

# **Marketing Monthly**

## April, 2009: Volume 4, Issue 4

### **\*\*\*Marketing Department Research Camp Set for Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>\*\*\***

**Our 4<sup>th</sup> Annual Marketing Department Research Camp** will take place on Friday, April 24<sup>th</sup>. A continental breakfast will begin at 7:45 a.m. in our seminar room (205), followed at 8:45 a.m. by the first of two morning presentations in room 187 of Cox Hall. We will break for a catered lunch at 11:45 a.m. in the Cocanougher Center and then return for the final two presentations. The Camp will conclude at 3:35 p.m. As was the case for our three previous research camps, the program has an impressive lineup of distinguished scholars. Click on the link following each speaker's name to learn more about them.

- **Ravi Dhar**, George Rogers Clark Professor of Marketing & Director, Yale Center of Customer Insights, School of Management, Yale University (Presentation: 9:00-10:15 a.m.). [Ravi Dhar Profile](#)
- **Karen Winterich**, Assistant Professor of Marketing, Mays Business School, Texas A&M University (Presentation: 10:30-11:45 a.m.). [Karen Winterich Profile](#)
- **Florian Zettelmeyer**, J.L. and Helen Kellogg Professor of Marketing, Kellogg School, Northwestern University (Presentation: 12:45-2:00 p.m.). [Florian Zettelmeyer Profile](#)
- **Baohong Sun**, Associate Professor of Marketing, Tepper School of Business, Carnegie Mellon University (Presentation: 2:15-3:30 p.m.). [Baohong Sun Profile](#)

A very special thank you to Venky Shankar for organizing our research camp, and to Spring Robinson for handling the many details associated with successfully hosting an event of this nature.

### **\*\*\*AMA Award Named in Honor of Rajan Varadarajan\*\*\***

In recognition of his sustained contributions to the development of the marketing strategy field, the Marketing Strategy Special Interest Group (SIG) of the American Marketing Association (AMA) has named one of their most prestigious awards in honor of **Distinguished Professor of Marketing and Ford Chair Rajan Varadarajan** at the recent 2009 AMA Winter Marketing Educators' Conference in St. Petersburg, Florida. Instituted several years ago (and given annually) to recognize scholars who have distinguished themselves in the marketing strategy arena early in their careers, this significant honor will now be known as the **AMA Marketing Strategy SIG Rajan Varadarajan Early Career Contributions to Marketing Strategy Research Award**. The naming of this AMA award is a salute to the tremendous stature, achievements and contributions of Rajan in the area of marketing strategy. Very few scholars have dedicated their career toward, distinguished themselves in, and inspired other researchers in the field of marketing strategy as Rajan has. Congratulations, Rajan, on this wonderful and most deserved honor!

Professor of Marketing and Coleman Chair Venky Shankar, Satish Jayachandran (University of South Carolina and TAMU Doctoral Alumnus) and Sundar Bharadwaj (Emory University and TAMU Doctoral Alumnus) championed the effort to honor Rajan. It is their hope and dream that the named

award will inspire many young and budding scholars to make outstanding contributions to marketing strategy research.

### **\*\*\*Eli Jones to Receive Mays Outstanding Doctoral Alumnus Award\*\*\***

**Eli Jones, currently the E. J. Ourso Distinguished Professor of Business and Dean of the E. J. Ourso College of Business at Louisiana State University**, has been selected to receive a 2009 Mays Business School Outstanding Doctoral Alumni Award. Prior to his appointment in July 2008 as Dean of the Ourso College he was Professor of Marketing at the University of Houston. Eli, and two other doctoral alumni from Mays, will receive their awards, meet with current doctoral students, and participate in a college-wide panel discussion at a yet-to-be finalized date in October or November. Should you want to write Eli a congratulatory note, you can reach him at: [elijones@lsu.edu](mailto:elijones@lsu.edu)  
The following excerpt is taken from Eli's nomination letter:

