



## ICBA Networking Calls Recap June 2022

### Buyer2Buyer Apparel/Gifts Recap

The Apparel/Gift Buyer2Buyer Networking call started out with buyers sharing what was their strongest category for the Spring season. There were many repeat items and brands!

- Plush – both Emblematic and non-Emblematic, plush key chains
- Blankets
- Fleece – all basics, hoods & crews, Embroidery & Tackle Twill, Pastel Crews (MV Sport)
- Graduations – Diploma Frames
- Drinkware - Yeti Hydro Flask
- Refried – new brand
- Squishable and custom squishy's
- Logos designed by graphic design students
- Tote bags
- Headwear
- Hype & Vice – Women's line

Discussion began with increased number of campus events and how outreach opportunities can expand/grow sales. Reaching out to the community outside conference can also be beneficial, see some events shared:

- Teacher Conference
- Annual Teaching Festival

Marketing efforts are an ongoing opportunity and a focus for stores, the following ideas were shared:

- Utilize Marketing budget to fund events or promote store on campus
  - Advertise on Orientation port site
  - Provide t-shirts for student focused event – “Taco & Hot Sauce Race” (supports softball team at Alabama)
  - Scratch off Discount cards
- Host events to create engagement
  - Several stores hosted an “Egg Hunt” where prizes and discounts were the prizes
  - Grad Fairs
  - Star Wars Days

Stores are using extra space made available due to reduction of Course Materials or other changing category needs to expand apparel and gift space. Space is utilized to expand assortment or double exposure key brands and categories. Some are partnering with local businesses and create “pop-up” opportunities for 1-2 days at a time.

Concerns were raised regarding Champion order delays due to the ransomware attack they experienced. Questions were raised if orders should be canceled and placed with other vendors since clear direction has not yet been communicated. At this point, Champion was expecting shipments to resume soon. It is always wise to have alternative vendors on-order within an acceptable threshold of slightly over your “Open-to Buy” to account for supply chain issues.

## Buyer2Buyer Supplies Recap

The Supplies Buyer2Buyer Networking call started out with buyers sharing what their best sellers were for the Spring season. There were many repeat items and brands!

- Binders
- Licensed & unlicensed notebooks (Hamelin, Mead 5 Star SmartPaper, Decomp, Moleskin, comp books, value price)
- Art Supplies (Sketchmate Kits)
- Planners (Erin Condren & bloom daily planners)
- Journaling supplies and fun pens
- Chipboard

Discussion began with in store traffic trends – many stores are seeing an increase in foot traffic by just being open and in store pick up options. There are still many changes with binder availability and sales – shipments were delayed, there was no stock available, and EA tanking binder sales.

### Product Assortment Discussion:

- Notebooks:
  - Decomp books impulse items due to attractive designs are selling well
    - 2 color Decomp book designs made the difference, customers liked “cuteness”
    - Some store having success in various sizes and double exposure is helping
    - Others are focusing on 1 size
  - Both value price along with lifestyle notebooks (higher price points) are selling
- Yoga Mats:
  - Yoga mats and stretch bands (sourced from Douglas Stewart) are selling
  - Offering lower price items is important
  - Some classes have made them a requirement – price points under \$34 is best, no logos
    - Sources mats from Hugger Mugger (also referred by yoga teachers)
- Planners:
  - Erin Condren is selling well and creating interest to other supply and gift items when cross merchandised
    - A strong endcap display can attract customers
    - sticker sales are declining
  - Students are concerned with quality, so they will pay more for the nicer planners and notebooks
- Backpacks:
  - Fjallraven is selling and has been cross merchandised with Hydro Flask
    - Outdoor lifestyle brands
    - Others seeing success with Herschel and Case Logic
    - Delays experienced with Jansport
- Other:
  - Saw squishy bubble balls at the ICBA Conference, ordered them and kids are loving them
  - One buyer shared they also buy tech category, are seeing as IA increases, they are selling more iPads, replacing binder sales
  - Tried blue light glasses to accommodate tech and digital, but not selling, wireless headphones are still selling okay
  - Rocket Book is selling in the Supply area for some Buyers and is being expanded for back to school
  - JPT America is being introduced with success to support large international enrollment of students (many from Japan)
    - Kokuyo starter display is selling well from JPT America, despite “horrible” binder sales, they did sell some binders from the Kokuyo assortment, appreciates the narrow footprint
  - Spectrum Uniform has been a great new ICBA vendor to work with so far
  - Cavalini Posters from McPhearson or Faire

