

Using Consumer-Driven Design for Access and Sustainability

By Sal Gattone, PMI Board of Directors President, LIXIL



Sal Gattone

Last month, I had the opportunity to interact with colleagues who attended the Milan Design Week in April. They narrated tales of awe-inspiring showcases where the concepts of consumer-centric design and sustainability beautifully intertwined. As product developers, they highlighted the increasing recognition of an important idea: by incorporating user-centric features, intuitive interfaces and visually appealing designs, we can seamlessly integrate sustainability with practicality and adoption.

As an industry, we concur that consumer-centric design forms the backbone of developing water-efficient products. By placing end-users at the epicenter of the design process, we create solutions that not only significantly conserve water, but also resonate with user preferences, encourage sustainable behavior change, and elevate the overall user experience.

In this column, I delve deeper into these thoughts and share my perspectives on how we can enhance our consumer-centric design approach to create an even more significant impact.

An iterative design process

One powerful approach is adopting an iterative design process. The modern consumer seeks water products that are dually capable of conserving resources while delivering top-notch functionality. Through an iterative design process – which engages in a cycle of observation, prototyping, testing and refining – we can develop products that not only meet but exceed the highest performance standards. This process entails continuous revisions based on invaluable user feedback and rigorous assessment of environmental impact. By doing so, we can promptly identify inefficiencies, mitigate water waste, and develop solutions that are a win-win for both users and the environment. The outcome is a product design that fosters innovation, weaves sustainability into every fabric of the product's lifecycle, and maximizes water conservation.

Inclusivity is not negotiable

Designing for all is another pillar in our approach, making inclusivity in design and products a non-negotiable principle. Recent statistics from the Centers for Disease Control and Prevention reveal that about 27% of adults in the United States have some form of disability. The U.S. Census Bureau reports that nearly a quarter of the American population will be 65 or older by 2060. These figures compel us to view design and development from a broader perspective and to focus on products for ALL. By actively seeking insights from a larger, more diverse demographic, we can seek a deeper understanding of the physical and cognitive limitations that different individuals might face. This knowledge equips us to develop products that accommodate an array of abilities, fostering a culture of accessibility and inclusivity. By considering variables such as mobility, dexterity and sensory impairments, we can craft products that are universally usable and empowering.

From insights to impact

Ensuring that water-efficient products are user-friendly and integrate effortlessly into users' daily routines is paramount for instigating long-term behavior change and sustained water conservation efforts. The way we design water products can significantly influence user behavior by providing informative materials, visual cues, and real-time feedback. This education equips users with a clear understanding of their water consumption patterns and the ensuing environmental impact. By empowering users with this knowledge and insight, we can inspire them to play an active role in water conservation and make informed choices that contribute toward a sustainable future.

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All Who 'Come From Away' Are Welcome

By Kerry Stackpole, FASAE, CAE, PMI CEO/Executive Director



Kerry Stackpole

were celebrating the 90th anniversary of the Canadian Institute of Plumbing and Heating (CIPH) this year. Founded in 1933, the association has grown into a powerhouse, advocating for the needs and interests of its membership across the 10 provinces and three territories that comprise Canada.

In the shadow of the Signal Hill National Historic Site in St. John's, Newfoundland, CIPH brought together representatives from the more than 280 member companies that manufacture, sell and distribute plumbing, heating, hydronics, industrial PVF and water-works products and services to celebrate this truly extraordinary occasion.

They could not have picked a more beautiful or friendly spot for the celebration. Newfoundland and Labrador are world famous for their hospitality, generosity and compassion. On Sept. 11, 2001, following airplane attacks on the World Trade Towers, the Pentagon, and the forced downing by passengers in Shanksville, Pennsylvania, Newfoundland became the landing spot for 75 transatlantic planes headed for the United States but ordered out of the skies by the Federal Aviation Administration. With almost 13,000 passengers and crew aboard the planes arriving on their doorstep, the communities across Labrador and Newfoundland stepped up to house, feed and comfort passengers stranded by the attack, who had "come from away" – a term locals use to describe visitors.

