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Service Execution Key To Second-Half Success

By Alan Wolf -- TWICE, 9/8/2008 1:12:00 PM

Buffalo, N.Y. — Store-level customer service will become increasingly critical to CE retailers' success during the holiday selling season as consumers reconsider their electronics expenditures amid the economic downturn.

That's the outlook from **Associates Interactive**, here, a 1-year-old firm that develops custom training programs for sales staffs at large CE chains.

"Consumer behaviour is rapidly changing," said president/CEO Bob Richardson, who previously provided training for CE department associates at Walmart. "Their spending habits aren't what they've been in the past so it is critical that pre-sale customer service play an expanded role for retail stores looking to see a profitable second half of 2008."

Richardson believes the following trends will have a major impact on CE dealers during the back half of the year:

- a renewed focus on installation and in-home services, as consumers find themselves unable to overcome the complexities of the latest technologies and turn to experts for assistance;
- a greater focus on service quality as prices across retailers and channels become more consistent;
- major shifts in shopping patterns will occur as consumers alter their buying habits in response to rising gasoline prices;
- greater value placed by consumers on environmentally sensitive products and programs; and
- accelerated home entertainment upgrades, given the prohibitive cost of travel and the February 2009 digital broadcast transition.

Richardson also said digital content delivery via broadband will trigger new thinking about how consumers receive their information and entertainment. Smartphones, personal navigation devices, laptops and gaming systems are particularly well positioned to benefit from this opportunity, he said.

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The advertisement features a man in a light blue shirt and tie jumping joyfully on the left. To his right, a blue circular graphic contains images of Samsung appliances: a front-loading laundry unit, a dishwasher, a refrigerator, a range, and a microwave. Each appliance is labeled with its category name. The Samsung logo is in the top right corner, and the contact information is at the bottom.