardening How-To magazine for sponsoring the Thursday morning breakfast at the winter convention. Gardening How-To representatives attending the conference were (l-r): Lien Sarles, Linda Resnick and Amy Schoenfeld.



# MGA Welcomes First-Timers

More than 30 first-time attendees registered for the MGA winter convention. Some were representing new member firms to the organization, some were from firms who have been MGA members but had not sent this attendee before, and others were representing prospective member firms. MGA past presidents serve as mentors to the first-time attendees to help explain how the organization operates and a luncheon was held at the convention to which first-timers, their sponsor and the MGA past presidents were invited. The luncheon, sponsored by NewHaven Software, provides first-timers the opportunity to meet other first-time attendees as well as some long-time members and to learn how they can benefit from their membership in the MGA.



Enjoying lunch together at the First-timers Luncheon were (l-r): Lisa Bednarski, Eden Bioscience Corp., Jennifer Schwind, Meredith Corp., and Freedom White, Stark Bro's Nurseries.



MGA Past President Judie Brower, Schoolhouse Marketing Group, joined first-time attendee Lisa Tricoli, Names and Addresses, Inc., at the First-timers Luncheon. Brower served as Tricoli's mentor.



Tom Danner, NewHaven Software, sponsored the First-timers Luncheon. Shown with Danner is his wife Sharon.



MGA President Don Zeidler welcomed the large crowd to the First-timers Luncheon, held on the top level of the Swissotel.

# Catalog Marketing in a Multi-Channel World

As most catalogers know, 'multi-channel' marketing does not refer to advertising with different television stations. No, multi-channel marketing refers to the variety of ways in which catalogers reach their customers and prospects. Today, many consumers



Geoff Wolf and Michelle Houston, LENSER., presented the educational session entitled "Creating an Annual Contact Plan in a Multi-Channel World".

are responding to catalog offers via the internet, as well as through the more traditional modes such as mail, phone and fax. An increasing number of consumers, are also doing their actual catalog browsing and shopping on line.

Even though the environment in which catalogers mail has changed significantly in the past

ten years, most catalog companies continue to perform circulation management with antiquated techniques, stated Geoff Wolf, LENSER, who along with Michelle Huston, LENSER, led a session that focused on why it is so important to understand how marketing and ordering channels interact and then how to react to how each drives demand.

Key points that Wolf and Huston covered were

1. Understanding customer value by channel.
2. Optimizing seasonality to the marketers advantage.
3. Understanding order curves to maximize revenue.
4. Rethinking contacting strategies across all channels.
5. How/when to use matchbacks.
6. Creating an invaluable contact strategy.

For a copy of the LENSER handout, used for their presentation, contact Wolf at [geoffwolf@lenser.com](mailto:geoffwolf@lenser.com) or Huston at [michelle@lenser.com](mailto:michelle@lenser.com).

## Getting the Most Value from Pay Per Click Advertising

Creating and managing a pay per click program, and getting the most value for your investment takes planning and ongoing monitoring, stated Alisa Keimel, Johnny's Selected Seeds. Keimel presented an educational session that highlighted the key points of implementing a pay per click campaign. Keimel advises starting with a simple PPC program, such as Look Smart. The basic approach, according to Keimel, for creating and managing a PPC campaign involves

1. Determining your budget.
2. Selecting targets to focus on.
3. Creating ad groups and ad copy.
4. Selecting key words/phrases you want to track and then setting a maximum cost per click you will pay.
5. Specifying match types, unit bids, and landing pages url's.
6. Monitoring impressions, click-thrus and conversions.

Keimel cautioned catalogers to be aware of click fraud, where competitors may be causing bogus clicks. She also stressed the importance of tracking results for return on investment measurements. For more information, contact Keimel at [akeimel@johnnyseeds.com](mailto:akeimel@johnnyseeds.com)

### MANY THANKS TO ALL OF OUR CONVENTION SPONSORS

#### Diamond Level

- Horticulture Magazine
- Organic Gardening Magazine
- Quad/Graphics

#### Platinum Level

- Fine Gardening Magazine
- Gardening How-To Magazine
- LENSER
- List Locators & Managers
- Marketshare Publications
- NewHaven Software
- Zed Marketing Group

#### Gold Level

- Berkshire Direct
- DMC International BV
- Mantis
- NextAction
- Planto
- Taction--The Call Center

#### Silver Level

- Brookside Marketing
- Chilcutt Direct Marketing

#### Sponsorships Being

Accepted for Summer '07 Meeting, in Madison, WI, July 10-13, 2007

Please contact the MGA office if your firm would like to sponsor a social event, educational session, convention giveaway or to serve as an advertising sponsor.

Phone: 410-540-9830

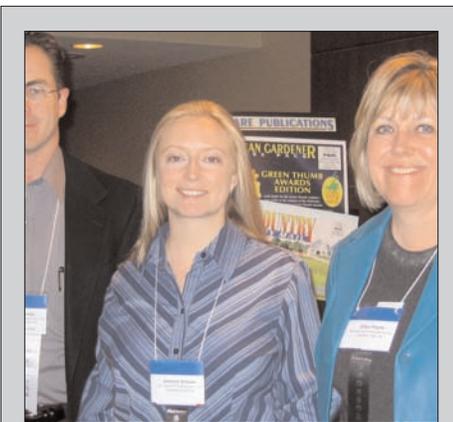
E-mail:

[info@mailordergardening.com](mailto:info@mailordergardening.com)

## Break Time is Networking Time



MGA conventions provide lots of opportunity to visit with friends and prospective customers. Conversing between educational sessions are (l-r) Mike Squire, *BloomingBulb.com* and Randy Schultz, *Schultz Communications*.



