



FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE:
May 6, 2010

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JUNE WORKSHOP TO FOCUS ON PRODUCT DEVELOPMENT

HIGH POINT, N.C. – The American Home Furnishings Alliance will hold a half-day Product Development Workshop from 1 to 5 p.m. on Wednesday, June 16, at the Marriott Resort at Grande Dunes in Myrtle Beach, S.C. The workshop precedes the Annual Marketing Meeting June 17-18 at the same location.

Rick Babick, founder of Design Research, a firm that specializes in research related to product design and brand development, will describe current product trends through the filters of style, design, color, materials, price, brand and more.

Babick is the developer of a web-based research and analysis tool that catalogs products currently in the marketplace. For example, in the first quarter of 2009, Design Research cataloged nearly 40,000 home goods offerings from Wal-Mart, Sears, Kmart, Target, JCPenney, Kohl's and Bed Bath & Beyond. By reviewing the strategic summary reports, retailers are able to see how they can differentiate themselves from their competitors. This highly detailed product information can also provide manufacturers with a valuable tool for sharpening their product development focus.

Prior to founding Design Research, Babick spent 16 years as head of market research for Lenox Inc., where he led a staff of 10 that conducted more than 75 studies per year, half of which were design tests.

Babick's associate, Janine Finkle, vice president of market intelligence at Design Research, will join him at the AHFA Product Development Workshop to help lead participants through a hands-on product development exercise.

Also on the June 16 program is Michelle Lamb, co-founder and chairman of Minneapolis-based Marketing Directions Inc., a home furnishings color and trend forecaster. Lamb is also the publisher of *The Trend Curve*, a newsletter offering insights to color, pattern and design trends in home furnishing products. Lamb gathers these insights traveling the globe to furniture, textile, housewares, tabletop and gift shows. She will share her 2010 forecast based on directions seen at 2009 and 2010 trade events.

Registration for the June 16 Product Development Workshop is \$100. However, there is no cost for attending the Workshop for those who are registered for the June 17-18 Marketing Meeting, titled "Accelerate the Recovery: Tools and Tactics to Empower Marketing Executives." Highlights of the marketing meeting agenda include:

- *Elm Street Economics*, Mike Anderson, Center for Sales Strategy. Anderson will help marketing executives make the transition from "recession-minded marketing," which

tends to be focused on Wall Street news and events, to “recovery marketing” that is focused on what’s happening to “your customers who live down on Elm Street.”

- *The Way to a Gen Yer’s Heart ... and Wallet*, Jayne O’Donnell, “Money” Reporter, *USA Today*. O’Donnell will interview a panel of Gen Y consumers using insights from her recently published book, “Gen BuY.”
- *Descriptive or Deceptive? How to Avoid the Risks in Green Marketing*, Christie Grimes, Partner, Kelley Drye & Warren LLP. Last month *The Wall Street Journal* reported that a rash of earth-friendly claims by manufacturers and retailers has spurred a “rising tide of legal and regulatory actions.” Grimes will help marketers understand current guidelines and how they are being enforced.
- *Moving Mainstream Furniture Shoppers Toward Sustainable Choices*, Suzanne Shelton, President, Shelton Group. Shelton will share results of recent research investigating how furniture shoppers perceive “eco-friendly” furnishings.
- *Channeling the Power of Social Media*, Rohit Bhargava, Senior Vice President of Digital Strategy + Marketing, Ogilvy Public Relations Worldwide. Bhargava is an award-winning blogger and nationally recognized expert on the topic of social media. He’ll provide practical strategies for executives who are trying to launch and maintain social media strategies.

All registration information for both the Product Development Workshop and the full Marketing Meeting is online at www.ahfa.us under EVENTS. For hotel accommodations, contact the Marriott directly at 800/228-9290. A discounted group rate is available through May 16.

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The American Home Furnishings Alliance, based in High Point, N.C., is the largest association of home furnishings companies in the world and represents more than 230 leading furniture manufacturers and distributors, plus about 160 suppliers to the furniture industry worldwide.