

# TABLEWARE TODAY

THE TABLEWARE SOURCE

JUNE/JULY 2018



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P O T T E R Y

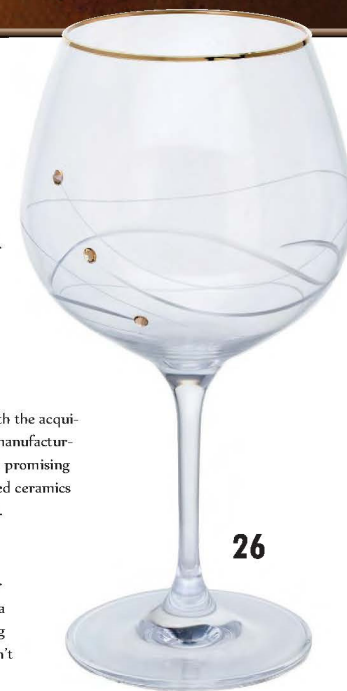


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Move over high-ball. There's another game in town for your gin and tonic... the Copa de Balon glass with its rounded shape and long stem. G&T lovers say it's designed to trap the aromas of the gin which imparts a superior taste, and the large bowl – which allows for plenty of ice and lime – adds flavor and keeps the drink cool.
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- 72 EURO CERAMICA**  
EURO CERAMICA – a longtime importer of tableware from Europe – is no stranger to rebooting: 24 years of ceaseless evolution, two decades perfecting its processes in a retail and economic climate that demands nonstop reinvention to survive. Good thing that founder Nicolas Marjeh is a tenacious tactician who enjoys hard work and doesn't know how to take no for an answer.



**26**





## FROM THE EDITOR

# THE CHILDREN ARE OUR FUTURE

by Amy Stavits

### GENERATION Z, LIKE MILLENNIALS,

are extremely digitally savvy. For this reason they're often lumped into the same category. Brands looking to stay at the forefront of what's cool tend to view millennials as identical to their younger brothers and sisters. But Gen Zers – born between 1996 and today – are already emerging from the shadow of millennials. After all, to claim that what's cool for a 35-year-old is the same as what's cool for a 15-year-old doesn't make much sense. They're entirely independent audiences with different habits, preferences, and reasons for being online.

The average attention span of a millennial is 12 seconds; for Gen Z it's eight seconds. Generation Z doesn't just have a shorter attention span, they also juggle more screens. On average, millennials bounce between three screens at a time, which is why television commercials are a poor marketing strategy for reaching these attention-scattered viewers. Gen Z tends to juggle five screens at once, making these future consumers even more difficult to reach, which explains why influencer marketing is so effective.

Generation Z doesn't want anything that isn't real; authenticity has become a huge marketing focal point. Millennials were the first to make their preference for authentic content known. They don't want digitally altered models or fake celebrity news. Generation Z goes even further; what they care about more than anything is feeling like they know the brand or the person behind the camera. They don't want to feel marketed to. They want

*Generation Z is waiting in the wings, widely recognized as the next consumer powerhouse. Now 22 or younger, Gen Zers are expected to account for 40% of all consumers by 2020. That's a lot of emerging shoppers, and we're not doing much to attract them.*

to feel like they're part of something. This is why brands are making their marketing campaigns as relatable and lifelike as possible. These guys don't want loyalty programs. While this might work for millennials, Generation Z isn't interested in having to pledge allegiance to any one brand. They'd rather be given options so they can get what they want, when they want it.

So what are you doing to reach Gen Z? Take a look at this issue's Last Word column. Even brands, like Gaia Group, working hard to get young people interested in their products have enormous obstacles to overcome. Starting early is key. I spent part of Take Your Kids to Work day at Waterford/Wedgwood HQs in central New Jersey, where a variety of fun and creative activities – targeted to three dozen Gen Z offspring of company workers – were inspiring and imaginative. I will have more on this fun-filled day in the next issue, but for now it's important we start paying attention to these young people who are tableware's future.

*Amy Stavits*

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Tableware Today is published six times annually by Bobecca Publishing, Inc., 58 Seven Oaks Circle, Holmdel, New Jersey 07733. Tel: (732) 332-1130. Amy Stavits, president.

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High Point Market & Pre-Market | October 10-17, 2018  
222 Fifth Furniture, Plaza Suites, C-104, Club Level

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# FRUIT OF THE



# UNION



PTS AMERICA is looking to broaden its distribution channels and customer base with SANGO, giving it access to the casual dining space as well as entry to new manufacturing techniques (like reactive glazes) and mixed materials. The union looks to be most promising for the dependable Indonesian factory – one of the world's largest vertically integrated ceramics manufacturers – marketed for the last 20 years in the U.S. under the 222 Fifth brand.