*First, Eli has built a strong reputation as a world-renowned scholar in sales management research. His research is primarily focused on issues related to the changing sales force—sales force diversity, sales force change management, sales force technology adoption and performance, salesperson motivation, and buyer-seller relationships. Eli has published 32 articles in academic journals and has co-authored two books—Selling ASAP: Art, Science, Agility, Performance and Strategic Sales Leadership: REAKthrough Thinking for BREAKthrough Results. He is the recipient of ten teaching in excellence awards at the university, national, and international levels. He taught strategic selling, advanced professional selling, key accounts selling, and sales leadership at the undergraduate and MBA levels, a Ph.D. seminar on marketing strategy, and he has designed and taught corporate training courses in Dubai, France, Hong Kong, India, Malaysia, Mexico, Trinidad, United Kingdom, and in the United States. He chaired doctoral dissertations and advised countless students who chose a career in sales management. He has always been a beloved teacher with many of the alumni he helped trained returning to University of Houston to hire the best graduates of the Sales Excellence Institute which Eli has founded.*

### **\*\*\*Spring Robinson Receives Mays Star Performer Award\*\*\***

**Congratulations to Administrative Assistant Spring Robinson** on receiving a 2009 Mays Business School Star Performer Award. The Star Performer Award is a staff bonus program for truly outstanding and high performing Mays staff members. Nominated staff must be currently exhibiting exceptional performance that *exceeds expectations on a regular basis*. Nominations are asked to contain specific information about the nominated employee's recent significant and noteworthy contributions or accomplishments and the nominated employee must have a current performance evaluation on file that demonstrates performance that "exceeds expectations." As Spring's nomination letter stated:



*Spring epitomizes what it means to be a Star Performer. Since joining Mays Business School in October 2007, Spring has excelled in her job. Responsible for taking care of the administrative needs of approximately ten faculty (including the department head), doctoral and MS Marketing applications (approximately 200/year combined), special event planning (faculty meetings, executive guests, scholarship banquet), and supervising our five student workers, Spring is a master when it comes to multi-tasking. Her performance in this regard is a function of her strong listening and prioritization skills. It is not just what Spring does that distinguishes her as a star performer, it is how she manages herself and her interactions with others. Always pleasant and cheerful, Spring has what some might call an old-fashioned “can-do” attitude. One of my favorite quotes states, “Enthusiasm can’t be taught, it has to be caught.” Well, we have all caught Spring’s enthusiasm, and our office climate and performance is better as a result.*

**\*\*\*Manjit Yadav Co-Author on Finalist White Paper \*\*\***

As you know, 18 teams were selected as Finalists in the competition for selecting Texas A&M University’s Landmark Research Areas. One of these Finalist Teams (“Texas Center for Digital Humanities and New Media”) includes **Associate Professor, Mays Research Fellow, and CRS Research Director Manjit Yadav**. The interdisciplinary group that submitted this proposal includes researchers from seven different TAMU colleges. The proposed Center will address two related grand challenges: the need to investigate the relationship of computing technologies and culture, and the need

to construct cyber infrastructure for the humanities and social sciences. The Center's research, focused in four interrelated areas -- the cultural record, cultural systems, cultural environments, and cultural interactions in the digital age -- engages one of the most compelling questions of our time: *What does it mean to be human in the digital age?* Their proposal is to recognize the human impact of computing as a landmark research area for Texas A&M University. The impact of digital technologies on individuals and society represents the central theme that connects this intellectually diverse group. The final proposal that Manjit's team submitted is available for your reference from Manjit and he welcomes comments and suggestions. Proposals will be presented at the University-Wide Retreat on April 7<sup>th</sup> in the Rudder Complex. Posters are currently on display. For details, see <http://www.tamu.edu/provost/amp/retreat.html>.

### **Manuscript News**

- ▶ **Congratulations to Associate Professor, Mays Research Fellow and CRS Research Director Manjit Yadav, Distinguished Professor and Ford Chair Rajan Varadarajan, and Pranjal Gupta (University of Tampa and a TAMU PhD alumnus)** on having their article, "How Task-Facilitative Interactive Tools Foster Buyers' Trust in Online Retailers: A Process View of Trust Development in the Electronic Marketplace," accepted for publication in the June 2009 issue of the *Journal of Retailing*.

