

SET-SELL PLANNING: PREPARING FOR THE HOLIDAY RUSH

The end-of-the-calendar-year holiday season is a critical period for the numerous Hardlines subcategories.

Chris Burton, who oversees the Army & Air Force Exchange Service's (AAFES) Hardlines assortment as vice president (VP) of the Exchange Merchandising Directorate's (MD) Main Store Hardlines Division, told *E and C News* that the Exchange has developed a series of set-sell planners to help stores prepare for fall and holiday-period business. "Home Team," Toys; Sporting Goods; and Health and Beauty Care (HBC)/Cleaning and Pets, are some of the division's top categories.



AAFES FILE PHOTO

Toys and the holiday season go together, and AAFES is focused on updating side counters, endcaps and in-aisle assortments, starting in September. Shown here, a toy department aisle at the Clear Creek Shopping Center, Fort Hood, Texas.

HOME TEAM

When it comes to scheduling, Burton said that fall housewares merchandise collections "are typically ordered early each spring for store sets in August and September, while Christmas and winter collections are typically ordered mid-to-late spring for store sets in October and November."

Burton noted that several popular small appliance brands and items will be in plentiful supply during this busy time period. "Cuisinart, Instant Pot, Philips, Le Creuset, Pioneer Woman, Rachael Ray, Ayesha Curry, Bissell, Ashley, and Woodwick brands are all trending this year in the Home area," he noted. "For the holidays, the Instant Pot brand is leading the trend in multi-cookers, and Philips is leading the trend in air fryers."

The Hardlines VP expects multi-cookers and fryers to be "major traffic drivers for Veterans Day and Black Friday," with Instant Pot and Gotham Steel Cookware currently being the key "never-out-of-stock" brands "that customers search for specifically within their respective categories."

Burton said that seasonal set sell planners have been developed for key brand concepts such as Martha Stewart, Ashley, Serta, KitchenAid, Bissell, and for AAFES's own Celebrity Chef Shop, "and brokers work with store teams on a monthly basis to ensure promotional stock, signs, and

AAFES FYTD 2018 Top Home Team Bestsellers by Dollar Volume

SMALL APPLIANCES

- 1) Instant Pot 7-in-1 Pressure Cooker (6 qt.)
- 2) Keurig K200 Brewer (black)
- 3) Vitamix 5300 Blender (black)
- 4) Keurig K50 Brewer (black)
- 5) Panasonic Inverter Microwave (2.2 cubic feet)
- 6) Oster Microwave Oven (1.1 cubic feet)
- 7) Elite Platinum Digital Air Fryer (3.2 qts.)
- 8) Keurig K425 Brewer (black)
- 9) Aroma Digital Rice Cooker
- 10) Panasonic SS Microwave Oven (1.3 cubic feet)

KITCHENWARE

- 1) Hanger Set (30 count)
- 2) Gotham Steel Cookware Set (10 pieces)
- 3) Simply Perfect Trash Bin (45 liter)
- 4) Rubbermaid Tough Storage Tote (27 gal.)
- 5) Rubbermaid Clearview Latch Storage Box (66 qt.)
- 6) Simply Perfect Stainless Trash Bin (40 liter)
- 7) Hanger Set (12 count)
- 8) Rubbermaid Square Food Container (9 cups)
- 9) Rubbermaid Roughneck Storage Tote (31 gal.)
- 10) Homz Ironing Board with Striped Cover

Source: AAFES

fixtures are properly set. They also help communicate store-specific challenges to the buying staff, such as intermittent inventory needs and special customer requests."

According to Burton, Military Star card promotional signing "is critical for our bulk goods promotions, such as furniture and mattresses, and our key category sales, such as our semi-annual

cookware event, need signing throughout the department to reinforce the breadth of offers.

"Our monthly Chef Shop planner is also key to showcasing key housewares items, especially new product launches and upcoming demos."

TOYS

Burton said that for the all-important holiday season, the Toy department "is focused on updating our store presentations starting in September. Side counters, endcaps and in-aisle assortments will be changed out and updated to ensure we're offering our customers the newest and most sought-after styles for the season."

To guarantee that basic replenishment styles are kept in stock, he said, "We order every one-to-two weeks. For fashion one-time buys (OTB), we order in May and June to make certain that goods arrive in stores in time for the peak selling season."

The Hardlines VP said that "a few key brands that will be hot again this year" are expected to be LOL Surprise, Fingerlings and Hatchimals. "We also expect the STEM/STEAM category to continue its upward trend as the movement to use toys as educational tools grows," he added, referring to products supporting these ongoing trends in education.

Some new and re-emerging brands that Burton said that the Exchange "is investing in" for 2018 are Fancy Nancy, Pomsies and Harry Potter. He added that AAFES "strives to always be in stock in our key volume drivers from such brands as

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— **Chris Burton**, Vice President (VP), AAFES Main Store Hardlines Division, Merchandising Directorate (MD)



TOP SELLERS

HEALTH AND BEAUTY CARE – TOP THREE SELLERS YEAR TO DATE BY DOLLAR VOLUME

- 1) Fusion ProGlide Power Cartridge (4 count)
- 2) Fusion Power Cartridge (4 count)
- 3) Braun Dual V Mobile Shave M60b (blue)

CLEANING/PAPER/LAUNDRY – TOP THREE SELLERS YEAR TO DATE BY DOLLAR VOLUME

- 1) Tide Spring Meadow Liquid Pods (16 count)
- 2) Gain Flings Original (16 count)
- 3) Charmin Ultra Strong Bathroom Tissue (154 count)

