## Ripple Effect To YEARS The Voice Of Plumbing Manufacturers International 70 Safe, responsible plumbing. Always.

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## **PMI Protects Members' Brand Value in Online Marketplaces**

By Chip Way, PMI Board of Directors President, Lavelle Industries



Shoppers searching online for sweet deals on plumbing fixtures and fittings beware! Scammers hawking unauthorized or noncompliant plumbing products—especially ones for luxury brands—lurk on Amazon and other online marketplaces.

Chip Way

Because these counterfeit and contraband goods often do not meet codes and standards regulations, they can

lead to health and safety risks while eroding customers' trust in the brands we've worked so hard to build.

PMI continues to monitor developments in this area, in the aftermath of the federal government and online dealers taking steps to combat the problem.

#### **INFORM Act achieved a PMI legislative priority**

In late 2022, PMI applauded the signing of the Integrity, Notification and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces (INFORM) Consumers Act into law. A top priority on PMI's legislative agenda, the act helps to combat the online sale of stolen and counterfeit consumer products, including plumbing products, by ensuring transparency of high-volume third-party sellers in online retail marketplaces.

The measure helps law enforcement, manufacturers, retailers and online marketplaces to work together to protect consumers from bad actors hawking counterfeit and stolen goods. The act specifically directs online marketplaces to verify high-volume, third-party sellers by authenticating the seller's government ID, tax ID, bank account information, and contact information. The legislation also requires sellers to give customers a way to report suspicious conduct.

High-volume, third-party sellers are defined as vendors who have made 200 or more discrete sales in a 12-month period amounting to \$5,000 or more. The bill's requirements have been implemented by the Federal Trade Commission (FTC) and violators are subject to civil penalties. The act allows every state attorney general to enforce the law's provisions.

#### Amazon spent \$1.2 billion last year to combat counterfeit products

After an investigation by the Wall Street Journal revealed that Amazon listed "thousands of banned, unsafe, or mislabeled products," the world's largest online retailer began to use machine learning to proactively monitor their stores and launched a Counterfeit Crimes Unit to pursue bad actors via litigation and law enforcement. Because Amazon scans 5 billion attempted product page changes each day, only machine learning could tackle that kind of challenge, the New York Times reported.

The unit uncovered the size and scope of the problem. Toward seizing and disposing more than 7 million counterfeit products worldwide in 2023, the company spent \$1.2 billion and employed about 15,000 employees in the effort, according to the Amazon's Brand Protection Report. Amazon also prevented 700,000 bad actors from creating new seller accounts last year. This number is lower than the 6 million prevented bad-actor attempts in 2020, 2.5 million in 2021, and 800,000 in 2022.

# Online tools, working relationships assist PMI members

Amazon also has created several online tools PMI members can use to protect their customer base from fake products, including Amazon Project Zero, the Amazon Transparency System, and the Amazon Brand Registry.

"I don't think it is enough yet, but I think it's great progress," said **Fred Killingsworth**, CEO of Hinge Global, in a New York Times article. A consultant who works with brands to optimize accounts on Amazon, he also noted that manufactur-

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## Foresight, Strategic Planning, and Growing Your Business

#### By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director

The renowned

painter Wil-

English poet and

liam Blake said,

"Hindsight is a

but foresight is

when it comes

some pain!"

to saving life, or

better, especially

wonderful thing,



Kerry Stackpole

In the competitive landscape of the plumbing fixture and fittings manufacturing industry, Plumbing Manufacturers International brings foresight to help your company avoid pain and anticipate future trends and challenges. Foresight—the capacity to predict and prepare for future developments—serves as a cornerstone of PMI's work in strategic planning and business growth. For member companies dealing with constantly evolving technological advancements, regulations, and market dynamics, leveraging foresight can distinguish leaders from laggards.

#### Understanding the role of foresight

PMI's use of foresight involves looking beyond immediate concerns to envision long-term scenarios and opportunities. What challenges might the world present our industry? How might others respond to our actions or innovations? Foresight encompasses understanding potential shifts in technology, customer preferences, regulatory landscapes, and competitive forces. By integrating foresight into strategic planning, your business, too, can align resources, adapt strategies, and position yourselves advantageously in a rapidly evolving market.

