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**Thanks to MNB
for this selection of
articles.**

One Year From Now, Fresh Meat Will Get Nutrition Labels

USA Today reports that nutrition labels—listing calories, calories from fat, total fat, saturated fat, cholesterol, sodium, protein and vitamins—will be required for “40 of the most commonly purchased cuts of beef, poultry, pork and lamb,” as of January 1, 2012, according to new rules published by the US Department of Agriculture (USDA).

“Federal officials say they hope the labels will make Americans as conscious about health choices in the meats they buy as they have become in scouring labels on other packaged food products,” the paper writes.

An example cited by the paper: “A 4-ounce serving of regular ground beef that is 73% lean meat...contains 350 calories, 270 of them from fat, according to the USDA, making up 60% of the suggested daily intake of saturated fat in a 2,000-calorie diet.”

Sansolo Speaks: "First, Count to 10"

by Michael Sansolo

The age of transparency cuts both ways. It can help or it can hurt; it all depends on how you use it. But in any age it's important to remember one simple rule: losing your temper is rarely a good idea.

Just before the holidays, a restaurant owner in Los Angeles tried to turn transparency on its head. He noticed that the restaurant reviewer from the *LA Times* was in his restaurant and promptly threw her out. Not only that, but he took her picture and posted it online, making certain that the reviewer's ability to visit restaurants unannounced would be forever compromised. He did it all, the owner said, because he found her reviews overly critical and unsympathetic to the challenging job of running a restaurant.

It's easy to sympathize. I've had bad reviews in my life and each time I could justify them away by saying the critic didn't respect the time, effort and challenges that went into my work. But, I was wrong...and so was this restaurant owner.

The critic is simply doing a job and the real key comes down to how the reader reacts to the information. I read restaurant reviews knowing full well that I lack the sophisticated palette to have the same experience as the critic. Likewise, I am usually far more forgiving of service lapses than most critics. So, while I find the articles interesting, I frequently look to see if they write about anything that really hits my hot buttons, such as too much noise, too little lighting or, heaven forbid, lax food safety standards. I feel the same about movie reviews. They are helpful, but frequently there are movies I know I'm going to see no matter what the

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reviews say, and I suspect I'm not alone. (The *Die Hard* movies didn't win many Oscars as I recall.)

But, the real problem in Los Angeles wasn't the critic. It is how this restaurant owner thinks of his clientele. They, too, don't judge a meal based on how hard the staff worked or what challenges they overcame or how hard it is to operate a restaurant. Rather, they decide based on whether the food tastes good and was a good value for the money.

The Los Angeles case is even more interesting because it clearly has issues. The reviewer was kept waiting 45 minutes for a table even though she had a reservation. Again, regular patrons might find that one more reason to give this restaurant no more than one try, if they even stayed long enough for that.

Let's be honest. We all love praise and hate criticism, but in many cases, the bad reviews are those that really require our focus. If we can force ourselves to face our shortcomings, we'll get a lot further than we do by simply slapping ourselves on the back.

Two sage bits of wisdom come to mind regarding the Los Angeles story. First, don't blame the messenger; that hardly ever works. Instead assess and fix the problem. Doing well is always the best revenge.

Second, remember that those whom the gods wish to destroy, they first make angry. Your outburst may feel good for a moment, but in the long run you are sure to lose, especially in the age of transparency.

Michael Sansolo can be reached via email at msansolo@morningnewsbeat.com. His new book, "THE BIG PICTURE: Essential Business Lessons From The Movies," co-authored with Kevin Coupe, is available [by clicking here](#).

How Retailing Is Not A Zero Sum Game

The *Harvard Business Review* has an interview with Whole Foods' John Mackey, in which he makes some interesting observations about what he calls "the prosperity circle":

"I think it's kind of deep in human nature to think in terms of the zero sum. If one stakeholder is winning, someone else must be losing. It comes from sports, where there is one winner and lots of losers, and this idea of a fixed pie, where if someone is getting a bigger piece, someone else has to be getting a smaller piece, and what's needed for social justice is to make sure people get equal pieces. But a conscious business recognizes that you can have an expanding pie, and potentially everyone can get a larger piece.

"I'll give you a simple example: Management's job at Whole Foods is to make sure that we hire good people, that they are well trained, and that they flourish in the workplace, because we found that when people are really happy in their jobs, they provide much higher degrees of service to the customers. Happy team members result in happy customers. Happy customers do more business with you. They become advocates for your enterprise, which results in happy investors. That is a win, win, win, win strategy. You can expand it to include your suppliers and the communities where you do business, which are tied in to this prosperity circle. A metaphor I like is the spiral, which tends to move upward but doesn't move in a straight line."

Scanning The Self-Checkout Phenomenon

The *Boston Globe* reports on the growth of self-checkout technology in the US, noting that "we've gotten used to pumping our own gas, printing our own airplane tickets, and answering our own questions on companies' FAQ pages. Now, increasingly, we're being urged to check ourselves out of stores ... Self-checkout machines have been around long enough for researchers to study how people react to them. Studies by the IHL Group, a Tennessee-based research firm, found that less than half, 41 percent, of people like self-service machines. On the other hand, a mere 8

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percent of the 2,700 people surveyed online from 2005 through 2008 said they would not use the technology."

