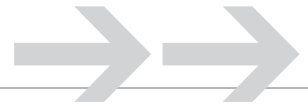


BookSmarts

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The Good Times Roll in New Orleans for CAMEX '05



AS THEY DO EVERY EARLY SPRING, bookstore buyers and merchandise vendors flocked to the annual CAMEX trade show, this time held against the sultry backdrop of the old-world, jazz-tinged charm of New Orleans.

For more than 80 years, the members of the National Association of College Stores (NACS) have met annually to exchange ideas, introduce new products, form new relationships and reinvigorate old ones. CAMEX 2005 was no exception, allowing vendors to show off their latest wares and buyers to determine what would be flying off their bookstore shelves in the coming year. This year's event marked the fifth time CAMEX has co-located with the annual Connect2One (C2O) member meeting.

According to Mark Palmore, C2O's executive director, "This year's show was a great success for both members and vendors." He continues, "C2O saw a 15 percent increase in attendance at our Education Day and added 33 new members to our group – a slight increase over last year."

Twenty C2O Education Day attendees were awarded \$100 scholarships during the C2O Welcome Reception. Additionally, Baldwin Wallace College Bookstore Director George Schiller received the \$500 Tammy Lotzer Memorial Scholarship award. Scholarships are presented to help offset costs in attending future Connect2One events.

During the Education Day Lunch, Palmore presented Participation Awards to the top three stores in each of the five membership levels, based on their purchases in C2O programs and the number of vendor partners used.

On the trade show floor, it was all about Paula and Michelle's ribbons. Building on the enthusiastic response to the annual "Paula's Picks" selections, in which Connect2One program director Paula Haerr



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for both members and vendors, alike. We added 33 new members to our group."

- Mark Palmore, Connect2One

tags items she feels will be the "hot" supplies products of the show, C2O added "Michelle's Best Buys" this year, covering apparel and souvenir items flagged by C2O's Michelle Johnson. While "Paula's Picks" were identified with cherry pink ribbons, teal blue ribbons marked "Michelle's Best Buys." These aided buyers in preparing for the back-to-school selling season by highlighting items that represent certain price points, bestsellers, new products or offer promotional opportunities.

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“The women’s wear category is here to stay... the range of color and style is so much broader than what’s been available before.”

- Michelle Johnson, C2O

► continued on page 1

Steve Ferre from Salt Lake Community College was enthusiastic: “The Connect2One staff really helped make this year’s annual meeting a success. ‘Paula’s Picks’ and ‘Michelle’s Best Buys’ made CAMEX a lot easier to shop. We really appreciated their hard work, going before us and deciding which items were a good buy.”

Sue Laesch of Harper College Bookstore concurs. “I was able to put new knowledge and ideas to good use immediately at the show. It’s obvious the C2O staff puts in a lot of work getting it all together, and it’s appreciated.”

When asked about specific buying trends, Johnson says, “The women’s wear category is here to stay, and the range of color and style is so much broader than what’s been available before.” Until recently, female college students typically bought small-sized versions of apparel that was designed for men. Now they can choose from a wide selection of items cut specifically for women. Not only that, but they also have access to fabrics and colors that appeal specifically to them.



Haerr mentions the continuing boom in lifestyle electronics and the myriad accessories they spawn, such as portable music player cases, computer cases, etc. Dorm supplies, too, are growing in popularity, including storage, shelving and other items. A new category, cosmetics, was very popular with buyers. One vendor was even offering “mini-makeovers” at their booth. In general, Haerr says, “People were really in a buying mood.”

And the mood doesn’t stop when CAMEX ends. In fact, that’s when the real work starts, with countless buyers putting pen to paper to write the orders that will determine their merchandise mix for the coming season. As for Palmore and Haerr, they’re already looking forward to CAMEX ’06. “We’ll see you in Houston,” Palmore chuckles.