What do you imagine the plumbing and heating industry was like in 1933? I was lucky enough to get a guided tour from our colleagues in Canada who

The history of Newfoundland is ripe with stories of hope and the resilience of its citizens. When Newfoundland, a dominion of the United Kingdom, ran out of money in 1934, they sought Britain's protection, suspending their constitution and trading their independence for governance by a six-member Commission of Government appointed by the king. The system of a six-member commission governed Newfoundland until 1949, when it became Canada's 10th province.

When the Canadian government banned cod fishing off its eastern coast in 1992, more than 30,000 people aboard boats and in fish processing plants lost their jobs in Newfoundland and Labrador. It took years for fishers – who had to make a switch to catching snow crab and lobster – to make any sort of economic recovery. Offshore oil and gas, aquaculture, tourism, mining, shipbuilding, and forestry now all provide employment opportunities and drive the province's economy.

I thoroughly enjoyed the hospitality and thoughtfulness shown by our Canadian colleagues at the 90th CIPH Annual Business Conference this year. It was clear how much everyone appreciated

the leadership of CIPH's longtime President and General Manager **Ralph Suppa**, as we took a pause to celebrate, cheer and recognize his outstanding contributions to the growth and success of the association during his 35-year tenure. Having announced plans to retire at the end of 2023, he was saluted by his colleagues, fellow industry association leaders, CIPH members, former board chairs, and the CIPH Board of Directors, all of whom praised his work ethic, innovations, and his many successes on behalf of the organization.

At PMI, we are ever grateful for our longstanding partnership with CIPH, the leadership of Ralph Suppa, and the commitment of the CIPH Board of Directors. PMI and CIPH signed their first-ever international Memorandum of Understanding in 2008. Ralph is a steadfast advocate and an active partner on issues impacting our industry across borders. His regular updates at the PMI Manufacturing Success Conference are always a hit and much anticipated by PMI members. Ralph will forever be part of our industry, and when the day comes, we will all wish him well in retirement. Until then, we look forward to continuing our vital work with Ralph.

Having announced plans to retire at the end of 2023, Ralph Suppa is a steadfast supporter and friend of PMI and the American plumbing manufacturing industry.



Report Highlights ‘Upstream, Downstream’ Water Solutions

By Ray Valek, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing Manufacturers International’s 2023 Annual Report, titled “Upstream, Downstream,” illustrates how plumbing manufacturers and allied industries contribute to solutions along the entire water value chain to assure access to safe, clean water for future generations.

Including contributions from all of PMI’s 37 members, the report highlights their achievements relating to water efficiency, sanitation, hand hygiene, sustainability, green building, and more. The report also explains how PMI highlights these innovations when representing members’ interests in technical, regulatory and legislative forums on issues such as water-efficiency standards, tariffs, counterfeit product protection, and extended producer responsibility. By delivering value through its work with policymakers, PMI helps members to achieve further successes in a fair and open marketplace.

In letters prefacing the report, PMI Board of Directors leaders **Sal Gattone** and **Martin Knieps** and PMI CEO/Executive Director **Kerry Stackpole** encourage plumbing and water industry stakeholders to think holistically about water resources and to collaborate with policymakers to develop synergistic solutions across the entire water value chain.

“Water shortages around the world will come with increased expectations for us and other stakeholders along the water value chain to decrease water use,” Gattone and Knieps state. “However, as we face this challenge, we must approach it holistically by focusing policymakers’ attention along the entire water value chain, both upstream and downstream from where our products are located within residential, commercial and public buildings.”

While summing up PMI’s latest accomplishment in his letter, Stackpole also renews an ongoing conversation among members about the question of where

the manufacturing industry can make the greatest environmental impact at this moment in time.

“The PMI Board of Directors gave a great deal of consideration to this question over the past year,” Stackpole stated. “After much discussion, the board decided to focus on how PMI and its members could contribute to sustainable water management through our Rethink Water initiative, as climate change and other factors cause water shortages.”