**The abstract of their paper states:** While there is a sustained interest in research focusing on issues relating to trust development in the electronic marketplace, significant gaps remain in the literature. In particular, little is known of the underlying *processes* that may be occurring in online trust development. For example, research suggests that factors such as site design and navigability are among the factors that impact trust perceptions. Extant literature, however, is largely silent about why certain trust-related effects are observed in online environments. In this paper, we propose a new process-centric perspective for understanding the formation of online trust—through buyer's assessment of the e-retailer's assistive intent, implicitly embedded in task-facilitative interactive tools. Specifically, we develop and test a model delineating the relationship between seller's provision of interactive product information management and product information comprehension tools, buyer's perceptions of seller's assistive intent, and buyer's initial trust in the seller. The results of two studies provide support for the trust-enhancing effects of task-facilitative informational tools and the mediating role of buyer's perceptions of seller's assistive intent. Importantly, these effects occur without any explicit expressions of seller's intentions. The results also suggest that the efficacy of interactive informational tools in engendering perceptions of seller's assistive intent, and hence trust, varies with the buyer's level of involvement with and knowledge of the product category.

**Keywords:** Online retailing; e-retailing; trust; online trust; initial trust formation; trust formation processes; trust development; trust development processes ; intentions and trust; assistive intent; helpful intentions.

- ▶ **Congratulations to Assistant Professor Ram Janakiraman** on being invited to present his ongoing work on social contagion at the Collaborative & Multidisciplinary Conference hosted by the Yale Center for Customer Insights at the School of Management, Yale University (<http://cci.som.yale.edu>), scheduled for May 1 to 2, 2009. Ram's paper is titled, "The Impact of

Social Contagion on What to Buy, How to Buy and Whom to Buy From: Evidence from High-Tech Durable Goods Market,” and is co-authored with Rakesh Niraj of the University of Southern California. Their work on this project was supported by a research grant received from our Center for Retailing Studies. Ram and Rakesh would like to take this opportunity to thank CRS for its support.

**The abstract of their manuscript states:** Social contagion refers to the social effect wherein the behavior of an individual varies positively with the behavior of the reference group of the individual. Although the effect of social contagion on consumer choices has been established in several contexts, much of the extant studies have focused on the effect of social contagion on consumers’ decision of whether to buy a (new) product. There has been no systematic examination of the effect of social contagion on other aspects of product buying process such as what to buy (i.e., brand choice) how to buy (i.e. the channel) and whom to buy from (i.e. retailers). Such effects of social contagion can matter in high-technology and durable goods markets and therefore, for marketers of such products, it is critical to understand the scope of contagion on consumers’ choice of retailers and channel. Drawing on social contagion theory and the literature on consumers’ perception of risk in their purchase process, we develop a set of hypotheses on the effect of contagion on consumers’ choices of what to buy (i.e., brand choice), how to buy (i.e. the channel choice) and whom to buy from (i.e. retailer choice). Leveraging a micro-level dataset of purchases of personal computers, we develop brand, retailer and channel related contagion measures at the individual consumer level and estimate a joint disaggregate model of the three choices that make up a product purchase process. We also account for firms’ advertising efforts, confounding factors (such as contextual effects and correlated factors), and other challenges (such as the “reflection problem”) so as to obtain unbiased estimates of the parameters associated with social contagion. Our results indicate that after accounting for consumers’ unobserved preferences for the different brands, places and channels and for marketing-mix variables, social contagion has a significant influence on consumers’ choice of brand, retailer and channel. We also find that contagion has a greater effect on consumers’ brand choice in comparison to consumers’ choice of retailers and channels respectively. Furthermore, we find evidence of a greater effect of contagion on those consumers who are new to the product category. Our results help develop a holistic understanding of the effects of social contagion on consumers’ decision-making.

### ***Research Grant News***

- ▶ **Congratulations to Assistant Professor Kelly Haws, Assistant Professor Karen Winterich and Doctoral Student Dustin Kirby** on having their research proposal titled, “The Green Consumer: When Retailers’ Green Behaviors Pay Off” selected (from among six proposals submitted) for the Center for Retailing Studies’ 2009 Alton M. & Marion R. Withers Retailing Research Grant. Now in its second year, this summer grant program provides the research team with \$10,000 that can be taken as a summer salary stipend. The CRS Summer Research Grant Program, along with the CRS Research Mini-Grant Program and inaugural Thought Leadership Conference held in January 2009 are helping the CRS strengthen its research mission and establish itself as a thought leader in retailing research and education.