## Technological advancements and innovation

Plumbing fixture and fittings manufacturing is influenced heavily by demands for water efficiency, high performance, and technological advancements. Innovations such as smart plumbing systems, water-saving technologies, and enhanced material durability are reshaping consumer expectations and regulatory standards. Companies that incorporate foresight into their strategic planning will better anticipate these changes and invest in relevant R&D. For instance, the rise of smart home technology has introduced advanced plumbing systems that offer remote monitoring and control. Companies that foresaw this trend have already begun developing products that integrate with IoT systems, thus capturing a share of this emerging market.

## Regulatory changes and compliance

It's no secret that regulatory environments are increasingly stringent, focusing on sustainability, water conservation, and safety standards. PMI helps members anticipate these regulatory changes to assure compliance and avoid costly adjustments. Foresight enables PMI to stay ahead of new regulations by proactively supporting innovations that meet or exceed future standards.

The demand for manufacturers to innovate toward complying with new water efficiency standards is real. Helping your company prepare for these changes is a core value at PMI. By investing in sustainable materials and eco-friendly technologies, our members not only ensure compliance but also build a reputation as industry leaders committed to environmental stewardship.

#### Market dynamics and consumer preferences

Consumer preferences in kitchen and

bathroom fixtures and fittings are evolving, influenced by trends such as sustainable living, customization, and design aesthetics. Foresight helps your business anticipate shifts in consumer behavior and adjust your product offerings accordingly. By understanding and predicting these trends, your company can develop products that align with future market demands.

The growing preference for fittings and fixtures that offer high performance, functionality and aesthetic appeal serves as a great illustration. Companies that anticipate this shift can offer innovative designs that appeal to modern consumers, thereby gaining a competitive edge. Similarly, the increasing demand for water-efficient fixtures has prompted companies to innovate and market products that align with these consumer priorities. One size does not fit all.

# Competitive analysis and strategic positioning

The plumbing fixture and fittings market is competitive, with numerous companies vying for market share. Foresight aids in strategic positioning by identifying emerging competitors, potential market disruptions, and opportunities for differentiation. By conducting thorough market analyses and scenario planning, your business can develop strategies that leverage your strengths and mitigate potential threats. Whether you are developing new technologies, entering new markets, or enhancing existing products, this proactive approach allows your business to stay ahead of the curve and maintain a competitive advantage.

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## **Former Chair Turner Led PMI Through Crucial Period**

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Gary Turner was

the chairman of

the Plumbing

Manufacturers

Board of Direc-

tors in 1997, a

crucial turning-

70-year history.

point year in the association's

International



Gary Turner

PMI's membership was rapidly declining, and its association management firm abruptly resigned, leaving the association with no day-to-day management. Turner and other board members had to quickly take action to preserve the association; otherwise, it was in peril of shutting its doors.

The board members decided to convene a series of meetings with industry CEOs from both member and nonmember companies, including **David Kohler**, **Chuck Dowd**, president of Delta Faucet Company at that time, and **Bruce Carbonari**, then president of Moen.

Turner facilitated four meetings, held across the United States, near major airports and lasting most of a business day, "which was a major commitment for the senior executives," Turner recalls. Discussion centered around questions such as "why is a trade association for plumbing manufacturers needed, and what would it take for their company to remain or become PMI members?" Turner said.

"The executives were very forthcoming. After those discussions, the board developed an organizational structure that was issues-based rather than based on products or technologies. So instead of having panels on fixtures and fittings, for example, we organized around what we called 'Focus Five' issues, which were developed by the executives during the four meetings: code uniformity, consolidated trade show, water conservation, lead standards uniformity, and fair trade," he

explained. "These formed the basis for PMI's proactive industry leadership."

#### From reaction to proactive

Their vision was to be the leader on industry issues rather than being reactive. "We wanted PMI to have a seat at the table when proposed legislation, regulations, or codes were being developed wherever they were being developed in Congress, in states, in locales, or in code bodies," he stated.

