



(2007 In Review Continued)

its 80th store, and the franchisor has an aggressive program in place to turn employees of franchises into future store owners. The store group also unveiled a corporate ad program, entitled "Fitloso-phy" that emphasized the store's fit program(although the ads were not backed by a major media spend). Fleet Feet is also looking at developing a business that could help store owners solve the succession issue, selling their stores to a new company that would then turn around and find new suitable owners.

2008 Forecast: Fleet Feet has a winning formula, combining a growing national brand with a local ownership and community involvement. The store has its sites set on the 100 store mark in the next 18 months.

8. Acquiring Minds. Collective brands' acquisition of Saucony was the biggest deal made in 2007, but there were others worth noting, too. Runner's World bought Running Times, New Balance bought Vital Apparel, parent of InSport, Implus bought Sneaker Balls and Crocs bought Bite. These purchases were a mix of strategic deals and those that rely on scale.

2008 Forecast: There is still a fair amount of M&A money hunting the sports business and chances are a few other running brands could change hands in the New Year. Word is that Nautilus is looking

to sell Pearl Izumi less than two years after it acquired the brand.

9. Tri This. One of the brands that created the biggest buzz in the market didn't come from a running company, but rather an upstart triathlon brand, Newton. Newton launched with some great looking product and an low-to-the-ground marketing effort and initially sold its product only on the web. Newton broke that mold late in the year, opening its first retail account, Runner's Hi & Tri in Illinois.

2008 Forecast: Newton capitalized on the growth of triathlons, which target an affluent technical customer who will pay for the latest and greatest. Other brands will certainly follow. Tri-suit maker Zoot also introduced a footwear line and while the tri category is small, it is mighty and attracting a lot of attention.

10. Green Guys. Don't expect Whole Foods to start selling running shoe any time soon, but the "green" trend is certainly coming to athletic footwear and apparel. New Balance uses a fabric made from coconut in its apparel line and Brook rolled out a new biodegradable version of its MoGo mid-sole technology. 2008 Forecast: Look for this green trend to spread quickly to races and race directors. There will be an emphasis on recycling footwear and apparel and reducing waste at major events. ●

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