PETS – TOP THREE SELLERS YEAR TO DATE BY DOLLAR VOLUME

- 1) Blue Buffalo Blue Wilderness Chicken Adult Dog Food
- 2) Blue Buffalo Chicken and Brown Rice Adult Dog Food
- 3) Frontline Plus for Dogs (3 pack)

SPORTS NUTRITION – TOP SELLERS YEAR TO DATE BY DOLLAR VOLUME

- 1) Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard Double Rich Chocolate Whey Powder (5 lbs.)
- 2) Animal Cuts (42 pack)
- 3) Lenny & Larry's Complete Chocolate Chip Cookie
- 4) Hydroxycut Hardcore Elite (100 count)
- 5) Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard Chocolate Whey Powder (2 lbs.)
- 6) Optimum Nutrition Gold Standard Vanilla Whey Powder (2 lbs.)
- 7) Cellucor C4 Ripped Cherry Limeade (30 servings)
- 8) BSN Syntha-6 Chocolate (2.91 Lbs.)
- 9) Optimum Nutrition Serious Mass Chocolate (6 lbs.)
- 10) Blender Bottle (28 oz.)

LAPTOPS – TOP SELLERS YEAR TO DATE BY DOLLAR VOLUME

- 1) MacBook Air (13.3 in.)
- 2) MacBook Pro (13.3 in., Space Gray)
- 3) MacBook Pro (13.3 in., Space Gray)
- 4) MacBook Pro (13.3 in., Space Gray)
- 5) MacBook Pro (15.4 in., Space Gray)
- 6) Hewlett-Packard Laptop (15 in., BS088NR)
- 7) MacBook Air (13.3 in.)
- 8) Hewlett-Packard Laptop (15 in., BS086NR)
- 9) Hewlett-Packard Laptop (15 in., BS087NR)
- 10) Hewlett-Packard Laptop (15 in., BW075NR)

Note: According to AAFES three of the Hewlett-Packard laptops are being refreshed, with new models being shipped out starting in late June.

Nerf, Lego, Hot Wheels, Barbie and Hasbro Games.”

With the continued close ties between feature films and toys, based on the upcoming movie release schedule, Burton said AAFES expects Aquaman, Transformers, Spider-Man, The Grinch and Wreck-It Ralph “to be strong sellers for the holidays.”

Burton said that AAFES's key Toy suppliers include Hasbro, Mattel and Lego. “We focus a great deal of effort providing forecasts and timely purchase orders to our suppliers to ensure production and shipping timelines are met. We ask that shelves be restocked in a timely manner and seasonal floor displays be put out as soon as they're received.”

SPORTING GOODS

Although Burton said the main selling season for Sporting Goods in AAFES stores is actually the spring, the Hardlines VP added, “Coolers, hydration, bicycles and a one-day event for firearms, drive the sales in the fourth quarter” for the Sporting Goods area.

“Product is ordered weekly, with the focus on ramp-up delivery for September/October to account for our overseas locations,” Burton said. “Best-selling brands for the holiday season are expected to be Yeti, Pacific Cycle Bikes and Valor Bikes. ... Sporting Goods also sees a lift in all major brands of firearms, particularly Smith & Wesson and Glock.”

Burton said those responsible for the Sporting Goods area for AAFES “are cognizant of the importance of a presentation at all times for Yeti, all major bike brands for the holiday season, and seasonal sport product.”

“The team provides a monthly forecast with a three-month lock for all best-selling product to ensure orders are flowing and consistent with leverage to adjust when needed,” he noted, adding that AAFES's key brokers in this area include Yeti Direct, Ira Green, Paragon, OSCWebco and RSR Group, Inc.

Burton explained that the preference “is to have all holiday stack-out buys and shelves look full for our key grab items and everyday best sellers.” To help achieve this, Burton said, the Sporting Goods team coordinates its key floor displays and items for the holiday season with the stores to assist in the merchandising effort.”

HEALTH AND BEAUTY CARE (HBC)/CLEANING/PETS

Burton noted that in this group of Hardlines subcategories, “Lift is applied to orders based on previous-year sales performance,” which bodes well for several brands and items, including CHI hair appliances; Braun and Norelco shavers; and Brookstone personal relaxation items.

“Stack-outs and endcaps of key advertised items” are what Burton said store personnel should focus on during the holiday period, with what he called “Top A-velocity replenishable items” being on the never-out-of-stock list during this busy shopping period.

—E and C NEWS

AAFES Top Toy Bestsellers By Dollar Volume

Trading Card Packs (Pokémon; Magic: The Gathering)
Playing Cards

“Evergreen” Games (classic toys and games such as
Jenga; Rubik's Cube and Monopoly)

Nerf Blasters

Darts

Hatchimals Collectibles

Black Panther Action Figures

Source: AAFES

AAFES Top Sporting Goods Bestsellers by Dollar Volume

All Major Bike Brands

Yeti,

HydroFlask

Products from All Major Firearms Manufacturers

Source: AAFES

PRINTERS – TOP SELLERS

52 WEEKS THROUGH MAY 2018

- 1) Epson XP-440 All-in-One Printer
- 2) Hewlett-Packard Envy 7855 All-in-One Printer
- 3) Hewlett-Packard Envy 7155 All-in-One Printer
- 4) Brother Inkjet Printer
- 5) Hewlett-Packard OJ5255 All-in-One Printer

Note: According to AAFES, printers ranking below the top five have only been available in stores for the past few months and other printers have not hit stores as of late June 2018.

Source: AAFES