

# HOMEWORLD<sup>®</sup>

## B U S I N E S S

VOLUME 32 NO. 10 JUNE 17, 2020

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“We have seen a strong increase in cookware set sales during the quarantine.”

—Bobby Griggs,  
Heritage Steel

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### 2020 Home & Small Office Furniture Report



Twin Star's Genevieve home office furniture collection.

## Home Office Lifestyle Trends Accelerating

NEW YORK— Home office furniture experienced an unprecedented surge as working from home became a sudden necessity for millions more Americans during the COVID-19 pandemic. Many observers forecast the home workforce to sustain at high levels after stay-at-home restrictions are lifted.

The annual HomeWorld Business Home & Small

Office Report provides an exclusive, in-depth analysis of how fast-evolving remote working trends are shaping online and in-store programs for innovative, new workspace solutions and marketing methods in a category that now confronts multiple purchase opportunities within each household.

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### 2020 Health & Wellness Report



## Pandemic Primes Wellness Solutions

From heightened attention to personal and family health and wellness during the coronavirus pandemic comes heightened awareness of the wide array of home products that help consumers take more control of their wellbeing. The HOMEWORLD BUSINESS<sup>®</sup> Health & Wellness Report 2020 examines dynamics, developments and data in

key categories anchoring the surging home health and wellness appliance market.

**REPORT BEGINS ON PAGE 23**

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"Plum was created with a single goal of changing the way wine is served to match the way people live," said Andreas Hansen, Plum global president.

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## Electrics Manufacturers Shape Sustainability Efforts

BY DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ  
*Contributing Editor*

NEW YORK— It might not be easy being green, but it just might translate into significantly more greenbacks for the housewares industry.

Consumer demand for sustainable products is driving suppliers and retailers to adopt greener manufacturing, product development, packaging and distribution policies. In fact, a survey of more than 30,000 consumers from 60-plus countries released by The Conference Board in February found that consumers rank environmentally-friendly production as the sustainability feature with the biggest impact on determining their brand choices.

“Companies that offer and highlight their environmentally-friendly production will most likely benefit with new sustainability-minded customers,” the board stated. The survey also revealed that home appliance makers and retailers— along with tech companies, utility providers, financial institutions and hotels— exceed consumers’ expectations regarding their sustainability efforts.

Leading kitchen appliance makers agree there is an increase in consumer demand for sustainable products, in turn spurring retail demand.

“When your retail partners include leaders like Walmart, Target etc.— brands who have set the worldwide standard for sustainability and environmentally-responsible processes— the most prudent move is to follow their lead and make sure we meet or exceed their expectations,” noted Gourmia founder Heshy Biegeleisen. “What we share with them is the desire to leave this planet to our kids in better shape.”

“We try and ensure that any powered components— motors, heating elements etc.— are all rated for maximum efficiency and performance as well as sourced from factories who share our mindset,” he explained. “We’re not going to say it’s always possible. Still, the more insistent we are, the more word gets around in the vendor community that doing business with Gourmia means having your house in order from a green/environmental perspective.”

Leading global suppliers showcased an array of sustainable, organic, renewable, recyclable and reusable products at Germany’s Ambiente fair this year. Suppliers are continuing to spotlight eco-conscious products and marketing during the COVID-19 pandemic.

“Being at home has made us spend more time in the kitchen and we have seen sales trends of consumers mak-



Gourmia, and other suppliers, strive to ensure that powered components are rated for efficiency.

ing easy swaps: switching to borosilicate glass containers instead of using mounds of plastic; discarding the plastic straws and opting for biodegradable or stainless steel eco-friendly options,” said Jacqueline Gonzalez, brand manager, Holstein Housewares. “Having a sustainable kitchen has become a priority.”

She added, “As a company, being eco-friendly has been a priority and part of our culture; from making choices in daily office operations to developing products and processes with sustainability in mind. A few examples of items would be Holstein’s 12-piece

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## Consumer Aspirations Elevate Barware

BY LAUREN DEBELLIS  
*Senior Editor*

NEW YORK— Consumers are more aspirational than ever, seeking out new dining experiences and adventures, determined to recreate the same enjoyment at home— something especially important as the country continues to remain safely in place.

It’s no question that the craft cocktail movement has certainly had an influence on the at-home bar. Consumers enjoying creative and handcrafted cocktails, or tasting new spirits, out at restaurants, have a renewed appreciation for proper techniques and ingredients. However, as consumers become



LSA's Gin Grand serving set offers a complete home bar experience.

more confident, so has their desire to refine their own bartending skills. Such aspirations have led to an increased demand in elevated wine and bar accessories for the home.

“We have seen about a 30% increase

in our spirit-related products. Customers are looking to have a restaurant-like cocktail related experiences at home. They are realizing how easy it is to replicate some of the things that

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## A Work In Progress

AFTER NEARLY THREE months of working from home, it is a welcome relief to begin the first phase of a return to offices for the HomeWorld Business team.

It is sure to be a work in progress as we re-acclimate to a co-working environment that, despite best efforts to return to the pre-COVID norm, will continue to be marked for an untold time by the altered behavior of lingering caution.

### Consumer Priorities

Prognosticators in myriad sectors of life and business have been active the past several weeks trying to assess which virus-affected behaviors and practices will abate and which will embed. Such observations are key to forecasting by retail businesses reopening to transformed variables when it comes to calculating consumer shopping priorities heading into a back half that should provide a critical measure of the broader economic recovery.

It has been well chronicled how the housewares business has delivered strong sales to a homebound society with heightened health and cleanliness sensitivities... to go with hearty home-cooking appetites.



This edition of HomeWorld Business presents a pair of annual special reports: The Health & Wellness Report and The Home & Small Office Report. The convergence of these reports into this edition was scheduled before most of us had ever uttered the word “coronavirus” or given any thought to the expression “shelter in place.”

### Growth Trends

Health and wellness and home office lifestyles have been brewing concurrently the past few years to the benefit of the home and housewares business. Retailers have enjoyed growth from a widening range of small appliances and household accessories promoting healthy living; and from a new generation of adaptable home office furniture designed for a remote workforce that had been expanding long before so many people were required to work from home.

That these growth trends were in play before the coronavirus pandemic amped up demand for such products gives even more reason to believe consumers will continue their quest for innovative solutions that make living and working at home healthier, safer,

more comfortable and more productive. And despite the recent surge in sales of many of these products, market analysts say responsive, creative marketers and merchandisers can tap into a broad base of consumers who have deferred such purchases for various reasons or face new and changing needs.

### Clearer Framework

It will take some time before we can gauge the proficiency of all the prognostication about the lasting impact of the pandemic on consumer behavior and purchase patterns. The next several weeks, as we attempt to stage a careful reopening that mitigates the possibility of a disruptive relapse, should help outline a clearer framework for how a society shut in for so long will live, work, play and spend.

It will be a work in progress. Emphasis on progress.

*Peter Giannetti*

EDITOR-IN-CHIEF

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# Homebound Chefs Igniting A Return To Cookware Sets

By Emily Cappiello  
Contributing Editor

NEW YORK— During the height of the coronavirus pandemic, as more people spent time indoors, they also spent more time in their kitchens. This spurred the consistent use of cookware as consumers created more meals at home as well as experimented with different recipes— and ignited a return to the purchase of cookware sets.

“We have seen a strong increase in cookware set sales during the quarantine. It really appears that as many people began to embrace cooking and have gained more interest in cooking, they have had a renewed desire for quality cookware,” said Bobby Griggs, vp/Heritage Steel.

As these consumers began cooking multiple meals a day at home, the wear-and-tear on cookware became obvious. Additionally, consumers realized that they had older cookware pieces that needed to be replaced as well as cookware that wasn’t quite right for the job they needed to get done in the kitchen. Sales of sets that were able to be procured while under social distancing orders began to grow.

Pamela Stafford, director at Hestan Culinary, said the company has seen about three times an overall lift in sales through May versus all of 2019, noting that the 10-piece sets have been

selling well. While some consumers may have looked into purchasing one or two pieces, a set allows for monetary savings while also allowing them to fully upgrade their kitchen. Stafford also said that new technology is appealing to consumers.

“Buying a set is a practical investment, especially for consumers who want to upgrade, since the savings can be 15% to 40% more compared to purchasing open stock items. Many consumers now are realizing that their old cookware, often times purchased 10 or more years ago, isn’t performing for them, and they want new technology to solve pain points,” she said.

David Nicklin, svp/marketing and licensing, Gibson, noted that as consumers have spent more time at home, they are also turning to cookware to freshen up the look of the kitchen as well as making a more utilitarian purchase.

“We’ve seen the Crock-Pot Artisan Collection that offers individually packaged enameled cast iron sauté pans, skillets, braisers and Dutch ovens experience strong sales on Amazon, higher than we’ve ever seen them, actually. The collection offers all of the above in vibrant and trendy color options,” he said.

Retail outlets, too, have played a part in the sales of cookware sets. Gibson said there has been an increase in sales for major brands that are sold

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Gibson reported sales growth for its Crock-Pot Artisan cookware collection.

## 2020 Chain Drug Report



# Drug Chains Sharpen Post-Virus Differentiation Strategies

NEW YORK— The chain drug store business has changed immeasurable over the past several years, even if you can’t tell that by driving by one of the innumerable stores that fall under its auspices, but the shift to a health care focus is a sector-wide initiative that is having an effect on housewares and even some home furnishings vendors.

An informal definition of drug chains, at least in their non-pharmacy function, has long characterized them

as convenience stores for women. To some extent, that has held true, even if the emphasis shifted from everyday food, essentials and health and beauty care items. The shift initially was based, in large part, on expansion of the beauty business as drug chain retailers found that operation increasingly attractive.

However, the even larger change began more recently and has had two

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# As Seen On TV

## Health, Comfort, Security Inspire Latest DR Launches

### Ontel Products

Ontel is focusing on personal safety and children's comfort with the launch of the Safe & Healthy UVC sanitizing light wand and Star Belly plush animal nightlights.

The Safe & Healthy kit can kill 99.9% of bacteria, viruses, germs and other harmful pathogens in seconds by holding the UVC lighted wand over all types of surfaces, according to Ontel. The compact sanitizing wand folds for storage.

Ontel, which scored a big plush hit with Pillow Pets, is rolling out Star Belly Dream Lites. Designed to comfort children at sleep time, each plush Star Belly animal features a glowing belly nightlight that projects rotating starry effects in six colors that show onto walls.

Star Belly plush animals, equipped with 20-minute light timers, are offered in unicorn, puppy, kitten and dinosaur characters in several color combinations.

### IdeaVillage

IdeaVillage has expanded its Copper Fit brand beyond compression garments into other health and wellness applications with the launch of Angel Sleeper Pillow and GuardWell Face Protectors. The new items, like Copper Fit compression wear, are infused with copper to reduce odors.

The Copper Fit Angel Sleeper, formed from memory foam, features posture-correct contours to help reduce pressure and stress on the body. A cut-out design allows arms to rest at a natural, comfortable sleep position. Fitted with a machine-washable pillowcase, the Angel Sleeper Pillow is set to hit stores in December, retailing for \$39.99 for a standard-sized pillow.

The Copper Fit GuardWell Face Protector offers a non-slip design that provides 30 UPF protection in a washable, breathable, thermal-regulating "Smart Technology" fabric to keep wearers cool and dry. The face protector is available at retail in one-packs at \$9.99.

### Allstar Innovations

Snuggie marketer Allstar Innovations has launched Happy Nappers Play Pillows, plush animal pillows that convert to sleeping blankets.

DR media in support of Happy Nappers launched in May ahead of an escalating retail rollout through the back half of the year.

Offered in rainbow unicorn and gray shark styles, machine washable Happy Nappers are set to retail at \$39.99.

Allstar is also rolling out the Touch Screen Purse, a stylish cross-body purse that protects a mobile phone while keeping it accessible and usable.

Created by entrepreneur Tami Lange and backed by Lori Greiner of Shark Tank fame, the purse's screen window allows for full use of touch screen mobile phones while offering storage for credit cards, make-up, cash, keys and more.

Each Touch Screen Purse retails for \$19.99.



LEFT: Ontel's Star Belly Dream Lites plush animal.

BELOW: The Safe & Healthy disinfecting UV light.



LEFT: IdeaVillage's Copper Fit GuardWell face protector.

BELOW: The Copper Fit Angel Sleeper pillow.



Allstar's Happy Nappers pillow/sleeping blanket.



The Touch Screen Purse mobile phone protector.





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# Kitchen Electrics



Zavor points to its multi-cookers as part of the trend for more efficient, batch cooking.

## Eco-Friendly Efforts Benefit Small Electrics Suppliers

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cupcake maker, which is energy-efficient and multi-purpose when compared to traditional baking options, or our electric glass kettles which are made from sustainable materials.”

Zavor has seen a sales surge in multi-functional pressure cookers during the pandemic.

“We have seen an immediate consumer interest in batch cooking and in preserving like we never saw before, which we believe has to do with how sustainability applies to food in addition to the products we use to cook,” pointed out Sara De La Hera, vp/sales and marketing, Zavor. “Consumers are more aware about how difficult it has been to get certain ingredients, and

how batch cooking, preserving or freezing meals has helped throughout these difficult months.”

“We at Zavor have always paid special attention to environmentally-friendly products, from pressure cookers that save 70% of the cooking time, and therefore energy, to our induction cooktops, which cook twice as fast as gas and electric cooktops, saving energy as well,” she added.

Metal Ware and its Nesco brand highlight sustainable food preservation.

“We aim to help consumers shop farmers markets and enjoy sustainable, home-grown produce all year round by having methods of safe storage that eliminate food spoilage and waste,” said Maddie Frank, sales and marketing

coordinator, Metal Ware. “We’re also taking a close look at all of our processes and finding areas where we can make things more efficient, upping our efforts on both plastic and metal scrap recycling to reduce environmental impact.”

Packaging has gotten a major revamp throughout the housewares industry. “We have transitioned all of our products to recyclable material, unless there is a weight issue, to pass drop tests,” said Jim Haskins, vp/marketing and product development for Aroma. “We changed most of our products to a corrugated inner packaging because most of our items are light in weight.”

Salton is focusing on packaging materials and packaging sizes, as well as on products’ energy efficiency and reuse. “The consumer wants an environmentally-friendly, sustainable product,

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Holstein strives to use more sustainable materials, such as borosilicate glass instead of plastic.



Plum’s appliance preserves and chills wine, enabling by the glass consumption.

## Plum Aims To Enhance The Wine Drinking Experience

By DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ  
Contributing Editor

DANIA BEACH, FL— A pioneering company is making a splash in the wine accessories market: Plum, the three-year-old entrepreneurial firm, is using technology to fundamentally alter the way consumers enjoy wine by the glass.