PMI decided that a visionary, actionoriented executive director was needed to achieve this version, resulting in the hiring of **Barbara Higgens** in 1998 and quickly followed by the hiring of current IAPMO CEO **Dave Viola** as the PMI technical director.

With new leadership in place, the board worked with staff to make PMI more proactive. Up until that time, PMI was not perceived as being progressive. "We were trying to hold things back," Turner recalls. "We wanted to be in front and have influence over where things were going rather than trying to clean up afterwards. Rather than being seen as a major player, we were seen as the old stick in the mud. We had our heels dug in on every issue. No matter what it was, we were against it."

#### Forming the 'new PMI'

As California pressed ahead with water conservation legislation, some of which would have posed serious threats to plumbing manufacturers, a "new PMI" was formed, one that could give expert opinion on how to implement water efficiency in a technically feasible way, without causing massive customer dis-



#### PLUMBING MANUFACTURERS INTERNATIONAL

satisfaction, he explained.

Over time, PMI members learned that they needed to be at the table to influence the outcome because, otherwise, "those at the table will develop the solution and tell you what it is," Turner said.

He also played a role in opening PMI's doors to allied members, which now include CSA Group, International Code Council - Evaluation Service, IAPMO, NSF and UL Solutions. "We wanted to get them to our table. If we were going to be issues-driven, we needed to have the standards organizations there with us," he said.

Under the leadership of Higgens and subsequent board chairs—and with an action-oriented board of directors— PMI stabilized its membership and started growing to the point where closing its doors was not a consideration, Turner stated.

Looking back, Turner is proud of his work to transform PMI. "Before, we were playing whack-a-mole," he stated. "Something would come up, and we'd have to try to knock it down instead of saying this is where strategically the country and industry need to go, the plumbing industry has the leading-edge technology to get there, and PMI is willing to collaborate with the government, regulatory bodies, and code authorities to get there."

## PMI24 to Deliver Can't-Miss Program, Celebrations and More

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

A 70th-anniversary celebration of PMI's past, present and future, the PMI24 Manufacturing Success Conference, Nov. 4-7 in Atlanta, will feature exciting presentations, collegial networking, and a fabulous city at your doorstep.

Experts on environmental

law, artificial intelligence, energy- and water-efficient buildings, reinventing the toilet, Water-Sense, and more will grace the stage. Attendees will learn about



Lauren Saidel-Baker

exciting innovations and PMI's current initiatives, including Rethink Water, and get the latest forecast from ITR Economics' **Lauren Saidel-Baker** to guide their business decisions through the coming year.

#### PMI Inspiring Leaders Program, welcome reception to kick off event



On Nov. 4, **Scott Hutcheson**, Ph.D., a senior lecturer and engineering and technology leader at Purdue University, will facilitate the all-day PMI In-

Scott Hutcheson

spiring Leaders Program on "Strategic Doing: 10 Skills for Agile Leadership." Open to all PMI member company employees, the program will take place at Atlanta's Carter Center, followed by a welcome reception for all PMI24 attendees at the InterContinental Buckhead hotel.



Dr. Hutcheson will share a practiceproven framework that helps leaders form action-oriented collaborations quickly. Participants will learn how to manage complex challenges better, add evidence-based tools to their portfolios, and gain the confidence to use the new tools and insights immediately.

# MMA fighter turned humanitarian will share story of courage and hope

During his Nov. 5 keynote address titled "Purpose, Performance, Impact," mixed martial arts fighter turned global humanitarian **Justin Wren** will share his

story of courage and hope along with tools for navigating adversity, finding purpose, and making a meaningful impact in business and life.

After achieving success



Justin Wren

in his MMA career and overcoming injuries and an attempted suicide, Wren founded Fight for the Forgotten to provide clean water, education and empowerment to Pygmy communities in Africa. He advocates for indigenous rights and delivers a powerful voice for marginalized communities. Known as "the Big Pygmy"—the name his tribal family in the Congo gave him—Wren has helped drill wells and teach others in the Pygmy communities how to gain access to life-saving clean water.