BY AMY STAVIS

[www.222fifth.com](http://www.222fifth.com)  
[www.sango-usa.com](http://www.sango-usa.com)

PTS AMERICA'S STATESIDE MANAGEMENT TEAM operates like a well-oiled machine, capitalizing on decades of experience and expertise in the decorated dinnerware arena. Good thing too as they look to pad their résumés with the revitalization/renaissance/rebirth of Sango, a once formidable housewares dinnerware player who fell from grace, thanks chiefly to curtailed product development which resulted in a sparse assortment of product. But the management/marketing/sales





troika of Debbie Hidayat (COO), David Lee (executive V.P.), and Dewitt (Dewey) Kendall (V.P. of merchandising, product development, branding, and sourcing) has ramped up product launches to warp speed, debuting hundreds of new assortments in the past six months alone, and covering a variety of new categories and materials. Bolstered by an Indonesian factory that employs thousands of workers, who are ready, willing, and able to ramp up production to hyper-drive, PTS is a company to keep an eye on this coming year.

PTS is mostly known as an OEM supplier for a who's who of producers and big name retailers. A small, but significant, part of their production is targeted to its 20-year-old 222 Fifth brand (named for its New York address), a fashion-forward assortment of decorated dinnerware. PTS acquired the rights to market and distribute Sango brand-

**222  
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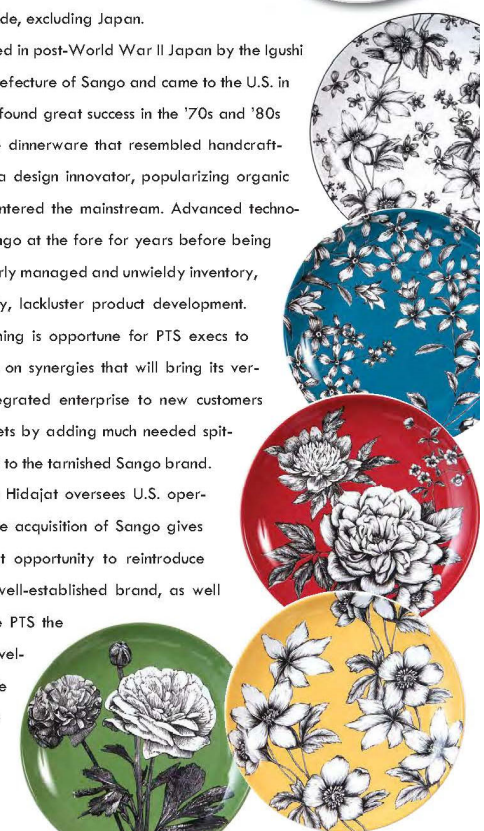
ed products worldwide, excluding Japan.

Sango was founded in post-World War II Japan by the Igushi family in the small prefecture of Sango and came to the U.S. in 1952. The company found great success in the '70s and '80s with its reactive glaze dinnerware that resembled handcrafted pottery. Sango was a design innovator, popularizing organic shapes long before they entered the mainstream. Advanced technological breakthroughs kept Sango at the fore for years before being sidelined by shipping snafus, poorly managed and unwieldy inventory, and, more recently, lackluster product development.

So the timing is opportune for PTS execs to capitalize on synergies that will bring its vertically integrated enterprise to new customers and markets by adding much needed spit-and-polish to the tarnished Sango brand.

Debbie Hidayat oversees U.S. operations. "The acquisition of Sango gives us a great opportunity to reintroduce this once well-established brand, as well as provide PTS the chance to develop into a lifestyle

brand." And that's the fundamental goal in an ambitious agenda — creating new categories of product covering a variety of materials.







PTS, a contract manufacturer for a variety of A-list dinnerware companies, is known for its 222 Fifth brand of decorated porcelain, especially seasonal designs. "We're well-regarded for our design expertise which we will use to help revive the Sango brand," says Dewey Kendall. "We're investing in the brand and reinventing the decorated porcelain space. It may not be the most popular look right now but it will be, and if anyone can make it cool we can." PTS dinnerware is sold in a variety of configurations (four-packs, five-piece settings), but the most popular is 16-piece sets, \$79 to \$149.

