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Marcum Symposium Addresses the Future of Trade Shows

By [Tyler Shultz](#) | Thursday, June 2, 2022



Co-founder of Blue Ensign LLC Tom Nastos delivered a keynote speech on the omni-channel aspect of future trade shows.

After a two-year hiatus, the **Marcum LLP Consumer Products & Retail Symposium** returned to an in-person session on May 19 at the **E-Central Downtown Los Angeles Hotel**. The event focused on the future of the trade-show landscape while also discussing the outlooks for consumer-products industries such as electronics, toys, accessories, food and beverage, apparel and e-commerce, among others.

Head of Consumer Products and Retail for Marcum Ron Friedman began the symposium six years ago with a goal of getting people in the industry together to discuss topics of interest to the retail industry. After writing an article before the COVID-19 lockdown regarding the future of the trade-show industry, Friedman set out to gather the industry to discuss where the future lies as events are returning to in-person capacities while still having the ease and convenience of the digital aspects that were introduced during the pandemic.

“I have clients in the apparel industry, and many of my better apparel people said they don’t need to go to trade shows,” said Friedman. “I see customers when I’m in New York or in Los Angeles. I can speak with them on **Zoom**, which is what everyone did during the lockdowns. So I wondered what the future of trade shows was and what needed to change.”

Friedman believes that as the trade-show industry continues to delve into the digital space, the younger generation is going to truly take hold of the digital capabilities that can be brought to trade shows and push the industry into something new and exciting. Friedman used a baseball analogy to illustrate his point of young people implementing an idea and how it can go from something foreign to one generation to the norm for the next.

“In **Major League Baseball**, they’re now putting a time clock between pitches in the minor leagues. The guys currently in the major leagues, they’re old school, and they do things their way—they’re going to hit and pitch when they want. In the minor leagues, they have a pitch every 20 seconds and speed the game up,” Friedman said. “You take the young people in any

industry that works with consumer products—those young people are going to be the ones who do things differently. The old people are going to leave and the new people are going to come in and they're going to be used to the new way of doing things and want their pitch clock.”

Robert Krieger, president of **Krieger Worldwide**, was a guest speaker brought in to discuss current ongoing supply-chain issues and how to best deal with them, as well as offering a bit of advice for how to avoid them. Krieger mentioned some invoices declared to U.S. Customs and Border Production could be non-dutiable, allowing for savings. He cited Section 321 in the CBP and the Trade Facilitation and Trade Enforcement Act of 2015, which describes *de minimis* and could lead to not having to pay duty on product completely under certain circumstances.

“For every problem there are many solutions, so don't be deterred by a tough market because you can be successful just by understanding what's going on and charting a path around the problem,” Krieger said.



Krieger Worldwide president Robert Krieger was a guest speaker on the ongoing supply-chain issues.

Krieger also noted that there was a new commissioner of U.S. Customs and Border Protection, which could lead to unknown things coming down the pipeline, typically both good and bad.

The main portion of the symposium was a keynote speech by Tom Nastos, co-founder of **BluEnsign LLC**. In discussing the trade-show industry, Nastos called upon his years of experience working as the former chief commercial officer of the **Global Fashion Group**.

“Future events will be B2B omni-channel. Retailers are going to want the convenience of digital to be included in physical shows, and they want it to be seamless. They don't want to have a digital and a physical with two separate registrations and processes,” said Nastos. “I think it's clearly going there. I think the challenge is to get people accustomed to a new way, and I think that does sometimes take time, but it's coming either way.”

To illustrate his point, Nastos brought up the recent **FashionGo Week Palm Springs** as an example of how trade shows can adapt to a digital future. That trade event featured digital tools including StyleMatch+ that brought the ease of digital search to an in-person trade show.