

Darrin Johnston
Managing director
Meyer Corporation, U.S.



POWER
 players

What is the biggest challenge facing your industry this year?

"The biggest challenge this year has been the West Coast port issue. The good news is, the issue has been resolved, but unfortunately the logjam created due to the ship and container back log has delayed important inventory needed for Q1 revenue plans. We are just now seeing the end in sight—mid-May—but we left some business on the table during Q1 due to this challenge."

How was business for you for the first quarter? What's your prediction for the rest of the year?

"We completed Q1 with a very nice comparative increase over last year, and our team did a great job driving this increase during the port issue. Having said that, we at Meyer are never satisfied and continue to strive for perfection, so it is disappointing knowing that further business could have been achieved."

"My prediction for the year is solid growth. The economy continues to recover and consumers have had very little bad news to shake their confidence. We have built a strong plan this year to capitalize on increasing consumer disposable income while also maximizing our market share growth."

What is your best-selling item? Why? Is it different online?

"It's difficult to speak about a specific item in our broad cookware assortment. It's easier to speak about a specific fabrication. We have been very pleased with our dishwasher-safe, all range capable, hard anodized product lines this year. Meyer continues to innovate and bring an immense amount of value to the marketplace with new technology. The consumer is clearly telling us right now that newness and innovation are extremely important in their purchase decision."

"We're seeing this trend remain consistent with brick-and-mortar and online sales."

How has online business changed how you look at your business strategy?

"Online has created an incredible opportunity for the housewares industry and Meyer Corporation. With all the retail consolidation our industry has suffered through during the last 15 to 20 years, floor space to execute a complete gourmet cookware offering is and will continue to be a struggle."

"Online has created a venue where companies like Meyer Corporation can work with retail partners to build out a complete product offering that insures we meet every need of discerning gourmet consumers. The Meyer team prides itself on being industry experts when we interact with any customer. Because of the differing business practices and requirements dictated by online business, several years ago we established a dedicated Meyer team, made up of online retail experts, to focus solely on online opportunities. This has been the biggest change in how we look at the business, and it has paid solid dividends for us in our online growth."

What consumer trends are influencing your company?

"We're spending more and more time studying the millennial generation. This generation is beginning to enter its peak purchasing phase and is motivated by a very different path to purchase than any previous generation. It's also a generation that's larger than the baby boomers. We think the millennial generation will prove to be a game changer over the next 10 to 20 years, requiring companies to dramatically alter how they interact with and market products to consumers."

What has been the biggest surprise for you this year?

"Honestly I haven't had any major surprises this year specific to our industry."

How is your company embracing technology?

"This is a great question and ties perfectly back to your question."

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Kris Malkoski
President

World Kitchen
North America

What is the biggest challenge facing your industry this year?

"Because we are a global company, we are seeing negative Forex [the global currency exchange market] impact as the U.S. dollar strengthens and many other countries' currency weakens."

How was business for you for the first quarter? What's your prediction for the rest of the year?

"Business was very strong in Q1. Outside of Forex issues, we believe that we will continue to see strong growth globally throughout 2015."

What is your best-selling item? Why? Is it different online?

"Our limited-edition items created for Pyrex's 100th anniversary are flying off the shelf at our retailers. We are also seeing good demand on this product online. From a branded standpoint, Corelle is our strongest seller online."

How has online business changed how you look at your business strategy?

"We love the ever greater importance of online because consumers are increasingly looking online for information before they make their purchase decision (whether online or with brick and mortar). Online represents a continuation of our business strategy of having the right product at the right price with the right information for where our shopper is looking to buy our product."

What categories are the strongest for you?

"Dinnerware, bakeware and food storage are our strongest categories."

How is your company embracing technology?

"We are very engaged in new technology and programs to enable us to more effectively reach and message to our consumers. We recently rebuilt our interactive/e-commerce platforms to increase our flexibility in messaging to consumers and fulfilling online orders."

How do you like to spend your time when you're not working?

"I love to cook and bake with my family. I'm a real foodie and I love trying out new recipes and dishes."

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tion about online business and consumer trend. The online business and the millennial generation go hand in hand to help answer this question. Both require our company to continuously work to perfect the ever changing combination of social media and digital assets to best target, interact and influence consumer purchasing decisions. This all requires corporate systems and assets that less than five years ago did not exist. Embracing new technology in today's corporate environment is a requirement for survival."

What is the one thing your industry should stop doing right now?

"I don't believe I'm qualified to speak for our industry and what they should stop doing."

What categories are the strongest for you?

"As discussed earlier, our hard anodized cookware business continues to be strong. The cookware industry is not a dynamic industry if it's up 1 percent or down 1 percent in any given year. If you are going to win and grow in our industry, you must be focused on market share. Consistent newness and technology are a must to success in the market share battle."

How do you like to spend your time when you're not working?

"I travel a lot, so when I'm home I spend as much time as possible with my family. We have two grandchildren, Mason, 10 years old, and Riley, three years old. Mason is a great baseball player, and my wife Leigh and I spend a lot of time at the baseball fields watching his games and traveling to tournaments. It's incredibly exciting to watch these boys develop in the game. Riley is just coming into her own, but at three she keeps us very active and very busy when she comes to visit."

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