RAYMOND M. KARSTENSEN

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# CAREER SUMMARY

Extensive experience in product and account management, merchandising, marketing, business development, and selling a wide variety of products. Hands-on experience with vendor and product selection, promotional and product development, building vendor and customer partnerships, sales and product training, and development of print and online media. Dedicated and hard-working team leader with excellent negotiating, communication and organizational skills.

# PROFESSIONAL EXPERIENCE

#### LAGASSESWEET and UNITED STATIONERS, Deerfield, IL 2008 to present

#### The nation’s leading wholesaler of Janitorial, Foodservice, Paper and Safety Supplies.

##### Customer Merchandising Manager, National Accounts

Responsible for sales, profit dollars, account management, business development, and training for all divisions of Staples (Advantage, Online and Retail), Quill.com, Coastwide Laboratories and Medical Arts Press. Quote all pricing including annual price files. Perform GAP analysis of current offerings and sell Janitorial, Foodservice, Paper and Safety products for online and retail stores. Conduct new product, catalog review and business review meetings. Perform sales and product training for the Staples and Quill sales reps. Create promotions, track promotional dollar spend by business unit and responsible for annual budget.

* Improved 2013 overall margin by 1.4% and surpassed sales plan, despite Staples moving several vendors to direct purchase.
* Sold new line of Bright Air air fresheners which resulted in first year sales of $760,000.
* Increased largest vendor (Reckitt Benckiser) sales 43% in 2013, 24% in 2012 and 61% in 2011 by securing many new product additions and by creating aggressive online and retail promotions.
* Increased online and retail product assortment by 977 skus in 2013.
* Negotiated Back to School retail promotions with two key vendors resulting in $946K in sales in 2013.

#### SPECIALTY STORE SERVICES, Des Plaines, IL 2007 to 2007

Supplier of store fixtures, displays and supplies for the small retailer.

##### Merchandising Manager

### Responsible for achieving sales and gross profit dollar goals on the entire product assortment. Merchandised products in a bi-annual 88 page retail store catalog and a bi-annual 148 page video store catalog, sale flyers and emails. Vendor and product selection, negotiated costs, determine competitive pricing, catalog and page layout, copywriting and proofreading. Created trade show flyers and package stuffers. Trained, motivated and supervised a staff of two.

* Improved GP% 63 basis points by performing a competitive pricing analysis.

**EDUCATIONAL RESOURCES, Elgin, IL 2004 to 2006**

Supplier of K-12 educational software and computer hardware.

### Senior Product Manager

### Productivity, science, arts and creativity software, keyboarding, computer hardware, and teacher tools. Responsible for achieving sales and gross profit dollar goals on the above lines. Merchandised 35 pages of products in a bi-annual 100 page catalog, 2 sale flyers per year, monthly emails and on EdResources.com. Vendor and product selection, negotiated costs, determine competitive pricing, catalog and page layout, copywriting and proofreading. Responsible for all aspects of coop advertising money including forecasting, selling ad space, billing and collection. Create marketing pieces for Inside Sales, IT Solutions and 20 trade shows per year.

* Responsible for the Microsoft Student Select program. Created all marketing materials and on-line demo. Worked with JourneyEd to create the web site journeyed.com/edresources.
* Improved GP dollars by $159,000, as the leader of the COGS Project Team in 2005. I negotiated $79,000. in cost reductions, program improvements and increased coop advertising dollars.

**QUILL.COM, Lincolnshire, IL 2000 to 2003**

### Subsidiary of Staples and the leading business-to-business direct marketer of office and school supplies, furniture and technology products.

### Product Manager

### Filing, file storage boxes, binders, presentation, indexes, desk accessories, cash handling, and custom imprinted products. Drove top line sales by developing promotional plans while managing gross profit dollars. Managed product line sales of $114 million. Merchandised 120 pages of products in a bi-annual catalog, 100+ sale flyers per year, emails and on Quill.com. Negotiated annual vendor program improvements with existing vendors and complete programs with new vendors. Vendor and product selection, negotiated costs, determined competitive pricing, page layout, copywriting, proofreading and forecasting. Coordinated and worked the Quill brand product’s booth at trade shows.

* Achieved $2.7 million in annual cost savings for Quill brand file and hanging folders, file storage boxes, binders, report covers, fastener folders and mesh desk accessories in 2003.
* Negotiated 22% increase in over and above funding by charging vendors to participate in monthly promotions in 2003.
* Increased Avery binder sales by 5.2% in 2003 by re-merchandising the category to trade up the customer, expanded the assortment and created aggressive promotions for print and online.

**AMERICAN HOTEL REGISTER COMPANY, Vernon Hills, IL 1986 to 2000**

The world’s largest distributor of hospitality supplies.

**Director of Amenities** (1998 to 2000)

Amenity collections, paper products, candy, coffee, disposables, personal care, laundry bags, pens, and decorations. Developed custom amenity programs with customers, sales and advertising departments. Purchased components and manufactured custom, stock and hotel chain amenity collections. Negotiated complete vendor programs annually. Vendor and product selection, pricing, proofreading, copywriting, purchasing, and inventory control. Performed product line training to the sales departments. Hired, trained, motivated, and supervised a staff of five.

* Learned the product line, the manufacturing of custom, stock and hotel chain amenity collections and hired and trained two new associates all within four months.
* Created Registry private label paper products, disposable cameras and coffee/condiment packs..

**Product Manager** (1989 to 1998)

Housekeeping, vacuum cleaners, bathroom hardware, small electrics, safety/security, material handling, storage products, and luggage carts. Managed $45 million in category sales, supplier negotiations, sales strategy, and inventory management as well as managing three direct reports. Performed product line training and created training videos for the sales departments.

* Maintained 20%+ sales increase every year from 1992 through 1998 by creating a sale flyer page rotation program and continually adding new products to the catalog and web site.
* Created Registry private label hair dryers, coffeemakers, vacuum cleaners, irons, ironing boards, luggage carts and a motorized maid's cart.
* Increased inventory service level from 89% to 94% and inventory turns from 5.1 to 6.5.

**Buyer** (1986 to 1989)

Door and bathroom hardware, material handling, and storage. Purchased and expedited 1,500 products, corrugated boxes and shipping supplies for two distribution centers. Forecasted future purchases based on seasonality and promotional sales history.

# EDUCATION

Bachelor of Science, Industrial Supervision, Northern Illinois University, DeKalb, IL

Associate of Arts, Liberal Arts, Richard J. Daley College, Chicago, IL

# TECHNICAL SKILLS

Excel, Outlook, PowerPoint, Picture Manager, Hyperion, and Adobe Acrobat Professional