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## BUSINESS

# First Insight Adds to Roster

- Maurices and Aéropostale expand apparel specialty clientele by two as Helzberg Diamonds and Things Remembered also sign on.

BY ARNOLD J. KARR

**First Insight**, the predictive analytics firm based in Pittsburgh, has entered into partnership agreements with four retailers as the firm prepares to bring its Insight Suite platform to locations outside North America.

The additions are the Maurices subsidiary of Ascena Retail Group Inc., Aéropostale Inc., Helzberg Diamonds and personalization specialist Things Remembered.

The company, already working in Europe, has taken its first steps to expand its services to retailers and brands in Asia and Latin America.

“Our mission is to improve the success rate of new products for all retailers and brands worldwide,” said Greg Petro, president and chief executive officer, “and we look forward to continuing to deliver sales and margin gains for our retail and brand partners.”

Jim Shea, chief marketing officer of the company, told WWD that the firm enters into subscription agreements with its customers and guarantees a 3 to 9 percent improvement in gross margin and seeks to give clients a 10-to-15-time return on their investments in the service.

“You don’t have to be 100 percent accurate in picking products,” Shea said. “When the success rate is 30, 40 or 50 percent, that’s worth a lot to a store. The question we pose to the consumers we engage online is two-fold: What’s the right product and what’s the right price?”

Beryl Raff, ceo of Helzberg, a Berkshire Hathaway company, commented, “Through a thorough due-diligence process, we have found that First Insight’s solution has more than doubled our new product success rate.”

Mike Herrick, senior vice president of planning and allocation for Maurices, said the feedback from consumers provided by First Insight “is enabling Maurices to understand which patterns, colors and silhouettes create the optimal combination for both our core customer and our new, targeted customer. We can now be much more focused during our new product development process.”

As Aéropostale embarks on a merchandise turnaround beginning with the back-to-school season, Marc Miller, chief operating officer of the teen retailer, commented, “The quick response time of the First Insight platform allows Aéropostale to make more informed decisions with shorter lead times, improving the efficiency of the merchandise and buying process.”

First Insight’s range of clients includes vertical brands, department stores, sporting goods companies, mass merchants and wholesalers.