Launched in 2017 by founder and CEO David Koretz, Plum developed a fully automatic appliance that preserves and chills wine so that it can be enjoyed a single glass at a time, without compromising the taste or integrity of the remainder of the bottle.

“Plum is dedicated to transforming how consumers and hotel guests enjoy wine from the bottle to by-the-glass,” explained Andreas Hansen, Plum global

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# Cook & Bake

Gibson noted increased sales for cookware sets from brands such as Cravings by Chrissy Teigen.



## Quarantined Consumers Boosting Cookware Set Sales

*continued from page 8*

through Amazon, Target and Sam's Club, retailers that saw an increase in business during the pandemic. The company saw increases in the sales of several cookware brands, including the Oster Rametto 8-piece cookware set; the Martha Stewart 14-piece non-stick cookware set; Cravings by Chrissy Teigen 12-piece non-stick aluminum cookware set; and the Kenmore Arlington 12-piece non-stick forged aluminum cookware set.

Jeff Malkasian, president of retail brands for Clipper

Corp., explained that he has seen e-commerce boost sales of cookware sets, as consumers were mostly browsing and shopping online or purchasing online for curbside pick-up during the pandemic. He noted that through these channels, consumers end up looking for different configurations of sets based on their search criteria.

"I think e-commerce will continue to grow in market share as a result of the pandemic, but as stores open and customers can visually see and touch the variety of products in a store, it will give them the ability to buy the pieces they need in more of a mix and match way," he said.

Malkasian also said while the company's 10-piece set has continued to trend well through the pandemic, he has also seen an uptick in specialty cookware as people are becoming more adventurous in the kitchen. "Our specialty pieces have been doing very well. I attri-

bute this to people trying more recipes at home and in many cases cooking for more household members so they are buying tools that help them cook in a different scale," he said.

Thomas West, director of e-commerce at Bradshaw Home, also noted a spike in specialty cookware, as well as 10- and 12-piece cookware sets. He said items like pasta pots are selling more than double last year's numbers, as well as sauté pans of all sizes.

And, said vendors, while the pandemic lit the spark for the sale of cookware sets, many believe this purchasing trend will stay steady for the next several months.

"We're very positive about the coming months, given that people are continuing to work from home and preparing every meal— breakfast, lunch and dinner— as part of their new daily routine. They're also either discovering or re-discovering the joys of cooking, which are multi-faceted," Stafford said.

But West predicts there will eventually be a reduction in sales as life begins to ease back, even though consumers have become more comfortable spending time in the kitchen.

"I believe we will continue to see this trend, but with fluctuation. People have developed new habits, hobbies and skills by getting back into kitchen. We will see sales slow as things start to open up again, but ultimately flatten out to higher than pre-pandemic time," he said. **HWB**

Hestan has seen a sales lift for its NanoBond 10-piece cookware set.



## Comfort Foods Fuel Harold Import Lasagna Pan Lineup

LAKEWOOD TOWNSHIP, NJ— As big batch cooking and oven-to-table are trending now that consumers are cooking more at home, Harold Import Co. is debuting new cookware and bakeware designed to provide a solution.

Additionally, comfort foods like breads and pastas are also top-of-mind with consumers that are turning towards the kitchen to ease any pandemic related anxiety.

HIC has introduced a new HIC branded lasagna pan with handles, an HIC branded individual sized lasagna pan as well as a Mrs. Anderson's high-fired ceramic baking lasagna pan with handle.

The company's lasagna pan with handle is a durable and versatile baking dish that can also be used for cakes, casseroles, roasting and serving as well as lasagna. Made from porcelain, the lasagna dish was created with generous depth, allowing for layering, and the easy-hold handles ensure a comfortable grip and secure transfer, the company said.

Also made from porcelain, the HIC personal size lasagna pan is safe for use in the microwave, freezer, oven, or broiler up to 500-degrees Fahrenheit. It is dishwasher safe and built for layering, even if the recipe is for a single serving.

The Mrs. Anderson's baking lasagna pan with handle is made from a high-fired ceramic. The baking pan can also transition from oven or broiler to the table. It can also be used in the microwave or freezer and can go directly from the fridge to the oven. **HWB**



Harold Import's new porcelain lasagna pan with handle.



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DeLonghi's new portable air conditioner features a Cool Surround smart sensing function that links to a smart remote monitor.

## Portable Cooling Begins To Gain Sales Traction

BY DONNA BOYLE SCHWARTZ  
Contributing Editor

NEW YORK— Temperatures are on the rise across the country, and as a result, sales are heating up in portable cooling products, including air conditioners and fans.

Suppliers reported that the season got off to a somewhat slow start, due in part to cooler weather in the Eastern states, but also as a result of the COVID-19 crisis and states' stay-at-home orders. Although the global pandemic kept shoppers out of the stores, suppliers said many shifted to online buying, sending sales soaring at e-commerce retailers.

"The COVID 19 pandemic has been the most impactful development affecting our sales this selling season," noted Jennifer Thomas, category manager, home comfort, DeLonghi. "Every company is facing the same challenge, but where the majority of our sales would typically occur in store for portable air conditioners, it has now shifted to online. Our sales are generally doing very well and I believe that is due to two things: one, great long-standing relationships with key distribution; and two, online web page

content was set up far in advance maximizing any opportunities for advanced content."

Thomas added, "We do attribute a slower than normal start to the season to the cooler weather, however, we have seen that pick up as the weather gets warmer. We have shifted a few promotions to be in warmer months, but generally we are not doing anything differently. Longer term, we plan to maximize online enhanced content so we are able to supply the customers with great information despite their ability to go to a store and shop."

DeLonghi is spotlighting its model PACEX390LVYN, which features a new "Cool Surround Smart Sensing" feature.



Home Easy has launched an Emerson outdoor portable air conditioner.

The smart Bluetooth remote monitors temperature, humidity, and the user's position in the room, adjusting automatically to maintain optimal surroundings. The portable air conditioner is exclusive to Amazon and sells for \$599.95.

"It is very early in the portable air conditioning season, but early indicators would tell us we are going to have a decent season," Thomas said. "We will have different pockets of heat throughout the country based on the weather forecasting services, so we anticipate the need for portable air conditioners to continue throughout the summer."

Emerson Quiet Kool debuted a new outdoor portable air conditioner this season, designed to cool up to a 100 square foot space.

"As soon as the country lifts the lockdown, consumers will start buying outdoor gear to enhance their outdoor activities after months of getting stuck at home," said Jack Zheng, Home Easy's marketing and sales director, noting that the new 1,000-BTU unit is ideal for camping grounds, job sites, mini offices or wherever cooling is needed for tight spaces. In addition to keeping consumers cool and comfortable, the product also features a USB port for phone and mobile device charging, a light for night use, and Bluetooth to link a mobile phone to a built-in speaker.

The Emerson Quiet Kool air conditioner will be exclusively distributed by Almo Corp., and launched on Amazon, Home Depot, Best Buy and other e-commerce sites. Retail price is \$499.

Midea America registered an uptick in sales due to people working at home during the crisis, according to trade marketing manager Susan Lanza.

"The cooling category has always been driven by the weather, and this year we are witnessing warmer weather earlier in Western states," she noted. "In the East, most notably around New York City but also in the Southeast, most people have been encouraged to stay home, and a large portion of the workforce is getting ready for a summer working from home, which has driven

*continued on page 58*

## Simplehuman Advances Sensor Mirror Lineup

TORRANCE, CA— Simplehuman has introduced its latest cosmetic mirror design, the Sensor Mirror Trio Max. The company said it is targeting the personal care and beauty market for significant growth.

The Sensor Mirror Trio Max is equipped with a proprietary Tru-Lux light system and has a 95 CRI (color rendering index) which closely simulates natural sunlight for enhanced visibility on the subtle variations in makeup color for flawless application. The distortion-free mirror lights up automatically as a user's face approaches, and unlike traditional bulbs or fluorescent lighting, the long-lasting LEDs won't burn out or diminish, the company said. A touch-control brightness feature allows fast, intuitive control over a continuous range of light settings.

The mirror offers three magnification levels— 1x, 5x and 10x. One side has 5x magnification, allowing users to view their entire face in detail. A quick, automated flip to the other side provides a 1x true-to-life view, along with a 10x magnification window for close-up work. The mirror measures 10 inches in diameter, providing a larger viewing area for users. **HWB**



simplehuman's sensor mirror trio max offers three magnification levels.



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Lenox's cocktail party tool set can be stored in a compact ice bucket.



## Elevate Barware

*continued from page 6*

they often pay for, and I believe will continue to do so as the risks of dining out remain," said Eugene Khayman, president, Eparé.

Another major influence on bar and wine trends that industry experts have noted is that of celebrity-driven brands.

"Gin is a trend growing over the last few years and it's particularly strong for summer 2020," said Martin Kehoe, president, Product Specialties, Inc.

He noted the influence of locally sourced gin distilleries popping up and the increased use of the botanically infused spirit by bartenders looking to get more creative with recipes.

Add to this the influence of celebrities such as actor Ryan Reynolds purchasing Aviation Gin has had on the trend, and vendors have leveraged the moment

by introducing glasses designed specifically for gin cocktails. Kehoe noted that the Copa de Ballon, the

original design of which Final Touch, a brand of PSI, has its own version, remains a strong purchase, with consumers enjoying the larger glass to experiment with gin spritzes and mixed drinks.

Tequila too has enjoyed climbing popularity, with Forbes magazine recently citing data from the Distilled Spirits Council that 20 million 9-liter cases of tequila were sold in 2019.

Of the spirit's continued rise, Kehoe pointed to the popularity of tequila among Hollywood with actors such as George Clooney behind the Casamigos brand of tequila, which he recently sold, and Dwayne "The Rock" Johnson's new tequila brand Teremana.

Overall, such influences signify a level of aspiration many consumers are craving and therefore have led to them actively seeking out accessories to help them explore new tastes.

Vendors have been developing functional barware that assists with next-level techniques yet also has a design-driven quality that gives consumers the confidence to put them on display in the home and on social media—both important avenues for sharing their cocktail knowledge and enthusiasm with others.

"The more you learn, the more likely you are to upgrade your tools. I think people who never bothered with bar tools are getting themselves the basics: shakers, strainers, bar spoons, jiggers, muddlers, mixing glasses, while people who already

had those tools are upgrading," said Ben Inadomi, president, True Brands.

For example, he pointed out the company is seeing the transition to better glassware, using a crystal mixing glass instead of a shaker tin and seeking out a weighted bar spoon instead of just grabbing a spoon out of the utensil drawer.

The company recently debuted a selection of acacia wood-handled bar tools, designed to elevate the at-home bar experience.

The new cocktail strainer with acacia handle by True is a traditional Hawthorne strainer to be used with mixing glasses and Boston shakers. The classic style of strainer, often preferred by professional bartenders, helps to ensure that no ice or solid mixing ingredients make it into cocktails and shots.

Meanwhile, the company also introduced the double jigger with acacia handle by True, which it described as an essential bar accessory. It is double-sided with dual stainless steel cups for quick, easy and accurate measuring.

Ice, too, has become a focal point, as consumers expand their cocktail making knowledge. Larger, clear cubes of ice are sought out more often for consumers who wish to slowly sip on spirits such as whiskey and bourbon, savoring the flavors and aromas of the brands they have invested in.

Slower melts and clearer ice prevents spirits from becoming diluted, said Khayman, who has seen the Eparé clear ice cube system rise since its introduction.

"We have seen an uptick in our craft ice products as people look to have a high-end experience at home," he said.

In addition, to help take the intimidation out of the experiences for newcomers looking to expand their skillset, Khayman said education remains one of the most important tools vendors and retailers have.

Inadomi agreed and noted that the company has recently



True Brands has stepped up its bar tools with an acacia wood accented collection.

begun to enhance its educational programming for its customers and consumers alike with its Instagram account, a first for the wholesale company.

"It's a challenge to connect with the end consumer as a wholesale vendor, but we do our best to connect through social media and provide buyers with selling points through our sell sheets as well as merchandising displays and informational emails," he said.

True Brands recently invested in its B2C social media accounts, using for example Instagram, as an educational tool by providing cocktail classes and regular step by step cocktail videos.

"Our goal is to educate the end consumer in these areas so they are empowered to assess their home bar and know what to look for to expand or upgrade their tools," he said. **HWB**



Eparé's clear ice system helps expand and elevate consumers' cocktail making skills.



PSI's Final Touch tequila tasting set puts an emphasis on the complete presentation.







Ullo's wine purifier decanter with adjustable aerator.

## Decanter Design Innovation Pours Into Wine World

By LAUREN DEBELLIS  
Senior Editor

NEW YORK— Wine enthusiasts are finding new ways to explore and enjoy new and favorite varietals beyond the bottle. As their thirst for knowledge and exploration increases, so too has their use of accessories, such as decanters, designed to enhance the wine experience.

“As people have been staying in more, they now have the time to explore their passions, and that includes wine,” said Greg Lambrecht, founder and executive director, Coravin. “We’ve seen bottles that have been stored for years are being opened or accessed using a Coravin system and finally tried. Plus, there’s been an explosion in the amount of content being created and distributed through social media by wineries, sommelier, and wine experts who are similarly trapped at home, making educating yourself about this beverage we love easier than ever.”

Lambrecht points out consumers are seeking accessories such as the Coravin wine opening and preservation systems, as well as additional accoutrements. “Tools for wine don’t need to be complex, but it is wonderful if they are perfect at what they do. Great glassware has such an influence on the experience of wine and is an attainable luxury during this time,” he said.

The spotlight has been cast on wine decanters among consumers. While not

a new idea, the decanter has been thrust into the forefront again as consumers are embracing their ability to oxygenate less expensive wines and serve a crowd—albeit a smaller one these days.

Coravin is supporting this trend with its By-The-Glass Decanter, which the company said is a companion to its range of wine preservation systems and designed for at-home wine tastings or other small celebrations. The decanter enables the wine to be aerated, while also letting a consumer measure the wine pour. It features markings for either a three ounce pour or a six ounce glass.

While decanters themselves are



Ypsilon wine decanters from Bormioli Rocco.

one way to increase the oxygen exposure to freshly opened wine, aerators are an accessory designed to do the same when topped onto a bottle. However, now vendors have merged the two. There is a new generation of aerators that are designed to work with decanters to further enhance the taste experience.

“People are doing what they can these days to enjoy their time at home. For many, that means making their space more livable. Adding a wine decanter to the home bar, bar cart, or kitchen countertop is a simple, chic improvement with the added benefit of the reward of an even better way to enjoy wine,” said James Kornacki, founder and CEO of Üllo.

