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Wireless Distribution Master Dealer

Mobileistic is a New York based Master Dealer in the wireless distribution space. Established in 2002, we have grown to become one of the largest Master Dealers for AT&T and Sprint in the Tri-State area; and among the largest sellers of wireless accessories in the US. Mobileistic has achieved recognition for its growth from its Carrier partners and from Entrepreneur magazine, which recognized us as #33 in its Hot 100 list of fastest growing businesses in the US in 2008.

Interview with Bonnie Hemrajani, CEO and Co-Founder **Conducted by: Lynn Fosse, Senior Editor, CEOCFO Magazine**

CEOCFO: Ms. Hemrajani, would you tell us about Mobileistic?

Ms. Hemrajani: We are in the wireless business, Mobileistic is a traditional Master Dealer for AT&T as well as Sprint. We also sell accessories for mobile phones that are new and unique related to your everyday lifestyle for example: music, power, fashion and health and fitness

CEOCFO: About how much of the business is in the accessories and how much is in being the dealer?

Ms. Hemrajani: It is actually 50/50.

CEOCFO: By design?

Ms. Hemrajani: Yes, we wanted to grow the accessory business as we saw a HUGE potential. The accessories business grew fast because it complements the handsets side beautifully. This industry has evolved so much today and is critical to have your gorgeous-looking phone be accompanied by the right accessories that compliment your lifestyle. People will be happy with one smartphone, but they do need a travel charger, a car charger, skins, a Bluetooth speaker, headsets, and everything else to go with that nice phone that they just invested a lot of money in. The accessories make a statement about you!

CEOCFO: How do you know what people will like? What is the key to knowing whether something will be a big hit or the other way around?

Ms. Hemrajani: I think it is kind of predictable. Samsung and Apple are leading the market, so we definitely know that most of the stuff they come out with is already pre-sold or in huge demand with lines outside of the stores and people are super excited about it. There are other very innovative manufacturers out there like Sony, Jawbone and our strength is to bring the right items and the right price and place it in the right channels.

CEOCFO: Would you explain how it works to be a Master Distributor?

Ms. Hemrajani: The way it works is that we actually work as a liaison between independent retailers and the carrier. AT&T, for example, acknowledges us as the distributor, we sign a contract with them, and then we further get the independent retailers to sign an agreement with us. They buy the handsets from us, they generate commissions when they activate for consumers, we pass those commissions on to them, and we pass those residuals on to them. That is basically our role. We handle their discrepancies, we supply inventory, and we support them in managing their business so they run as profitable stores.

CEOCFO: Are you able to represent specific carriers? Do you have a territory, or do you have direct competition in the geography you cover?

Ms. Hemrajani: Of course. There is competition in every industry, so of course there is competition. However, we can always sell in the tri-state area, so we are not national or regional for that matter. There are more similar distributors such as us that do the exact same thing.

CEOCFO: How do you encourage retailers to work with you as opposed to a competitor?

Ms. Hemrajani: We have been doing this now for 11 years, Mobileistic has been in business for 11 years. It is kind of set at this point. These are the doors that we had back in the day, and we grew them, cultivated them, supported them and groomed them. At this stage, it is hard to get in to the program, but if you are lucky or you can buy an existing business out with residual. There are no more situations where everybody is running for the same customer. My stores are my stores,

and my competitors' stores are their stores because they are contractual obligations to be honored. In the past, however, it used to be highly competitive.

CEOCFO: *How do you support the stores? What are some of the services other than supplying the products?*

Ms. Hemrajani: We have a very engaged sales team. We have feet on the street, so our team is out there visiting these locations consistently. They make sure the stores look up to the standard that the carrier requires them to be, the planograms are updated, the merchandising is done, they have light-demo devices working in their stores, uniforms, and the look and feel of the store is right. If they need something or there is something missing, we help them get that done. Our job is to ensure the branding, image look and feel of the store is up to par. We also bring in best practices to make these locations more profitable.

“The ever increasing dependency on the cellphone has been the biggest surprise. There has been a natural progression towards it. From being just used for voice to practically doing everything on/from this phone like mobile banking, watching TV, recording your shows, navigation, shopping, home security systems has been a FUN surprise. It’s like we are constantly asking the question: what next?” – Bonnie Hemrajani

CEOCFO: *Do you find, in general, that businesses will come to you with a problem or do you really have to be out there finding trouble?*

Ms. Hemrajani: It depends. With financial problems, customers usually do call and come to us, but with anything else, we are pretty proactive. We have to be out there, and we have to keep our eyes and ears open and guide the operators the right way. We need to help them make good decisions so that they can sustain themselves for longer periods of time.

