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NEWS

Small Business Economic Outlook Improves

A new survey released today shows an improving climate for small businesses. The National Federation of Independent Business (NFIB) survey registered a reading of 88.9, indicating improving sentiment for the second consecutive month. The total falls just short of 90, which is the benchmark by which the survey measures positive growth. The results have encouraged the NFIB enough to predict that positive economic gains will arrive shortly. "We've been suggesting that we will be slightly negative this quarter and push through to positive in the third [quarter]," NFIB Chief Economist William Dunkelberg said.

Out of 10 areas that the survey measured, nine were either flat or positive, with credit concerns remaining the lone trouble. A total of 16% of the participating businesses said loans were harder to get than the previous quarter – the highest reading since 1982. "They expect it to be difficult to get financing over the next six months," Dunkelberg said. "In spite of the heavy easing that's going on they're not seeing a real optimistic outlook."

The May reading represented a gain of 2.1 points, compared with the 5.8-point improvement seen in April. A total of 12% of companies said they expected the economy to improve (a large gain over previous months), and more businesses planned to increase inventory, though there are no plans yet to increase hiring.

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Quality Certification Alliance Seeks Not-For-Profit Status

The Quality Certification Alliance (QCA), an organization focused on certifying the safety of industry products, announced that it recently filed for not-for-profit status with the Internal Revenue Service. Once the application is granted, the QCA can become a membership-based organization open to companies that import or manufacture promotional products. "The organization always envisioned itself opening up for membership," said D E Fenton, QCA executive



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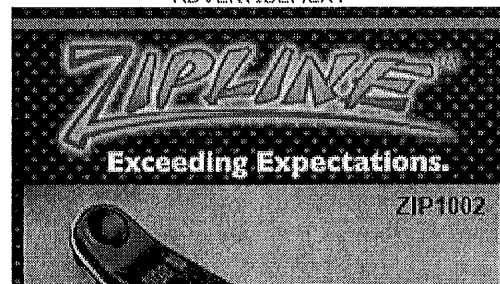
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director, in a statement. "For the past five months, we've been working diligently to fulfill our commitment to the industry to develop an organization and provide tools that will serve to validate members' compliance efforts."

The QCA is continuing to develop several benefits for its members. According to the alliance, its members will benefit from negotiated audit costs and special pricing on fluorescent X-ray guns for product testing. Members will also receive access to tools designed to help with certification as well as regular updates on laws.

"The QCA initiative goes beyond helping members design processes and procedures to insure the promotional products we manufacture and import meet appropriate standards today and in the future," said Jonathan Isaacson, CEO of Gemline (*asi/56070*). "The outcomes give our customers the ability to buy with confidence as it relates to quality and compliance and this benefits the industry as a whole."

With the goal of attaining improved product safety and measurable compliance to regulations, the QCA was formed in July 2008 by 14 industry companies. The alliance is expected to receive non-profit status later this year.

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The Joe Show: Eco Products

This August, *Counselor* magazine will publish its second annual HOT Issue. The whole issue will be dedicated to the people, places and topics that are the most popular – or, hottest – in the ad specialty industry.



To kick off the HOT Issue, Managing Editor Joe Haley is asking for your help in picking the coolest products on the market today. Each week, we'll present a new episode of The Joe Show, where we'll show off new products in different categories. And then it will be up to you to vote on the hottest product of the bunch.

This week, we offer some of the latest eco-friendly items available in the market. This growing category is becoming more of a staple for suppliers and their offerings are extremely varied. Check out some of the latest in this video. [Click here](#) to see a video of all the products and then send an e-mail to Andy Cohen at acohen@asicentral.com to vote for your favorite of the group.

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