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### **LakeWest Group's Annual POS Survey Reveals Retailers Focus on the Customer, Multi-Channel Business Process Integration, and Technology Upgrade**

CLEVELAND, Ohio – 01/13/06 – LakeWest Group, the leading independent retail management consulting firm, recently completed its 7<sup>th</sup> Annual POS (Point-of-Sale) Benchmarking Survey of the Top 100 Specialty Retailers. LakeWest Group found that retailers are focusing on better understanding the customer and aligning their business strategy to that customer, and then designing the necessary processes, technology, operations, and organization around the customer strategy.

By meeting and exceeding the customer's current and future expectations, retailers establish the foundation for a loyal customer. In understanding the customer and their purchasing patterns across channels, retailers also predict future shopping patterns to create and maintain this valuable customer. This is known as customer intimacy, which builds upon the daily interactions with the customer to create true and lasting relationships. "Creating these strong customer relationships builds brand loyalty and helps to create and keeps valuable customers," said Robert Antall, CEO of LakeWest Group. "Understanding the customer and creating a business strategy based on the customer's current and future expectations is necessary to compete in this competitive retail environment."

This year respondents are focusing on offering ancillary services to improve the customer's shopping experience. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents offer customers special-order abilities, in addition to more than half realizing the benefits of offering loyalty programs. These services offer valuable benefits to the customer and can be critical to customer satisfaction and loyalty.

In addition to offering customers valuable services, retailers are employing various applications to assist in the management of store employees, tasks, and payroll dollars, which helps provide retailers with the tools needed to enhance the customer shopping experience. Nearly two-thirds of the respondents currently utilize labor scheduling/workforce management tools to better manage labor resources and nearly one-quarter of the respondents utilize store execution management tools to assist in prioritizing tasks at the store.

The foundation for the success of these applications lies in the infrastructure at the store level. Nearly one-third of the retailers surveyed plan to replace hardware and software in the next two years and nearly one-quarter of the retailers will upgrade their connectivity. Ultimately, this provides retailers with the infrastructure needed to enhance the customer shopping experience, while also attaining an effective ROI.

For the complete survey findings and analysis, contact Kathleen Fischer at LakeWest Group, (216) 535-4008, or at [kfischer@lakewest.com](mailto:kfischer@lakewest.com).

Established in 1990, LakeWest Group is the premier independent management consulting firm dedicated exclusively to serving the retail and consumer products industry. With deep business knowledge and cross-functional skills, the firm delivers superior design and implementation of strategy, technology, and process solutions to help clients achieve their full business potential.

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