The Üllo decanter comes with the company’s wine purifier, designed to remove sulfites from wine, while respecting the simplicity and ritual of wine itself. It features an adjustable aerator that the company said is designed to replicate how one would naturally swirl a glass of wine in the hand.

When topped with the company’s decanter, the wine is enhanced further. The decanter is designed with balanced proportions to provide optimal air exposure and controlled pouring. The decanter has a wide base that allows optimal surface area for amplifying the wine.

Another new aerator on the market designed for use with decanters is the Final Touch conundrum wine aerator from Product Specialties, Inc. The accessory also utilizes a three phase process to instantly oxygenate red wine, while also enhancing the scent and flavor. The accessory comes with the glass conundrum aerator, aerator bowl and a stainless steel filter, which is said to remove sediment.

The conundrum globe design features holes in the aerator to provide a unique aeration phase, midway through the entire process, said the company.

The wine continues down into the bottom of the aerator and travels out and onto the sides of the decanter, further supporting the aeration and oxygenation process. Once the wine rests in the decanter, its flavor and scent are noticeable to the consumer.

Vendors have stated that aerators designed to be placed on top of a decanter for an elevated enjoyment are the next in what will be even more innovative experiential wine accessories to come. **HWB**



Badash Crystal's wine decanter.



LSA's Borough wine decanter.



PSI's Final Touch Conundrum wine aerator and decanter.



# Chain Drug Report

## Wellness, Beauty Accessories Renew Drug Chain Potential

*continued from page 8*

components. The first was a deliberate shift from the traditional drug store role to one involving health care. A shift to mail order prescriptions helped power the move, but drug chains recognized that the consumer was in many ways underserved by the health care sector as constituted.

Pharmacists and newly conceived convenience clinics, drug chains reckoned, could help consumers with many health care needs that were otherwise problematic, as not everyone with an allergy problem wants to make a doctor's appointment to discuss what will most likely be a non-prescription remedy or to conduct a simple child's school physical. Given health care costs, as they fall on consumers without health insurance, and even those with insurance, lower-priced help might be appreciated, the drug chains determined.

The second component was mergers. Walgreens because an international company when it first partnered then merged with Boots, with its prominent representation in the United Kingdom and into Europe, and it got new expertise in beauty care, which its partner made a specialty; and pharmacy operations, which are more varied in their healthcare dimension on the other side of the North Atlantic.

In a more dramatic initiative, CVS acquired Aetna, both a healthcare and insurance company. United States Securities and Exchange Commission actions helped squelch a Rite Aid merger with Walgreens, which resulted in a sale of many Rite Aid pharmacies to Walgreens. However, with the remaining stores, Rite Aid pursued its own health-oriented repositioning, one that included a thoroughgoing store remodeling program.

One result of it all is somewhat greater differentiation between drug stores. Rite Aid particularly has developed a more polished presentation staying closer to the original convenience orientation than its rivals. CVS



has gone deeper into health care-oriented merchandise generally, while Walgreens has scaled back some categories and expanded consumable food, wellness and OTC products. All three continue to emphasize beauty and seasonal products as well, with Walgreens remaining perhaps most conspicuously committed to calendar-sensitive goods.

The product mix and emphasis can vary with store size, which can vary tremendously from one market to another, and even within markets, but each of the three major pharmacy chains seems committed to greater differentiation one from another while retaining at least some commitment to the basic product segments traditionally carried in the front of store non-pharmacy business.

The changes that drug chains have made to position their operations as more important health care providers put them in good stead when the COVID-19 crisis hit. Just as critically, they were deemed essential business, with good reason, and allowed to stay open. Changes in how they served customers, through drive throughs and free delivery services, further enhanced their status, but they also remained places where people could pick up key non-medical essentials at a time when such products were getting scarce across the spectrum of still-op-



ABOVE LEFT: CVS is taking an expansive view of wellness, including aromatherapy.

LEFT: CVS is positioning health electrics throughout the store.

BELOW: Oral care, including electrics, is a point of CVS emphasis.



erating retailers.

Walgreens first quarter performance, as the period ended February 29, wasn't heavily affected by the COVID-19 outbreak in the U.S. Still, in an April 4 conference call James Kehoe, Walgreens CFO, stated, as transcribed by SeekingAlpha, "While we have not yet closed the books for March, we do have good visibility to our sales performance. In Walgreens, comp retail sales grew by around 14% in the month, led by 32% growth in health and wellness and 28% growth from our grocery category, partially offset by declines in discretionary categories such as beauty and seasonal. But there were two very distinct periods in March. We delivered comp sales growth of 26% in the first 21 days of the month. However, post-March 21st, the comp sales trends turned negative with the last week of the month running at a mid-teens rate of decline."



Like other open retailers, the company saw comps slip as consumer movement and bricks-and-mortar retail occupancy restrictions kicked in. At the same time, e-commerce prescription sales kicked in.

In the conference call, Walgreens executives also mentioned a 50-store test of Kroger Express locations in positive terms. In a deal with the supermarket chain, and anoteable partnership post-Boots merger, Walgreens is trialing fresh produce and Kroger is testing

*continued on page 39*



# Health & Wellness

Report 2020

A Supplement to HOMEWORLD BUSINESS®

## The Comforts Of Home



### Pandemic Primes Surge In Family Wellness Solutions

From heightened attention to personal and family health and wellness during the coronavirus pandemic comes heightened awareness of the wide array of home products that help consumers take more control of their wellbeing. The HOMEWORLD BUSINESS® Health & Wellness Report 2020 examines dynamics, developments and data in key categories anchoring the surging home health and wellness appliance market.

#### Inside:

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Compression Garments	.....6A
Dehydrators	.....8A
Humidifiers	.....10A
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# Air Cleaners



## Consumers Taking Control Of Indoor Air Quality

Health concerns linked to COVID-19 are raising awareness of the air cleaner category.

Spring allergies normally drive demand for air cleaners. This spring, respiratory safety and health concerns linked to the COVID-19 crisis amplified sales of air purifiers by homebound consumers while reinforcing overall awareness of the importance of good indoor air quality.

Air cleaner demand has risen sharply since stay-at-home mandates were implemented. Sales of air cleaners were up 144% in the three-week period ending April 4 compared to the same period a year ago, according to the NPD Group.

Consumers normally take about 20,000 breaths each day and spend 90% of the time indoors, according to the Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program.

Officials from the Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program report that consumers are more interested in learning about air quality, with page views for portable air clean-

ers on the [www.asthmaandallergyfriendly.com](http://www.asthmaandallergyfriendly.com) website increasing 48% as the coronavirus outbreak escalated.

According to the Environmental Protection Agency (EPA), indoor air can contain concentrations of some pollutants two to five times higher than typical outdoor concentrations. Indoor pollutants can come from heating and cooking appliances, cleaning supplies, paints, building materials and other commonly used products.

Increasing consumer home air quality awareness has helped drive sales for several years of devices to reduce such airborne contaminants as pet dander, dust pollen and mold, as well as volatile organic compounds, bacteria and viruses.

Consumer education remains an important issue in the air cleaner segment. Shoppers may be overwhelmed when reviewing the features and benefits of the many products currently available on the market.

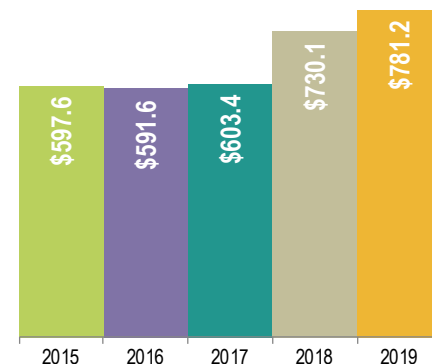
In-store product packaging has evolved the past several years to present efficacy and usage guidance that is easy to read and digest. Online, suppliers and retailers can offer expanded outlines of the product features and benefits, aided by video demonstrations and other content that showcase the technological and efficacious aspects of the air cleaners.

New products on the market today make use of various purification systems to cleanse the air of impurities. These include mechanical filtration models combining pre-filters, HEPA filters and activated carbon filters. Advanced air purifying technologies available for home use, such as medical-grade NCCO technology, active oxygen generators and photocatalyst filtration are reported to be very effective against viruses and germs.

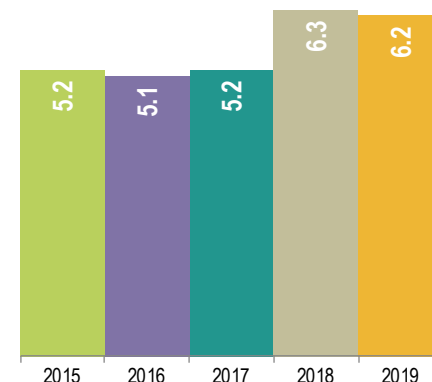
Some new air cleaners, including lightweight portable models, feature sensors that monitor surrounding air quality and automatically adjust filtration intensity.

The air cleaner category is also one that has also seen a great deal of product development when it comes to the growth of connected or smart home products. WiFi- or Bluetooth-enabled units allow consumers to connect with their unit remotely to control settings, monitor air quality and turn the unit on and off.

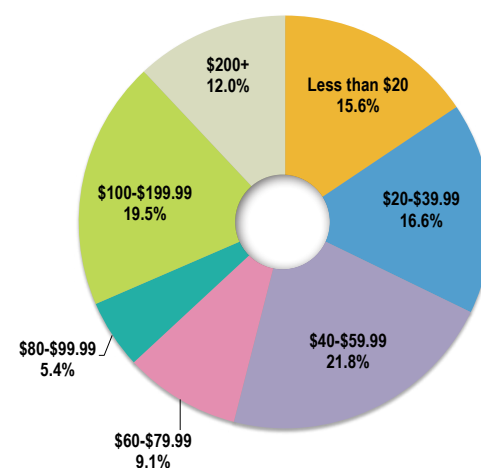
Retail Dollar Sales  
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Retail Unit Sales  
(in millions)\*



Consumer Purchase Price Expectation\*







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# Anti-Fatigue Mats



## Homebound Consumers Supporting Comfort Mats

Anti-fatigue mats are stepping up the comfort for stay-at-home, task-driven consumers.

**M**ore than ever, the home has certainly become one's haven, a place of respite from an unpredictable world. With that said, consumers continue to seek out home goods that provide comfort to their everyday routines, which often include cooking in the kitchen, making wellness masks in the bathroom and do-it-yourself projects in the garage.

Anti-fatigue mats, which feature a gel or polyurethane foam layer to provide energy to lessen fatigue in the legs, provide comfort to consumers taking on such tasks. As such, vendors have reported a healthy increase in sales this year, as more consumers adopt the mats in their kitchens and beyond.

What began as a kitchen helper, supporting consumers with comfort as they prepped, cooked and baked

in the kitchen for hours on end, soon began to enter other rooms in the home such as the bathroom, garage and home office, where consumers are also standing for long periods of time.

This wider adoption has led to a boost to the category, with consumers purchasing more than one for the home, as well as for gifting to family and friends.

And with consumers working from home more than ever in recent months, the category received a boost as consumers made additional purchases to outfit their home offices.

Customers continue to look for innovation in the category both in terms of design and functionality, vendors reported, with larger size mats emerging as a more desirable option.

Another key design trend has been the proliferation of more textured comfort mats as well as personalized selections, to match existing décor throughout the home. In addition, rugs or rug-like textiles with a comfort component have also gained traction.

While the category has seen positive growth, it also has its challenges. Competitive products that are being manufactured overseas continue to enter the marketplace, and products are more often than not made from what is said are inferior components, such as recycled foam, and often contain components that could create health issues, like vinyl and adhesives.

This development can deter from those anti-fatigue mats that are made in the U.S., a designation that has become increasingly desirable among consumers. Vendors continue to educate consumers on the quality of their products as compared to the imports and how that translates to consumers willing to pay a bit more for a product they know is supporting U.S.-based factories and workers.

- Consumers are seeing the benefit of having an anti-fatigue mat in their kitchen and are looking for mats for other areas of the home, such as the garage and outdoor activity areas.
- Education and lifestyle content are key drivers for online sales of anti-fatigue mats as the category continues to grow.
- As more consumers work from home for the long-term, anti-fatigue mats for use in the home office, especially under standing desks, is forecasted to rise.
- Rugs or rug-like textiles with a comfort component have also gained traction as consumers ask for the comfort a mat provides coupled with the look and feel of a fine, designer rug.



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# Compression Garments



## Compression Garments Flex Marketing Prowess

DRTV sales growth has widened the category's appeal with an active wellness lifestyle message.

Leading marketers of copper-infused compression garments saw year-over-year dollar sales growth in excess of 20% in 2019, driven by the launch of next-generation products, escalating direct-response marketing and widening retail and online distribution.

Many entries in the latest generation of compression garments for athletes, weekend warriors and others whose lifestyle and work contribute to joint and back pain showcase advanced, lightweight materials, featuring the infusion of odor-fighting copper fibers, for optimum performance and comfort.

The DRTV renaissance of copper-infused compression garments started with a few sleeves for knees and elbows. Their success stimulated the rapid extension into back supports, energy socks, gloves and updated joint sleeves that have come together in wide assortments anchoring in-line departments across

the retail landscape, As Seen On TV sections, in-store promotions and e-commerce platforms.

Steep sales growth heading into 2020 was driven by the launch of a new generation of easy-on/off, above-the-calf socks and form-fitting, open-finger gloves, as well as a resurgent interest in back supports. Marketers of copper-fiber compression products have sustained high levels of DRTV advertising during the COVID-19 crisis.

This year will see the rollout of new collections of copper-fiber compression-wear infused with CBD oil and menthol to promote added relief and comfort by offering an effective, convenient, economical and mess-free alternative to using lotions with compression products.

Compression garments are known in medical circles to provide muscle and circulatory support. They may be prescribed to treat varicose veins; to help prevent clots and thrombosis; to

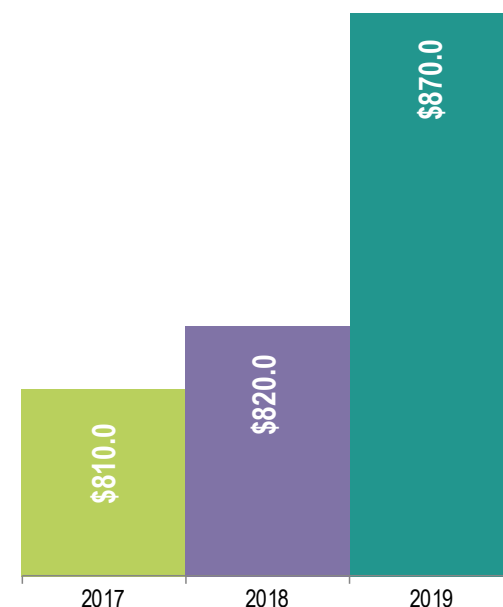
avoid blood pooling in extremities; and to treat low blood pressure.