Rethink Water encourages systemic solutions and accelerated innovation

Creating a proactive water-saving scenario through PMI’s Rethink Water initiative will require industry leaders to spearhead a comprehensive and collaborative approach to water sustainability, in cooperation with government and various other stakeholders. This public-private partnership can drive a large-scale operation to achieve sustainable water management, spurring innovation and bringing a huge influx of jobs and manufacturing capabilities back to the U.S., the report explains.

The report emphasizes how dwindling water resources can be preserved through the enactment of systemic solutions and accelerated innovation. For example, legacy product replacement can quickly save significant amounts of water. Plumbing manufacturers have carried forward a long tradition of developing water-efficient, safe and durable products. The latest toilets, showerheads, faucets and other fixtures and fittings have built upon this history to achieve even greater water savings, convenience and environmental responsibility while delivering the safe and clean refreshment so essential to health.

To solve seemingly insurmountable problems relating to water and sanitation, the plumbing manufacturing industry must take small steps. “The first

of these steps is simply talking about the problem. These discussions lead to actions, first on a small scale, then on a larger stage as the evolution toward better water and sanitation solutions progresses,” the report states.

Report summarizes PMI’s recent accomplishments

The report also summarizes PMI’s recent accomplishments, including:

- With calls for extended producer responsibility legislation arising in various states, PMI partnered with the leading packaging industry advocates – the American Institute for Packaging and the Environment (AMERIPEN) – to assure PMI members benefit from “over the horizon” insights about new legislation and compliance schemes on the drawing board.
- With counterfeit plumbing products entering the U.S. marketplace through online venues, PMI filed complaints with the Department of Energy, Department of Homeland Security’s Custom and Border Protection and with owners of various online marketplaces including Amazon. PMI also supported the recently passed Integrity, Notification, and Fairness in Online Retail Marketplaces (INFORM) Consumers Act to address the loopholes in online marketplace accountability.
- PMI renewed industry opposition to tariffs on Chinese goods in comments to the U.S. Trade Representative and Secretary of Commerce. PMI continues to deliver frequent updates on tariff issues that first arose in 2019.

Read more about how the plumbing manufacturing industry is meeting challenges upstream and downstream at tinyurl.com/2p97jxrm.

PMI23 to Deliver Lineup of Exciting Speakers and Topics

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Experts on sustainability, the economy, artificial intelligence, PFAS and more will deliver crucial updates to attendees at the PMI23 Manufacturing Success Conference taking place Oct. 23-26 in Seattle.

Topping the list of exciting speakers is **Moogega Cooper**, planetary protection engineer at NASA's Jet Propulsion Laboratory (JPL), who will deliver the keynote address, sharing her life story and details of her role as a "guardian of the galaxy" to help keep Mars safe from earthly contaminants.



Moogega Cooper

Her keynote presentation, "Limitless," will aim to inspire plumbing manufacturers and others to pursue their dreams and overcome obstacles. Cooper, who has a Ph.D. in mechanical engineering and mechanics, will share leadership lessons learned from her journey to the top of a male-dominated field, insights on how perseverance pays off, and how diversity makes the JPL team even greater.

Focusing on sustainable business practices, packaging and more

As sustainable practices continue to rise in importance for plumbing manufacturers, Plumbing Manufacturers International has secured leading sustainability professionals to share their experiences and success stories.

Those interested in the latest green building achievements will want to attend the session on Seattle's Bullitt Center. Called the "greenest office



building in the world," the Bullitt Center generates its own electricity and water, collected from rain off the roof, states the center's website.

Opened on Earth Day in 2013, the Bullitt Center has been certified as a Living Building structure by achieving the goals of the Living Building Challenge (version 2.1), as described by the International Living Building Institute. To be certified as a Living Building, a structure is required to produce as much energy as it uses in a year, capture and treat rainwater for all its needs for at least 12 continuous months, and meet rigorous standards for certain materials and the quality of its indoor environment.

The center was created from the Bullitt Foundation's vision to promote urban sustainability in Cascadia, also known as the Pacific Northwest.

