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Sudoku solution from Page 3

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Comparison Shop Like a Champ This Holiday Season

COMPARISON SHOP LIKE A CHAMP

DURING THE HOLIDAY SEASON

The holiday season can be expensive. Sure, you might describe this time of year with less cynical words like “magical” or “warm,” but unfortunately, most stores don’t accept magic or warmth as legal tender. Whether it be for gifts or for holiday meals and treats, most people want to get the most for their money while saving their time and energy. That’s what makes comparison shopping in the age of technology so worthwhile.

In case you didn’t already guess its meaning, “comparison shopping” is simply when you compare prices of the same or similar products at different stores or online retailers. You’ve probably done comparison shopping without knowing you were doing it. However, once you truly embrace the concept, you can increase your savings. Plus, by using the bevy of online price comparison tools, you can do so without scrambling around to every store in town.

If you want to comparison shop like a champ this holiday season, here are a few general tips.

The best deal isn’t always the lowest price. If you’re buying gifts online, be sure to take shipping costs into account.



They might end up making the cheaper option more expensive in the end. You should also take a look at the return fees, in case these could drive the price up significantly.

Look at the per unit price for food. If you’re buying groceries for Thanksgiving dinner, sometimes the item that’s more expensive at face value is actually cheaper per unit. That can mean you’ll save money overall by buying in bulk.

Be wary of markups. Black Friday can leave you feeling frenzied, and that’s not always when stores have their best deals. In fact, many of them mark up their prices (sometimes “discounting” them back to their regular price) in preparation for that day. It’s a good rule of thumb to be wary of massive “sales” at big retail locations.

If you want to know where you can compare prices, take a look at any one of these apps: Google Shopping, PriceGrabber, Shopping.com, Idealo, Shopzilla, BuyVia, NowDiscount, ScanLife, or ShopSavvy.



HAWAII IS OUT OF REACH — AGAIN!

My Never-Ending Quest to Reach the ISIAQ Conference

A few months ago, a single click turned my November upside down. I was getting ready to book my airline tickets to Honolulu, Hawaii, to attend the Healthy Buildings America 2021 conference. Before I clicked “purchase,” I opened up the conference webpage to double check the dates — and my stomach dropped all the way to the floor.

For months, the page had read, “Healthy Buildings America 2021: Honolulu, Hawaii, Nov. 9–11, 2021.” But that morning, it suddenly said, “Jan. 18–21, 2022.” What?!

I couldn’t believe it. The conference was originally scheduled for June of this year and had already been moved once. Would they really reschedule it again without sending out an email or announcement? To find out, I called the committee that hosts Healthy Buildings 2021: the International Society of Indoor Air Quality and Climate (ISIAQ).

It turns out the conference had been rescheduled just that morning due to COVID-19. I was sorely disappointed, and I still am months later! I look forward to attending these conferences every few years because the people who belong to ISIAQ are the brainiacs who do the important scientific investigation that moves our industry forward.

At each ISIAQ conference, researchers tell experts like me what works and what doesn’t and share the latest tips and techniques for managing indoor air quality. In particular, I was looking forward to the presentations from Dr. Joseph Allen of the Harvard School for Public Health (who wrote the book I reviewed in last month’s newsletter) and building sciences pioneer Terry Brennan.

I’ve heard Terry speak several dozen times. He always offers really good practical advice that I can apply in my business. Similarly,



Dr. Allen was set to give a useful lecture called “What Makes an Office Building Healthy?” and lay out the post-COVID-19 return-to-office strategy for building owners and managers. That would have been particularly helpful for me to pass on to folks like you.

Honestly, my biggest frustration is that you will have to wait another three months for me to pass on the latest cutting-edge information. (Of course, I’m also disappointed I won’t be able to take Kaye to Hawaii and look like a hero, but that’s secondary. My clients’ needs come first!) I also feel for all the researchers who were set to give presentations this month. I’m sure it’s discouraging that they’ll need to wait even longer to share their insights with the world.

If you’ve read this far, thank you for indulging my bad temper! I’ll put a stop to it now because the news isn’t all terrible. I’ll still get to Hawaii in January, meet my colleagues there, and learn the latest in the IAQ space. Plus, the havoc COVID-19 wreaked on my schedule is nothing compared to the impact it has had on the lives of others. I’m grateful that a rescheduled conference is the worst I have to worry about!

I hope if you’re feeling frustrated about COVID-19’s impact on your holiday plans, you’ll join me in trying to look on the bright side. Better days are ahead. We just have to hang in there long enough to reach them!

GETTING BETTER INDOOR AIR QUALITY

A large majority of the indoor air quality (IAQ) problems that we investigate are caused by airborne particles. Also known as particulate matter, this involves the smaller dust, dirt, and debris found in the indoor air.

Some of this dust comes from the outdoors, and much of it comes from construction materials like gypsum wallboard or other organic products that are wearing or breaking down. Furnishings, such as carpet and furniture, are also a significant source of the particles. But honestly, a lot of it comes from us. Humans shed thousands of skin cells every day. Our pets at home also do, and that particulate can be carried into a building on our clothing; it's all complicated and difficult to control.

Still, more particulate can leak into a building that isn't sealed well (especially as the day's winds blow against the building enclosure). Because of this, the question of how we can control it forms much of the consulting that we offer.

It appears that using MERV-8 air filters is the most common level of filtration in the commercial buildings we see. But MERV-8 filters are not very efficient. Recently, some of our clients and some of the federal buildings we visit are upgrading their air filters to a MERV-13 filter media. That's great, but it still won't address the particle source.