Spotlight On Success

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NBC Helps Georgia College Store Become More Efficient

According to Store Manager Connie Wade, until just a few years ago, Gordon College Bookstore, located in Barnesville, Georgia, was “stuck in the dinosaur age,” as far as its point-of-sale/inventory (POS) system and buyback methods were concerned. Wade and her employees rang up sales on old-fashioned cash registers and did inventory by hand. Add to that the stress of performing their own buyback duties, and it was fairly plain to see that Gordon College Bookstore was in need of some help if they were to become more efficient and more profitable.

Dan Hild, a Nebraska Book Company (NBC) sales representative based in Atlanta, recognized the store’s needs and its potential. He worked with Wade to convert her operation to the company’s WinPRISM POS system. Almost immediately, WinPRISM had a positive effect on the store and its harried manager. “I love it,” she says.

“Our inventory is done electronically now, and we can track student purchases, which is great.” She continues, “Three months after rush, if a parent comes in and says, ‘What did my son buy with my credit card?’ I can let them know.” In addition, NBC worked with the college to integrate financial aid capability into the system. “We can use students’ financial aid at the registers now,” Wade says. “Before, it was all done after the fact by hand. Every item that was purchased had to be written down.”

The system has improved the store’s bottom line, too. “We can produce reports that let us know what’s selling and what’s not,” Wade says. “This lets us be much more efficient, ordering what we need and not ordering what we don’t need.”

Perhaps the biggest difference, though, came in the area of buyback. After a couple of years with NBC, Wade

Make Your Store's Web Site More Profitable →→

SINCE THE ADVENT AND WIDESPREAD ADOPTION OF E-COMMERCE, many college bookstores have found that online retailing offers a cost-effective way to broaden their customer base, in addition to making it easier for their existing customers on and off campus to browse inventory and make purchases at their convenience.

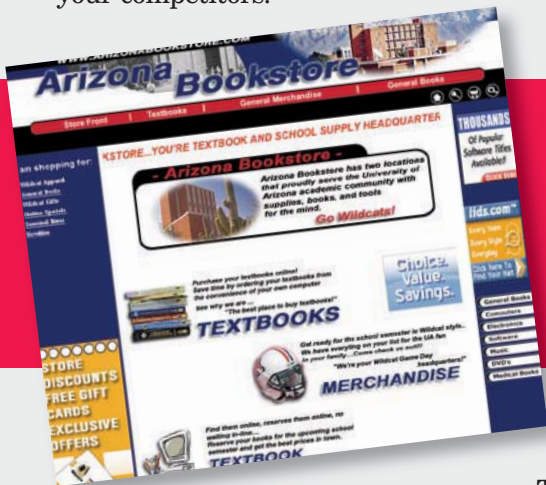
Unfortunately, too many stores seem to operate as if their Web site itself is enough to perpetuate this success. It isn't. Having an online store is like having a brick-and-mortar store on the busiest street in the world. On one hand, the location and walk-by traffic is ideal. On the other, the competition for this traffic is about as intense as it gets.

In other words, your Web site is just like your store window. If you don't keep it fresh and inviting, it will lose its power to draw in new customers and could even contribute to your losing existing customers to your competitors.

have the resources, TheCampusHub can do it for them.

The actual sales, inventory and fulfillment process is streamlined, too. According to NBC's Kevin Gish, "TheCampusHub offers college bookstores a complete Web presence – one that's tied to their backroom inventory system." This means that, unlike some competing systems, there's no transaction re-entry. Every transaction is reconciled with actual inventory in real time.

The company doesn't stop there, either; it also helps stores market their URLs through giveaways of popular items, such as koozies and carabiners that bear the store's Web address. In addition, TheCampusHub can devise mass-marketing e-mail strategies that can target specific groups, such as book clubs or athletics supporters.



"TheCampusHub offers college bookstores a complete Web presence — one that's tied to their backroom inventory."

- Kevin Gish, NBC

That's where TheCampusHub comes in. A division of Nebraska Book Company (NBC), TheCampusHub offers turnkey, integrated e-commerce solutions for college bookstores around the country. These online retail operations are attractive to customers, easily navigable and readily updatable, so they always have a clean, fresh, customized look. In addition, the company offers the ability to capture images of products and upload them to the site, giving customers an exact representation of the item ordered.