Larry Gottlieb, president of ResinTech Inc., will discuss per- and polyfluoroalkyl substances (PFAS) as they relate to water systems. Known as a global leader in ion exchange for water purification, ResinTech helps

distributors and operators worldwide improve the quality of their water, notes the company's website.

Gottlieb, a mechanical engineer, joined ResinTech in 1993 and helped improve operations and increase capacity. He leveraged his mechanical expertise as the company began making filter cartridges and high-purity water systems.

In 2020, ResinTech opened a state-of-the-art global headquarters and plant in Camden, New Jersey. The 360,000-square-foot complex is the first new ion exchange factory in the U.S. in more than 30 years, states the ResinTech website. ResinTech manufactures its own ion exchange resin from scratch, meeting rigid specifications without using solvents. The company produces other water treatment products, including granular activated carbon, water purification cartridges, and high-purity water systems.

A session led by the Seattle Water Department will cover how it carefully manages the city's Cedar River Municipal Watershed to support and supply clean drinking water to 1.5 million people in the greater Seattle area. The watershed covers 90,563 acres and hosts a rich diversity of plants, animals and habitats.



Bullitt Center, Seattle

Seattle owns almost all of the land within the watershed's hydrographic basin, which is protected for water supply, flows and wildlife habitat. Watershed management follows a Habitat Conservation Plan that covers the city's water supply and hydroelectric operations and protects and restores habitats of fish and wildlife that may be affected by these operations.

Dan Felton, executive director of the American Institute for Packaging and the Environment (AMERIPEN), will provide the latest information on regulations and bills relating to extended producer responsibility (EPR). An important topic for plumbing manufacturers, EPR shifts responsibility for recycling and safe disposal of products and packaging from local government and taxpayers to the products' producers. PMI joined AMERIPEN in 2022 to gain additional insight and influence on state and federal bills related to single-use plastic and packaging.

In addition, **Stephanie Tanner**, lead engineer for the EPA's WaterSense pro-



Dan Felton

gram, will share an update on the program.

Trade and the economy

PMI23 sessions will provide updates on important trade policies and the economy.

Gary Stanley, director, Forest Products & Building Materials Division – U.S. Department of Commerce, will lead a session on various trade issues important to plumbing manufacturers. Stanley, who has presented at previous PMI Manufacturing Success Conferences, oversees an office of 10 industry and international trade specialists who monitor a wide range of sectors, including aluminum, building products, chemicals, forest products and steel.

His team undertakes industry trade analysis, shapes U.S. trade policy, participates in trade negotiations, and organizes trade promotion and facilitation pro-



Stephanie Tanner



Gary Stanley

grams to improve the global competitiveness of the U.S. materials industries. They also work with other U.S. agencies in developing a public policy environment that advances U.S. competitiveness at home and abroad.

Taylor St. Germain, speaker and senior forecaster, ITR Economics, will present an economic outlook tailored for plumbing manufacturers.

An experienced economist, St. Germain provides consulting services for small businesses, trade associations, and Fortune 500 companies across a spectrum of industries.

In his five years with ITR Economics, he has worked with various distributors, manufacturers and producers, helping each client navigate the business cycle and optimize their corporate planning strategy. He has spent time in the tech industry providing market intelligence to electronics OEMs, semiconductor companies, and component manufacturers. St. Germain has been featured in OEM Magazine and on the Fab Lab and Wealth Formula podcasts.



Taylor St. Germain

Jerry Desmond and **Stephanie Salmon**, PMI's government affairs consultants, will deliver the latest news on critical advocacy and legislative topics that impact the plumbing manufacturing industry.

Other important topics to be covered include artificial intelligence and drought as well as a panel discussion on closing the skilled labor gap. Look for registration to open soon!



Jerry Desmond



Stephanie Salmon



Seattle's Lotte Hotel, site of the PMI23 conference

PMI23: Experience Seattle's Amazing Vistas, Art and More

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Seattle's stunning waterfront views of Puget Sound, amazing architecture, quirky parks, and striking art exhibits will likely inspire attendees of the PMI23 Manufacturing Success Conference to extend their stay.

