



## **A conference whose size and programming are designed for the COVID-19 era, and beyond**

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The COVID-19 pandemic has acted as an accelerant for home-improvement retailers to engage their customers through ecommerce. But the gaudy growth figures in online sales that retailers reported in their latest quarters will be transitory unless these retailers leverage shoppers' willingness to try new ordering and delivery platforms.

The pandemic "is giving this channel, for the first time really, the opportunity to step forward and lead" in ecommerce, says Sonya Ruff Jarvis, founder of the Home Improvement eRetailer Summit, which will take place next March 7-9 at the Aloft Chicago Downtown River North hotel.

This event itself is perfectly suited to assuage any safety concerns of participants and sponsors. The Summit is keeping its attendee count to under 100 people, so social distancing can be practiced in an intimate setting that allows for the kinds of face-to-face interactions that make conferences valuable.

As some organizers have moved to virtual events due to the pandemic, Ruff Jarvis recalls a recent conversation with an event producer whose revenue significantly decreased after their virtual event compared to the revenue that previously resulted after an in-person event. "Our face-to-face meetings are designed to 'go deeper,' and build relationships," says Ruff Jarvis, "and their intimacy makes them more relevant."

The Summit has never been more important for home-improvement retailers that are confronted with big-box and mega-distributor ecommerce competition. The pandemic has also “turned everything on its head,” says Ruff Jarvis, pointing to recent data from The Farnsworth Group that found about half of the shoppers polled saying they had used a new channel to make purchases in recent months.

“Independent dealers have a greater opportunity to take a bite” out of these competitors’ digital market share, says Ruff Jarvis, but only if the independents make themselves “extensions of their communities” and make sure their services “are easy and convenient and seamless.” This is even true for so-called “Internet-proof” products like paint and soil, which more homeowners than ever are choosing to buy online.

The Summit remains the industry’s premiere forum for ideas about how dealers can maximize their market positions, and for strategies about sustaining those positions post-pandemic. The event’s one-on-one meetings between retailers and suppliers are important at a time when supply chain and delivery efficiency is critical to successful ecommerce programs.

At a time when people are yearning to reconnect, and when online sales are giving retailers a stronger foothold with a broader customer base, the Home Improvement eRetailer Summit can be your gateway and path toward the “new normal.”

For more information about the Summit, contact Sonya Ruff Jarvis at 203-295-3385 or [sruffjarvis@eretailersummit.com](mailto:sruffjarvis@eretailersummit.com)

*The Home Improvement eRetailer Summit is the only face-to-face North American event that focuses on home improvement ecommerce through networking, education, and one-to-one meetings. It is designed for all types of retailers, manufacturers, distributors and industry professionals who are interested in gaining intelligence and insights on how to optimize the internet as a distribution channel to sell more home improvement products. The Summit is owned and operated by the JC Event Group a minority and woman-owned small business.*

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