Studies indicate athletes wearing compression products can run longer with less pain and faster recovery by allowing muscles to work more efficiently and by helping prevent injury. Direct-response marketers driving the dramatic growth of compression garments have harnessed such athletic credibility by enlisting well-known professional athletes as spokespeople appearing in infomercials, websites, social media and other marketing collateral.

The new age of direct-response marketers have widened the appeal of a category once presented in more clinical tones by promoting a wellness lifestyle theme to which active consumers across generations can relate. Displays of compression garments now are as likely to secure up-front placement in sporting goods stores and departments as they are to command a prominent presence in or near chain drug stores and pharmacy departments.

The awareness-and traffic-building boost from regularly updated DRTV spots for a continuing stream of new products has extended retail distribution of compression garments to supermarkets, home specialty stores, home centers, hardware stores, gift stores and other channels.

Retail Dollar Sales (in millions)\*



## Compression Garment Benefits

- Support for muscle stiffness, soreness, and pain
- Reduces muscle recovery time
- Supports improved circulation and oxygenation of working muscles
- Prevents strain and fatigue by keeping muscles warm

## Copper Benefits

- Protects against bacteria that can cause stains, odors and product deterioration
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- Not harmful to people or the environment





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# Dehydrators



## Dehydrators Delivering Health Plus Value Benefits

Education is key to promoting the segment's healthier food choices, cost-saving techniques.

Increasing interest in healthier food choices, cost-saving home food preservation techniques, urban farming and outdoor living are fueling sales of food dehydrators, which remain a niche, yet growing, category.

Consumer adoption of Paleo, Atkins, Keto and other low-carbohydrate diets has caused many consumers to take a second look at dehydrators, because they allow easy, inexpensive preparation of jerky, as well as dried fruits, vegetables and herbs.

Dehydrators turned in modest year-over-year sales increases in 2019, with dollar and unit growth of 2%.

Although more consumers are aware of dehydrators, industry sources said there is a gap between increasing awareness of the products and education about using the products. With many units on the market in a variety of shapes and

sizes, with varying features and at a wide range of prices, choosing the right unit for individual needs can be challenging for consumers.

The educational component helps explain why sales have shifted somewhat in favor of online and television platforms, on which demonstration videos can show consumers how easy it is to use dehydrators to make a variety of healthy, non-processed foods at home.

Online platforms also let retailers and suppliers go into deep detail about each product's features and benefits. Consumers also have access to online product reviews, which can help with their decision-making process.

Another potential selling opportunity for dehydrators is with the serious home cook. The use of herbs and spices within recipes is a key element

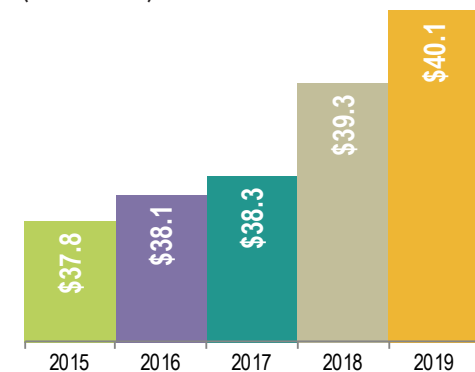
and the ability dry basil, parsley, rosemary and other key ingredients for future use could open the category to a new group of consumers.

The category has been boosted by a growing number of cookbooks available that focus on dehydration. Several suppliers are also offering recipe books with units as they work with chefs to give consumers new ideas for using a dehydrator.

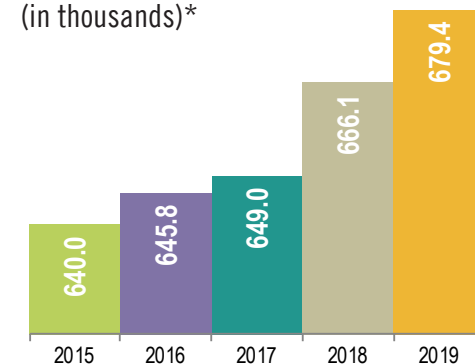
More recently, suppliers have looked to drive growth by tapping into a strong hunting market. According to a report by the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, there are more than 11.5 million hunters in the U.S., spending about \$25.6 billion annually. Many discounters have responded by moving dehydrators from the small appliance departments to sporting goods and camping departments.

Dehydrators come in various shapes and sizes. Nearly all come with removable, stackable shelves that can be used to dehydrate different foods at once, can be cleaned easily and are dishwasher-safe. Some models feature semi-solid racks that are designed for use with jams or pulp for making fruit leathers. Key features include either manual or digital controls, overheating and auto shutoff functions.

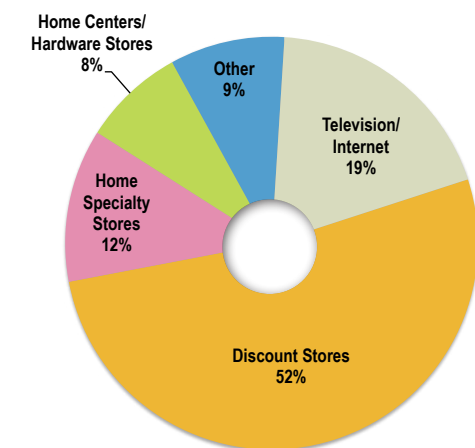
Retail Dollar Sales  
(in millions)\*



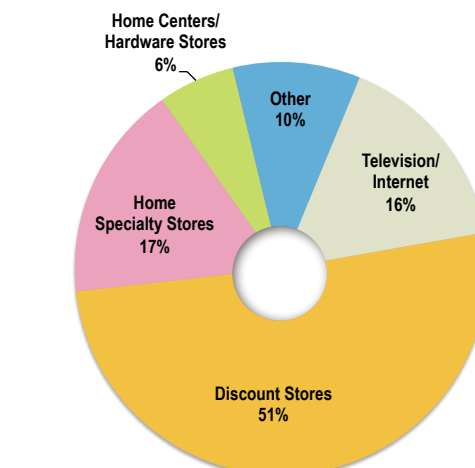
Retail Unit Sales  
(in thousands)\*



2019 Retail Dollar Share by Channel\*



2018 Retail Dollar Share by Channel\*




\*Source: HomeWorld estimates, HomeWorld Census 2020





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# Humidifiers



## Creating A Healthy Home Key To Humidifier Market

The coronavirus pandemic has raised consumer interest in enhancing wellness in the home.

Creating a healthy home environment has never been more important to consumers, particularly with increasing numbers of people working, studying and staying at home because of the COVID-19 crisis.

The Centers for Disease Control (CDC) recommends humidifiers to provide relief from the dry cough and sore throat from the coronavirus.

Humidifiers can play a key role in creating healthier homes. Relative humidity should stay between 40% to 50%, according to the Asthma and Allergy Foundation of America (AAFA) and Allergy Standards Limited (ASL) which administer the Asthma & Allergy Friendly Certification Program.

The winter season normally is the most popular period for in-home humidification as consumers look to offset the impact of drier air and prevent dry skin, chapped lips and dry eyes. The cold, dry air typically

associated with heating season in the northern regions of the country coupled with a rise in births among Millennial couples are invigorating sales of humidifiers.

Overall consumer interest in general wellness is having a salutary impact on sales of humidifiers, which retailers are positioning as a key element in creating a healthy home during the winter months. At the same time, medical research has shown that there is a strong correlation between dry air and viral infections, such as the flu, colds and measles, as well as many bacterial infections; the studies have shown that a “sweet spot” for indoor air is between 40% and 60% relative humidity.

Humidifier sales benefitted from this publicity last year, before the coronavirus outbreak, with dollar and unit sales increasing 12%. The increases come on the heels of more than 20% increases the preceding year, indicating that humidifiers are

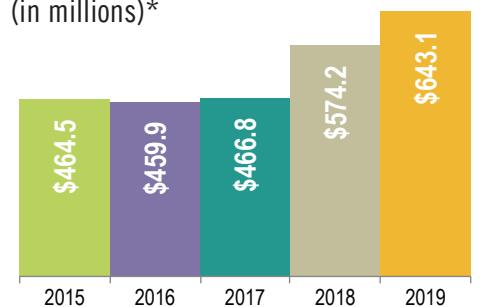
gaining more floor space at retail. And consumer purchase intent remains strong: 20.3% of consumers surveyed in the 2020 Forecast said that they intended to purchase a humidifier, ranking it fifth in terms of home environment purchases.

Distribution remains strongest among discounters, as well as home centers and hardware stores, and online purchases are gaining in importance. Retail pricepoints reflect the emphasis on these channels of distribution, with nearly three-quarters, 71.6%, of consumers surveyed saying they expect to pay less than \$60 for a humidifier.

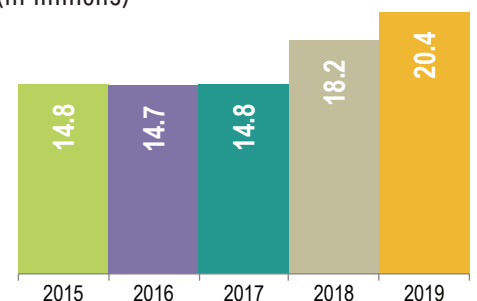
Interestingly, more than a fifth of consumers surveyed, 22.4%, expect to pay more than \$100 for a unit, which may reflect a growing trend towards larger and more full-featured units that incorporate essential oil diffusers and aromatherapy.

With more consumers turning to humidification as a way to improve their home’s environment, suppliers continue to step up their product design efforts that further mesh the utilitarian nature of the item with aesthetics that fit comfortably with a room’s decor. New designs range from sleek, modernistic silhouettes for updated living spaces to whimsical animal shapes and colorful designs for children’s rooms.

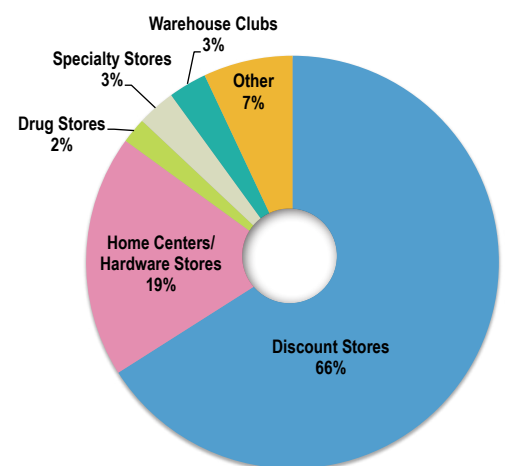
Retail Dollar Sales  
(in millions)\*



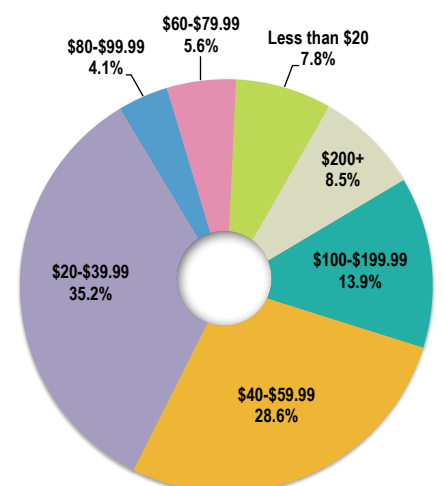
Retail Unit Sales  
(in millions)\*



2019 Retail Dollar Share by Channel\*



Consumer Purchase Price Expectation\*





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# Juicers



## Juicers Creating Fresh Growth Opportunities

Homebound consumers focusing on healthy lifestyles are lifting the segment to new heights.

Healthier lifestyles and a greater emphasis on wellness are boosting sales of juicers. Juice extractors, for example, were all the rage last year as several celebrities raved about the benefits of celery juice.

A new wave of wellness began lifting the juicer category about two years ago, but it has seen a big surge this year during the COVID-19 crisis.

“We started seeing a real change in consumer behavior in March, when stay-at-home orders began to take effect,” said Joe Derochowski, home industry advisor for The NPD Group. “Products that promote a healthy lifestyle are becoming even more important to families now than they were before, and they were performing very well before.”

Derochowski added, “This represents a real opportunity for the industry to educate the consumer about the benefits of these products

as part of a healthy lifestyle.”

One simple vegetable— celery—helped drive a surge in juicer demand and sales beginning last year. Hollywood’s A-listers, including celebrities Gwyneth Paltrow, Kim Kardashian and Pharrell Williams, have touted celery juice as a great source of vitamin C, beta carotene and important antioxidants.

The celery juice craze exploded in 2019, fueling sharp increases in all types of juicers, including extractor styles and citrus juicers. Unit sales were up an estimated 16% over the previous year, and dollar sales were up 14%, according to HomeWorld Business estimates.

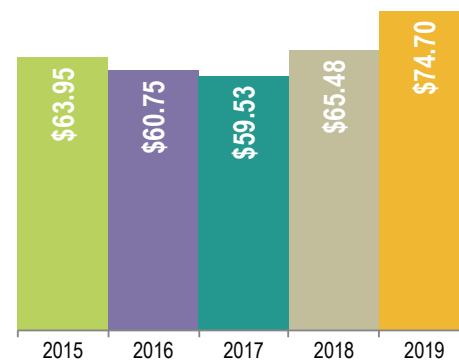
All of the publicity surrounding celery juice and the health benefits of juicing in general have impacted consumer purchasing expectations: 13.9% of consumers surveyed in the 2020 HomeWorld Forecast said they

intended to purchase a juicer. About half of all consumers said they expect to pay between \$30 and \$100 for a juicer.

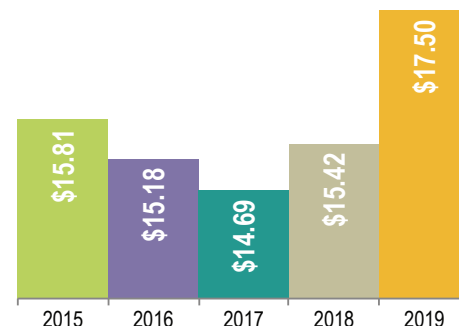
Consumer education continues to be an important consideration in sales of juicers, which may explain why e-commerce purchases have increased as a percentage of sales. Online video demonstrations, tutorials and testimonials allow consumers to gain a fuller picture of how a juicer operates, and such interactive marketing support allow retailers to differentiate between the different types of juicers. This includes the breakdown between extractor models, which process and spin the pieces of fruits and vegetables rapidly to separate the juice from seeds, skin and pulp; and citrus juicers, which twist the fruit and break down the interior fibers to extract juice.

Direct-response TV, which played a central role in introducing consumers to a new generation of juice extractors and propelling a big wave of retail growth more than two decades ago, is primed again to help raise awareness and sales. Select new models are slated for multi-pronged media programs combining TV commercials, web and social platforms.