Taking place at the Lotte Hotel in downtown Seattle, Oct. 23-26, PMI23 places Plumbing Manufacturers International members in the heart of the city known for its beauty, tasty coffee, and grunge music roots.

Historic buildings and breathtaking views

A short walk or car ride will take you from the Lotte Hotel to many amazing sites around the city. Seattle's iconic Space Needle, a designated landmark,

delivers stunning skyline views as the building rises 520 feet above the city's Lower Queen Anne neighborhood.

For those who would like to take in the mountains, fresh air and put some miles on their hiking shoes, a visit to three of Washington's impressive national parks – Olympia, Mt. Rainier and North Cascades – should be added to your vacation agenda.

Soak up art and music history

Fans of famed Seattle glass artist **Dale Chihuly** will want to check out the Chihuly Garden and Glass, one of the most beautiful exhibits in Seattle. Watch live glass-blowing demonstrations while enjoying lunch or a drink at the new Art Plaza.



Music fans will want to check out the Museum of Pop Culture (MoPOP) which features items from hip-hop and grunge music artists, and an extensive **Jimi Hendrix** collection.

Be sure to mark your calendar for the PMI23 Manufacturing Success Conference. (safeplumbing.org/pmi23)

Learn Persuasive Communication Skills at PMI Workshop

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Are you looking to better influence, communicate with, and provide more value to your colleagues and others? Be sure to register for the Plumbing Manufacturers International Inspiring Leaders Workshop, "Persuasive Communications," on Aug. 17 from 1-2:30 p.m. CT.

Workshop leader **Hope Timberlake** will share powerful strategies for communicating with increased clarity, persuasion and impact – whether you're communicating with leaders, stakeholders or team members. Participants will learn how to create and deliver tailored persuasive messages with greater confidence and control. Timberlake will provide individualized feedback to attendees as they practice their persuasive communication skills.

Timberlake, author of the book "Speak Up, Dammit! How to Quiet Your Fears, Polish Your Presence, and Share Your Voice," focuses her training on per-

suasive messaging, executive presence, influence skills, and working well cross-functionally. By creating rapport and building trust, Timberlake empowers people to excel as communicators and leaders. Her style has been described as energetic, experiential and results-oriented.

In the past year, Timberlake has spoken at a variety of events, including the Power Up Conference, Paylocity Elevate, Archer Daniels Midland Women Event, Woodruff-Sawyer Women in Finance, Stellantis Women Engineers, and at the American Society for Laser Medicine and Surgery. For more than 15 years, she has worked with a wide range of companies, such as Airbnb, Autodesk, Dropbox, Gap, Intel, PlayStation, Williams Sonoma, and many smaller, rapidly growing companies.

PMI members can register for the workshop on the PMI website (tinyurl.com/ymakyd2z).



PMI Inspiring Leaders Program and Workshops are designed for all leaders at all levels of your organization. The August workshop and others throughout the year help participants build important leadership skills; these learning opportunities culminate with a more extensive program at the PMI23 Manufacturing Success Conference.

This year's PMI Inspiring Leaders Program takes place at Seattle's Museum of Flight on Oct. 23, the first day of the PMI23 Manufacturing Success Conference. Facilitated by **Nicole Bianchi**, this year's program, "Leading with Clarity and Tough Conversations," explores being intentional as leaders and clear on leadership philosophy, setting expectations, building relationships, and having conversations that matter.

Don't Miss the July 25 D.C. Virtual Legislative Forum!

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Water recycling, the housing outlook, and trade issues will top the agenda for the Plumbing Manufacturers International Washington Virtual Legislative Forum on July 25 from 1-3 p.m. CT.

Open to all PMI members as a benefit of membership, the forum will feature three speakers: **Danushka Nanayakkara**, the National Association of Home Builders' assistant vice president for forecasting and analysis; **Greg Fogel**, the Water-Reuse Association's director of government affairs and policy; and **Edward Steiner**, senior director, international trade and governmental relations, for Sandler, Travis & Rosenberg.