**The abstract of their proposal states:** Green marketing has become a pervasive positioning strategy in recent years. Retailers may often jump on the “green bandwagon” without understanding how differences in their consumers’ environmental concern impacts their perceptions of products or their effectiveness. We demonstrate important differential responses to benefit positioning based on consumers’ level of environmental concern. Our research indicates that both product positioning and attitudes towards the environment may influence consumers’ evaluations of “green” products. Furthermore, branding may play an important role in these evaluations and impact the strategic decisions of manufacturers and retailers offering green products or engaging in other green initiatives. Additional studies will examine other aspects impacting responses to green products and strategies including assortment decisions and consumer identities.

- ▶ **Congratulations to Assistant Professor and Mays Research Fellow Allan Chen, Professor and Macy’s Foundation Professor Sanjay Jain, and Associate Professor and Mays Research Fellow Alina Sorescu** on receiving 2009 Mays Summer Research Grants of \$12,500 each. Unlike in the past, the Mays Research Council did not require submissions of research proposals, rather, the awards were based on a combination of the following accomplishments:
  - Scholarly publications in leading journals. Evidence of an excellent track record combined with ongoing research productivity is expected.
  - Evidence of contributions to the literature that make a significant contribution (it can either be a single publication or a body of work).
  - Significant contributions to the research culture of Mays Business School.
  - Substantial mentoring role for PhD students and/or other faculty.
  - Major contributions in roles such as editor, associate editor or member on editorial review boards of leading journals.
  - Other contributions as evidenced by indicators of research excellence/effectiveness detailed in the Mays document on Guidelines for Annual Performance Review and P&T.
  
- ▶ **Congratulations to Clinical Associate Professor Janet Parish, Distinguished Professor and Zale Chair Len Berry, Senior Lecturer Sandi Lampo, and MS Marketing Student Ainslie Schultz** on receiving both *CRS and Mays Business School Research Mini-Grants* to support their proposal titled, “Implications for Servicescape Design for Inseparable Services.” This study will focus on the implications of service facility design when customers and employees share much of the same space. Questions of interest include: Whose interests should take precedence in facility design – customers or employees? Are there creative ways to reconcile conflicts in needs and preferences when they exist? Can a series of servicescape design principles be established for facilities shared by customers and employees? The setting for this study is restaurants, however, it is hoped that findings will emerge that can be extended to other retail sectors. Restaurants that are expected to participate in the study include Capital Grill, Christopher’s World Grille, Golden Corral, Olive Garden, and Red Lobster. Anonymous study data will be collected from participating restaurant employees and customers via self-administered questionnaires. Results will be shared with participating restaurants and published in academic journals.

## **Department of Marketing News**

- ▶ **Happy Birthday** wishes this month to:

**Business Administrator Theresa Morrison** (April 5<sup>th</sup>)  
**Department Head and Professor Jeff Conant** (April 5<sup>th</sup>)

- ▶ The Featured Faculty member for the month of **April** in the Marketing Department Display Case (located outside our main offices in Wehner 220) will be **Assistant Professor Rishika Ramkumar**. Stop and read about Rishika's accomplishments, current interests, and future plans when you are able. The display also highlights some of Rishika's favorite quotes, as well as her *Tips for Success*.
- ▶ **Thank you Sandi Lampo, Senior Lecturer and Undergraduate Advisor**, for designing and implementing our 2009 Pre-Registration Advising Sweepstakes. It has been a resounding success. Taking a page from the book, *practicing what we teach*, Sandi created a Sweepstakes for our 500 undergraduate marketing majors to help smooth out pre-registration advising demand and encourage more students to come in to see a Marketing advisor. She created a theme for the prizes given out each week: Build your Business Book Library, Resume Prep Pack, Study Prep Pack, Show Your Aggie Spirit, and a Surprise Package. It's been a lot of fun, and more importantly, very effective. Our advising team has seen over 167 students during the first three weeks of our Sweepstakes, filling 80% of our available appointments. This response is really amazing given that registration for Summer classes just started last week and registration for Fall classes will not begin for most our students until April 20!
- ▶ **Center for Retailing Studies Director and Executive Professor Cheryl Bridges** celebrated her **sixth anniversary** as a member of CRS leadership team on March 3<sup>rd</sup>. In addition, she begins her **fourth year** as CRS Director on April 1<sup>st</sup>. Cheryl's contributions to our multiple missions have been many and significant. In addition to the leadership she provides CRS, Cheryl is a dedicated and skilled educator whose passion for teaching and assisting students is inspiring.
- ▶ **A special thank you is also due Cheryl Bridges** for organizing the recent (March 25<sup>th</sup>) meeting that brought all Mays Business School Center Directors together for the first time. Attendees included:
- Ben Welch, Center for Executive Development
  - Wendy Boswell, Center for Human Resource Management
  - Kerry Cooper, Center for International Business Studies
  - George Fowler and Jan Jaspersen, Center for Management Information Systems
  - Richard Lester, Center for New Ventures and Entrepreneurship
  - Cheryl Bridges, Center for Retailing Studies
  - Gary Maler, Real Estate Center
  - Cydney Donell, Real Estate Programs within Finance Department
  - Bala Shetty, Executive Associate Dean, Mays Business School