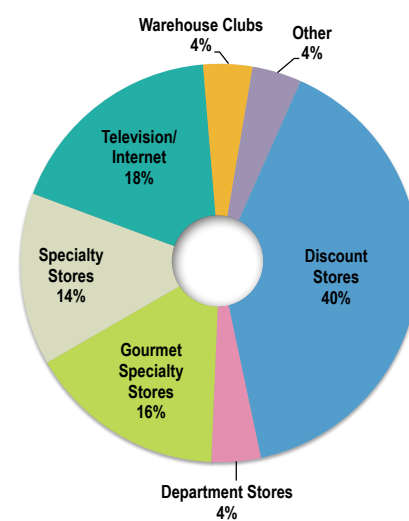
**Juice Extractors**  
Retail Dollar Sales (in millions)\*



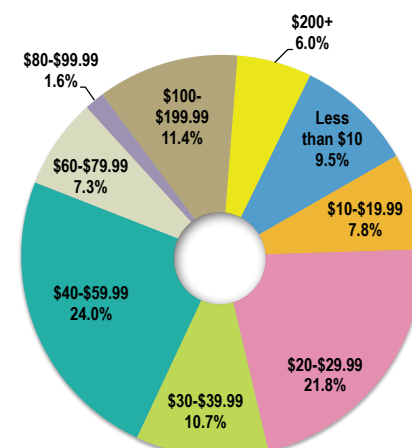
**Citrus Juicers**  
Retail Dollar Sales (in millions)\*



2019 Retail Dollar Share by Channel\*



Consumer Purchase Price Expectation\*





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# Rice Cookers



## Rice Cookers Heating Up Broader Market Appeal

Healthier eating is renewing a category already getting a boost from stay-at-home consumers.

**R**ice cookers, a strong niche business for several years that has flirted with bigger healthy-eating-fueled crossover into the mainstream cooking electrics market, has seen a dramatic spike in sales through e-commerce and at mass market stores open during the coronavirus, according to vendors and market research firms.

This latest boost finds rice cookers, historically a staple of ethnic households in the U.S., widening its appeal across demographic lines. And while lower-priced, basic rice cookers have been a big contributor to the category's recent boom, observers say increasing demand for the product has opened awareness to higher-priced cookers with added capabilities and versatility that cater to healthier at-home lifestyles.

Many anticipate the recent rice cooker surge could herald a longer-lasting renewal of the category as shifting consumer cooking habits endure beyond the lifting of stay-at-

home restrictions.

Consumption levels of rice across the U.S. were on the rise well before COVID-19 pandemic. Statistics show that Americans on average consume about 26 pounds of rice annually compared with the Chinese, who eat about 300 pounds of rice each year.

Various styles of rice have gained favor with a growing number of consumers with nutritional and dietary needs, such as gluten-free eating. According to the USA Rice Federation, rice offers 15 nutrients and anti-oxidants, calorie intake is low at 100 calories per ½-cup and 1-cup of brown rice equals two servings of whole grains. In addition, rice is inexpensive, costing about \$0.10 per serving.

Competition from countertop multi-cookers and other kitchen electrics promoting versatility in recent seasons had cut into sales of pure-play rice cookers. Sales of rice cookers declined over the past two years, with 2019 dollars decreasing 4% and unit sales down 5%, according to Home-

World Business estimates.

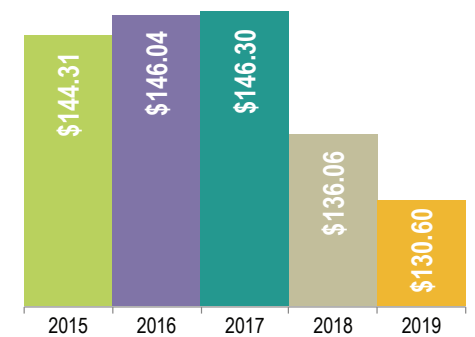
Rice cooker suppliers noted while there had been some erosion of sales of lower-priced units the past couple of years in the face of competition from multi-cookers priced less than \$100, sales of rice cookers at higher pricepoints have held up well.

Popular, updated functions allow users to program the units for specific types of rice, including conventional white rice, brown rice, wild rice, jasmine rice, Spanish rice and even exotic black rice, which is touted as one of the latest "superfoods." These types of rice require different cooking times and temperatures, which are often offered as pre-sets.

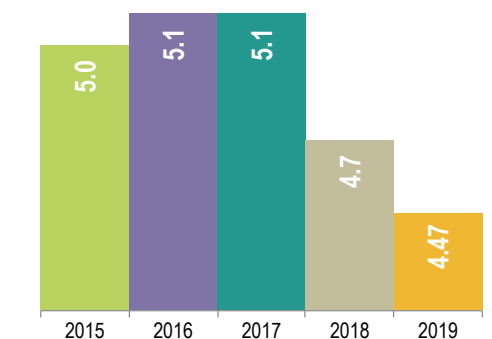
Programmable settings and the addition of inner steamer baskets also allow users to use the cookers as steamers, perfect for sushi rice, sticky rice, oatmeal, porridge and cakes, as well as cooking several different types of foods at once: meat, fish or vegetables can be placed in the steamer basket to cook at the same time.

Additional desirable features include easy-to-read LCD control panels, automatic and delay timers, keep warm settings, rapid-cook sequences, automatic reheating cycles, and lid designs for improved monitoring. Newer, connected rice cookers allow users to search and download recipes online, as well as program the units using a mobile phone.

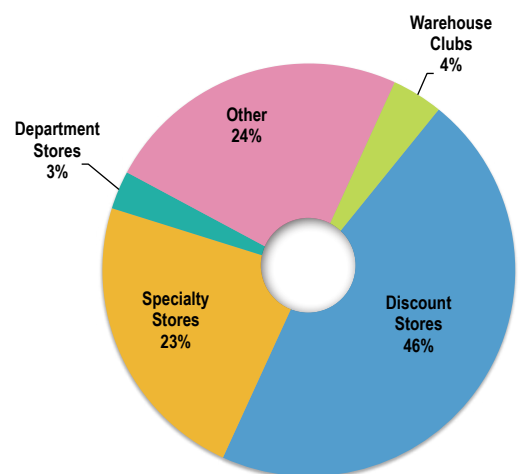
Retail Dollar Sales  
(in millions)\*



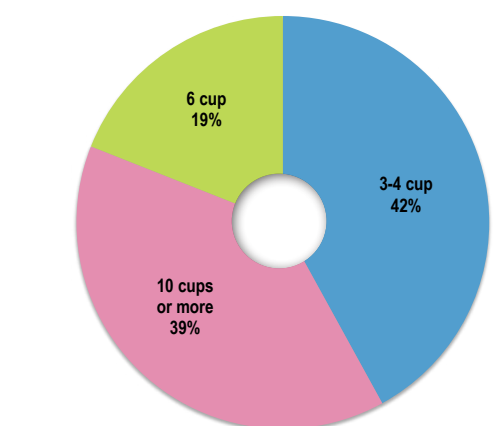
Retail Unit Sales  
(in millions)\*



2019 Retail Dollar Share by Channel\*



Unit Share by Cup Capacity\*







## Discover the best-selling rice cookers on the market

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# Healthy Options

Wellness-oriented suppliers release range of products to support and motivate consumers' healthy living goals.

## SOURCE PRO DIRECT

A new lithium-battery-powered, rechargeable Westinghouse portable air purifier from Source Pro Direct debuts for home and personal use with patented NCCO (Nano-Confined Catalytic Oxidation) technology designed to remove airborne allergens, viruses, bacteria, total volatile organic compounds, smoke and odors without releasing toxins.



## GELPRO

The GelPro Elite Comfort Mat, pictured in woven, features a ¾-inch thick core of the brand's proprietary gel and "energy-return" foam. The Elite series offers reinforced beveled edges, a slip-resistant bottom and a stain-resistant top surface constructed with non-toxic polyurethane.

## IDEAVILLAGE

New Copper Fit easy-on-and-off compression socks from IdeaVillage are infused with CBD oil, said by the company to provide an effective, convenient, economical and mess-free alternative to using therapeutic lotions and creams with Copper Fit compression products.



## METAL WARE

The latest Nesco Snackmaster Junior Dehydrator from Metal Ware is a compact unit designed to process smaller batches of fruit chips, jerky, herbs and other dried foods. Equipped with a digital timer and temperature knobs, the new model offers a sleek look in "Classic Blue."



## ESSICK AIR

The AirCare Horizon series of console evaporative humidifiers from Essick Air deliver whole-house humidification up to 3,700 square feet for as many as 45 hours on a single fill. The digitally controlled series includes modern wood-tone finishes.



## CAPITAL BRANDS

The NutriBullet Blender Combo from Capital Brands lets consumers switch easily between 24- and 30-ounce single-serving cups and a 64-ounce pitcher. The 1,200-watt unit features multiple speeds, a pulse function and an extractor blade.

## ZOJIRUSHI

The Zojirushi Micom NS-TSC series rice cookers come with a steaming basket that features micro computerized Fuzzy logic technology and menu settings for white/sushi rice, mixed rice, porridge, sweet rice, brown rice, cake, steam and quick cooking.





## Drug Chains

*continued from page 22*

Walgreens private label health and beauty products.

In a CVS conference call for the first quarter, in this case, ended March 31, Larry Merlo, the company's CEO, said online activities including with the company's convenience clinic operations, had taken off in the coronavirus crisis.

"We've achieved higher levels of engagement across our digital assets in Q1, a trend which began in January and accelerated with COVID-19," Merlo said. "And let me provide you a few examples. Utilization of telemedicine for virtual visits through MinuteClinic is up about 600% compared to Q1 '19. Retail prescription home delivery is up more than 1,000%. Additionally, we saw a fourfold increase in the number of consumers adding front store items to their prescription deliveries; let's call it the front store attachment rate."

He added that front store sales had taken off as consumers confronted the coronavirus spread. Front store revenues increased 8.5% in the quarter building on the 2% gain that occurred before the COVID-19 related purchasing began. Front-end comps grew 8% in the period.

In the fourth quarter, ended February 29, Rite Aid saw front-end comps gain 1.5% and digital sales grow 28%, Matt Schroeder, the company's CFO

said in the related conference call.

In contrast, March front end comps jumped 33%, with sales moderating in April.

As with some other retail channels, drug chains were able to re-engage with consumers during the COVID-19 outbreak including online, which is likely to be a first for many customers. As such, drug chains have been given an opportunity to become higher profile community institutions and may even have been able to make a stronger case for themselves as prescription providers given that supermarkets and supercenters that fill scripts were heavily used and could be difficult to access in the coronavirus crisis.

Drug chains continue to reconfigure their front end, non-prescription sales, which sometimes seems to be an endless process, but the larger health-related initiatives they are pursuing are likely to favor those housewares and related home products that can position themselves in the wellness vein, as candles and aromatherapy electrics have managed along with products ranging from fitness monitors to massage products have done.

However, keep in mind that the definition of wellness is expanding to include the mind, so products such as beauty tools that have given up space in some cases may see a rebound, and cleaning products, so deliberately sought in the coronavirus crisis, may become more important as well. **HWB**



**RIGHT:** Walgreens continues to devote high-profile space to seasonal products.

**BELOW:** Walgreens' seasonal product lineup recently included electric grills;



**RIGHT:** Rite Aid prominently displays health monitors, making a statement about the chain's wellness emphasis

**FAR RIGHT:** Massagers and other soothing products get their own designated position at Rite Aid.





# Home & Small Office Furniture Report



Sauder has focused on adding task-supporting furniture to collections, with L-desks being a key item.

## Home Office Lifestyle Trends Accelerated As Pandemic Spread

By Mike Duff  
Executive Editor

NEW YORK— The home and small office furniture segment is going through a metamorphosis of sorts, one that has been accelerated by the coronavirus pandemic in the U.S. but that has its roots in consumer lifestyle transitions and professional workstyle trans-

formations that have been progressing for a generation. The excitement that has driven the home and small office segment over the past few months has been evident, and HOMEWORLD BUSINESS®, in research including on and off the record interviews with retailers and vendors, has traced developments that identify how the COVID-19 crisis has acted as a catalyst that has propelled trends in the sector and that signal

where developments may lead over the next few years. Much of the change in how consumers approach their small and home office organization has been facilitated by advances in electronics that have given people a greater ability to communicate and share data, as well as in audio, image and video technology that allows remote workers access to more sophisticated professional applications. Those working from places such as home and small commercial and satellite offices have become enabled to an extent that may have been thought impossible a generation ago. In the course of the COVID-19 outbreak, people who work in many if not most office functions, and even in jobs where personal interactions and transactions used to seem crucial, have built on know-how they’ve accumulated to switch from actual to virtual spaces, and at a pace that, under normal circumstances, might have taken a decade. Now, the personal and professional realities are immersed in an unintended experiment that will determine how and what work can be accomplished at home and other remote locations as readily or even more readily than can be performed in a traditional office. Consumer purchasing patterns as demonstrated in the coronavirus crisis support the idea that consumers believe they’ll be doing more work at home. The tremendous run on office products that occurred across mass-market retail as coronavirus-prompted government-mandated restrictions on consumer movement and the store retail operations was certain evidence of consumers preparing to work from home in a more thorough manner. However, given the range and depth of purchasing, the demand surge also affirmed that consumers believed preparing the home for additional professional and, in many cases, scholastic endeavors was an investment in the future.

*continued on page 42*





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## Home Office

*continued from page 40*

At the same time, the market was adjusting to a new reality, and not without difficulty.

In late February and early March, as consumers faced the reality that workplaces, schools and stores would be closing or restricting access as a means of suppressing the COVID-19 pandemic, an Amazon spokesperson identified office products, with desks and chairs prominent among them, as seeing rapidly increasing sales.

During Amazon's first quarter conference call, Brian Olsavsky, Amazon's CFO, noted, "In early March, we experienced a major surge in customer demand. Particularly for household staples and other essential products, across categories such as health, and personal care, groceries and even home office supplies. This large demand spike created major challenges in our operations network."

Amazon began to shift its focus to essential needs products, including household necessities and cleaning items, limiting the ability of suppliers focused on other goods to replenish supplies in its fulfillment system. Amazon continued to allow purchasing from existing inventory, and those suppliers who could drop ship orders themselves, which included most major ready-to-assemble furniture producers, kept addressing consumer demand. Amazon also changed the algorithms on its site so that, in searches, the company's marketplace and other customers who could deliver products more quickly than it could out of the stressed fulfillment network came up higher in the results.

Although the story was pretty much the same among online-focused retailers, who gained as store closures became more common in late winter and early spring, the details about how home office fared were somewhat different from one case to another.