According to the story, "Retailers say they like self-scanners, because they're cost-cutters that can speed shoppers through the checkout process and allow management to redeploy cashiers to jobs that can't be done by a machine. Although some may think that the self-checkout system is more susceptible to theft, studies show otherwise. Theft deterrents on the self-checkout machines include integrated cameras, scales, security tags, and, in some cases, laser analysis of dimensions of the products, according to Greg Buzek, president of IHL Group."

BJ's Closes Stores, Restructures, Repositions Itself

BJ's Wholesale Club announced yesterday that it will close five stores that it described as "underperforming" - three in Atlanta, one in Florida and one in North Carolina - and will restructure its home and field operations, creating eventual savings that it said would be "invested in new clubs, remodels, and information technology, all of which are vital to our competitiveness, future growth and profitability."

The closures are expected to eliminate some 500 jobs throughout the company, including more than 60 at its Natick, Massachusetts, headquarters.

BJ's also announced that it has named Robert W. Eddy (currently, Senior Vice President, Director of Finance) to the position of Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer; and Cornel Catuna (currently, Senior Vice President of Field Operations) to Executive Vice President of Club Operations.

The company also announced the retirement of Frank Forward, Executive Vice President and Chief Financial Officer since 1997, and Thomas F. Gallagher, Executive Vice President of Club Operations since 2007. The company said that "Forward's retirement is part of a planned transition underway since 2007; and Gallagher is retiring for health reasons. Forward, who has been with BJ's since its founding in 1984, will continue to advise and counsel senior management as a consultant."

Sam's Launches New Health Program

Drug Store News reports that Walmart-owned Sam's Club said yesterday that "it is offering its business, advantage and plus members tools to help them achieve their health goals, including free monthly, in-club health screenings and access to a new health management benefit, The Prevention Plan, from U.S. Preventive Medicine.

The Prevention Plan will cost members \$99 a year, and "involves an online health assessment and at-home blood test to identify potential health issues for which a personalized plan is developed to address risks. Personal health coaching, ongoing support, a variety of tools and a plan-wide health challenge are provided through The Prevention Plan to keep members motivated to maintain a healthy lifestyle."

Starbucks Changes Logo, A Reflection Of CPG Ambitions

The *Seattle Times* reports that Starbucks Corp. is updating its logo, with the most noticeable changer being that the words "Starbucks Coffee" have been completely eliminated.

According to the story, "The new wordless logo...is better suited to the company's expansion beyond coffee into a wider array of business lines and into more international markets."

"What is really important here is an evolutionary refinement of the logo, which is a mirror image of the strategy," said Howard Schultz, CEO of Starbucks. "This is not just, let's wake up one day and change our logo."

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The company apparently also felt that it was well enough known after four decades in business that it did not need to use its name in the logo.

The new all-green logo, according to the *Times*, "is the fourth version of Starbucks' logo since the company's beginnings as a small coffee, tea and spice shop in Seattle in 1971. The first update came in 1987, taking the original bare breasted siren in brown to a more stylized - and modest - version in green as the company began to expand. The image was further refined in the 1990s as the company went public and its growth soared.

FastNewsBeat

- Weis Markets announced it has lowered the prices on 2,400 staple items, effective Sunday, January 2 and that it will freeze the prices of these products for 90 days through April 2, 2011. It is the Company's sixth round of its 90-day Price Freeze program over the past two years. The Price Freeze program includes 2,400 store brand and brand-name products in grocery, produce, frozen, dairy, meat, deli, seafood, bakery, health, beauty care and general merchandise.

- The *Buffalo News* reports that Tops Markets and a local dietary education business called Propel Health have teamed up to offer "consumers a creative weapon when they head to the grocery store shelves with healthfulness in mind ... For a small annual fee - about \$20 - the program offers enrollees access to food and menu information and planning that is updated weekly to reflect the products and items available and on sale in the region's Tops stores.

"The goal of the service ... is to show people that eating healthfully can be done cheaply as well -- and to empower shoppers with menus, recipes and nutritional information so they can feed themselves and their families well."

- CVS Caremark said Friday that it has reached an agreement to buy Universal American's Medicare Part D unit, which focuses on the federal prescription benefit program, for \$1.25 billion, an acquisition that the *New York Times* said "may open the nation's largest pharmacy health care provider to further criticism about anticompetitive practices."

- The *Houston Chronicle* reports that "in 2011 Kroger will aim to build on what's been working.

"The grocer will open a big Marketplace store in Willis, north of Conroe, do five major and six minor remodels on well-performing stores in the Houston area, and close two underperforming ones.

"'We're continuing to invest in Houston, with a new Marketplace store and upgrades of existing stores,' said Gary Huddleston, consumer affairs director of Kroger's southwest division."

- The *Minneapolis St. Paul Business Journal* reports that "the Twin Cities market is one of 10 urban areas in which Target Corp. wants to build small format stores.

"The list includes cities where Target has already announced 2012 store openings — San Francisco, Seattle and Los Angeles — as well as other markets with densely populated central business districts such as Boston, Chicago and New York."