### Merchandising & Marketing

- Members are using their Flex Spaces in a variety of ways:
  - Creating or expanding a specific rush queue
    - Cash register area divides space between gifts/tech/supply displays
  - Working to maintain current supply space and preventing apparel from taking space due to their growth
  - Uses flex space to feature supplies prominently during back to school
  - Created an area for kids' arts & crafts kits in trade area, using more space outside of regular supply area
    - Also, arts and crafts kits for kids were placed alongside youth clothing area in another store
  - A journaling station was created instore with different supplies and fun pen colors, making it an eye-catching area

### **BTS Ordering & Outlook**

- Lower price and basic items have gone down in sales in part due to IA, nicer items are selling, but not enough to make up difference in lost sales
- Supply chain issues are affecting backpack sales and selection
- Being conservative for fall on basics, but increasing lifestyle items

## Buyer2Buyer Course Materials Recap

The Buyer2Buyer Course Materials call started with a quick round of “What department is the hardest to get adoptions from?”

- The English department was the winner as being the most difficult to get adoptions submitted
- Other include Communications, Education, Physics, Economics, Nursing Art/Architecture, Humanities, and Entrepreneurship

Stores had a variety of ways they try to work with their campuses to collect those adoptions, from visiting campus departments, attending new faculty orientations, emailing, and all of those on the call use a collection tool of some sort.

45% of respondents stated their course material sales in dollars for FY2021 were up 1-9% while 36% stated they were down 1-9% with similar response when asked about the sales in units.

Enrollment numbers at the Institutions represented are looking positive for Fall 2022. One school mentioned international student enrollment was looking good, however first year student enrollment is down. Several stores mentioned there are still a lot of courses being offered virtually.

It was a mixed response when discussing whether stores are still doing rentals. A couple of the stores reported, they are doing them but it is a lot of manual labor and it may not be worth it going forward. Others are still promoting their rentals as a less expensive option for students.

Inclusive Access is increasing, with Cornell rolling out Equitable Access in the Fall of 2022. It will be offered to undergraduate students only with a flat fee model. They will be offering digital whenever possible but are making exceptions for students who prefer print. Three Rivers is starting their second year of Equitable Access. There were no complaints from students and the first year was a success. OER was discussed but wasn't being used a lot at any of the participating institutions.

Smartest Thing:

- Attend any Faculty fall orientations you can!
- Email faculty before they leave for the summer.
- Work with your IT department to find out the “key words” that may be sending you collection tool emails to spam/junk folders. Eliminating certain words can make a huge difference.

## Buyer2Buyer Course Materials – EA/IA Recap

The Course Materials Inclusive Access/Equitable Access call started with a lightening round of “What is keeping you up at night?” One participant said nothing keeps him up at night, while others mentioned

- IA/EA - how to get started
- All things work
- Uncertainty of the Fall back on campus plan
- Creating new revenue streams as course material revenue declines
- Changing of POS systems

In the poll, 45% of respondents estimated that IA is 0-20% of their CM business, with an additional 32% saying it was 20-40%. In the second poll 23% of respondents said they are not considering EA at all, with 55% calling themselves beginners. 23% are planning on implementing in the next 24 months.

Several stores mentioned they are still doing a lot of print business, although more courses are being converted to inclusive access models. Those still doing print business are still seeing strong rental sales. Most stores are converting access codes and courseware to inclusive access with very low opt out rates.

Some conversation between participants in balancing what is “fair” when it comes to EA when there is such a price difference in materials for disciplines. One participant stressed it’s not about price, but rather access. Another stated that “access on Day 1” really isn’t always true as there can be LMS issues, publisher delays and other bumps.

Smartest Thing:

- A shift from providing individual books to individual students and trying to provide savings one book at a time – to “what is most cost-effective, efficient way to provide all students their materials when classes start and remove one major point of friction in student learning process”
- Always keep in mind what is in the student’s best interest. Open communication with campus community is always a good thing.