The division makes it easy for stores to change layouts, color schemes, product mixes or just about anything that's needed to keep customers surfing back. This updating can be done by the stores themselves, or, if they don't

With online retail giants such as Amazon.com and Half.com ready to snare your store's potential customers at any minute, Gish notes, "It's the brick-and-mortar customer service component that really differentiates our clients' sites from their online-only competitors." He continues, "Course materials are another differentiator. College bookstores are on the front lines of the course materials adoption process." For the student buying books according to a syllabus, his or her local college bookstore's online shop will offer a far more accurate selection of texts. He or she can be sure to get the correct book in the correct edition, with the correct supplemental materials. And should the student drop the class, the return process is often more streamlined because the student is dealing with a college store's customer service staff.

Transitions: Kelly and Rempe Move Into New Positions

As Bill Allen retires from his position as Senior Vice President of the Textbook Division at Nebraska Book Company, Mike Kelly will assume that challenging and rewarding role. Kelly's former position as Senior Vice President of Complementary Services will be filled by Larry Rempe. Allen will continue to work closely with Kelly in an ongoing consultant role.



Mike Kelly

Mike Kelly joined Nebraska Book Company (NBC) in 1999 – though he hopes to be here “for the next 20 or so years.” As such, he’s looking forward to working with NBC’s many veterans. He says, “I will be sharing many of the decisions with the functional heads of the three divisions: sales, operations and warehouse.” He explains, “Most of these people have 25 years or more experience in the industry. Hopefully, I can learn from them while being freed up to get more involved with customers on a face-to-face basis.”



Larry Rempe

Larry Rempe is one of “those people” – he’s been with NBC for almost 31 years. As with Kelly, Rempe knows the value of experience. “My immediate plans are to learn as much as I can from the people who’ve been doing this a long time.” He goes on, “Our long term goal is to build the growth of our company, striving to do it with everyone involved.”

As to what keeps people like Rempe at NBC for decades and what makes him want the same, Kelly puts it plainly, “Everyone who works here wants success for this company because NBC instills an atmosphere of genuine pride in the work they do. People aren’t here for themselves; they’re here for Nebraska Book.”

► 21st Century cont’d

let Hild convince her to let the company handle the store’s buyback. “The first day of buyback, I looked in the mirror and said, ‘What took me so long?’ It really was amazing! Lines moved faster, more books were bought – we’ll never do our own buyback again!”

When asked to identify her favorite aspect of her relationship with NBC, Wade responds, “I love their phone customer service people.” She explains, “If you need help, they’re right there. If they can’t help immediately, they’ll call within the hour – they don’t leave you hanging on the phone all day.” This praise is hardly surprising when one considers that it’s directed at a company that’s known throughout the industry for its persistent emphasis on customer service. She echoes the same sentiments when asked about the store’s relationship with its NBC sales representative, Hild. “We couldn’t ask for any better. He’s really taken care of us,” she enthuses.

With three years gone by, it’s difficult for Wade to imagine how she and her employees managed the day-to-day operations of the store before NBC came on the scene. And these days, “the dinosaur age” is just a few chapters in a paleontology textbook, which, as far as she’s concerned, is right where it belongs.

► More Profitable cont’d

In addition, stores can give their customers access to a vast “virtual inventory” of must-have products. Each online sale nets the store a commission, without the hassle of having to manage inventory.

Gish sums up, “TheCampusHub can make stores’ Web sites more profitable by improving their sites’ ease-of-use; giving the stores online merchandising assistance; enhancing overall look and feel; and providing marketing assistance.”

In other words, if you build it (and keep it looking fresh), they will come.

We Want Your Business–Not Your Customers

- We believe the student is your customer.
- We believe the bookstore is our customer.
- We believe in integrity in business dealings.
- We believe college bookstores should be independent.
- We believe in providing solutions to keep your business independent.



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