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FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE

Ann Taylor Partners with Columbus Consulting to Improve Planning & Allocation

COLUMBUS, Ohio – January 16, 2006 – Columbus Consulting, Inc., a leading retail consulting firm, today announced that it has been hired by Ann Taylor to guide the specialty apparel retailer through a complete renovation of its merchandise planning and allocation processes, including; merchandise and store planning, assortment planning, store size profiling, pack optimization, and allocation. Ann Taylor, which had sales of more than \$1.8 billion in 2004, operates 831 stores in 46 states.

According to senior consultant Jon Beck, “we provided Ann Taylor with a complete merchandising system plan, including infrastructure, processes and systems that will allow their organization to transition their work effort from data gathering and data entry to one of analysis, insight and communication. As a result, Ann Taylor will have an integrated set of business processes that are aligned with the company’s product life cycle calendar, supported by a suite of integrated systems that include merchandise and store planning, sourcing, SKU creation, purchase order generation and tracking, allocation and re-projections.”

“Once this project is completed, we will have a merchandising platform that provides us with a more complete picture of our business; one that will allow us to react quickly to changing business conditions and support the future growth of the company.” said Debbi Berit, EVP Planning & Allocation at Ann Taylor. “We are pleased with the service and support we have received from Columbus Consulting, which has played an integral part in the development and implementation of our new merchandising system. We look forward to working with them as we continue to optimize our new processes and systems and grow Ann Taylor.”

“For this project, we were able to demonstrate the breadth of knowledge and expertise that Columbus Consulting offers to retailers looking to enhance their current merchandising systems,” added Beck. “We have a solid core of retailing experts that bring a broad range of knowledge and experiences that can help retailers, like Ann Taylor, take advantage of new technology and implement more effective and efficient systems.”

About Ann Taylor

Ann Taylor is one of the country’s leading women’s specialty retailers, operating 831 stores in 46 states, the District of Columbia and Puerto Rico, and also Online Stores at www.annaylor.com and www.annaylorLOFT.com as of December 31, 2005.

About Columbus Consulting, Inc.

Founded by industry veteran Richard Amari in 2001, Columbus Consulting, Inc. is comprised of a team of highly experienced specialists in retail systems and processes. The company works with many of the world's largest and well-known retailers, general merchandisers and apparel stores, including American Eagle Outfitters, Ann Taylor, Big Lots, CVS Pharmacy, and New York & Company . Columbus Consulting is called upon to provide a variety of services, from managing short-term, high-impact, executive-level advisory services on matters of strategic importance relating to retail systems and processes, to overseeing large, multi-disciplinary, multi-million dollar projects, lasting more than a year. The company is based in Columbus, Ohio. For more information on Columbus Consulting, visit www.columbusconsultinginc.com.

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