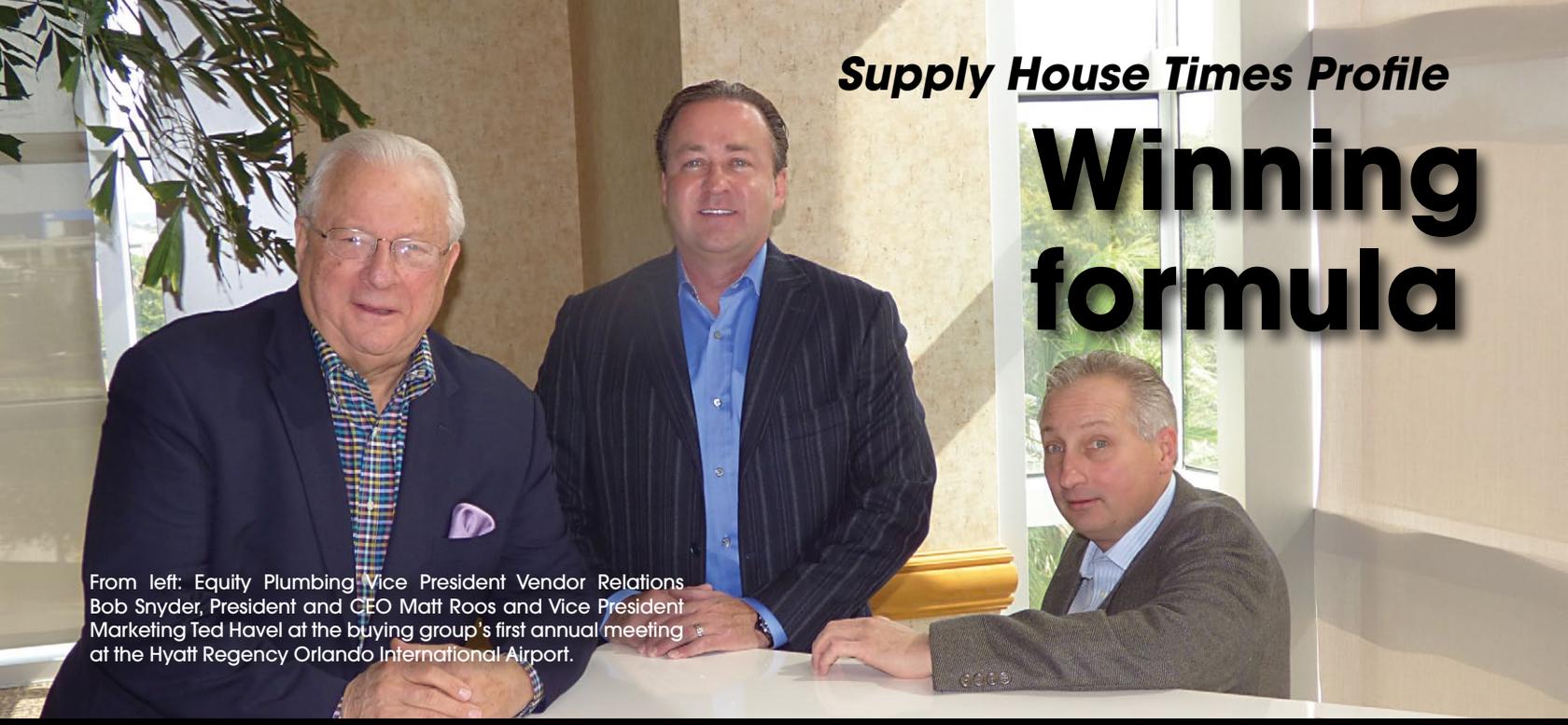


# Winning formula



From left: Equity Plumbing Vice President Vendor Relations Bob Snyder, President and CEO Matt Roos and Vice President Marketing Ted Havel at the buying group's first annual meeting at the Hyatt Regency Orlando International Airport.

## Equity Plumbing buying group excited about its future.

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Photo by Mike Miazga/Supply House Times

**T**he Equity Plumbing buying group celebrated its fifth anniversary earlier this year and recently held its well-attended first annual national meeting. Spawned from the old Equity/EDN electrical buying group and further strengthened by the acquisition of United Purchasing Affiliates' marketing operations in 2012, today's Equity boasts 405 distributor members (500 including all branch locations) and 85 vendors with member distributors generally falling in the \$5 million to \$15 million annual sales range. During Equity's recent meeting in Orlando, President and CEO **Matt Roos**, Vice President Vendor Relations **Bob Snyder** and Vice President Marketing **Ted Havel** sat down and talked with Supply House Times about a number of topics, including the importance of the small independent distributor in today's marketplace.

**Supply House Times:** How did the original idea for Equity come up?

**MR:** With our electrical group we were enrolling some combination electrical and plumbing houses in our membership. Several members over the years approached us and encouraged us to get involved in the plumbing industry. At the time, they didn't have the opportunity to be part of any groups in the business. We started with 26 original members who had combo houses.

**Supply House Times:** What is Equity's goal with its members and vendor partners?

**MR:** We want to bring increased profit to our members and added value to our vendors through sales and marketing programs that produce above-average marketplace growth. This is a partnership on all sides. Each side has to provide value in order for our group to continue to grow.

**Supply House Times:** How important are buying groups today?

**MR:** They are more important today than they have ever been.

Consolidation continues to widen the gap between the large national chains and the mid- and small-size distributors. Therefore there will continue to be disparity in buying power. I believe this is a trend that will continue. You also have nontraditional competitors such as Amazon and Google entering the marketplace. It's imperative you have unified organizations that can share best practices and strategies.

**Supply House Times:** Where does the small independent distributor fit into the marketplace?

**BS:** The typical small distributor is an entrepreneur and an important part of our society. We've developed our programs to help them succeed in their markets. I look at the small independents as the rowboat brigade. The small independent can feather its oars, pull into shore, make rapid adjustments and withstand changes. The small independent will continue to thrive in the marketplace.

**Supply House Times:** What new initiatives are on Equity's horizon?

**TH:** We are implementing two new member committees that will give management guidance. The vendor committee will help us with new programs and to evaluate different areas of supplier opportunities. The marketing committee will work closely with me to develop programs that will organically help our members grow their businesses. One particular area of focus will be on Web and e-commerce programs that will help members better compete in their markets against traditional and non-traditional forces.

**Supply House Times:** Where do you see Equity in the near future?

**MR:** Predictions are difficult to make, but we're going to continue and build on what has been successful through the input of our committees and the establishment of programs that meet our members' objectives. We want to be cautious and thoughtful as we continue ahead on our growth curve. <<