



- [This Week's HFN](#)
- [Today's News](#)
- [Editor's Column](#)
- [HFN Classifieds](#)
- [About HFN](#)
- [Online Directory](#)
- [Subscribe](#)
- [Change of Address](#)
- [Missed Issues](#)
- [Trade Show Calendar](#)
- [HFN Editorial Staff](#)
- [Advertise with HFN](#)
- [Contact Us](#)



Warren Shoulberg  
Editor-in-Chief

[Reply to this Editorial](#)

## Editor's Column for the Week of July 23, 2007:

### Retailing Relevancy

"Our recent performance underscores our ongoing need to become more relevant to consumers while improving our discipline around expense management."

Aylwin, Aylwin, Aylwin: I thought you'd never get it. I was really getting worried about you, but maybe, just maybe, you are finally starting to understand. Maybe.

The above-referenced Aylwin is, of course, Aylwin Lewis, chief executive of Sears Holdings, the moneymaking machine disguised as a retailing operation. Lewis' mea culpa came after the company was forced to admit that business wasn't so hot and that it was likely to stay relatively lukewarm for the second half of the year.

Selling Kenmore refrigerators when the housing market is in a free fall is a tough trick, make no mistake about it. Even the best retailer in the world would be having a tough time these days in that line of work.

But Sears and its illegitimate half-brother Kmart are far, far away from being the best retailers in the world. Many people would make a case they are among the worst.

None of which is to be confused with this company's ability to reward its owners. If I had any money, I'd be quite tempted to put it into Sears stock.

But in announcing disappointing financial news, Lewis took the unprecedented step of going much, much further and saying, basically, that the company's customers really don't relate to its stores anymore.

It was quite a remarkable thing to say--but not because it's a new development. In fact, the rest of the industry has known this for years. What is remarkable is that a Sears Holdings senior executive said it.

This is a reminder to the leadership and



**HFN**  
**DAILY NEWS UPDATES**  
 CLICK HERE TO REGISTER  
 IT'S FREE!

Imagine...  
 all your  
 Indian  
 Home Decor  
 resources  
 under one  
 roof...

**LoLoi Rugs®**  
 Texture. Design. Color.

info@loloirugs.com  
 Showrooms:  
 Atlanta, Dallas  
 High Point, Las Vegas  
 972-503-5656

Visit the  
**HFN**

**HFN CLASSIFIED WORKING FOR YOU!**  
[CLICK HERE](#)

Learn about  
 consumer  
 behavior,  
 industry  
 trends,  
 and new  
 media.

This is, remember, the land of Lampert, and when Fast Eddie talks about Sears and Kmart, it's always from a position that the retail strategy is dead-on right. There are no mistakes made in Hoffman Mistakes.

Now, Lewis is begging to differ.

He says the company's stores have to be more relevant--which begs the question, could they be any less?

Look at any successful retailer out there and you'll see that their relevance is indeed instantly recognizable. Wal-Mart: Always low prices. Target: Cheap chic. Kohl's: Value for the family. Bed Bath and Beyond: Selection at a price.

But Sears and Kmart? There's no concept there, high or low. They are not relevant to the consumer because they don't mean anything to the consumer. Other than a handful of brands such as Kenmore, Martha Stewart and Craftsman, there is absolutely nothing unique to these stores, and nothing that has any relevancy to shoppers.

The customer says it, the trade says it and now, finally, Sears Holdings says it. But, in the words of one of those few bright spots, this could be a good thing.

If the company is finally coming to grips with this issue, it might start to address its relevancy. It might invest a little more in its physical plant. Maybe support and promote those brands a little bit more. Maybe even go after new business with new stores and new programs.

They say recognizing your problems is half the battle in solving them. Your move, Aylwin.

## ONLINE DIRECTORY

Your source for home textiles, tabletops, furniture, floor covering and much more