#### Water expert's insights to focus on national water landscape, Georgia's wins

Katherine Zitsch, water policy expert with the Georgia Water Planning and Policy Center, will deliver the Nov. 6 keynote on "Why It's a Great Time to be Working in Water: Embracing Chal-

lenges and Seizing Opportunities."

She will explore the dynamics of water management today while providing an overview of the water landscape in Georgia and the Southeast. Her presentation



Katherin Zitsch

will delve into the ongoing water wars between Georgia, Florida and Alabama, detailing the opportunities for resolving these water disputes.

She also will provide insights into the national water landscape, the critical need for water-efficient fixtures, and a forward-looking perspective about the future of water over the coming decades.

"We can tackle some of our bigger challenges nationally with collaboration among philanthropy, business, and local, state and federal government," she said. Georgia demonstrated this collaborative spirit 25 years ago when the business community, legislature and governor together determined a new path forward for the Atlanta region.

"These leaders knew we needed to plan for water regionally rather than as individual cities and counties. They created the Metropolitan North Georgia Water Planning District, compelling nearly 100 municipalities and counties to work together to protect water quality and drive down water usage across metro Atlanta," Zitsch said. She explained that three challenges dominate how water is managed today: 1) how extended droughts impact water availability in both the eastern and western United States; 2) the age of water systems across the country and the need for not only system repair but replacement; and 3) changing water consumption patterns, such as water used to cool big data centers, and the dynamic of water management.

"Part of the challenge is that we need more people in a conversation about our water supply. A big part of the solution is innovation," Zitsch said. Plumbing manufacturers play an important part of the equation by producing innovative water-efficient fixtures that can help maintain an adequate water supply, she added.

#### PMI Women's Breakfast speaker encourages creating a support community

The PMI Women's Breakfast on Nov. 6 will welcome **DeRetta Cole Rhodes**, Ph.D., executive vice president and chief culture officer of the Atlanta Braves. Dr. Rhodes will provide insights on the importance of finding a personal voice as a female leader. She advises women to "create your community to support each other. There is magic in numbers and makes you see that you are not isolated and by yourself."



DeRetta Cole Rhodes

Dr. Rhodes guides women and others on how to celebrate their career achievements. "My best recommendation is to begin to write down your accomplishments throughout your career and to review them from time to time. This allows you the opportunity to always know your worth," she said.

#### What manufacturers need to know about the 'new' world of environmental law

**Doug Henderson**, partner with King & Spalding's Atlanta office, will discuss "The 'New' World of Environmental Law: Chemical Exposures to Greenwashing" on Nov. 6. He will share details on how rapidly changing environmental law affects marketing, supply chain, product design, and transportation.

Henderson's presentation will cover new requirements for evaluating the health hazards of all manufacturing process chemical inputs as well as extended producer responsibility, which makes manufacturers responsible for recycling or disposing of all products sold. Henderson will share how to consider new environmental requirements in your company's corporate strategy and business planning.



He will discuss how greenwashing lawsuits against manufacturers occur regularly when companies make misleading claims of "climate-friendly," "natural," or

Doug Henderson

"non-toxic" and share a new development on "fenceline" monitoring – or testing in neighborhoods near manufacturing facilities.

# Exploring smart water management and the role of AI

Mahesh Lunani, founder and CEO of Aquasight, will delve into the major trends shaping the future of smart water management, with a particular focus

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## PMI24 to Deliver Can't-Miss Program, Celebrations (Contd.)

#### Continued from page 5



Mahesh Lunani

and the plumbing industry, identifying key opportunities that lie ahead in water management solutions.

Lunani has been dedicated to revolutionizing the life cycle of water through

real-time AI and technology. Aquasight's product suite and COVID-19 Early Warning System have been effectively deployed and tested in cities nationwide,



on the trans-

formative role

of artificial intel-

ligence (AI). His

Nov. 5 session

will explore the

critical interac-

tions between

smart water

technologies,

municipalities,

Shan Arora

earning recognition from state agencies, elected officials, and utility leaders for producing substantial results.

