

Warranty Briefs

Global Warranty Group's New Alliances

Global Warranty Group (GWG) announced that it is partnering with VCM Solutions to be the exclusive provider of protection plans for that company's whatwater line of waterproof cases. As a specialist in administering wireless device plans, GWG will work with VCM to "allow us to further expand our solutions and product offerings to our customers," Vincent Minasi, co-founder of VCM, said.

GWG has also entered into an agreement with Aaron's to be that retailer's exclusive provider of extended service programs.

With over 2,100 retail locations, Aaron's is a lease-to-own retailer specializing in the sales and lease ownership of residential furniture, consumer electronics, home appliances and accessories.

"GWG's experience, innovation, expertise and consumer focus is what we are looking to provide to our customers. This will help Aaron's strengthen our existing relationships, and improve our overall brand experience with our customers," Tom Blamire, director of merchandise at Aaron's, said.

Assurant on Millennials

The 14-to-35-year-old group of Millennials is predisposed to an extended service contract (ESC) buy—if they are cultivated properly. So says a whitepaper report recently released by Assurant Solutions.

"Protection matters to Millennials. Providing the right mix of benefits and delivering a high-quality post-purchase customer experience are key to building brand loyalty," Jeff Unterreiner, senior vice president in Assurant Solutions' Extended Protection Solutions division, said.

According to the study's findings, more than 40 percent of Millennials say that being on the cutting edge of technology is important to them, compared to 28 percent in other generations.

And that spells rapid replacement cycles—a reason why traditional protection plans with up-front payment and longer terms are not likely to resonate with these buyers. The study's conclusion is that this group is better served in being offered shorter terms or a monthly pay option for products with a rapid replacement cycle.

Moreover, 81 percent make most of their purchases at brick-and-mortar stores, yet 45 percent spend more than an hour each day on retail websites. They are social shoppers who seek ratings, peer review comments and feedback from their social connections prior to making a purchase. This indicates that the best approach to selling extended warranty programs to this group is to share information about programs consistently and broadly across all communication platforms, including in-store, online, and through mobile and social media strategies.

Some other key points the paper drives home as important to know about Millennials:

- **Understanding their Habits**—Millennials purchase more CE products than any other generation, and they care about their investments; 54 percent of younger and 64 percent of older Millennials believe ESCs are an important part of an electronics purchase.

- **Engaging their Needs**—Most Millennials are in the midst of making major life decisions that spur large purchases. But customers

leaving for college, purchasing homes or having children all have different needs. Understanding these needs is key to making the sale.

- **Keeping Them Coming Back**—With the Millennial demographic, it's crucial to be consistent and straightforward in messaging. Highlight major ESC benefits at every corner, whether with in-store signage, brochures or web content.

Outline for customers the value-added benefits, and even the exclusions, to ensure that they feel they're making a smart, informed decision.

A summary of the study is available at tinyurl.com/ESCmillennials

New Leaf Expands Sales Roster

New Leaf Service Contracts has expanded its nationwide sales team. Mike Tierney and Warren Mann have joined the company as directors, sales and marketing, while Lance Partridge has taken the position of regional sales manager.

Tierney, as director of national sales and marketing, had most recently been president of Channel Sales and Marketing and before that, of Uniden America Corp. He comes to the post with more than 30 years of senior management experience in consumer electronics, retail, distribution and reseller channels.

Warren Mann, New Leaf's new director of national sales and marketing, brings more than 35 years' experience to the job. Mann was senior vice president at Haier America Corp. in the appliance division and managing director of the consulting firm World Merchants. Prior to that, he worked as executive director of the MARTA Cooperative and as group director for the NATM buying group.

Lance Partridge, new regional sales manager, had been a field coordinator for Nationwide Southwest, where he was responsible for coordinating membership sales, Internet marketing and financing initiatives.

"Our new and expanded all-star sales team has the depth and breadth of experience needed to work directly with clients—retailers, manufacturers, distributors to create value-added programs that reinforce customer loyalty and value for the clients' brand," said Sean Hicks, New Leaf's CEO.

SquareTrade Launches Broad Protection Plan for Sam's Club

The Sam's Club division of Wal-Mart and SquareTrade have jointly launched a wide-reaching services and support program for Sam's Club members who purchase consumer electronics.

The new program allows a Sam's Club member who purchases a TV worth \$500 or more to buy a \$99 four-year SquareTrade protection plan that includes delivery, setup, haul-away and recycling of the old TV.

Also part of the plan is a guaranteed

buy-back program permitting club members to trade in their TV within six months of purchase and receive up to 50 percent of its cost back on a gift card.

The program also includes accidental damage protection and 24/7 tech support, among other elements.



Jeff Unterreiner

