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# PLMA show continues to preview product strategies.

by Stansbury, Susan  
[Nonwovens Industry](#) • Jan, 2008 • Private Label Manufacturers Association

[ILLUSTRATIONS OMITTED]

If attendees at the November Private Label show outside of Chicago were looking for amazing new developments, they were likely disappointed. If garnering high traffic were the measure of a successful show, it was good, with some 4000 visitors. However,

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the PLMA show is not just about those things. Getting serious attention from targeted retail buyers is the measure of success. Satisfying the expectations of retailers is what it's all about for the 1900 exhibitors.

Retailers of all types, including major U.S. supermarket chains, drug chains and mass merchandisers, attend the show to confer with their suppliers across the private label spectrum. For example, The Kroger Company, Target and dm-Drogerie Markt, a European chain, were this year's PLMA brand excellence award winners in the supermarket, mass merchandiser and drug chain categories, respectively, while Wakefern Food Corporation won in the coop/wholesaler category.

PLMA's Home & Health Awards recognized innovative products in seventeen categories ranging from toiletries and healthcare to housewares. Home & Health Awards winners were Ahold USA, BJ's Wholesale Club Inc., Costco Wholesale, JCPenney Corporation, The Kroger Co., Rite Aid, Save-A-Lot, Sears Holdings Corporation, Target, Topco Associates, Uniprix, Inc., Wal-Mart Stores and Western Family Foods.

Private Label Growth

PLMA reports that the clout of private label products continues to grow, saying that \$55 billion in annual sales is moving from national brands to private label and driving private label's dollar marketshare to 24% within a decade. A shift of this magnitude is consistent with the experience of store brands in Europe, according to McKinsey and PLMA. PLMA's industry report, conducted in 2007 by McKinsey & Co., points to best-in-class value as a key factor in private label and store brand results versus national brand products--which bodes well for the innovators in private label nonwoven products.

Exhibitors at this year's show made their statement to retailers by displaying featured products, as well as the breadth of their offerings. And in some cases, there were some new products and trend affirmations. A brief tour rounds out the 2007 view from the floor.

An International Presence

International exhibitors of nonwoven-based products were back this year

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with a strong presence. Italy had a pavilion again, and O-PAC showed a full range of "inspired by nature" wet wipes, including baby wipes with aloe vera, intimate wipes with chamomile and make-up remover wipes containing almond and coconut extracts. Mexico was again well represented, and this year PLMA added exhibitors from Guatemala, Taiwan and India. Just as retailers are branching out globally, manufacturers and marketers of nonwoven items are expanding their reach.

#### North American Displays

As expected, key private labelers such as Nice-Pak Products and Rockline Industries had imposing presences. Focusing its message on "innovative delivery systems and solutions," Nice-Pak's pre-moistened wipes were shown for personal hygiene, cleansing and disinfection. The latest news from Nice-Pack includes a children's hand-sanitizing wipe, which is in the process of national launch under Nice-Pak's brand Sani-Hands For Kids. Nice-Pak is the world's largest manufacturer of wet wipes, according to Michael Kelter, director of marketing. Nice-Pak facilities are located in the U.S., the U.K. and Germany.

Rockline's Ron Kerscher, senior vice president of sales and marketing, said the company is in the process of introducing a range of new ideas to its retail partners, with announcements around the corner. Rockline prides itself on being one of the few private labelers to lead with unique products. Currently, its Natural Choice flushable moist wipes are a rare flushable wipe said to be dispersible. Rockline has facilities in the U.S., The Netherlands, the U.K. and South China.

PLMA Charter member Hospital Specialty Company offers one of the most complete lines of hygiene products including diapers, training pants, sanitary napkins, tampons, incontinence products and wet wipes. The company's Wet'N Wash Rinse-Free Bath Cloths are dry cloths that are loaded with body wash ingredients and activated with water--one of the newly emerging dry-to-wet wipes.

A number of companies made a nice splash and were busy with retailer discussions, including First Quality, whose retail line features adult

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incontinence, disposable washcloths, feminine hygiene and paper products. The Triad Group showed off its specialties in the healthcare industry, with antiseptics and scrubs, pre-moistened wipes and washcloths and patient care products. U.S. Nonwovens displayed laundry, baby, auto, pet and beauty care products.

AHP, a DSG company, continues with its marketing strategies focused on good profit margins for retailers and high quality diapers at a strong value for consumers. AHP's new facility in Delaware, OH is part of its "world-class" value vision. Meanwhile, Arquest's diaper offering includes new "Especially for Baby" custom-designed diapers carried by Toys R Us stores. AHP also showcased its Clifford character licensed line. Tyco's Healthcare Retail Group was also on hand with its feminine hygiene, baby diaper and incontinence care products.

#### More Green Than Ever

Green and natural product promotions were in full force at PLMA. If there was one stand-out trend in retailer-targeted promotions, going green was it. From Rockline's dispersible wipes to U.S. Nonwovens' "Planet Earth" line, eco-friendly was everywhere.

Also exemplifying the "natural movement" was Maxim Hygiene Products. The company's Rebecca Alvandi was showing a line of feminine products including "organic" sanitary napkins, pantyliners, tampons, intimate wipes, packs and cotton underwear. The tampons have a "certified organic cardboard applicator.."

Cascades of Canada tells one of the most complete "Green Connection" stories, from its use of recycled raw materials and its eco-friendly processes (using 80% less water than the industry average) to its recyclable products that can be recovered, recycled or reused.

Fama Jersey, an Italian producer, promoted its Bio Cotton, which runs on one of its four spunlaced lines using 100% organic cotton originating from "bio-dynamic" cultivation techniques. The cotton is non-allergenic and is targeted to hygiene and personal health products.

Complementing nonwoven products producers at the PLMA show were several packagers and others offering green solutions. For example,

Shorewood Packaging, a business of International Paper, offered its Green Choice packaging options. Paper and paperboard, inks and coatings, alternative materials and supply chain considerations are part of Shorewood's sustainable developments. As a Shorewood spokesperson put it, "This is more than just a business issue. Consumers and retailers are expressing a growing concern about the effects of packaging on the environment."

The next step has to be a new level of industry-accepted standards for green claims and better definitions for words such as "natural," "organic," "sustainable," "recyclable," "biodegradable" and other terms seen at PLMA and elsewhere. And there appears to be progress on that front, with more companies offering a definition and test methods.

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