## Buyer2Buyer Technology Recap

The Buyer2Buyer Technology call started with a quick round of asking “If could sell any tech product in your campus store, what would you be most excited to offer? Dream big!”

Entertainment and gaming specifically were prevalent among answers!

- Oculus VR headset – mentioned a few times
- Apple products – numerous mentions both for expanded assortment and simply getting stock due in!
- Gaming accessories
- Valve Steam Deck handheld gaming, VR
- A laptop for all students as part of digital assets within the EA program
- Dell gaming PC

**General Recap:**

- General feeling expressed by Members is a need new products and categories to stimulate sales.
- There is also a need to exchange ideas within the ICBA Community on “what’s hot?”

- Gaming seems like an opportunity, but most Members are not sure how to fully capitalize on this.
- While the pandemic initially caused some increases in Tech products, the discussion revealed a struggle among Members to uncover what the best ways to drive sales.
- Supply Chain issues, especially with Apple, are causing major headaches and lost sales.

### Sales Opportunities:

- Items Members would like to sell:
  - Oculus VR and other Virtual Reality gear (with reasonable profit margins, which is currently a major challenge!)
  - Gaming: merchandise and accessories (and even systems)
    - Some Members having success with LED lights.
    - Get involved with gaming and esports teams on campus both in store and out on campus.
      - [Home - Varsity Collegiate Esports - NACE \(nacesports.org\)](https://nacesports.org) is an organization that promotes esports and gaming on college campuses
    - Low awareness around campus that college stores can offer top gaming merchandise.
    - ICBA Partner *eSports Certified* offers a low-risk way to sell gaming products via an ecommerce affiliate link where ICBA Members earn commissions (contact [Office@ICBAinc.com](mailto:Office@ICBAinc.com) for more info).
- Scaling back assortments to avoid duplication and to make sure you show “good-better-best” options helps customers make good purchasing choices.
  - It also helps with visual merchandising and makes the shelf look “cleaner” and easier to shop.
  - If you are having success with “good-better-best” you may also consider a promotional or value offering below the “good” and then a premium offer that is above the “best.”
    - Ear buds and headphones are a good example of where this can work.
- Cross-merchandising may also be worth a try: especially with items like fashion bags/sleeves, where placement in a gift section may yield good results vs. keeping everything in the traditional Tech section.
- Trying to show more demo merchandise, especially interactive demo merchandise, may be an opportunity to increase traffic and drive interest (and sales).
- In-store Trade-in programs may be worth considering.
  - Power On currently has the best program for college stores.
- Some Member interest in potential vendor ICBA is speaking with who helps departments dispense with older or unwanted PCs.
  - Power On also provides a similar service.

### Overall Concerns:

- Supply chain challenges across multiple categories
  - Apple supply chain shortages clearly impacting stores that sell Apple.
    - Apple can be ordered from distributors Ingram Micro and Tech Data to supplement ordering directly from Apple.
    - Ordering M1 devices from Apple may be a good strategy while the industry waits on Apple to ship the M2 models.
- Ability to make reasonable profit on popular items

### Promotions/Marketing:

- Not many promotions being offered or even tried. This is an area of opportunity to drive sales and store traffic.

- Test & Learn is recommended.

## POS Systems

The POS Systems call started with a quick round of asking them to share what is their current POS and how long have they been using it.