Niraj Shah, in Wayfair's first quarter conference call, said mid-March to mid-April, when customers were settling down under shelter at home restrictions, saw home office sales build rapidly but not alone, as cookware and kitchen appliances, children's furniture and play items also took off. Sales demonstrated that consumers were beginning to reconstitute homes, initiating projects to align household spaces such as home office with new or more intense uses.

Although a number of product categories began to



LumiSource can offer often compact workstations in modern looks.

accelerate as March shifted into April, some took off earlier than others.

"These are ones you associate with staying at home and working at home, and the kids being at home, home office, and cooking at home, home office, kitchen, large appliances, small electrics," Shah said.

He also identified storage and organization, children's playroom, children's furniture and outdoor recreation as early beneficiaries of consumer restrictions. Even by the time of the conference call in early May, and as other Wayfair product categories gained, those that took off early continued to sell at a significantly faster rate year over year. What was happening in Wayfair's consumer business was also evident in its operations serving interior designers and related professionals.

Jonathan Johnson, Overstock CEO, said during a first quarter conference call on April 30 that in the period from March 13 through 31, sales grew in key categories as consumers started focusing on making their homes more functional as shopping and moving restrictions proliferated.

"We saw over 100% growth in office furniture, outdoor play equipment like swing sets and exercise equipment," he said. "That growth accelerated as the stay at home mandate reached the entire country by April 1. Since then we've seen accelerated growth in home furnishing as people have shifted their shopping behavior from brick and mortar to online in response to the current restrictions. As a result, year-over-year sales in April are up over 120%."

As he compared shopper behavior in spring to what the post-coronavirus days might bring, Johnson noted, "We've seen a meaningful increase in new customers this year particularly in April. We can see that new customer growth in April alone increased nearly 250% versus the year-ago period. These new customers demographically mirror our existing customer base. Our brand values and our value proposition resonate with them evidenced by demand being almost entirely from home furnishings. Things like area rugs, office furniture, patio, beds and other home related items. These are exactly what people are buying. As a percentage of sales, home goods now represent 87% of the total. Given what they're buying, we don't believe these new customers are just one-time

*continued on page 46*

## Amazon Investing In Home Office Furniture Growth

**NEW YORK**— Amazon is investing in its own furniture brands, making them a point of advantage when it comes to the promotion of mass-market furniture, and home office has become a critical part of that, especially recently.

Coresight Research pointed out that the company now identifies 111 own-brands that sell through its site. Of those, 33 have more than 100 available items, with Rivet, the company's mid-century furnishings line being one. In fact, at 2,177 items on Amazon, Rivet comes in second in product portfolio terms after AmazonBasics, which offers 4,152 items, but before AmazonEssentials, which is focused on apparel and offers 2,092 items. AmazonBasics offers a range of products with furniture, including office furniture, represented.

Rivet offers a broad assortment of home office products ranging from desks to storage items to chairs to task lamps with some emphasis on small-space products. Beyond that, Amazon's other furnishings private label, Stone & Beam, includes 243 items.

Stone & Beam, a somewhat upmarket casual traditional line with cottage, modern and industrial influences, also carries a full range of office furnishings including desks, chairs, lamps and storage pieces.

In an interesting note, during mid-May, the landing page for both the Rivet and Stone & Beam brands had home office furniture in a top featured spot. The Rivet page had the home office click-through box placed just below the uppermost flags explaining the brand and style, and next to the slot of dining furniture introductions in the brand, while home office products occupied the shop by category slot for Stone & Beam. —Mike Duff



Amazon's Rivet brand offers a range of home office furniture.



Bush is bridging its residential and commercial operations to offer new options for the remote home office worker.





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## Interior Designers Seeing More Home Office Trends As Workers Transition

NEW YORK— Interior designers working before and even through the COVID-19 crisis, even if remotely, are among those who have seen interest in home office installation and upgrades as they help clients deal with remote work and school challenges.

Dan Crepps, Wayfair Professional general manager of interior design, said the professionals who use its services shifted pretty much in step with the mass market to support people transitioning to home-based labor and study as the coronavirus pandemic spread across the U.S.

“In early March, as many businesses transitioned to working from home, Wayfair Professional saw interior designers shift focus to home offices and organization,” he noted. “While the category of home office has always performed well with interior design clients, it saw double-digit growth in key categories during March and April as designers worked to provide their clients with dedicated work spaces that foster productivity while working remotely.”

Crepps said that desks, filing cabinets and bookshelves saw the greatest sales gains, with office sets including those items also experiencing a notable rise in demand, along with other product segments.

“With many Americans on their second or third month of working from home, Wayfair Professional is observing that clients are optimizing their living spaces in other areas of the home,” he said. “In more recent weeks, interior designers have broadened their remote projects, driving higher demand in outdoor, lighting, upholstered furniture and

more. Across outdoor spaces specifically, designers have been working with clients to extend the comfort of their indoor living aesthetic to the outdoors, with deep-set patio couches, earth-toned rugs, vertical gardens, cement fire pits and more.”

In the interior design context, home office trends as observed by Wayfair Professional already were tending towards styles that can serve to enhance the function and aesthetics of shoppers crowding work into the residential environment.

“Glass-top desks and all-white desks have been popular, which has remained relatively consistent over time” Crepps said. “In smaller spaces, clear console desks and foldaway or wall-mounted desks have seen an increase in demand as they occupy less space and are often multi-functional, characteristics that clients are looking for to quickly solve their recent work from home needs. Filing cabinets and bookshelves have been of particular importance in dedicated home offices as clients looked to organize their space under new working conditions and with extended time being spent working from home.”

Storage for task-related materials and office supplies can help consumers in remote settings remain organized, reduce clutter and end a day or a week neatly, said Crepps.

Many home office pieces have multiple purposes.

“Bookshelves have been efficient, multi-purpose pieces as they also provide space for personal items, framed photos, and decor, to add a personal touch to a home office,” he pointed out.

Liz Morgan, creative director of JHL Designs, Portland, OR, said that the company’s clients value flexibility, such as the ability to move around during the day, but they also want a space where they feel comfortable, so even in relatively open environments, they want to set boundaries both psychological, with the use of noise cancelling headphones, and physical, by delimiting spaces through the use of barriers or the creation of designated spaces, even if only in a corner or niche. People want to feel secure, she said, and not feel, for instance, that no one might come up or circle behind them as they work.

Simple desks may suit many, particularly younger consumers, but that doesn’t mean full home offices have disappeared. Some, especially older and perhaps more senior, home workers want a room lined with books, heavy with storage or arranged to accommodate visiting clients and colleagues. However, even in situations where storage is a major consideration, as with architects and engineers who work with blueprints, more of what they do takes place digitally, so functionality is important. Yet functionality, in this case, may just mean the ability to mount a full-sized monitor to supplement a laptop screen and provide access to electrical connections.

At the same time, aesthetics remain important, not only in terms of consistency within the household but in creating lighter, brighter, more natural workspaces with soothing colors such as

Functionality and style are playing a role as consumers upgrade their home offices.



“People know that you can make the home office space on your own with any budget.”

—Liz Morgan,  
JHL Designs

blue and green, and even houseplants.

Moreover, consumers, who generally have more knowledge of domestic design and working remotely today than would have been the case 10 or 15 years ago, and who lately have been looking to set up household workspaces quickly, recognize they can make home offices more functional and personal as they establish routines.

“People know that you can make the space on your own with any budget,” Morgan said. “People who find they are working from home now may buy a desk for \$99, but they also may find it’s worth something to get a nicer piece of furniture they can have for 10 years or longer. When you amortize that, it can be totally worth spending the money.”

Going forward, home office furniture purchasers, whether working with interior designers or on their own, will probably rethink and revisit initial purchases made under pressure— and in circumstances where they had to address an immediate need in a market where inventory has been eroded by heavy demand— as they recognize the value of function and style that suits their specific working challenges.

“The solutions will probably get more sophisticated as people are beta-testing ideas,” Morgan said.

—Mike Duff

Wayfair Professional has reported an uptick in consumers optimizing their home offices.





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for **DESKS** and **HOME OFFICES**



With so many working from home, the demand for proper workspaces are in great demand even when space is limited.

Crafted in North America, Whalen's Drop-Lid Desk is the ideal solution when space is limited.



Additional finishes available.







Twin Star workstations are fully capable for the remote office worker whether in a dedicated space or elsewhere in the home.

## Home Office

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customers. Overstock retail is well positioned to capture and convert the shifting online home furnishing traffic. We're providing products people need and enabling them to buy from the safety of their homes."

E-commerce gained all around in the COVID-19 crisis. Lamps Plus had to lock up its 36 stores as the coronavirus crisis hit, with store reopenings beginning in early May, but it kept selling on its larger digital platform.

Despite its stores being closed, Dennis Swanson, Lamps Plus founder and CEO, told *HomeWorld Business*, "Our sales grew double digits during the quarantine."

Workspace was a part of the home Lamps Plus customers wanted to fit out as stay at home appeals began, although the company also saw action in furnishings related to comfort.

"The areas of customer homes with the most spending have been home office, kitchen and outdoor," he said.

Walmart's business in home office, including in household essentials, food and other products required to keep a household working and cozy in the COVID-19 pandemic was almost too good. Doug McMillon, Walmart's CEO, said in a May 19 conference call, "Items such as laptops, office chairs and fabric have been cleared out in some of our stores and online."

Of course, Walmart stores remained open through the stay-at-home period, even if it had to restrict the number of shoppers in its buildings to maintain social distancing. In its first quarter conference call, Target CEO Brian Cornell said that office products not only boosted furnishings sales but electronics as well.

Some retail channels have benefited from the COVID-19 outbreak because an essential-business designation allowed them to keep serving consumers even as other sectors suffered closure orders. In food retailing, supermarkets and warehouse clubs got a boost not only in terms of sales but also because consumers essentially familiarized themselves with their current array of products and services during shopping restrictions, some of which they might never have used otherwise. In a similar vein, office su-

perstores could see longer term benefits from the fact they were allowed to remain open.

Gerry Smith, Office Depot CEO, told a first quarter conference call audience that, although the effect on operations of the coronavirus outbreak was mixed, hurting demand in the business to business side of the operation, it did push consumer sales significantly, with demand for essential products such as cleaning supplies, technology, and home office products advancing in brick and mortar and the company's digital store. The heightened demand in those segment products was behind a 2% increase in retail division comparable sales for the quarter, versus the year-previous period. The number may not seem huge, but the quarter ended March 28, only partly through the period of greatest consumer restrictions, and would include consumers and professionals who may have little awareness of the various services office superstores offer today, which they may want to employ as they conduct more work at home.

Although the pandemic accelerated trends, home and, in many cases, small business offices have been changing since the 1990s as the notion of needing a big desk with expansive drawer storage and an imposing silhouette began giving way to more functional thinking. The advent of the personal then the laptop computer drove the trend. The evolution of home lifestyles, and office workstyles, guided it. Change hasn't been linear but, rather, has proceeded as professionals and consumers both tried new things when technology and social acceptance permitted. Over time, the main home office gave way to temporary workplaces that could function for different purposes. Writing tables that could support someone doing a little work but could function as a game station and even a buffet when company was over became popular. On the professional front, open office plans and shared space created a need for workstations that could support various demands for personal and group work, or even multiple users. At the same time, the proliferation of professional and personal electronics prompted greater integration between workstation and digital devices.

Even as coronavirus-related restrictions to movement and shopping ramped up, Euromonitor detected the surge in home office product purchasing. In

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## Technavio Study Suggests Mass Opportunity In Commercial Furniture

**NEW YORK**— In its studies, market research firm Technavio suggested that the mass market may find additional opportunity in commercial and smart furniture.

Even before the coronavirus pandemic, Technavio, in a research analysis, said it expected the commercial office furniture business in the U.S. to add \$5.64 billion in sales in the period between 2019 and 2023.

The market research firm anticipated a 5.21% growth rate in 2020 and a compound annual growth rate of 6% with two-fifths of the growth to come from seating.

In a report updated as the COVID-19 pandemic began to rattle the U.S. retail sector, the market research firm maintained its CAGR figure but predicted incremental growth of \$22.32 billion.

Other segments Technavio expected to grow at a faster rate than that for the category itself are table, system, storage unit and file, and overhead bins.

The rise in the number of business start-ups is a primary growth driver for the office furniture market in the U.S., Technavio noted. Rising support for start-ups from the U.S. government should translate into an increased number of start-ups operating in the country, which will, in turn, drive office furniture market growth in this region. In addition, the rise of online furniture retailing also is driving sales of office furniture, Technavio pointed out.

Although the analysis is for the commercial market, many mass market retailers, particularly but not limited to Ikea, office superstores

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Bestar's adjustable height desk is available through Costco.com.



# Dining tables are best for dining... **STYLISH and FUNCTIONAL SOLUTIONS** for **DESKS and HOME OFFICES**



With so many working from home, the demand for proper workspaces are in great demand.

The versatile Densen office set includes a standard desk on casters and a stand-up desk with integrated file drawer and power center.



To save valuable space in the home, the standard desk can be used and stored under the stand-up desk.





Wayfair's double desk demonstrates how retailers are proposing home office solutions in their online merchandising.



## Home Office

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its March Passport report, the market research firm stated that the short-term jump on purchasing should level off medium term, especially as the economy copes with, then begins to emerge from recession. At that point, Euromonitor expects a consumer reset and reevaluation of how remote workers want to address home office needs, including exploring options such as furniture rental. In the report, "How Will Consumer Markets Evolve After Coronavirus?," Euromonitor noted that wellbeing would be an increased consideration for consumers working and entertaining at home. The observation is consistent with the consumer desire for personally satisfying aesthetics and ergonomic furnishings.

### Home Office Surges

Although the surge in home office product sales that began late this winter was extraordinary it isn't altogether unprecedented. Some trends may have gone out the window as vendor and retailer inventories emptied and consumers took what they could get, but, in most cases, the same product developments that have attracted consumer attention recently continued to generate demand.

"While there is definitely a surge in home office needs, we have been watching a steady uptick over the last several years and our current assortment reflects this," said Joy Raccagno-Bond, marketing direct for the Dorel Industries Ameriwood Home brand. "The desire for flex-space living items has increased as living rooms and bedrooms double as home offices and classrooms. Creating collections to work nicely together and provide a seamless look is exactly what many families are turning to. More than ever home is our sanctuary, and we strive to make it a beautiful, functional and affordable place to shelter."

In preparation for the post-coronavirus future, the Ameriwood Home lineup will emphasize a holistic approach to home office.

