

## Walmart adopts

### JPMA Certification 2.0 standards

The Juvenile Products Manufacturers Association (JPMA) announced that Walmart will now accept JPMA Certification 2.0 reports for all testing requirements where the two testing programs align.

As of December 9, 2013, manufacturers that test with the JPMA Certification 2.0 Program will be fulfilling a large part of Walmart's

product testing requirements, and laboratories will accept their Certification 2.0 reports when they initiate product testing for Walmart.

Manufacturers will have to test

for any additional Walmart requirements that apply to their product that are above and beyond the JPMA protocols.

The JPMA Certification 2.0 Program utilizes third party testing labs and follows the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM) standards, as well as state and federal requirements for issues such as lead in surface coatings and toxins in packaging. Previously, manufacturers had to test for requirements in both the Walmart and JPMA certification programs.

Companies who complete the process

will be permitted to display the JPMA's Certification Seal on their products. ■

Source: Kids Today



## Rug outlook positive

### as calendar turns

As rug manufacturers roll out their newest and best during the winter cycle of shows, they're hoping to build on the strong year they just completed.

Many vendors indicated that 2013 was strong - some conveyed astronomical growth figures, including an eye-popping 60% growth reported by Jaipur. While they're coming off a good year, a number of manufacturers are jumping in with both feet as we start with a fresh page on a brand new calendar.

I just wrapped up a visit to Georgia to check out many of the introductions during the Atlanta International Area Rug Market at Americasmart. A number of these will also be on display in Dallas and Las Vegas as well.

From the perspective of creating buzz around the brand, Kas Rugs certainly had an impactful month leading up to this market. Not only did the Somerset, N.J.-based manufacturer announce the introduction of its branded pillows and poufs to debut at the January markets, but it also grabbed headlines by announcing licensing partnerships with Bob Mackie and Donny Osmond Home - the latter of which is debuting across a number of product categories this month. The rugs will be introduced in Las Vegas in July, but Kas created a lot of excitement for the brand by announcing the agreement in advance of the first DOH launches in Atlanta.

Oriental Weavers continued to build on a strong 2013 thanks to its Pantone Universe license. When color authority Pantone announced that Radiant Orchid was its 2014 Color of the Year in December, OW was waiting in the wings to announce that it had shag rugs in the hue ready to ship that day - proof that partnership can be a powerful thing.

Oriental Weavers also scored a new licensing agreement with island lifestyle brand Tommy Bahama for indoor and outdoor rugs that made their first appearance last week in Georgia.

This year promises to be a big one for Dallas-based manufacturer Loloi, which kicked off its 10th anniversary at Americasmart. Loloi introduced nine new rug collections as well as 29 new styles in pillows, fresh off that category's debut in High Point.

Surya, which is offering a trip to Hawaii for one lucky winter market attendee, is launching some 21 rug collections during this market cycle to go along with introductions in many of its other product categories.

From first impressions in the headlines and in the showrooms, it looks like the rug industry is poised to build on all the momentum gained in 2013. ■

Source: Furniture Today



## Reshore UK launched

### British businesses to bring production back from overseas

The UK government has launched a new initiative to encourage British companies to bring production back to the UK from overseas. Launched by UK Trade & Investment and the Manufacturing Advisory Service, Reshore UK will help companies reshore manufacturing, textiles, software production and call centre work to the UK instead of outsourcing abroad. The new organization would provide a matching and location service, access to advice and support and a named individual to help each company. There is a particular focus on supporting small and medium sized businesses.

UK Prime Minister, Mr. David Cameron, who spoke at the World Economic Forum said Britain has an opportunity to be the 'Reshore Nation', commented: "For years UKTI has played a vital role helping our businesses to export and encouraging inward investment. Now, as part of our long-term economic plan, I also want us to help businesses bring back production to Britain. This new service will offer dedicated support for businesses that want to capitalise on the opportunities of reshoring, creating new jobs and ensuring that hard-working people can reap the benefits of globalisation."

Business secretary Vince Cable added: "British industry is coming home. Over the last few months I have welcomed many companies who have taken manufacturing, textiles, call centre work or software abroad, bringing jobs back to the UK. This is a sign that diverse, high-quality British manufacturing is on the rise once again. It also highlights the ability of British-based business to stand strong in the face of global competition. The partnership between UKTI and MAS will further support British industry so they can continue to succeed. This builds on our long-term partnership with industry in key sectors like aerospace, automotive and oil and gas, which is giving business the confidence to invest in the UK and drive growth." ■

Source: *Business Zone, UK*



Reshore UK would provide a matching and location service, access to advice and support and a named individual to help each company, with particular focus on supporting small and medium sized businesses.