- Clear conclusion: there is no single perfect system for all college stores
  - Needs and strategic direction dictates the type of system that is best for any given store
  - All have pros and cons
- General expressions of dissatisfaction (from mild to severe), regardless of which system Members are using
  - Systems used by call participants
    - PrismRBS; MBS; NetSuite; Booklog
  - Common themes:
    - System Providers not providing enough support, both during implementation and after implementation
    - Access to reporting seems to be a consistent problem
    - Access to critical financial data is often a challenge
    - Implementation and training are always more complex and takes more time than anticipated
    - Need for more advanced ecommerce and more advanced email marketing capabilities
- Many of the challenges mentioned on the call have been at least partially solved by other ICBA Members in various ways (some with the help of their system provider, some have been creative “do it yourself” solutions)
  - There seems to be some inconsistency in terms of what is communicated and how certain features work (regardless of system)
- Poll Results:
  - 31% do not plan to switch systems in the near future
  - 31% just switched systems in the last 18 months
  - 23% plan switch in next 5 – 24 months
  - 8% in the process of switching
  - 8% plan to switch in the next 2-3 years
- PRISM
  - The sale of PRISM (“Mosaic”) to Harris is a concern since there’s still a lot of information yet to come from Harris about the long-term plans
  - Delays in Mosaic meeting its promise have been frustrating
  - Some of the info they have been sending has not been reliable
  - Some have had challenges running sales events, others have been able to make it work
- Having your system tied to a book wholesaler has pros and cons
- Newer NetSuite users feel that ultimately, it will be a powerful tool, but the learning curve is bigger than anticipated and requires substantial technical expertise
  - NetSuite for Course Materials is not as strong as some other college store systems
  - Lots of advanced capabilities that will be considered over time
- Booklog
  - Challenges with their system supporting Inclusive Access programs
- MBS
  - MBS allows serialized bar coding
  - MBS has been responsive to support calls (24 hours or less)
- Very important to think about future system needs (2024 and beyond) as well as current needs
  - What will the General Merchandise to Course Materials ratio of sale become?

- The migration/trend toward Inclusive Access and Equitable Access CM programs means that system needs are changing
  - eCommerce capabilities?
- ICBA will check with NetSuite and MBS regarding compatibility with SensePass (ICBA's partner who offers e-wallet services)

## DEI Recap

ICBA will continue to amplify and share what our Member Stores are doing to support Diversity, Equity, and Inclusion on their campuses and as a retail best practice. The DEI Networking calls are a time to share ideas, get inspired, and discuss opportunities and goals. Overall, great ideas and honest conversation was had throughout the call whether attendees came to listen or share!

We began the DEI Networking call with our lightning round, asking all attendees, "Do you have access to DEI resources on your campus?"

- Many institutions have resources available to support campus store efforts
  - Safe zone training meeting offered
  - DEI office handles training
  - Entire team participates in DEI trainings
  - Courses are available for DEI online and in person
  - Participation online in training courses is a regular part of job duties
- There are also a variety of DEI initiatives, good campus support that offers professional development and training, holds a "One Campus" book reading each year, brings authors to campus
- Opportunity to work closely with accessibility office for students with disabilities

### **Discussion About Internal Initiatives:**

- Had proposed to Director of Auxiliary services to bring in more mannequins to accurately reflect the campus population, able to get more diverse mannequins <https://store.greneider.com>
- Juneteenth promos receiving pushback/criticism about capitalizing on holiday, asking if they should step back or continue? Many other holidays advertise sales, they sell diverse stoles for graduation with portions of proceeds going to support groups on campus and they are well received
- Have had organizational changes, rewriting job descriptions, and included a clause for DEI now part of job description and specific DEI interview questions added to interview process, now have what they call DEI Champions
- Uses DEI backgrounds for Zoom, displayed a few for group, created by institution
- In recent marketing, added staff members to model, had a group of different ages, backgrounds, and ethnicities – learned from Andy Crestodina's presentations at the ICBA Conference
- Offer pride merch year-round and have expanded their trade book assortment to include more Black/Latinx authors and characters
- Created more social media posts in English and Spanish since 68% of their student population is Hispanic, used subtitles/closed captioning with videos for people with disabilities, look for feedback on promotions and engage with specific departments to brainstorm together, seeks buy-in from key stakeholders, tries to promote and feature vendors who have DEI initiatives
- Ordered from Freedom Wear and will get their first order this month, more unique designs, less traditional, <https://freedomwearco.com>, was able to get 3x and 4x sizes
- Started using campus makeup data for assistance in ordering correct number of stoles for each group, always good to engage with campus communities – for instance, Men of Color group are offering ideas for bookstore
- Land's End plus size availability is impressive, they also do special order commission program
  - There is no upcharge on larger sizes even if vendor does
- Did a pop-up shop with a local vendor – Arctic Gear – and sold CWA knitwear on reunion weekend with good success, also local vintage shop did pop up and sold well, alums brought in old school gear and shop bought

them back

- Partnering with grad events and nursing school ceremonies

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