- The *Dayton Business Journal* reports that Dollar General plans "to open 625 new stores this year, creating 6,000 jobs as it expands into three more states" - Connecticut, Nevada and New Hampshire.

- *Reuters* reports that "hopes for a supermarket recovery have been pushed back yet again while Wall Street rethinks earnings expectations as food costs rise, unemployment remains high and consumer spending stays fragile.

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"The shares of Supervalu Inc., Safeway Inc., and Whole Foods Market Inc. were among the stock market's biggest losers on Tuesday after investment firms cut ratings on them. Investors had hoped 2011 would usher in a big improvement in supermarket earnings, but such optimism is being dashed by costs, the jobless economic recovery and other factors, including a long-running price war and stiff competition from general merchandise retailers ranging from dollar stores to Wal-Mart Stores Inc."

- The *Seattle Post-Intelligencer* reports on a new comScore report saying that "consumers spent a total of \$32.6 billion online over the holidays, an all-time high; it was up 12 percent from last year."
- Go figure. ShopRite announced this week that it is celebrating the 40th anniversary of its iconic annual "Can Can" sale, which promotes canned fruits and vegetables with an aggressive ad campaign. Among the components of the celebration: "To commemorate the 40th Anniversary of ShopRite's famous Can Can Sale, ShopRite has teamed up with select vendors, including Coca-Cola and Nestle, to create exclusive, limited edition products to be sold only at ShopRite stores while supplies last."

The MNB Wal-Mart Watch

- The *New York Times* reports that Walmart is one of several companies investing a total of \$500 million in 360buy.com, described as "a fast-growing online retailer in China." The precise amount of the check being written in Bentonville was not divulged.

The *Times* writes, "The 360buy deal seems likely to feed excitement about China's fast-growing Internet start-ups. Just a few weeks ago, one of China's biggest online video sites, Youku.com, raised more than \$200 million in an initial public offering in the United States. Then, in December, its shares raced up in one of the hottest debuts in years on the Nasdaq.

"China is already home to some of the world's most valuable Internet companies, like Alibaba, Baidu and Tencent. The country also has the most Internet users, about 420 million, according to the latest government survey."

- Bloomberg also reports that Walmart "is planning to open more stores in Brazil this year than the almost 50 it opened in the country last year, the company's president in Brazil, Marcos Samaha, told reporters today in Barueri, Sao Paulo.

"The company may also make acquisitions in Brazil, he said."

Executive Suite

- Michael J. Haaf, the longtime Senior Vice President of Sales, Marketing and Business Strategy for Food Lion, is moving to HVM LLC, which manages the 685-property Extended Stay Hotel chain, as the company's Chief Marketing Officer, responsible for marketing, brand strategy and positioning, as well as sales and revenue management.
- The *Jacksonville Business Journal* reports that Winn-Dixie announced that Laurence Appel senior vice president of retail operations, will replace Frank Eckstein, "who is retiring but will continue to serve in an advisory capacity until the end of fiscal year 2011. Appel has served as general counsel, corporate secretary and senior vice president of human resources since joining the Jacksonville-based grocer in 2002."

According to the story, "Appel will be succeeded as general counsel by Timothy Williams, who joined Winn-Dixie in 2003 and formerly served as assistant general counsel.

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"Dan Portnoy, senior vice president and chief merchandising and marketing officer, has resigned from the company. His duties will be divided by Group Vice President of Marketing Mary Kellmanson; Group Vice President, Non Perishables, Pricing and Corporate Brands Matt Gutermuth; Group Vice President of Perishables James Smits; and Vice President of Pharmacy John Fegan."

- Price Chopper Supermarkets/Golub Corporation announced today that Bev Akin, the company's Senior Financial Systems Specialist, has been promoted to the position of Director of Financial Systems.

The company also said that David Siegel, the Director of Grocery Merchandising, has been named Director of Corporate Brands.

And Jason Kennedy, Price Chopper's Manager of Continuous Improvement and Supply Chain Initiatives, has been promoted to the position of Director of Continuous Improvement & Administrative Efficiencies.

- Price Chopper Supermarkets/Golub Corporation announced that Mona Golub, the company's Vice President of Public Relations and Consumer Services, has been promoted to the position of Vice President of Public Relations and Consumer and Marketing Services.

Price Chopper also announced that Heidi Reale, the company's Manager of Market Research, has been promoted to the position of Director of Consumer Insights.

- Gladson, the provider of product information and category management services for the consumer packaged goods industry, has named Susan B. Sentell as its new president/CEO. Sentell, the company said, "has served on Gladson's board of directors since 2007 and has over 25 years of executive experience, leading companies in Fortune 500, mid-sized and entrepreneurial environments."

- The Food Marketing Institute (FMI) announced the appointment of Thomas Osborne as senior technical director of the Safe Quality Food Institute (SQFI), a division of FMI. Osborne joins SQF with 18 years of industry food safety experience, most recently as director of quality assurance, food safety, regulatory affairs and laboratories at Wayne Farms, LLC. He also served in various quality assurance and food safety roles for 9 years at Tyson Foods, Inc.