Topics discussed by the center directors covered an array of subjects, including:

- The need for a college wide calendar of events hosted by all centers in Mays Business School.
- The various certificate programs sponsored by CMIS, CIBS, CHRM, CNVE, and CRS.
- The impact of the challenging economic environment on center fund raising activities.
- Concern about student participation in events. An idea of tying participation in events to course credit was introduced. CRS uses a point system for evaluating participation in the Student Retailing Association (SRA). Active participation in SRA is a requirement for the Retailing Certificate.
- The need for an event room within Mays Business School (larger than the Cocanougher Center) within which signature center programs and receptions can be held. A room/facility/lobby of this type will allow the Wehner Building and Mays Business School to be showcased to visitors.
- The mission of each center, however, there was only time to hear from Kerry Cooper (CIBS) and George Fowler (CMIS). This line of discussion will be resumed when the Mays center directors next meet.

- ▶ **Center for Retailing Studies Assistant Director and Lecturer Kelli Hollinger** also celebrated an anniversary, her **fifth**, as a member of CRS leadership team on March 15<sup>th</sup>. Kelli wears many hats in the CRS, primary among them strengthening our relationship with sponsor firms, proposing partnerships with sponsor prospects, and overseeing CRS communications. In addition, and as a lecturer, Kelli teaches the marketing department internship course (Marketing 484). To earn credit for Marketing 484 students must complete 300 hours of professional work in internships that compliment their marketing degree. Internships vary widely from sales, advertising, retail management, sports marketing, to PR for non-profit agencies (including one student who recently interned at the Smithsonian). Five written assignments encourage students to develop business communication skills and to build a network of professional contacts. **Twenty-nine students** completed the course in summer 2008 and another **five** have taken it during the fall and spring semesters. Thank you, Kelli, for your commitment to excellence.
- ▶ **Professor and Coleman Chair Venky Shankar** has been invited and accepted an invitation to join the editorial review board at the *Journal of Marketing Research*. Congratulations, Venky!
- ▶ **University of Houston Doctoral Symposium:** Students and faculty from Texas A&M University, the University of Houston, The University of Texas at Austin, The University of Texas at Dallas, University of Colorado, University of Southern California, and UCLA were in attendance at the XXVII Annual University of Houston Doctoral Symposium on March 27-28. Dr. Greg Allenby from the Ohio State University delivered the keynote address, while students from the various universities presented their research. Our own **Jeff Meyer** presented insights from his dissertation research on optimal pricing strategies for hybrid bundles. **Doctoral Student Gautham Gopal** also attended as a discussant and **Assistant Professor Kelly Haws** represented our faculty. Thank you, Jeff, Gautham, and Kelly for attending the UH Doctoral Symposium and representing Mays Business School with distinction.

