



OutdoorIndustry.org

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WebNews

Outdoor Retailer Upbeat and Setting Records Despite Market Turmoil
Featuring: Interview with Tom Barney

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Outdoor Retailer Summer Market set several records last week while marking its 30th birthday. Consider these numbers: 1,300; 7,000; and 455,000. Those represent preliminary estimates of the number of exhibitors, retail buyers and net square feet of exhibition space sold at the show as of Sunday afternoon. All represent double-digit increases over last year, when the numbers rebounded following a contraction of the show in 2009. More important than these metrics, however, may have been the shift in attitude. Vendors and reps said for the first time since 2008, retailers are looking to bring in new brands and planning to open or expand stores.

The mood was even upbeat at the New Exhibitor Pavilion, an air-conditioned tent Nielsen Expositions erected across the street from the northwest end of the Salt Palace to accommodate the overflow of exhibitors. While traffic was lower than the main floor, six of nine exhibitors interviewed said they had written orders and/or were leaving with lots of leads. Several said they were impressed with how Nielsen used free food, beer, coffee, swag giveaways and other promotions to drive retailers to the tent.

Exhibitors and retailers alike were struck by how news of Thursday's 500-point drop in the Dow Jones Industrial Average and Friday's historic downgrading of U.S. credit rating was barely mentioned at the show.

"At our Thursday and Friday night dinners we toasted our guests and said that despite the market being down 500 points we have a lot to be happy for," said Tom Barney, member of the OIA Board of Directors and CEO for Osprey Packs, which has added 13 employees this year to support its growth. "We almost matched our total Spring/Summer 2011 business before the show. We heard more news of store expansions than we have at any show. We are in growth mode."