Nanayakkara will share an analysis and forecasts relating to the broader macro-economy, housing demand, supply-side challenges, and single-family and multifamily housing. She also will focus on the effects of tighter monetary policy and factors that are preventing more construction. Nanayakkara oversees the



activities of the forecasting and analysis section of the NAHB's economics group, which produces housing market analysis, industry surveys and economic forecasts.

Fogel will present on federal policies and programs that impact and support

water recycling and how the federal government is coordinating to advance water recycling. He leads the Water-Reuse Association's federal policy work, including its legislative and regulatory advocacy program.

Steiner will deliver an update on trade, including tariffs and customs issues. With more than two decades of experience in public policy and international trade and development, Steiner has spoken and written on a variety of trade and customs-related issues, such as Section 301 and 232 tariffs and tariff exclusions, ocean shipping reform, e-commerce, and product and food safety.

Learn more and register today! (tinyurl.com/5583ktwx)



Danushka Nanayakkara



Greg Fogel



Edward Steiner

Show Your Company Pride and Sponsor PMI23!

PMI members run innovative companies, adding new services and products all the time. So why not toot your own horn and show your company pride by sponsoring the PMI23 Manufacturing Conference in Seattle, Oct. 23-26?

New this year, sponsors get the opportunity to play their company video in front

of all the meeting's attendees. The higher your sponsorship level, the more your video gets played. Sponsors also receive one or more complimentary conference registrations; visibility across all of PMI's communication platforms, conference signs and materials; and more.

All sponsorship levels spotlight your

company and signal to the rest of the industry that your team is an important part of our mutual success.

Learn more about the benefits of sponsorship! (tinyurl.com/ycxr9md5)



PMI to Host July 11 Webinar on New Law for Online Sellers

By Judy Wohlt, PMI Communications Team, Valek and Co.

Plumbing Manufacturers International will host the webinar “New Law Governing Online Platforms and Sellers – What Plumbing Manufacturers Need to Know” on July 11 from 1-2 p.m. CT.



Jessica Rich, of counsel and senior policy advisor for consumer protection with Kelley Drye & Warren LLP, will guide PMI members through the requirements of the new INFORM Consumers Act and how it affects both online marketplaces and sellers. She will share details on how the Federal Trade Commission and state attorneys general are likely to enforce the new law and what is at risk for sellers and how they should prepare.

Rich counsels companies on a range of issues related to advertising and consumer privacy, including legal compliance, agency investigations, and engagement in legislative and regulatory processes.

As former director of the Bureau of Consumer Protection with the Federal Trade Commission, Rich is one of the nation's leading experts on consumer protection, with years of experience drawn from government service, consumer advocacy, and private practice. Rich served as director of the FTC's Bureau of Consumer Protection from 2013 to 2017, capping a 26-year career as a leader and innovator at the agency. During her FTC tenure, she launched and led the FTC's first privacy enforcement and policy work; built the privacy program from a small team to the signature FTC program it remains today; established the FTC's first technology lab; brought hundreds of enforcement actions against large and small companies; and steered the agency through rapid technological and regulatory change.

After departing from the FTC, Rich served as vice president for advocacy at Consumer Reports, as an independent consultant, and as a distinguished fellow at Georgetown Law's Institute for Technology Law and Policy.

All employees of PMI member companies can participate in this valuable opportunity to learn more about the new law governing online platforms and sellers.

Register today on the PMI website (tinyurl.com/2r5nexta).

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Using Consumer-Driven Design (Contd.)

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As industry professionals, we have the responsibility to drive positive change and stimulate innovation. We can develop solutions that don't leave anyone behind by engaging in continuous and inclusive dialogue with consumers and by conducting thorough research. In

doing so, we foster a collaborative community that understands, values and promotes sustainability in every aspect of their lives. This shared vision and collective effort is the fuel that will power us toward a more sustainable future, one product at a time.