

HOME WORK

Manufacturers rethink products, market strategies

APPLIANCE DOCTOR



JOE GAGNON

The resignation of Romulus native Lloyd Ward at Maytag prompted Leonard Hadley to come out of retirement and take over the reins as chief executive officer.

Hadley has announced a return to the "basics" philosophy for his company. His return comes at a time when Maytag officials have watched company stock prices fall at an alarming rate.

News reports indicate that Ward wanted to move Maytag headquarters to a larger city

after being located in Newton, Iowa for the past 107 years. Upon resuming his old job as CEO, Hadley nixed this idea immediately. Hadley said Maytag increased research, and development spending substantially in the past year.

"However, much of that spending has not directly supported the delivery of innovation in our core product lines," Hadley said. "We intend to focus that spending more sharply on our core product lines in major appliances and floor care, and on products that will hit the marketplace sooner rather than later."

This writer believes that Maytag provided proven quality products for many years, but if that company ever pulls a boob again like it did with mistakes in the first batch of front-load washers, Maytag's image will never be the same.

Workers lose jobs

Over at Whirlpool, CEO David Whitman predicts a tough first half of 2001 with "substantial performance improvements in the second half of the year." Whirlpool has announced job cuts of about 6,000 people worldwide to reduce costs. Introduction of new products such as the new top-loader washer, touted as an energy-saver, and the new refrigerator, which has the ice maker apparatus inside the door, may be the products that help the company rebound.

From sales to service, we switch over to a report from the Appliance Service News in Chicago. The latest Maytag washer rework involves replacing defective water valves in approximately 2,500 Atlantis washers made between Oct. 25 and Dec. 1, 2000.

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The problem stemmed from outlet valves that were improperly made by a vendor. The washers involved house a water valve that was relocated to the center-rear of the machine. According to Maytag, water leaks may range from a drip to a trickle to a considerable flow down the rear panel.

Where possible, the machines will be retrofitted with a new water valve while available in dealer stock. Other machines will need the work completed in customers' homes. The project is identified as the "PVL" rework. Maytag servicers will be mailed a notice listing the wash-

ers that require inspections in their areas, the valve and a three-page instruction sheet. Questions should be directed to 1-800-544-2538.

Whirlpool dishwashers overheated or burst into flames, damaged property, and may have killed three people, even after 500,000 dishwashers and design changes were recalled in 1996, Forbes magazine reported. Complaints filed with the Consumer Product Safety Commission indicate that since 1991 some Whirlpool dishwashers have overheated. Forbes cited Wayne Brown, a Sears repair technician from Tennessee, who reported in 1996 that switches in some dishwashers overheated.

Whirlpool said its investigation showed evidence of problems outside the dishwasher, and Whirlpool officials still do not know what's causing the fires, Forbes reported.

Recalling about one million dishwashers could cost Whirlpool \$150 million, Forbes reported.

No wonder I'm so negative — this stuff is scary. Stay tuned.

Readers write

Kristine and Mike O'Day wrote that they have a portable dehumidifier that is icing up on the coil where condensate should form and drip off.

Q: "I have cleaned the fins where the air passes through, as quite a bit of dust had collected. After cleaning, the icing still occurs. Is there anything that I can do, or do I need a new dehumidifier?"

A: Take it to the car wash and wash it. Let it dry before you plug it in. Wait until summer before you try it.

Joe Gagnon can be heard on *NewsTalk 760, WJR-AM*, every Saturday and Sunday mornings. His second book, *The Words and Wisdom of The Appliance Doctor* is available in book stores. His phone number is (313) 873-9789.

Do you have a question for the Appliance Doctor? Contact him care of Ken Abramczyk, At Home Editor, Observer Newspapers, 36251 Schoolcraft, Livonia, MI 48150 or e-mail kabramczyk@homecomm.net

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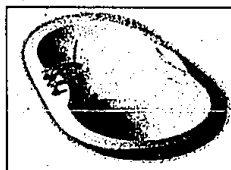
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Jeffrey Moss is vice-president of Advance Plumbing Supply Co. in Walled Lake and Detroit. Call (800) 560-7474 toll-free. Have a plumbing question? Write to Jeffrey at Advance Plumbing Supply Co., 1977 E.W. Maple Rd., Walled Lake, MI 48390. www.advanceplumbing.com

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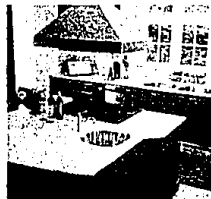
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