#### Other sessions to highlight reinventing the toilet, WaterSense updates and more

Other sessions will cover "FCC Labelling Updates," with **Brian E. Finch**, partner, Pillsbury Winthrop Shaw Pittman LLP; "The Future is Net Zero Water," with **Shan Arora**, director, the Kendeda Building for Innovative

Sustainable

Design, and

Mike Snider,

field foreman,

Kimball, Inc.;

and "Reinvent-

ing the Toilet: A

Global Collabo-

ration Turning

an Infrastructure

Batchelor &



Mike Snider

into an Appliance," with **Kyle Azevedo**, branch head, mechanical applications, Georgia Tech Research Institute.

The final day of PMI24 will feature sessions on "Manufacturing Good: Redefining 'Quality' Within the Living Product Challenge," with **Mike** 

Johnson, senior director of materials, International Living Future Institute, and "New Developments at WaterSense," with **Stephanie** Tanner, lead engineer, Environ-



Mike Johnson

mental Protection Agency's WaterSense Program.

The day also will include a presentation from the Georgia Aquarium's Life Support Systems engineering team.



Stephanie Tanner

Register for PMI24 today! Attend the PMI Inspiring Leaders Program and receive a discounted bundle rate. Go to <u>safeplumbing.org/pmi24</u>.

## Foresight, Strategic Planning (Contd.)

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**Risk management and resilience** By anticipating potential risks—such as supply chain disruptions, economic downturns, or changes in trade policies-companies can develop contingency plans and build resilience. This proactive approach minimizes the impact of unforeseen challenges and ensures business continuity. In plumbing fixture and fitting manufacturing, risks such as fluctuating raw material costs and supply chain uncertainties are known risks. Companies that use foresight to assess these risks can implement strategies such as diversifying suppliers, investing in inventory management systems, or exploring alternative materials. These measures help mitigate the impact of potential disruptions and maintain operational stability.

In the plumbing fixture and fittings manufacturing industry, using foresight in strategic planning is not just a beneficial practice but a necessity. By anticipating technological advancements, regulatory changes, shifts in consumer preferences, and competitive dynamics, PMI helps companies position themselves for long-term success. Foresight enables your business to innovate, comply with emerging standards, cater to evolving market demands, and manage risks effectively.

Ultimately, PMI membership empowers companies to transform potential challenges into opportunities, ensuring they remain competitive and resilient in a constantly changing industry landscape. As the plumbing fixture and fittings manufacturing sector continues to evolve, PMI will continue to harness the power of foresight not only to navigate future uncertainties with confidence but also serve our industry and members with innovative solutions and strategic vision.

## **Inspiring Leaders to Learn Agile Leadership & Collaboration**

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

We all have a

fond memory,

a memory to

which we have

future outcome

that makes

vou excited

an emotional

attachment. Now, think of a desired



Dr. Scott Hutcheson

and emotional. This is the practice of "prospection."

"Prospection is reminiscing forward," said Dr. Scott Hutcheson, the Purdue faculty member who will lead the Nov. 4 PMI Inspiring Leaders Program at the Nov. 4-7 PMI24 Manufacturing Success Conference. MRI scans of brain activity show that prospection and reminiscing look the same. His job as the program facilitator will be to help participants envision a future to which they're emotionally attached and that can be shared with partners. "When you do that, you get what's called 'shared intentionality,' where you all say, 'come hell or high water, this is where we're going together," he stated.

Having both prospection and shared intentionality in place makes achieving a goal more likely. These two principles underlie one of the rules of "Strategic Doing – 10 Skills for Agile Leadership," the program's theme and also the name of a book Dr. Hutcheson co-authored. He has worked with more than 4,000 leaders from 147 countries. He speaks at conferences and other events worldwide, and his TED Talk on the science of prospection has been viewed on YouTube more than 1.3 million times.

# Collaborating to solve complex challenges

Dr. Hutcheson said agile leadership is an approach to leading teams and organizations through times of uncertainty in experimental, iterative ways. "Organizations face two different kinds of challenges, those that are complicated and those that are complex, and often we don't distinguish between the two," he stated.

