

# DESIGN CENTER Forum 2008

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Design Center managers and designers from across the country convened in San Diego last week for the sixth annual DESIGN CENTER FORUM 2008, produced by Artisan Design Group.

For two days, the energy and enthusiasm of the participants and presenters trumped the tough market, with a program that provided an opportunity to address today's market issues, prepare for

the future and get motivated and revitalized in the company of some of the best people in the industry.

The Forum's Keynote speaker, nationally recognized speaker and author John Jenson, started with a strong focus on this year's theme, *The Pursuit of Excellence*. His high energy approach helped participants take a personal look at how to design, package and deliver themselves for both success and personal satisfaction.

Looking toward the future, "Innovate 2008" provided two perspectives on the changing nature of the market and what's needed to succeed. Lenette Hewitt, Vice President of Urban Housing Partners provided the builder perspective, and Jaimi Julian Thompson, President of Artisan Design Group, gave insights into design-center specific concerns.

An industry panel of today's and tomorrow's trends was once again an attendee favorite. Deborah Adams, marketing manager, Residential Interior Design Community for Stainmaster Carpets, painted a picture of the colors that are in now and coming soon, while Maria Muto-Porter, editor of Builder Design Center Magazine, presented a session on going green and outlined what to expect in products innovation, and Jaimi Julian Thompson illustrated trends in merchandising for showrooms and design centers.

Practical, revenue-enhancing skills were supported by breakout sessions such as "Customer-centric Selling", "Winning Over Objections" and "Upgrades and ROI", as well as roundtables on adding revenues after close of escrow, exceeding customer expectations, and technology progress. Topics such as "Managing Up" and "Teambuilding and Morale in Times of Change", presented by Dave Popple, Ph.D., corporate psychologist for Artisan Design Group, helped people address the very real challenges of this market.

Participants left the conference renewed and ready to return to face the daily challenges of the housing industry. As Angela Hardie, design center manager for Robertson Douglas Group homebuilders in New Jersey stated, "The forum was informative and invaluable, in maintaining a positive outlook during the difficult market we are in...It was the spark needed to ignite a profusion of ideas at just the right time."