- ▶ **Congratulations to Doctoral Student Gautham Gopal (Vadakkapatt)** on being selected for a 2009 Mays Business School Doctoral Student *Teaching* Award. Gautham's commitment to instructional excellence is visible in the exemplary ratings he has received from students in our Marketing Research (323) class. Gautham's award, like Jeff's above, will be presented at the Mays Faculty and Staff Meeting on May 6<sup>th</sup> at 2:00 p.m. in Wehner 114.
- ▶ **Congratulations also to Gautham** on being selected by our Doctoral Program Council as the Texas A&M University representative to the 2009 American Marketing Association/Sheth Foundation Doctoral Consortium. This year's consortium will be held at Georgia State University from June 11-14<sup>th</sup>. **Professor and Coleman Chair Venky Shankar** will serve as a member of the consortium faculty.



As announced in the March issue of the Marketing Monthly, **Assistant Professor Karen Winterich and Senior Lecturer Sandi Lampo** were inaugural recipients (along with 42 other TAMU faculty) of 2009 Student Led Awards for Teaching Excellence (SLATE). Pictured above are Karen and Sandi with Texas A&M University System Chancellor Mike McKinney at the awards ceremony held on Friday, March 6<sup>th</sup> in the rotunda of the Academic Building. Congratulations Karen and Sandi!

- ▶ **Congratulations to Doctoral Student Jeff Meyer** who has been selected to receive a 2009 Mays Business School Doctoral Student *Research* Award. This award is a tribute to the excellent progress Jeff has made in developing his research program and will be presented at the upcoming Mays Faculty and Staff Meeting scheduled for May 6, 2009, 2:00-3:00 p.m. in Wehner 114.

Jeff's dissertation is titled, *Essays on Hybrid Bundle Pricing*. An abstract states: Firms are increasingly offering hybrid bundles, defined as products that combine and generate both good(s) and service(s). Hybrid bundles span both B2C and B2B industries. Some B2C hybrid bundles such as TiVo that combines a digital video recorder (good) and recording management (service) are highly visible, while B2B hybrid bundles such as General Electric's Powerplant System that includes a nuclear power plant (good) and repair/project management (service) are more obscure. Anecdotal evidence suggests that the pricing strategy of a hybrid bundle is critical to its success. While pricing strategies for goods bundles have been extensively studied, those for services bundles have been explored much less. Hybrid bundles, which are fundamentally different from goods or services bundles, have received even less attention. Drawing from previous research on pricing and bundling for both goods and services, these essays aim to explore pricing strategies for hybrid bundles.



As announced in the March issue of the Marketing Monthly, **Doctoral Student Thomas Dotzel** received a 2009 Association of Former Students (AFS) Distinguished Graduate Student Teaching Award. Pictured above are Thomas with Interim Dean of the Office of Graduate Studies Robert Webb and 2009 Chair of the AFS Board Shelley Potter ('78) at the awards ceremony held on Wednesday, March 25<sup>th</sup> at the recently remodeled Clayton Williams, Jr. Building. Thomas' wife, Fernanda, and department head Jeff Conant, joined Thomas at the ceremonies during which fifteen TAMU graduate students were recognized in the areas of: Doctoral Research; Master's Research; and Teaching. Thomas received a beautifully framed certificate, cash honorarium, and commemorative TAMU watch. Congratulations Thomas on this most significant of honors!

- ▶ On Friday, February 27<sup>th</sup>, **Professor and MS Marketing Director Steve McDaniel** took the first-year MS-Marketing students on a chartered bus trip to Brenham for a tour of Blue Bell Creameries. He reports they had a great trip. As he recounted in a thank you note to Associate Dean David Blackwell (whose office provided the funds for the chartered bus):

*Not only did CEO Paul Kruse (he's in the center of the photo below) speak to us for an hour, he and his executive team divided us into 6 groups, and each executive took us on an hour plant tour - with 6 students per executive. They didn't give us the "regular tour." Instead they took us out back and we watched a milk truck unload, we watched the one-of-a-kind carton maker as it took sheets of carton material and instantly formed containers, we put on hair nets and walked around on the plant floor seeing cookies and cream shot into containers as they whizzed by right beside us, we went through the -18 degree storage areas and all of us shivered for ten minutes afterwards. I was very surprised and delighted with how much they did for our students. And Mr. Kruse was absolutely wonderful as he explained, very honestly, the market challenges Blue Bell faces, and even asked our group what we recommend they do to solve a channel conflict issue Blue Bell is having with a major food retailer. I honestly feel that each student will remember this experience for the rest of their life.*



## ***April News from our Center for Retailing Studies***

### ► **CRS Sponsor Forum**

Troubling times can be motivation to go back to school and learn fresh approaches to the retailing business. Over 40 executives from sixteen CRS sponsor partners participated in the March 31 Sponsor Forum. This was the highest participation rate ever.