## Consumer Confidence

### gains again in January

For the second month in a row the consumer confidence index increased, gaining 3.2 points to 80.7, according to The Conference Board, which compiles the monthly indicator from a survey of consumers conducted by Nielsen. The improvement in the overall indicator included increases in both the present situation and expectations indexes, its two main components. The present situation index picked up 3.8 points to 79.1, while the expectations index was up 2.8 points to 81.8.

Lynn Franco, The Conference Board's director of economic indicators, said, "Consumers' assessment of the present situation continues to improve, with both business conditions and the job market rated more favorably. Looking ahead six months, consumers expect the economy and their earnings to improve, but were somewhat mixed regarding the outlook for jobs."

In the Nielsen survey, a greater percentage of the responding consumers rated current business conditions as good, while an increased percentage of consumers characterized jobs as "plentiful." Looking ahead, the percentage of consumers expecting business conditions to improve remained unchanged while the percentage of those expecting business conditions to worsen declined. The percentages of consumers expecting more jobs and fewer jobs six months down the road both declined.

"All in all, confidence appears to be back on track, and rising expectations suggest the economy may pick up some momentum in the months ahead," Franco said. ■ Source: *HFN*

## Sears to cut jobs and JC Penney to close stores

Sears Canada is to eliminate 1,628 jobs to cut costs. The move comes after a similar reduction last year. obs are being outsourced from three call centers to IBM, with additional employees being let go from four logistics centers. As a result, Sears Canada has about 20,000 in staff, the article said, down from 31,000 two years ago. JCPenney expects to generate annual savings of roughly \$65 million from more than two dozen store closings to be completed by May. It will shutter 33 of its 1,100 stores and eliminate some 2,000 positions. The closings will take place in 20 states, in most involving only one or two units. Wisconsin will lose the greatest number of stores, with five on the chopping block. ■ Source: *Home & Textiles Today*

## Decline in toy sales in US

### overall toy sales hit slight dip

Overall toy sales may have hit a slight dip in 2013, according to the NPD Group, which found that the 2013 U.S. retail dollar sales of toys declined by one percent in comparison to 2012. Although, 2013 had a shorter holiday shopping season, the weeks of Black Friday and Cyber Monday saw respective sales increases of four percent and 24 percent (compared to the same time periods in 2012); the remaining weeks of 2013 experienced softer sales in comparison to 2012, while fourth quarter sales-Oct. through Dec.- were down one percent. "It's clear that toy shoppers responded during the peak Black Friday and Cyber Monday weeks, but six fewer shopping days may have impacted overall holiday toy sales," said Russ Crupnick, senior vice president, industry analysis, The NPD Group.

Across categories, youth electronics and arts and crafts experienced the most growth at 18 percent and 8 percent, respectively. Building sets and plush saw respective revenue increases of one percent and two percent, while action figures and infant and preschool toys experienced the largest dollar sales declines in comparison to 2012 at six percent and four percent, respectively.

Crupnick says that the growth in youth electronics was from new introductions in robotic and interactive toys like Zoomer and Flutterbye Fairies.

In addition to the core categories, licensed toys also experienced an increase of three percent in 2013, and represented 31 percent of total industry sales, in comparison to 2012. Some of the top properties were Disney and Nickelodeon. Disney's Doc McStuffins, Sofia the First, and Disney Planes were in the top five dollar growth, while Nickelodeon's Ninja Turtles and Lego Legends of Chima fit in the top 5 growth properties. Overall top properties for the year (based on total dollar sales) were Barbie, Disney Princess, Monster High, Nerf and Star Wars. ■ *Source: Playthings Extra*

## Furniture Industry

### Increased M&A activity seen

The US furniture industry could see increased merger and acquisition activity through 2013, with Sun Capital-owned Lexington Home Brands and Rowe Furniture heading the acquisition list, a popular online newsletter reported this week.

A number of private equity firms may be interested in investing in the furniture business as the housing market picks up speed. The article speculated that Lexington and Rowe could be prime acquisition candidates.