For any other operation this could be too unrealistic a vision, but the 40-year-old, family-owned factory is well-known as a polished and proficient one-stop shop, among the most sophisticated on the planet. More than 5,000 workers (3,000 in ceramics and another 2,000 in the new furniture facility, established four years ago) occupy a compound as large as 100 football fields, situated majestically atop a hill that overlooks the port city of Semarang. The newest addition, in 2014, is the state-of-the-art furniture factory, adjacent to the ceramics manufactory, which took two years to complete. Since its launch, wood furniture — a variety of tables and kitchen islands in a range of woods, like acacia and teak — has been finding favor with buyers from Frontgate, Pier One, and Target. "We make tabletop, so why not the table?" Dewey Kendall jokingly posits. The multi-titled exec spent a decade as an architect and his current position utilizes a range of his skills. "This category has great growth potential,"

says the marketer/merchandiser/developer. "What makes all this possible is the amazing technology. We have a kiln that can dry a five-foot thick log. The visible live edge trim is a very popular look, and the areas we can move — bathroom vanities, ceramic fixtures with wood bases — can extend to all parts of the home." The objective is for wood furniture to generate one-



third of sales volume in the next three years. And the company's eco sensibilities — all scrap wood is recycled into smaller home products, like cutting boards/charcuterie trays/wooden bowls — continue to be mined. Kendall joined PTS last summer and he's stoked about introducing new materials — wood, resin, metals, glass — into assortments. "As an architect, I was trained in connecting different materials," he says. "One of my strengths is combining materials other people can't figure out how to do or can't be bothered doing. I don't mind going the extra step figuring out how contrasting materials work together. And for PTS, already so proficient in ceramics, branching into new materials offers tremendous design opportunities."

Kendall is also an armchair sociologist, a studier of trends and behaviors, which helps enormously in plotting new product development. "As an industry, we don't look at the way people really live," he says. "We don't consider how much space someone has to move around his apartment or house, but as an architect I do. I think of storage and limitations of structure. I think of how something functions and looks. It's really important to understand how we live today in order to design tableware that's needed, not simply throw another







Sango is banking on its reactive glaze achievements to capitalize on the trend for artisanal handwork. "The maker's movement, Etsy, and living in a way that expresses individual creativity is right in line with our handcrafted pottery looks," says Kendall. "PTS has invested in the former Sango factories to develop their use of dark brown and red terra cotta clays as well as designers with extensive studio pottery backgrounds, who are driving our innovation in the casual ceramics space to evolve the Sango legacy." Sixteen-piece sets retail from \$49 to \$79.

Tailor Granite

pattern up on the wall. Not many people have basements that they can fill with storage. No more casual and formal sets of dinnerware. We must pay attention to how people live." This attention to detail seems to be working. "My target is to double volume in the next three years," says Hidaajat, "by making Sango a lifestyle brand penetrating more categories, like furniture and wood serveware, as well as adding new materials, like glass and metals, increasing Sango product development, and entering the casual dinnerware space – an aggressive but achievable goal. People will buy things that have meaning and which they can connect with."

This intensified product development means Kendall, along with his in-house and freelance design staff, are logging the hours. "PTS is one of the few companies to retain in-house illustrators, providing some of the most exuberant and compelling illustrations for decoration in the dinnerware industry," Kendall affirms. "It's been a tremendous opportunity to utilize the talent here. My first year has been about addressing the transition between upstairs to casual entertaining with products and objects people are asking for." The prolific product developer – in addition to his career as an architect Kendall has an extraordinary résumé steeped in product development, marketing, and sourcing tableware, giftware, and furniture, private label as well as branded goods – says his current job is perfectly aligned with his know-how, and he's already launched hundreds of much-needed SKUS

for both Sango and PTS. The company will continue to play to the brands' strengths: Sango, a department store boxed brand known for its homespun glazes; and PTS, for its decorated dinnerware acumen.

Since the fortunes of formal upstairs dinnerware have diminished, the synergies to be capitalized on with Sango's casual sets couldn't come at a better time. "It has been difficult for PTS to enter the housewares space," Kendall acknowledges. "Decorated porcelain has been a challenging category, with the exception of decorated seasonal which is on the uptrend for us." Sango offers the perfect opportunity to play in a robust, albeit competitive, marketplace. "Chiefly, it provides us entry into casual reactive glazes, which are so popular," Kendall says.