CEOCFO: *What surprised you as the industry has exploded?*

Ms. Hemrajani: I think it is an extremely dynamic industry, and I am very fortunate to be a part of it. The ever increasing dependency on the cellphone has been the biggest surprise. There has been a natural progression towards it. From being just used for voice to practically doing everything on/from this phone like mobile banking, watching TV, recording your shows, navigation, shopping, home security systems has been a FUN surprise. It’s like we are constantly asking the question: what next?

CEOCFO: *What is your most unusual accessory? What do you particularly like on a personal basis?*

Ms. Hemrajani: I enjoy the Bluetooth portable speakers because I am a big music fan. I like to carry the little speakers around when I travel. You can take it to the beach or wherever. The Bluetooth speaker is something I personally enjoy the most because I love music, but there are a lot of unique products that some of our vendors have out there depending on what your interests /needs are. The health band is a good example.

CEOCFO: *Do you see different trends developing with colors, or is it really very much of a personal choice?*

Ms. Hemrajani: I think different trends are definitely developing with color. I think black is no longer the basic. Grey is the new black. I think colors bring a lot of excitement to the product lineup. Everybody is venturing out for more colors. The colored phones that have come out with iPhones substantiate that. All of the accessories and colors just add so much to your phone. Different color covers for your phone changes the whole look and the appearance of the phone. Every so often depending on your mood, you can change the colors, which makes it exciting.

CEOCFO: *What happens in your West Coast office?*

Ms. Hemrajani: We have a D.C. there, so we have a warehouse. We fulfill all of the orders for our West Coast customers from there and all of the East Coast customers from here in order to give them a shipping advantage.

CEOCFO: *What about the tri-state area?*

Ms. Hemrajani: We are in the tri-state area for only the activation piece of the business. With the accessory business, we are nationwide.

CEOCFO: *Would you tell us a little bit about handling the logistics? There are an awful lot of items, and I am guessing there are an awful lot of places that you are delivering to. What is involved and how has technology helped make that easier for you?*

Ms. Hemrajani: We have about 4,300 distribution points that we supply to on a monthly basis. In the beginning we had a lot of challenges not on the handset side but on the accessories side. One phone can easily have 40 accessories, including all of the different system colors that are coming in to play. We invested in a very good system, which is purely a warehouse-management system by the name of RedPrairie. It is a huge investment for a small business like us, but it pays

off in the long run. With that, we have 99.9% accuracy. It makes the whole process extremely simple, and it takes the thought out of it, so it is very easy to monitor. The WMS is integrated with SAP BusinessOne, which we also use.

CEOCFO: *What is next for you?*

Ms. Hemrajani: Next is growing the company – doubling the size and doubling the revenue. There is a lot of opportunity in this area, so we have our own product lineup that is coming, and I am excited about building the Mobileistic brand.

CEOCFO: *Why was this the time to go in that direction? Have you been inching toward it?*

Ms. Hemrajani: We have been inching toward it. It is a natural transition to get there. I think that with all that we have, is a lot easier for us to understand what the needs are. We bring in product only for those specific categories and price points where we see the void.

CEOCFO: *Put it all together for our readers. Why pay attention to Mobileistic? What sets the company apart?*

Ms. Hemrajani: I think we are a young dynamic company. We have continued to grow in an economy that has been challenging. A lot of companies have had no growth, but fortunately for us we have had growth year over year. We are constantly adapting and evolving. I feel that in every industry, if you stop changing you become a dinosaur. This is the case especially for ours because things are moving at a fast pace. We make an effort to make sure that we keep our ears pasted to the ground. We understand the pulse of the market and we constantly innovate and reinvent ourselves to get to the next level.

BIO: Bonnie Hemrajani is the CEO and co-founder of Mobileistic. She has grown the company from its inception in 2002 to become one of the top Master Dealers in the NY area for Sprint and AT&T. In 2006, Bonnie launched Mobileistic's accessories initiative, in an effort to offer customers a full service offering and generate incremental revenue. Today, Mobileistic has relationships with all the major manufacturers in the wireless industry. Bonnie has always had a passion for sales, and she is focused on growing the business and maintaining relationships with the company's dealer base and carrier/vendor partners. Bonnie has been in wireless industry for 17 years.

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