



DO IT BEST CELEBRATES RECORD-BREAKING YEAR AT FALL MARKET

👤 Lindsey Thompson 🕒 October 4, 2021 📁 Industry News 👁 653 Views

For the first time since February 2020, **Do it Best** members and vendors convened at the Indiana Convention Center for the co-op's fall 2021 buying market, held Sept. 27-30 in Indianapolis.

In addition to being the first in-person buying opportunity in nearly two years for Do it Best members, the event marked a chance for the co-op and its members to celebrate a record year for sales, which totaled \$5.2 billion, up 45 percent over the prior year. Also, attendees were able to celebrate Do it Best's 75th anniversary in person, an opportunity that wasn't possible last fall.

"A year and a half was simply too long to go without the opportunity to reconnect, and I've really enjoyed the conversations I've had with so many members on the market floor this week," says Do it Best president and CEO Dan Starr. "That experience is true every time we get together, of course, but especially this one because this year represents the culmination of everyone's commitment to deliver on a job exceptionally well done in 2021."

Retailers were excited about the opportunity to interact with products on the market floor again.

During the pandemic, Do it Best prioritized product sourcing and improvement in efficiencies to lessen the impact of supply chain interruptions for its members.

“Even prior to the pandemic, our buyers were aggressively negotiating with current vendors, doing a lot of line reviews,” says Do it Best director of communications Randy Rusk. “We were fortunate that our team had already started looking across all categories and strengthening those relationships ahead of when they needed to be leveraged, which allowed us to move more quickly.”

For example, Do it Best has spent the last several years developing relationships in the **paint channel**, and Rusk says having those **partnerships** helped Do it Best members become destinations in the category and have made sourcing this year more manageable.

“A resin shortage has hit the paint category, but because we had relationships locked in before the pandemic, we’ve been able to give our members more options in that area,” Rusk says.

That investment in product sourcing and cultivating supplier relationships was present on the market floor, where retailers explored trending categories, new store design innovations and more than 70 new vendors.

Exploring the Market Floor

At previous in-person markets, attendees were introduced to new segments of the market floor, including Category Solutions and Core Solutions. These spaces are curated by Do it Best merchandising managers to identify trends in specific categories and give retailers comprehensive buying options. Category Solutions highlighted different category planograms that included discounts and favorable dating and terms to allow members to get into categories they didn’t have or to refresh an existing category.

A storefront facade of the new Do it Best prototype store was on the market floor for retailers to explore.

“Category Solutions are not just a single vendor, but the best mix of various vendor products in that category,” Rusk says.

For the fall market, merchandise managers identified **outdoor living** as a key growth opportunity, as consumers invested in their outdoor spaces during the pandemic. At this market, Core Solutions featured 6,000 square feet of merchandised products, from bug spray and lawn care to grilling accessories and outdoor furniture.

“Core Solutions is all about creating the ultimate outdoor destination and features 240 planograms in outdoor living, outdoor power equipment, lawn and garden and more. Members could purchase parts of the display or the whole area if they wanted a complete reset,” Rusk says. “Demand for outdoor products

in 2022 will be as strong as it was last year. For members to go into spring successfully, they need to make decisions now.”

Do it Best also debuted a prototype store in 2021 and market attendees could get a closer look at all the features on the market floor. **Vassar Building Center** in Vassar, Michigan, was the first store to undertake the prototype design.

Cherié Jacobs, Do it Best store development manager, says the company launched the prototype concept to welcome a new generation of shoppers with spaces that include modern colors and design elements for the interior and exterior.

“These stores will have a more recognizable icon system, open sightlines and wider aisles for a more enjoyable shopping experience,” Jacobs says. “They will also offer the opportunity for members to feature something they are experts in or known for. Members will be able to tell their stories through vignettes throughout the store.”

Building for Growth

Getting back together in person and being able to see and interact with products and vendors was a key priority for the retailers who were on the floor.

Phil Groff, sales and marketing manager for PaulB Hardware, which has three locations in central Pennsylvania, was appreciative to be back in-person to network and see new products.

“For the same reason brick-and-mortar is important to our customers, getting a chance to see new products in person is a great opportunity for us to grow our business,” he says.

For Matt Smith, manager of Rathdrum Trading Post Hardware in Rathdrum, Idaho, seeing examples of merchandising on the market floor gives him ideas to take back to the store.

“If I see a display that’s enticing, it’s a good indicator our customers will be enticed too,” he says. “Virtual can be harder to shop and find what’s new and interesting, so I like being back in person.”

In pursuit of growth for its members, Starr says that Do it Best will focus on three main areas. Do it Best will work to execute growth objectives through investments in member growth, evolve the company’s e-commerce strategy to drive more customers in its members’ doors and continue to expand infrastructure to support growth.

“This last year tested our collective resolve like no other. But it didn’t diminish our drive,” says Starr. “If anything, it demonstrated just how much potential there is and how effective the co-op model is to drive

real growth. And it hasn't stopped us from making great advances to strengthen this co-op and drive our member's profitability."

The Do it Best Spring Market will take place Feb. 11-14 in Indianapolis.