"Looking forward, we believe that a new normal within the household will be having a designated workspace, for adults and children alike," Raccagno-Bond said. "Whether that is a specific office space or updating your coffee table to a lift-top coffee table, we can provide ei-

ther. There are often, if not always, several of these items included in our collections, and we plan to continue growing these categories."

At Bush Industries, dealing with the coronavirus outbreak has been a complex effort, given it has a residential and commercial business with manufacturing resources it counts on in the U.S. and Canada, since its merger with Bestar, as well as Asia. The company had to manage its trans-Pacific supply chain as impacted by COVID-19 then its North American manufacturing as coronavirus caused problems closer to home. As well as keeping product moving to customers, office furniture demand took off, said Mark Weppner, svp/marketing, design and engineering, but Bush recognized that, although it was experiencing something unprecedented, the company had both residential and commercial product experience to make the most of it. He said that professionals and office workers who suddenly had to cope with movement restrictions also realized that modern technology provides the means to work from home full time more easily. However, at the same time, remote work requires sufficiently functioning hardware, WiFi, electrical connections and other gear including furnishings items that provide, for instance, secure storage.

Yet while they could address fundamental home office needs, Bush products also addressed another critical concern. As consumers have, for the past decade, shifted their purchasing of task-related furniture from utilitarian items meant for the basement to pieces that could physically and aesthetically fit into the home, the company has built its ability to meet consumer interior design expectations. Commercial clients have, at the same time, become more conscious of style and interior fashion, which has prompted Bush to provide those customers more designs and finishes.

At the moment, Weppner said, Bush is watching to see how the initial rush to get some kind of office furniture for the home translates as conditions evolve.

"Going forward, we predict a continued increase in home office furniture orders," he said. "Businesses and employees came up with quick solutions for their current environments, but will they go back to the office full-time, part-time or continue to work from home for good? Real estate forecasts show higher commercial vacancies

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## Technavio Study

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and Amazon, serve the business market informally or formally, particularly when it comes to small, often new businesses. Furnishings for professionals represent an opportunity for mass market retailers and sellers, as they can address the needs of specific segments of the commercial market, especially small business, with familiar brands and shopping formats. Many of those retailers and vendors are developing initiatives to grab a piece of that growing market, and they could try additional dedicated efforts as to product development and marketing relatively inexpensively by building off existing product development and using targeted online marketing, as is beginning to happen.

A segment of the office furniture business that offers opportunity is smart office. Technavio expects smart office to grow at a 20% CAGR, advancing by \$266.6 million from 2019 to 2024, with this year's growth estimated at 19.31%. North America was the largest smart office furniture market in 2019, and the region offers growth opportunities during the forecast period, the market research firm stated, based on high income, high urbanization and demand for luxury and premium office furniture. More than 44% of the market's growth will originate from North America.

Advancement in connectivity technologies is a main driving force in smart office furniture market growth, with Bluetooth, Wi-Fi, and IoT all playing a role in facilitating adoption of various smart office furniture products such as smart desks, smart tables and smart chairs. A number of vendors today are developing smart furniture products with advanced connectivity technologies, with Steelcase, for example, collaborating with Sprint and Ericsson to test how 5G will impact offices by deploying Sprint's 5G service in its Atlanta WorkLife Center.

However, the umbrella of smart home also includes feature rich standing desks and chairs that adapt to user positions to enhance ergonomic functions, which already sell through the mass market. The rapid transitioning of adjustable desks with features such as electric-motor motion and built in power stations from the pricier commercial to more affordable mass-market sector demonstrates that opportunities to make further inroads in the market should arise in the short to mid-term. —Mike Duff

OSP's gaming desk highlights the versatility of some desks aimed at both the home office user and the dedicated gamer.





Cramped kitchen counters...  
**STYLISH and FUNCTIONAL SOLUTIONS**  
for **DESKS and HOME OFFICES**



With so many working from home, the demand for proper workspaces are in great demand.

The Axon Office Collection offers contemporary style and practicality.

Left: Axon Desk with drawer and perfectly matching Gas-Lift Office Chair.



Above: Axon Bookcase with Drawer

Below: Axon 2-Drawer File can also be stowed under desk







Linon Powell sees that consumers want to make home office conform to the personal, even whimsical, home décor choices.

## Home Office

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as leases come up and businesses realize they don't need as much office space. They're more likely to invest in permanent, commercial-grade home offices for their employees at that point. We did not miss a beat working from home and believe a lot of companies with appropriate workstations and technology feel the same way."

Consumers who are learning what they need to do their jobs at home now have to weigh what kind of investment they should make in their home offices.

"Whether you're an executive or an intern, we've been working from home long enough now that we know what our workstation needs are," he said. "Everyone's home is different. For some the home office is an entire room; for others it's a corner of the bedroom. It's not a one-size-fits-all approach. If you're in a situation where you're going to be working from home long-term or permanently, make sure your team is set up for success with furniture that fits their space."

As consumer work on the technical demands of working at home, they are looking at how they can physically accommodate what's needed in the home footprint, even as they deal with the aesthetic issues. In an interesting twist, developments on the commercial end, including expansion of finishes and development of seating that exactly matches desks, now are helping Bush consider how it should approach product going forward as it looks to satisfy professional requirements as they are applied to the home space. The function and aesthetics approach Bush has taken in the commercial business are generating sales to those working from home who want for professional quality products.

To drive home the benefits its products offer, Bush has developed marketing that puts products in front of the consumer in the best light, no matter which side of the business.

"We're taking our commercial-grade products and instead of showing them in a business environment, we're now rendering them in home settings," he said. "We want to help our customers imagine our furniture in their homes because of the style and then also sell

businesses on the ANSI/BIFMA quality and safety. Once companies get a moment to breathe, they'll understand it's still important to provide safe and sturdy desks, bookcases and file cabinets, and ergonomically correct chairs for their employees in their own homes. OSHA safety issues and workers compensation liability still apply. For these reasons, we think work from home furniture buying is really just beginning."

Weppner said that coffee tables with adjustable lift-tops had seen significant demand as people were forced to find ways to labor from home, but he pointed out that products and spaces that can temporarily support laptop and other device use aren't long-term solutions for the remote worker.

As the company considers ways to integrate commercial-grade Bush Business Furniture into its consumer presentation, Weppner said the company doesn't want to promote it as resimercial, as the designation has more to do with design and aesthetics than it does with addressing OSHA and ANSI BIFMA commercial standards. Rather, Bush is working on furniture that has BBF construction advantages but also conforms stylistically and proportionately into a household footprint. In effect, Bush is creating merchandise to suit an emerging third market, as Weppner put it, for the growing work-at-home market. Commercial quality furniture already appeals to some professionals in businesses where work-at-home offices have long been common, but now it could appeal to customer service employees who, for the first time, have to take care of business remotely.

Weppner said people now working at home, often in conditions not conducive to creating sprawling office spaces, represent an opportunity for Bush in that it has experience in what people need to do their jobs and in refining products to meet changing trends in the consumer marketplace. As they've looked to purchase to meet immediate needs, a broader range of consumers has engaged with Bush. As a result, the company has the chance to apply experience and creativity to serve new customers who will be assembling and updating home office spaces as their working conditions evolve.

Weppner said Bush is looking forward to a new population who will be working from home and who will need creative solutions for a very small footprint. He expects that a lot of growth will come from the need for highly efficient, small footprint, productive office spaces. To create them, he said, remote workers will look for products that are safe and durable.

Lisa Cody, svp/marketing at Twin Star Home, said the company has seen big gains in its home office product line including the company's adjustable sit/stand desks and accessory pieces. Twin Star has been fortunate, she noted, because it has furniture items that have a more traditional workspace design for those who prefer to build more traditional home offices, but the company also developed a large proportion of its product line to be both multi-function and multi-purpose. Its sit/stand desks can offer multiple benefits, such as charging options, that make them first-class workstations but also can fit in multiple rooms of a house. People now working and studying at home recognize that they may be doing more of

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Dorel is offering two office related collections under the Bridgeport brand.



## Dorel Positions Relunched Bridgeport Office Collection

NEW YORK— Dorel Business, supplier of office, lobby and hospitality furniture, has relaunched Bridgeport, with a focus on function, quality and design in commercial products that will give parent Dorel Industries an even greater depth in business-oriented products that cross from the personal to the professional.

With Bridgeport, Dorel is addressing what might be considered a gap in the marketplace for customers who want products that can stand up to commercial use but also reflect up-to-date style at a value.

Bryan Hollingsworth, Bridgeport business development manager, said, "The target audience is schools, government, independent office dealers, the hospitality industry, the end user that doesn't go to a retail store to buy products but uses catalogs like Grainger."

The Dorel Industries division will carry a product line that includes office chairs and desks, but extends to various other seating, tables, reception furnishings under two sub-categories, Essentials and Commercial. Essentials products range from residential to commercial in quality, offered at a low to mid-pricepoints. Dorel developed the product line to serve family-operated businesses and similar smaller enterprises. The Commercial products are commercially rated and designed for high-traffic and commercial environments, offered in the mid to high pricepoint range.

Dorel Business will provide Bridgeport brand products to dealers and business distributors including but not limited to furniture dealers, office products dealers, school supply dealers, industrial distributors, architects, contract furniture dealers, government purchasing agents, universities and colleges, and office furniture wholesalers.

Dorel provides a legacy in business-oriented products as well as corporate resources that will support and advance the Bridgeport brand. As applied, Hollingsworth said, design standards for the brand render full-time equipment for people who need products that work for them

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Walker Edison is among the vendors that have reported a surge in home office sales, such as small space living options.

## Home Office

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that in the future as well, but also understand that they don't have a space they want to dedicate to full-time home office use. As a result, they have to consider how home office products suit the spaces they occupy and the lifestyle they favor.

Twin Star is doubling down on its data gathering and analysis functions, watching what consumers are doing week in and week out as they continue to fully figure out just what working at home means. The efforts don't start at traditional market research but include reviewing what consumers are doing in social media to see what they're interested in purchasing and how they stage products at home once they buy them. It's evident, Cody observed, that some consumers want more complete home office setups, but she also noted that consumers still want or need to work in swing spaces, particularly when households have more than one person engaged in daily tasks at home. Under those conditions, they may prefer products that they can use for more than one purpose, as has been the case with simple and writing tables recently, but that are serviceable enough in form and function to stand up to a complete workweek.

Going forward, Twin-Star is going to keep close tabs on consumers to see how the trends that have been occurring carry forward as they decide just what they need to work from home in the post-coronavirus environment. She pointed to corporate initiatives that provide workers with allowances to set up remote offices as an example of what kind of developments may drive home and small office purchasing. Evidence exists that what has happened as consumers quickly adjusted to working and schooling at home may evolve into a new phase of home office spending, subsidized or not.

"These are dynamic times," Cody said. "As people are trying to navigate through the uncertainty, they

are nesting at home. We want to make sure we are playing a relevant role in the way we connect with consumers through our products as well as our content. Right now, understanding their needs and mindset is more important than ever. It's all about listening to the voice of the consumer and reacting quickly."

Across the board, vendors have seen the home office segment take off as a key beneficiary of the coronavirus shift to remote working. Walker Edison spokesperson Brittany Smart said, "Our home office category has done extremely well during this time. We have seen sales in this category of 350% more than we would typically see during March and April."

## Lessons Learned

The lessons mass-market vendors have learned about changes in how consumers view home office have served them in good stead in the coronavirus crisis. They understand that consumers have specific needs they want addressed but weigh purchases based on a variety of factors. They want function, on the one hand, particularly as to ensuring they can work with electronics effectively, but they are looking at ancillary to address related concerns such as wellness, which involves products such as adjustable sit/stand desks and quality, ergonomic seating. Yet, simultaneously, consumers aren't afraid to repurpose products. Crafting furniture became more popular for its dedicated purpose, especially as users discovered they peruse online videos that help them accomplish more elaborate projects. However, some professionals who like lots of open storage recognized craft desks as an alternative to traditional workstations. Gaming desks became not only a place to play but also to view, but also to support the array of electronics some remote workers need to do their jobs.

Recent products developed under the OSP brand demonstrate how vendors have been developing products that are function-specific even if today's consumer may not use them exactly as intended.

The feature-rich Glitch Battlestation Gaming Desk, under the Designlab by OSP Furniture designation, incorporates a raised monitor shelf for ideal viewing position, 3-port magnetic smart power USB hub, power-strip bracket and cable management, and a steel frame. The desk also offers Bluetooth controlled RGB LED lights for optimum game immersion, but OSP Home identified it as multifunctional and fitting for use as an office desk for at least some potential buyers who just may not activate the LED lights.

In a different approach to task furniture, OSP Home's the Ravel Crafting Stand-up Desk With Pull-out Storage offers a 42-standing height for comfort in vertical activity, a 48-inch durable work surface, an accessible desktop power port, large pull-out storage cart that keeps supplies within reach and, as an accessory item, a 30-inch stool. The construction makes the desk handy for crafting but also appropriate for office work.

In some cases, it's a matter of recasting a traditional product to suit today's lifestyles. L-desks faded a bit a few years ago as consumers looked to build smaller or flexible workspaces, but they've made a comeback as mass-market furniture vendors have developed a

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## Dorel Bridgeport

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day in and day out.

"The chairs are designed for people who sit eight hours a day," he said by way of example. "It's not that a retail product is necessarily bad, but it is not designed for that."

Hollingsworth said Dorel developed Bridgeport as an extension of the resimercial furnishings idea that has been gaining steam in the market. The brand is meant not just to fill in gaps but extend from the residential side, where it takes a lot of inspiration, into the commercial side, where it draws its structural standards.

Whether the customer is a family business looking to establish a professional office environment, or a grade school seeking tables that suit schoolwork, crafting and games, Bridgeport can provide products that suit expectations. The evolution of the work, school, hospitality and lobby furnishings continues, and the momentum may experience acceleration due to circumstances surrounding the COVID-19 outbreak. Whatever the cause, Hollingsworth said, the conditions that influence the commercial furniture market have changed, and Dorel is looking to address that reality with Bridgeport, including as experienced in the office category.

"We have a different workforce with different expectations," he said.

Indeed, one area of specific focus for Bridgeport is the big and tall segment of the office market. Not only are big and tall consumers looking for scaled up products, Hollingsworth pointed out, but many people in the mid-range of height and girth like them for the extra comfort they find in the larger construction. Bridgeport can deliver big and tall products with prevailing fashion than is often the case, marrying preference and style.

Hollingsworth noted that Bridgeport, although a limited product line, will also act as a part of the organization where ideas can travel from commercial to residential and back again, so that the company overall can bring its resources to bear at a time when workstyles are changing substantially and, at times, quickly in response to new challenges and opportunities.

— Mike Duff



Dorel's business division also offers a Bridgeport school furnishings line.