Providing an outside perspective, speakers from an accounting firm and advertising agency addressed how retailers can survive the recession. **Pete Lempert, a principal at The Richards Group**, challenged the audience not to scale back and instead grow share. “Maintaining is the same as increasing, you will gain share as your competitors cut back.” He highlighted Orkin, the #3 pest control service, which has substantially increased leads and share as local competitors retrenched. It is a telling story as the pest control business is directly tied to the housing business. In another example, Advance Autoparts’ new ad campaign featuring DIY, (Do it Yourself,) car maintenance, like oil changes. “After 36,000 miles, you are the warranty,” says a new commercial addressing the shift in buying patterns to replace cars every five years instead of every three years.

BDO Seidman agreed with The Richards Group that now is the time to advertise. By focusing on the long-term rather than the current gloom, retailers can succeed. Think of 2009 as a “reset” versus a “recession.” If consumer spending habits and mind-set is focused on a recession, then retailers need to invest now in order to prepare for the future. **Assurance Partner Ted Vaughan**’s top recommendation was to connect with your customers. “Treat them as the #1 asset that they are, hang out with them, save them money, and deliver excellence in customer service.” Lempert also addressed connecting with the customer saying, “Get thumb twiddling employees to pour the sugar of love on your customers!”

Beyond the customer, Vaughan’s recommendations included training and investing in talent, strategically cutting costs, creating added-value for customers, and avoid halting product development. Product and service innovations like Wrigley’s Gum, Revlon, and frequent flier miles were all outcomes of depressed business cycles.

Breakout sessions rounded out afternoon programming. **Bernie Smith, Director of Talent at Lowe’s**, said, “This was excellent. It was almost a vacation for me. Rarely do we have the opportunity to step out of day-to-day business tasks, and explore ideas at the theoretical level with such a diverse group.” Smith joins others from OfficeMax and The Richards Group who volunteered to participate in the 2010 Thought Leadership Conference.

**Cheryl Holland Bridges** said, “We were pleased so many of our partners could join us. This intimate gathering is one of the many ways we say ‘thank you’ to the companies that invest in the Center.”

- **Spring Break Market Tour to New York City:** Thirteen eager students participated in the Center’s annual spring break New York City Market Tour. The trip offers students the opportunity to explore one of the country’s largest retail hubs, many for the first time, and attend

meetings with leading retailing and retailing-related firms. These meetings provide a “behind the scenes” look at the business behind the brands and real world lessons that compliment classroom learning.

One of the trip’s highlights was the first-time meeting with Polo Ralph Lauren where students learned about Polo’s latest brand, Rugby. The brand, which targets 18-24 year olds, incorporates new technology that revolutionizes the shopping and the online experience. Students were encouraged to visit the downtown Rugby flagship store which has touch sensitive windows where customers can actually shop from outside of the store.

Other appointments included The Doneger Group, a leading buying office; Bergdorf Goodman; and, the International Council of Shopping Centers. Executives from each company provided students with overviews of their businesses, examples of day to day duties, and information about internships and full time positions in the city. A few revelers in green tried to show students the fun side of the city, as the group was forced to detour from Bergdorf Goodman to avoid the annual St. Patrick’s Day parade. Before the trips’ conclusion, two students had follow up interviews with host companies and more plan to pursue the dream of moving to New York.

Free time to explore the city is also a valuable part of the trip experience. Many students visited landmarks such as the Statue of Liberty and Central Park in addition to cultural destinations such as the Metropolitan Museum of Art. Melissa Long, a sophomore M.B. Zale Leadership Scholar notes “The World Trade Center Tribute was something I am extremely happy I didn’t miss! The trip far exceeded my expectations!”



**We want to include your activities and news in the next issue of the *Marketing Monthly*. Simply submit them to Jeff Conant at: [j-conant@tamu.edu](mailto:j-conant@tamu.edu)**