PTS' retail channels – a mix of big boxes, department stores, and independents – continue to evolve, not always clearly and not always for the better. Kendall believes that OEM/private label will continue to generate the lion's share of PTS' volume,

From left: Dewey Kendall, Debbie Hidaajat, and David Lee, who has been on the sales side at PTS for 12 years. "Sango gives us a brand with entry into a more casual segment of the dinnerware market," says Lee. "In the mid-1990s, PTS had two strong casual reactive glaze patterns, Craft and Studio. Sango is helping us return to those casual dinnerware roots and approach retailers who haven't bought from us in a while." The brand holds tremendous promise. "Retailers want design, value, and quality," Lee says. "They want a company that understands their market and is on top of trends. Our brands stand out because we lead, not follow. We've bolstered product development and design to make sure we stay true to our roots, having great tabletop designs and glazes."



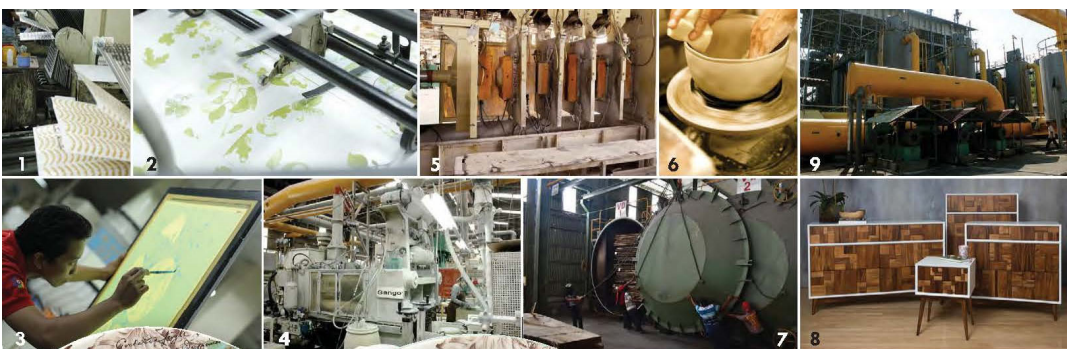


but paying attention to the 222 Fifth brand is a priority. “Brands will exist in their digital space, and all manufacturers and distributors will be online retailers, doing it all themselves,” says Kendall.

“We’re actually already doing most of the work ourselves.” Longtime sales exec Lee

— with his who’s who of retail experience; he was a buyer at Target, BB&B, Macy’s, and Linens ‘n’ Things, before moving to the wholesale side — isn’t bullish on in-store retail. “Well-timed reinventions of the selling floor, adding newness, and providing a better shopping experience will be the keys to success,” he says. “E-commerce has challenged the workload and bandwidth of our staff. Providing accurate information and good marketing points are key, but that’s easier said than done. We need to keep evaluating the best way to service this growing segment.” Lee’s varied retail résumé certainly helps on this side of the aisle, but the obstacles are still formidable. “I understand the needs and wants of retailers we sell to and their challenges to pull together the right assortments,” he says, but a revolving door of buyers is particularly daunting. “It’s more important that we keep our reputation intact by providing well-designed, well-priced product that suits the retailer’s strategy, along with our first-rate cus-





**1-3. PTS has exclusive distribution rights to a factory that has the largest decal printing plant in Asia with capabilities for tighter registration and a greater number of colors. The printshop pushes the limits of reactive glaze decals and is staffed with artists who pride themselves on exquisite reproduction of artwork.**

**4. The state-of-the-art factory utilizes a unique forming method rare in Asia. Dust press forming uses dry powdered clay put under intense heat and pressure to form their pieces which lessens the need to remove water from wet clay, reducing warp, shrinkage, and water absorption percentage in the final product.**

**5. The factory's high pressure horizontal casting method produces cast pieces with more even clay density than typical vertical presses.**

**6. Taking staff time out of processes that can be automated allows for more time for individual finishing and quality assurance.**

**7-8. The furniture factory, adjacent to the ceramics factory, has the largest high-pressure vacuum wood kiln dryer in Asia, capable of drying whole logs up to five feet thick.**

**9. The factories are fueled by an on-site coal gasification power plant. Emission scrubbers remove pollution, and by-products are used to make eco-friendly paving bricks for local municipalities.**

tomor service. We need to make sure we have plenty of strengths and very few weaknesses."

Very few weaknesses, indeed. For a mammoth manufacturing colossus that makes its own molds, that blends its own raw materials, that prints its own decals, that creates its own packaging, that even manufactures its own machinery, keeping deficiencies to a minimum has become standard operating procedure, and that explains the recent very impressive growth spurt. "Aggressive development challenges us to have better systems in order to continually gain efficiencies," affirms Hidajat. "It's very important that we always know what's working and what's not working. Whatever challenges come as the business and the market changes, we will adapt. It's always about evolution. I plan to continue to grow this business to hand it off to the next generation." □