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## Home Office

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broader range of products in different proportions. A studio apartment dweller could accomplish a full day's work with the right scaled down but feature rich L-desks incorporating, for example swing-out returns, not to mention low-back office chairs and wheeled files that could slip under the core desk when not in use.

Sauder Woodworking has been a driver in the L-desk revival. It's recently previewed Willow Place prototype collection, featuring a clean and contemporary/transitional aesthetic for today's home fashion-conscious consumer with an L-desk among the dozen items in a group that includes bedroom, home office and living room furniture. As it realizes that consumers want home office choices, Sauder hasn't just included single desks in its recently developed and expanded product collections but at times more than one piece that supports electronic or other secondary uses, such as the adjustable riser top on the Willow Place coffee table. Overall, Sauder is marrying trending style to evolving consumer demand for function.

One vendor noted that the almost desperate demand for functional professional workstations likely played a role in the surge of gaming desk sales during the peak of the coronavirus crisis. Still, that doesn't mean consumers have ignored the purpose as intended. As multiple retailers noted in comments on first quarter results, gaming-related sales in general jumped as stay at home restrictions extended into spring.

In a larger sense, what happened to home office and some other categories as the COVID-19 pandemic hit has been good for mass-market furniture retailers and vendors. Mass-market retailers and vendors generally noted that their furniture sales gained in the crisis across the board. In some cases, items that consumers could repurpose for use as home offices got a lift including casual dining, which offers products that can substitute at need or in preference for more traditional workstations.

LumiSource has recently featured products consumers can use to build relatively compact home offices with clean modern looks enhanced by a touch of glam. The Folio Desk, Folia Corner Desk and Folio Bookcase, for instance, pair gold metal and white wood.

Aesthetics are critical. The Linon Powell Group has been pairing small, simple but stylized desks with its pop-

ular line of rolling accent-style office chairs to create attractive, sometimes whimsical home office workstations, with its Draper office chairs.

Linon Powell, said merchandising manager Morgan March, had "a lot of success selling home office during this quarantine and we have a few new styles already selling. Our Draper office chairs do well, especially the new novelty patterns."

It should be noted that products across the home office horizon benefited from the coronavirus-related surge.

"We have been seeing increases in the desk lamp business since the beginning of this whole situation," said Amanda Schaak, Adesso product development and marketing coordinator. "People are setting up their home offices and we are definitely seeing the demand there. We have seen floor lamps pick up recently as well. So our online business is doing well."

Again, functional products may have an edge attracting the remote workers figuring out how they might manage full-time home employments, but aesthetics and other factors count.

On the office accessories side, Holly Bohn vp/Thinkspace Brands, a marketer of home and office workspace organizers, said, "Our office supply business, especially See Jane Work, has been very fortunate during the pandemic. Demand is up for office supplies that people want in their home offices. We have seen an increase in online sales. See Jane Work is exclusive to Office Depot, and as you know Office Depot is an essential business so has remained open."

In its other brands, Thinkspace supplies various major-market retailers, many of which were essential and continued operating in their store capacity as well as online, which supported the company through the worst of the pandemic.

"Organizational products are still in demand, especially with people spending so much time at home. In some products, we've traded in store sales for online sales, but any products that are not online are down," she said.

As the country emerges from the coronavirus, Bohn said odds are that companies that provide home office products that enhance the domestic work experience will thrive.

"I do think the work from home situation is here to stay in a bigger way than it has been in the past," she said. "Which is good news for See Jane Work. What you will allow on your desk in the office, is a lot different than what you want in your home." **HWB**

## Home Office Boosts Social Media Efforts To Capture Sales

**NEW YORK**— As demand in the category picked up in late February, many home office product vendors and retailers turned to email and social media to pivot marketing in support of segments that were enjoying accelerating sales as stay-at-home requirements proliferated across the U.S.

For example, Lamps Plus recognized that it had an opportunity to use quick-to-craft and relatively inexpensive social media and email advertising to reach consumers whose demand for home office and other products that helped them deal with the situation was taking off. The company attached specific messaging and extended its marketing efforts.

"Lamps Plus' marketing during the quarantine has been focused on function and comfort over luxury," said Dennis Swanson, the company's founder and CEO. "We highlighted these themes on social media channels and in customer emails. We also held webinars for customers to get expert advice for their home projects."

On the vendor side, the Ameriwood Home Facebook page offered a series of posts that demonstrated how the Dorel division could satisfy an array of home office needs. Ameriwood also featured different styles, color options and price/value presentations in the home-office oriented stream of Facebook posts that ran through March and into April.

"Our social strategy and consumer communication was able to react very quickly to stay relevant," said Joy Raccagno-Bond, marketing director for Ameriwood Home. "We saw an immediate need and reworked all channels to point customers in a helpful direction so they would be best prepared to continue a comfortable work, school and home environment for an extended period."

Social media and related marketing not only let Twin Star Home more quickly promote its desks and related office products as demand swelled but also allowed the company to engage consumers and garner insight.

"We are engaging customers wherever they are," said Lisa Cody, Twin Star svp/marketing. "That is part of our growth strategy."



Lamps Plus boosted its social media marketing.

She added that Twin Star used social media to address shopper concerns as they rose, direct customers to products and even information about how they could effectively assemble a home office. Online, Twin Star watches social media to see how consumers are posting and pinning its products in their homes to provide more insight.

"We are listening and being proactive," Cody said. "We can see trends in social media. There's a balanced approach we take in engaging to create relationships and pointing them in a direction."

Mark Weppner, svp/marketing, design and engineering at Bush Industries, noted that the company has used social media and related marketing not only to tout products but to help consumers deal with the challenges that building an office at home creates, with speed of delivery being an important element. In its approach, social media became an important element of how Bush adapted.

"We intentionally shifted our marketing focus to help the customer navigate how to find the right home office furniture in a hurry," he said. "We ran ads on our fast delivery times and also showed some of our low-cost items and complete office sets. 'Need a home office fast?' was the message that really resonated in the beginning. People really just needed help getting to work. We're hitting all-time highs in traffic on our websites the past couple of months thanks to organic and paid visitors. There's a huge demand for home office furniture right now, and it's been crucial for us to get our message out in a variety of channels to reach a wide audience." —Mike Duff



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## Plum

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president. “The company was created with a single goal of changing the way wine is served to match the way people live. By combining sophisticated technology and elegant design, Plum is delivering on its mission to bring the perfect glass of wine on demand, every time—preserved and served at its ideal temperature.”

Hansen continued, “It began with a simple question: If we could wake up every morning and have the perfect cup of coffee on demand, why couldn’t we have the perfect glass of wine in the evening. We wanted to enjoy each glass just as the winemaker intended. So we set out to build an appliance that was beautiful enough to look great in our living room or on our kitchen counter, and advanced enough to fully automate preservation and cooling. We wanted it to be easy enough to use that it would become a part of our routine.”

The Plum wine appliance holds two standard, 750-ml bottles of wine, using artificial intelligence to automatically identify the specific varietals and chilling each bottle individually to the temperature that is recommended for that varietal. Each bottle chamber has an integrated, high-definition camera that scans the label on the bottle and automatically identifies the varietal, vintage, region, winery and wine. A patented, motorized, double-cored needle automatically pierces natural or artificial corks, or even metal screw caps and foil covers, and prevents any air from entering. The unit preserves the wine in the bottles for 90 days by

injecting argon gas into the bottle to prevent oxidation. The unit comes with a fully reusable argon gas canister that preserves 150 bottles.

Plum’s wine appliance features a sleek, brushed stainless steel exterior with a high-gloss black front. The dispenser can be programmed to pour a standard 5-ounce glass, a 1-ounce tasting sample, or customized serving sizes. The dual spouts pour each wine directly from the bottle into the glass. Other special features include two thermoelectric solid-state cooling chambers that provide virtually silent cooling and a built-in automated cleaning system. Suggested retail price is \$2,499.

Hansen said Plum is focusing on marketing the product to independent retailers, specialty stores and gourmet shops.

“Plum is an experimental, experimental product that needs to be experienced to fully grasp the change in lifestyle it will trigger,” he pointed out. “Plum users change their habits on how they interact with wine. It opens

up a world of possibilities in the ability to enjoy exceptional wines regularly. We want to work with retailers that immediately see the benefit and use Plum at their stores to host, entertain and make Plum an experience.”

Plum is aggressively expanding its distribution network. In May, the company formed strategic partnerships with Eastern Marketing, a wholesale distributor of luxury appliances in the U.S. with a network of more than 600 independent dealers; Maple Distributing, one of the fastest-growing luxury appliance distributors in the central U.S.; and Pinnacle Sales Group, a leading luxury appliance, plumbing and outdoor kitchen distributor covering the Southeast, Mid-Atlantic, and Midwest markets.

The new distributors join Plum’s existing network, which includes Mode Distributing in the Western U.S.; LUWA Luxury, in the Pacific Northwest and Canada; La Cuisine International, in Latin America and the Caribbean; and Grupo IESA in Mexico.

Hansen is confident that Plum will rapidly reshape the way consumers enjoy wine.

“There is no competitive product in the market today,” he said. “Other systems require you to uncork the bottle which immediately triggers oxidation. The only way to extract liquid out of a bottle is to uncork it or drill a hole through the cork. As we never open the bottle to begin with, oxidation never starts and we can guarantee 90 days preservation.”

“We only have one product, but we have a large in-house engineering and software team that constantly focuses on improving the experience,” Hansen added. “We pride ourselves on doing one thing, and one thing only, which is delivering the perfect wine experience to wine lovers around the globe.” **HWB**



Salton notes that its induction cooktop highlights a greener way of cooking.



## Sustainability

*continued from page 14*

and all of the major retailers have a corporate commitment to sustainability and reducing their carbon footprint,” said Jason Hutton, vp/sales and marketing for Salton. “Consumer demand and retailers are really driving this, but this also benefits us as manufacturers, because it pushes you to come up with a better product.”

Hutton explained that using environmentally-friendly materials—corrugated cardboard in place of Styrofoam, for instance—and smaller boxes benefits suppliers in terms of paying less shipping costs, and also benefits retailers because they can fit more products in the same footprint.

“We have all learned that it doesn’t make sense to just be shipping air in a box,” he noted. “Fitting the product into smaller boxes is a big deal for online retailing, because it decreases the shipping fees, and also in-store, because of the amount of space the box takes up on the shelf.”

On the product development side, Salton’s multi-functional appliances offer the consumer the benefit of purchasing one appliance that does the work of three separate appliances, which means less waste.

Hutton added, “Also, we are focusing on energy efficient cooking methods, such as induction cooking, which is the greenest way to cook because it doesn’t waste any energy. We also have seen very big growth in space-saving, collapsible appliances—a dehydrator with collapsible trays, a compact kettle with foldable handle and retractable cord—saving on the amount of packaging needed and saving consumers space. Compact kettles also allow users to only heat the amount of water they need, rather than wasting energy heating more. And our smart bag sealer eliminates waste by making plastic bags reusable. All of these efforts are part of our commitment to sustainability.” **HWB**



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## Portable Cooling

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demand for all things related to comfort at home, from home office tech to air conditioners.”

Lanza added, “There’s also a strong push in e-commerce and the omni-channel experience some retailers can deliver, which seems to be accelerating the already ongoing trend for shopping online. Retailers that are stepping up to deliver a better online experience are ahead of the game. We still expect June-July-August to bring seasonably warm weather and with the reopening of most of the country, we’re getting ready for a strong cooling season.”

Midea is offering a range of new cooling options, including the SmartCool line of portable air conditioners that deliver fast, effective cooling for spaces up to 375 square feet while simultaneously providing fan and dehumidifica-

tion functions. The SmartCool units can be controlled from anywhere using Midea’s smartphone app, and also can be paired with Alexa or with Google Assistant to use voice commands.

“We expect a great season,” Lanza said. “Apart from our Midea portable air conditioners and Pelonis portable fans, we’re also getting great feedback on the Midea U, our latest product launch that brings a new concept to the window air conditioner segment.” The Midea U features a U-shaped design that blocks most of the running noise; the design also allows the user to open and shut windows with the unit installed. New inverter technology allows users to achieve up to 35% energy savings, the company said.

Other home comfort suppliers also expect increasing sales due to consumers continuing to work from home.

“With more people working from home due to the pandemic and lockdown orders earlier this year, NewAir saw an increase in portable cooling business as consumers sought to invest in home improvement items for their home office or living room,” noted Kate Rogers, marketing representative, NewAir. “We are expanding our entire cooling line, which means more portable air conditioning units, evaporative coolers, misting fans and high-velocity fans. Our new range offers cooling products for residential and commercial uses.”

“NewAir started its business online,” Rogers added. “This has served us well over the last couple of months, as we have had a strong online infrastructure and presence in place to meet the increase in online shopping due to the lockdown. This year, our portable cooling category is performing better than expected and sales have not slowed down.” **HWB**



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## eMarketer: E-Commerce A Bright Spot In Retail Forecast

NEW YORK— The broader retail sector in the U.S. could take years to recover from the impact of the COVID-19 pandemic, eMarketer has asserted, but e-commerce will be a bright spot.

Overall and including automobile and fuel revenues, the sales decline could be worse than that of the Great Recession, down 10.5% to \$4.89 trillion this year versus the 8.2% drop in 2009. E-commerce is the bright spot, jumping 18% this year, as Americans rely on Amazon and other online retailers for necessities.

eMarketer estimates assume that widespread social distancing measures, which have gradually been lifted in May, will continue to ease and economic activity increase in Q3, the market research firm stated. However, consumer spending will likely remain dampened throughout the year, and in that case, total retail sales probably won’t rebound to 2019 levels until 2022.

Although insufficient to offset store declines, e-commerce has mitigated the severity of retail’s decline. E-commerce sales will advance 18% to reach \$709.78 billion in 2020, eMarketer stated, reaching 14.5% of total U.S. retail sales this year.

The fastest growing e-commerce categories will be food and beverage at 58.5% and health/personal care/beauty at 32.4%, as Americans turn to online ordering for household essentials. Apparel and accessories, the second-largest e-commerce category in overall sales, will grow at a slower pace, 8.6%, according to eMarketer, as consumers



shift spending from more discretionary, nonessential categories.

For the first time, Walmart will surpass eBay as the number two e-commerce retailer in the U.S. Still, new consumer purchasing patterns will have a number of specific effects this year and beyond.

“Amazon will increase its e-commerce market share to 38% and extend its reign of dominance,” said eMarketer principal analyst Andrew Lipsman. “But big-box retailers are leveraging their click-and-collect models to accelerate their e-commerce businesses. This will push Walmart into the number two position for the first time. Along with Target, Best Buy, The Home Depot and Costco Wholesale, Walmart is expected to grow e-commerce sales more than 35% in 2020.” **HWB**







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