### 'Food & Knowledge' Combo Works Well with MGAers

Offering food and information in one setting has proven to be a good combination at MGA meetings. Thus the great turnout for the closing brunch and "Trends" presentation on Friday, which was graciously sponsored by Marketshare Publications and List Locators & Managers. MGA greatly appreciates these firms ongoing support. Their representatives at the Chicago meeting were (l-r) Eric Hines, Jessica Graven and Ellen Payne.

**REMEMBER --**  
**MGA Summer Mtg.**  
**July 10-13**  
**Madison, WI**

## Cooperative Efforts Creates Evening of Fine Dining and Good Conversation

Thanks to the fine folks of Horticulture Magazine and Quad/Graphics, MGA convention attendees enjoyed a relaxing evening with great food and a beautiful environment atop the Swissotel on the 43rd floor. With a panoramic view overlooking downtown Chicago, MGAers could not have asked for a more picturesque setting to dine and converse with friends and business acquaintances.

The reception and dinner was the perfect cap to a full day of educational sessions and business meetings.



Jim Rudek, *Quad/Graphics* and Barbara Emerson, *Horticulture Magazine*, shared the hosting responsibilities at the Thursday evening reception and dinner. A big "THANK YOU" to both firms for their ongoing generosity in sponsoring this event. It was a special evening!

## Is Your Creative Arsenal Well Stocked for Battle?

Are you using everything in your arsenal to create a selling tool that will increase response, loyalty and your average order? Catalogers tend to analyze and dissect data like no other advertising genre, but most could do a better job of applying the data to their creative executions.



Jeff Thurston, *Hot Pepper Wax*, quizzes Lois Boyle, *J. Schmid & Assoc. Inc.*, about some of the tips she recommended during her session.

One of the most important points about catalog creative, stressed Lois Boyle, *J. Schmid & Associates, Inc.*, is that it's all about the customer experience. Boyle presented an educational session on Friday morning of the convention, entitled "Cracking the Creative Code." Simply stated, if the customer is not moved to buy, the lay out needs to be improved. The human eye takes in about 4,000 messages each day. That is a lot of clutter to sort through, Boyle commented. But unless your catalog layout engages the reader, tells the story you're trying to convey, and makes it easy for the customer to know what you want them to see (and purchase) their experience with your catalog will be short lived.

Boyle talked about how to use key marketing metrics to strengthen creative presentation, responses and average order; how to build an efficient catalog that emotionally engages the reader; and how to use specific merchandise findings to create a more powerful selling opportunity. For a copy of Boyle's presentation, contact her by e-mail at [loisb@jschmid.com](mailto:loisb@jschmid.com).

## Media Heads Lead Discussion on Outdoor Living Trends



Four panelists, four view points -- it was to be expected. But how dull life would be if we all had identical perspectives. Diverse opinions about how catalog companies can cash-in on the outdoor living market and perhaps recognize signs of future trends, created the catalyst for audience response to the panelists' comments, and that they did.



Panel participants for the packed-house closing brunch/presentation session were Doug Jimerson, Editor-in-Chief Better Homes & Gardens Special Interest Media, Todd Meier, Publisher, Fine Gardening, Krisin Grilli, PR Specialist, Garden Media Group and Scott Meyer, Editor-in-Chief, Organic Gardening Magazine.

## *“You Meet the Nicest People at MGA Meetings . . .”*



Margaret Koogle, Lilypons, with her door prize “Chicago” cow.



MGA Executive Director Camille Cimino, chats with Jim and Mike Zuckerman, Zed Marketing Group. Jim is a past president of MGA. Zed Marketing is one of the long-time platinum convention sponsors. They sponsored the refreshments in the Networking Room for the recent meeting.



Dottie Schultz, J.W. Jung Seed, and Clayton Beaty, Beaty Fertilizer, visit between sessions.



Photo above: Jim Foster, DMC International, Frank DiPaolo and Michael Lynch, Earthbox, pose for the camera during the Thursday evening reception and dinner.

Photo at right: It was a double first for Hans Tonkens, DMC International -- his first MGA meeting and his first visit to the U.S. Hans is talking with Jan-Marc Oosting, Elburg Botanic Media.



“Will the real Texas cowboy please step forward?” No, this isn't a scene from the old TV show ‘What's My Line?’ -- it's just three MGA hombres showing their lighter side. Left to right, Michael Allen and Leo Vandervlugt, Dutch Gardens and Bruce Frasier, Dixondale Farms. Leo and Bruce are both MGA Past Presidents. For more Karaoke Night pics, see page seven of this newsletter.

# True Personalities Emerge on Karaoke Night!

In order to share as many photos from this event (and to protect the names of the innocent), the editor opted to not include captions. MGA would like to thank *Fine Gardening Magazine* for sponsoring this well-attended and fun social event. And like true hosts, they did their share of karaokeing!

*Can you pick out Susan Abrams and Lisa Riebe in the photos below?*

