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NEWSWORTHY

Surveys Reveal Jan/San Distribution Trends

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A recently released survey paints an overall positive picture of the services distributors provide. Another study, conducted around the same time, reports distributor opinions on “green” products.

The surveys were conducted by Altura-Solutions e-poll, a division of Altura Solutions Communications, Chicago, on the behalf of Enviro-Solutions, a Peterborough, Ontario-based manufacturer of green cleaning chemicals.

The first survey of more than 1,000 jan/san end users asked respondents to rate their overall satisfaction with distributors’ customer service.

Fifty percent of jan/san end users believe the service they receive from distributors and manufacturers is “average;” 23 percent say they are “satisfied;” and more than 15 percent say they are “very satisfied.”

End users say they rely on distributors’ customer service for three main reasons: for more information on products or equipment (60 percent); to discuss service problems related to a product or equipment (25 percent); or for help remedying problems operating a product or equipment (12 percent.)

More than 70 percent of end users will turn first to their local distributor when they have problems with a product, Mike Sawchuk, vice president and general manager of Enviro-Solutions, noted. “That’s a clear indication of just how important the distributor’s role is for the end user,” said Sawchuk.

The second survey polled approximately 200 distributors and asked them how they felt about the direction their company is taking regarding the sale of “green” products.

Respondents say they are very confident about the success of green products — 93 percent of respondents feel their company’s vision or direction in selling

green products is “very good” or “excellent.”

Distributors were also asked their opinion on green product manufacturers. A slim majority — 54 percent — believe manufacturers have effective green marketing plans. Ninety percent think their manufacturers’ investments in green products are effective; and about 60 percent believe the training provided by manufacturers is effective.

One trend Sawchuk identified is the growing confidence in green products themselves.

“Although about 10 percent of the distributors surveyed still believe [green products aren’t as effective as conventional products], nearly 90 percent now believe green cleaning products are comparable to conventional cleaning products, which shows the advances that have been made in the past few years.”

NEWS MAKERS

Connecticut To Go Green

In April, Connecticut Gov. M. Jodi Rell mandated that all state agencies use environmentally preferable cleaning products.

The new purchasing guidelines, which will be released sometime in the next year, will be issued by the Department of Administrative Services, which will work with the departments of Public Health, Public Works and Environmental Protection.

The guidelines apply only to state agencies, though schools and municipalities are encouraged to follow suit.

Report Predicts Continued M&A Activity

According to a report by Robert W. Baird Co., Inc., Milwaukee, middle-market merger and acquisition activity should remain high in 2006, for the fourth straight year.

Baird’s report, “2006 Middle Market M&A Outlook,” notes that middle-market M&A activity was up 8 percent to 3,733 transactions with an associated 11 percent increase in total deal value, to \$349 billion.

Technology companies had the highest M&A levels, followed by the health care, industrial and financial sectors.

The report says a growing economy, strong debt and equity financing markets, substantial amounts of uninvested private equity capital, and higher stock prices should fuel M&A activity in 2006.

Increased Participation in Health Savings Accounts

The Small Business and Entrepreneurial Council reported that a member census conducted by America’s Health Savings Insurance Plans (AHIP) determined that enrollment in Health Savings Account (HSA) plans nearly tripled between March 2005 and January 2006.

Approximately 3.2 million people are now enrolled in HSAs. Congress is discussing expanding the accounts to be more available to small business owners, the self-employed and those who lack insurance.

MERGERS & ACQUISITIONS

Mountville Mills Inc., LaGrange, Ga., has acquired all assets of Kansas City, Mo.-based **Golden Star Inc.**'s matting division. The transaction will allow Mountville Mills to expand its presence in the matting industry while Golden Star can focus on its mopping systems.

Italian-based **Filmop S.r.l.** recently acquired **HPC Cleaning Innovation LLC**, Conroe, Texas. Filmop says the partnership will help the company address its American customers' needs.

Philip Rosenau Co., Warminster, Pa., announced the acquisition of **Envirotrol**, Bellmawr, N.J. The partnership of the two distributors will enhance service to customers in the Philadelphia and Southern New Jersey regions.

Jan/san distributor **Solutex Inc.**, Sterling, Va., has acquired **Apex Supply**, Fairfax, Va., another distributor. Apex employees will move to the Sterling location.

Emulso Corp., Buffalo, N.Y., a manufacturer of cleaning chemicals, has acquired **Central O-B Products Co.**, a wholly-owned subsidiary of Bison Laboratories, a Buffalo, N.Y.-based wholesale supplier.