In addition to private equity firms, larger residential furniture companies such as Ashley and Home Meridian International, as well as contract furniture makers such as Steelcase, Herman Miller and Knoll, could be interested in making acquisitions, the article said. ■ *Source: Furniture Today*

## Amendment in export policy for export of value added products of Red Sanders wood

**Copy of DGFT Notification No. 54 (RE- 2013 )/2009-2014; New Delhi Dated the 3 December, 2013**

S.O.(E) In exercise of powers conferred by Section 5 of the Foreign Trade (Development & Regulation) Act, 1992, as amended, read with paragraph 1.3 of the Foreign Trade Policy, 2009-14 the Central Government hereby makes the following amendments in respect of Sl. No. 189 of Schedule 2 of ITC(HS) Classifications of Export and Import Items as under.

2. Item Description in Column No. 4 against S. No. 189 of Chapter 44 of Schedule 2 of the ITC(HS) Classifications of Export and Import Items is amended as under:

From "Value added products of Red Sanders wood such as Extracts, Dyes, Musical Instruments and Parts of Musical Instruments, made from Red Sanders wood, procured from legal sources"

To "Value added products of Red Sanders wood such as Chips, Powder, Extracts, Dyes, Musical Instruments, Parts of Musical Instruments, Furniture, Parts of various sizes of furniture (maximum cross section: sizes: 15 cm X 15 cm; Planks: 20 cm X 7.5 cm and maximum length 2.5 Mtrs), toys, dolls & other handicrafts made from Red Sanders wood procured from legal sources"

3. Effect of this notification: Item Description against Sl. No. 189 of Schedule 2 of ITC(HS) Classification of Export & Import Item has been amended.

(Anup K. Pujari)

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(Issued from F.No.01/91/180/1380/AM12/Export Cell)



## Mobile shopping priority in 2014 for most retailers

Enhancing the mobile shopping experience is the number one priority in 2014 for most retailers. That's the finding of the 2014 Shop.org/Forrester Research State of Retailing Online survey, which surveyed 70 retailers in October and November 2013. More than half (53%) marked mobile efforts as a top priority, identifying responsive design, mobile site optimization, and tablet redesign among key focus areas.

"Retailers grew their digital business with impressive strength in 2013, reflecting their laser focus on improving the customer experience across all of their channels, striving for a 'mobile first' mindset that will be a key driver in all business decisions," said Vicki Cantrell, Shop.org executive director. "In 2014, they will continue investing to further their relationships with customers, exploring everything from personalization and site usability to all things mobile."

Digital retailing fundamentals such as



improved usability and conversion rates continue to be important for retailers, and this year

loyalty and CRM efforts also figure prominently on priority lists. For instance, more than one-third (36%) of retailers surveyed are prioritizing improved marketing efforts as they continue to focus on both retaining and acquiring new customers. In fact, repeat customers in 2014 will grow in importance: the survey found 51% of web revenues are being driven by these shoppers and nearly two-thirds (63%) note that repeat customers drove more web sales in 2013 than in 2012. Many retailers will also prioritize site redesign in 2014, with 46% surveyed planning to engage in some site overhaul. ■

Source : *Home and Textiles Today*

## Bold colours, materials, combinations win occasional vendors bring adventurous product to market

Suppliers of occasional furniture in Las Vegas Market, report great success with bold colours, adventurous materials in surfaces and ambitious combinations of wood and mirrors. Pieces that can be used for more than one purpose are also doing particularly well, as are those that can complement a casual dining collection.

There are those with intricate resin-painted decorations in chests while trunk-like pieces are generating interest because they can become either an attractive cocktail table or a storage bin or both. And then there are demilune



consoles that sell well because they place mirror siding amid beautifully finished wood features, including drawers and cabriole legs. Credenza pieces too are selling well,, albeit in more contemporary and colourful styles. The credenzas "have multiple uses," from hallway decorative items to home

entertainment pieces. Another winner is market is a steel table whose surface "compass" motif has been etched with acid. Retailers are responding well to occasional pieces with bright colours. These piece come in multiple colours. They include cube-like structures of rubberwood that can be joined together to create a cocktail table or separated to create end tables placed at both ends of a sofa. It brings a pop of colour to a retail floor and is a way for the consumer to bring colour into their furniture as well.

Occasional pieces of reclaimed pine are having great success, complementing casual dining.

The occasional pieces include a hall tree, which offers a place to hang coats and backpacks and store various and sundry items in shelves below. Manufacturers desire that people pick their furniture for many different rooms. Cocktail tables with "unique" surfaces such as zinc, cork and slate are selling well. ■

Source : *Furniture Today*

