

## Cleaning and Polishing Showing Sophistication

GURNEE, Ill. — Weiman Products LLC is an outstanding example of just how dynamic products as seemingly mundane as furniture polishes and cleaners can be. The company has leveraged its ability to track lifestyle trends into impressive sales growth.

Weiman offers a range of wipes, cleaners and polishes geared to the materials and surfaces found in today's most popular upscale appliances and fixtures. According to president and chief executive officer Carl DeMasi, the company is positioned as a premium line of top-quality products that is based as much as possible on natural ingredients that are biodegradable and environmentally friendly.

Although the company still sells the furniture polish that was its first product more than 65 years ago, it now offers cleaners and polishes for the hottest appliances, fixtures and materials, including cook tops, flat screens and laptop computers. DeMasi points out, for example, that such materials as granite, quartz, copper and corian are highly popular now, and consumers are looking for more effective ways to clean them and maintain their appearance.

"We closely watch the new types of appliances, building materials and furniture that are being used in new homes, and we watch the trends in home decoration," he explains. "Once we see a trend emerging, or feel that a trend is inevitable, we source the materials we want our products to clean, and we develop a wish list of attributes so our chemists can know how we want them to perform."

Product formulation then begins, with ongoing tests to ensure compatibility with the target material. "Numerous test parameters are set, which the product has to pass in order to be marketed," DeMasi adds. "We also try to work closely with the furniture and appliance manufacturers to develop

the best product possible."

The approach appears to be working well. According to Information Resources Inc., Weiman achieved a 20.9% gain in sales to \$4.8 million to become the second-ranked brand in the specialty cleaners/polish category for the 52-week period ended April 16 (based on sales through food, drug and discount stores excluding Wal-Mart Stores Inc.). In addition, the company's sales in the cloth furniture polish/cleaners segment soared nearly 234% to \$2.4 million, giving it the No. 3 spot in the category. Finally, Weiman's sales in the oven/appliance cleaners/degreasers segment totaled \$6.4 million, making it the No. 2 player behind Reckitt Benckiser PLC's Easy Off Oven Cleaner.

That kind of growth has been achieved by winning shelf space at such national chains as Wal-Mart Stores Inc., Target Corp., Kroger Co. and Home Depot Inc.

Last month Weiman bolstered an already-strong product lineup by acquiring J.A. Wright & Co., a silver and metal care company. "The merging of Wright with Weiman will strengthen both product lines and allow us to boast two of the top-selling products in their categories, Wright's Silver Cream and Weiman Cook Top Cleaner," says DeMasi.