

SPECIAL REPORT

Supporting the Independent



SuperZoo 2018 attendees at the after-party that gave them a chance to network with, learn from peers as well as unwind.



"Most pet food lines who offer frequent buyer programs do not offer them to online or big box sellers. This has made our job of being competitive as independents a bit easier,"

**Shane Howard,
Lebanon Pet**

"You have to make those contacts and meet with these people. You have to see and be seen! That would be a way of looking at how manufacturers commit to brick-and-mortars. They show up and exhibit at these shows,"

**Bill Trufant,
B&B Pet Shop**



Small brick-and-mortar independent retailers have always attended SuperZoo. The show helps them keep track of emerging industry trends, gain knowledge from the educational sessions the World Pet Association offers, gives them access to new products and provides them face time with manufacturers for valuable product insights and answers to questions they may have.

As competition in the pet retail industry gets tougher, manufacturers are taking a multi-channel approach to attracting a larger consumer base. This is resulting in independent pet retailers feeling marginalized. While last year manufacturers in the pet industry seemed to come together to address price conflicts and instituted Minimum Advertised Price (MAP) guidelines, the focus of this year's show seemed to be on addressing channel ambiguity and unnecessary conflict, so small independent retailers have an advantage either

with better merchandising solutions or a product that is exclusive to their stores.

Shane Howard of Lebanon Pet noticed that many manufacturers have really committed themselves to MAP and iMAP. "Many also offer select lines only to brick-and-mortar locations," Howard said. "Most pet food lines who offer frequent buyer programs do not offer them to online or big box sellers. This has made our job of being competitive as independents a bit easier," he said.

David Hayford of Tether Tug also had the same observation. "I didn't hear as much about MAP at this show, which means most people have addressed it. That's great news," Hayford said. Looking back on how far his company has come from where it was two years ago in terms of appealing to its customers, who are mostly independents, Hayford said, "When we first started we had no way to display it, poor signage and

some offerings that we weren't exactly proud of. Our first pricing sheet was an absolute mess. The first floor display we had was made of cardboard. Who knew dogs peed on cardboard?" he said.

At SuperZoo 2018, Tether Tug had a nice metal display made that holds its product well. "We stepped up the look of the attachments to Tether Tug that now stand tall. We offered a video monitor that attaches to the display," he said. Hayford believes this gives stores a new, unique product that helps sell itself—something they can be proud to display in their stores. "This is a huge investment for us, but we believe we have to give our customers the best chance possible to sell our product," he said.

Craig Weindling of Smiley Dog observed that there were a handful of manufacturers who are making a commitment to independent retailers by setting and enforcing policies to keep

□ **Cont'd on Pg. 4**

Pet Insight (ISSN 2164-9294), a monthly magazine, is published by Executive Insight Properties. Subscription rates \$75 per year in the US, \$100 Canada, all other countries \$150. Periodicals postage paid at Senatobia, Mississippi and additional mailing offices. © 2018 Pet Insight. All rights reserved. No item or portion may be reproduced without written permission from the Publisher. Postmaster: Send address changes to: Pet Insight, P.O. Box 2067, Issaquah, WA 98027.