Organizations generally have tools and processes to address complicated challenges. However, organizations often lack the requisite insights or resources to address complex challenges. "You have no choice but to partner with others who have different insights, perspectives and assets," Dr. Hutcheson explained.

When establishing a collaborative partnership to address a complex change, the principles of "co-creation" and "coexecution" are important, he explained. "And how do you as a leader, design and guide collaborations toward a set of shared strategic outcomes?"

#### The 10 skills of agile leadership

During the Nov. 4 program at Atlanta's Carter Center, Dr. Hutcheson will provide practical tools to help participants allow their teams to co-create and co-execute, as well as introduce them to the rest of the 10 skills. He said the 10 skills are all based upon evidence-based practices.

Creating and maintaining a safe space for deep, focused conversation is one of the 10 skills. "We often don't create space to do that. We're having lots of conversations, but they're typically operational in nature," he stated. "We get so busy doing the day-to-day, we don't carve out the time. That's the case whether we're face-to-face or working remotely. When we're all together, those conversations happen serendipitously. There are less of those serendipitous interactions remotely."

Dr. Hutcheson said he is a social scientist embedded with engineers and other



scientists at Purdue. "Professionally, that's the world that I've lived in since I was 23 years old. As a young theater major, I got invited into a research lab with scientists and engineers to teach them improv, as a means of helping them collaborate across disciplines," he recalled.

That was the first time he saw how he could add value in a world of people he viewed then as intimidating and still views as "crazy smart," he said. "I figured out I'm smart, too, only in a very different way. We've designed strategic doing with that in mind. It's not an improv class anymore. We're not asking them to get up and act like an animal. What we are doing is embedding these more improvisational, iterative and collaborative principles into a discipline that doesn't look too much different than Lean Six Sigma. There's a people process here—how do human beings collaborate? It's linear enough to connect with the engineering mind, but open enough that a philosopher can find value, too."

PMI24 attendees participating in the PMI Inspiring Leaders Program receive a discounted bundle rate. Register today at <u>tinyurl.com/k3j4yvjb</u>.

### **PMI Protects Members' Brand Value (Contd.)**

#### Continued from page 1

ers have not yet developed solutions as sophisticated and comprehensive as Amazon's. Still, manufacturers are sometimes reluctant to participate in programs that make them more dependent on Amazon and that give Amazon more data about their sales.

PMI and its members are continuing to work with Amazon, Department of Energy, Environmental Protection Agency, U.S. Customs and Border Protection, FBI, FTC, and the Buy Safe America Coalition to advance efforts to protect Americans from counterfeit goods.

Our efforts will ensure that the ingenuity of our products will be recognized in the marketplace, and that their value will be enjoyed and appreciated by our customers.

### **PMI Staff Visits Five Member Companies**

Plumbing Manufacturers International staff including **Kerry Stackpole**, **Ann Geier**, **Merill Morse**, **Jodi Stuhrberg** and **Kyle Thompson** made visits to PMI member companies including Fluidmaster, Moen, Neoperl, Pfister Faucets, and Sprite Industries during August. The gatherings provided the chance to discuss opportunities and challenges facing the companies and the benefits of participating in PMI programs.



*l-r: Morse, Geier, Stackpole, Danira Serrano and Brian Marcin of Pfister, Thompson and Stuhrberg* 



*l-r: Stackpole and Stuhrberg with Mike Reffner and Patricia Ramey of Moen* 



l-r: Kim Farley, Marcus Selby and David Farley, Sprite Industries, with Morse (second from left) and Geier, Stuhrberg, Thompson and Stackpole (far right)



l-r: Caroline Mounir of Fluidmaster, Thompson, Jose Loera of Fluidmaster, Stackpole, Corinne AndersonSchoepe and Robert AndersonSchoepe of Fluidmaster, Stuhrberg, Geier and Morse



l-r: Belinda Wise, Angela Jimenez, J'aime Salvatore and David Lingafelter of Neoperl with Stackpole (middle)

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