

**FOR IMMEDIATE RELEASE**

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**Retail Benchmarks Partners with Columbus Consulting, Inc.  
to Launch Groundbreaking Merchandise Planning Benchmark Series**

**Atlanta, GA--(PRNewswire)—April 25, 2006**—Retail Benchmarks, Inc. today announced that it has partnered with Columbus Consulting, Inc. (CCI) to launch the latest Retail Revelations™ benchmarks, the “Merchandise Planning Series.” The new series follows Retail Benchmark’s critically acclaimed “Store Labor Management Benchmark,” which was released in January 2006. Retailers can only improve what they can measure, and with the Merchandise Planning benchmark series, Retail Benchmarks revolutionizes this process by revealing the relationships between ordinary retail measurements and the key processes that influence them. With this information, retailers will discover meaningful ways to improve their businesses.

Merchandise Planning delivers a road map for inventory investment activity that delivers the top line sales and margin needed to produce profitable results. Because of the considerable reach and importance of Merchandise Planning, Retail Benchmarks will examine the topic in depth through a series of benchmarks. The first, Merchandise Planning: Part I, explores the four critical processes of Strategic Planning, Channel/Top Line Location Planning, Product Planning/OTB Management, and Reporting.

“Retailers need to know how they compare in inventory turns, in-stock percentages, margins, and markdowns, but more importantly, retailers want to know how they can be more effective in merchandise planning,” said Marianne Gregory, president of Retail Benchmarks. “We are extremely excited to be able to leverage the industry recognized merchandise planning leadership and expertise of Columbus Consulting for this benchmarking series.”

“Our clients are thirsty for best practice information that is meaningful and actionable,” added Richard Amari, founder of Columbus Consulting, Inc. “The synergy of our merchandise planning expertise and Retail Benchmarks’ model framework of mapping critical process characteristics that drive meaningful metrics provides enormous benefit to retailers of all shapes and sizes.”

**About Retail Benchmarks, Inc.**

Retail Benchmarks, Inc., an associate member of NRF (the National Retail Federation), delivers a series of benchmarks for the retail industry through its Retail Revelations™ series. In addition to the Retail Revelations™ series of benchmarks, Retail Benchmarks Inc. offers Retail Connections™, an online forum where retailers can discuss and share their ideas, questions, and experiences with complete security and anonymity. Retailers can also browse the Retail Connections™ library and download any of the process-focused white papers from leading retail industry experts and thought leaders. Visit [www.retailbenchmarks.com](http://www.retailbenchmarks.com) for more information.

**About Columbus Consulting, Inc.**

Founded by industry veteran Richard Amari in 2001, Columbus Consulting is comprised of a team of highly experienced specialists in retail business process and systems. The company works with many of the world’s largest and well-known retailers, including American Eagle Outfitters, Ann Taylor, Saks, Big Lots, Guitar Center, CVS Pharmacy, and New York & Company. While Columbus Consulting is called upon to provide a variety of services, their primary focus is in planning & allocation, reporting & analysis, data warehousing and IT strategy/leadership. Projects range in scope from managing short-term, high-impact, executive-level advisory services to overseeing large, multi-disciplinary, multi-million dollar projects, lasting more than a year. For more information on Columbus Consulting, visit [www.columbusconsultinginc.com](http://www.columbusconsultinginc.com).

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