Over the years, we have investigated particle-related complaints in a large variety of offices. We can confirm that a majority of them were due to poorly organized, heavily cluttered offices. And that makes it challenging for the custodians to clean. The dust builds up in offices, and the occupant complains. The solution, however, is pretty easy to figure out — get organized!

While we routinely investigate complaints caused by particles that range in size from 0.3 to 10.0 microns (1 micron is 1/25 — or 400th of an inch), new concerns are being voiced for particles smaller than 0.1 microns. (These are referred to as ultrafine particles).

Ultrafine particles can carry chemical vapors much easier than larger sizes. Ultrafine particles are more prevalent in a cubic meter of air (as we sample them), and finally, the ultrafine particles can go much deeper into the lungs — so deep that they can bypass much of the body's self-defense systems against breathing contaminants that are served by the lungs.

There is equipment to sample for ultrafine particles, but it is expensive and difficult to use.

Heavy, cumbersome, and challenging to learn, the instrument has a long wand that extends some 4–5 feet away from the user. The user then slowly moves the wand from side to side, taking readings of the indoor air. Much like a Geiger counter, when the gauge levels go up, that indicates a direction to the source of particles. The user then walks in that direction, sampling as they go. Ultimately, the instrument will show the source of the higher particle counts and indicate an area to be repaired. We have used this equipment to find leaky window seals, poor wax ring seals, and even cracks in a slab in the above-ceiling spaces.

Finding and chasing odors using this ultrafine particle counter is an easy process. What won't be easy (in the future) is finding and resolving occupant concerns for air quality when the regular (standard) tools don't work.

We were charged with finding the pathway that cooking odors were taking to enter the U.S. Attorney's Offices in one South Texas office building. The attorneys were on the fifth floor, while a large and popular restaurant was located on the sixth floor. We knew where the fajita-like odors came from, but we didn't know how they got into the attorneys' offices. Using the particle counter helped us identify window seals that were leaking in several areas. Even more surprising, we discovered that the cooking odors came from a floor drain in the restaurant kitchen! That drain-line ran above the ceiling of the attorneys' offices. The ultrafine particle counter showed us higher numbers when we ran the wand around the bottom of the floor penetration (in the ceiling return), and this showed us something we could never have found without the instrument!

Occupant complaints in today's environment can be addressed when found. But when the source isn't properly identified, the leaky building and high ventilation levels (outdoor air) can dilute the source that may resolve the complaint.

Buildings are now being built tighter with better air controls. As that continues, the level of complaints will go down, but that doesn't mean finding a solution to IAQ complaints will be easier. That's why the need to find the sources of ultrafine particles will increase.

I don't have a crystal ball for indoor air quality, but I do see the scientific community discussing and researching the concerns. And it is very likely that this is one issue that'll haunt building owners, facility managers, and IAQ investigators like me long into the 22nd century.

Train West

FOOTBALL AND THANKSGIVING:

A MATCH MADE IN MARKETING HEAVEN

Last year, 30.3 million people tuned in to watch the NFL's Thanksgiving showdown between the Washington Football Team and the Dallas Cowboys. For those Americans (and probably for you if you're reading this article), football is as essential to Thanksgiving as turkey and stuffing — but why?

As it turns out, there are two answers to that question. The first is that games have been played on the holiday for almost as long as it has officially existed. Thanksgiving became a holiday in 1863, and just six years later, the third American football game in history was played on it.

According to SB Nation, the Young America Cricket Club and the Germantown Cricket Club faced off in that inaugural Thanksgiving game in Philadelphia, and football has been played on Thanksgiving pretty much ever since! When the NFL was founded in 1920, the Thanksgiving game was official from the get-go.

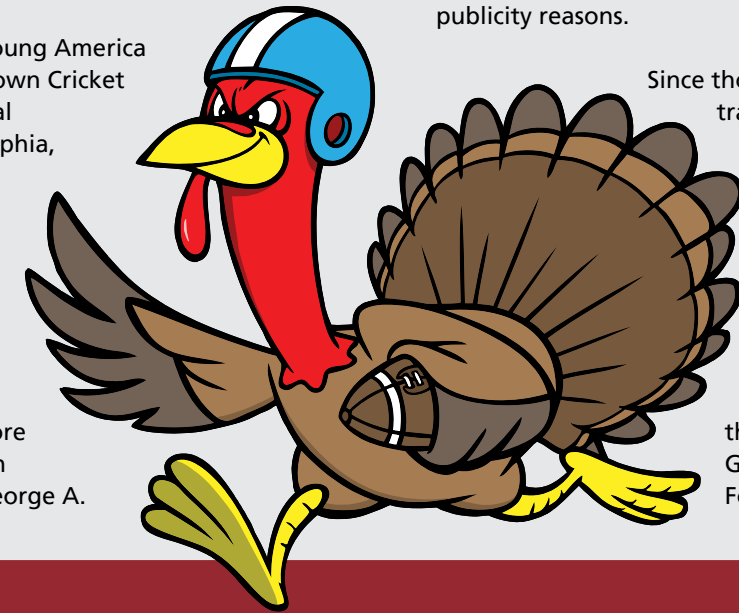
The second reason we watch football on Thanksgiving is more about money than tradition. In 1934, a Detroit Lions coach, George A.

Richards, decided that in order to attract more fans, his team would make a point to always play on Thanksgiving when most people were off work. To sweeten the pot, he committed his radio station (an affiliate of the NBC Blue Network) to broadcasting the Thanksgiving game live on 94 different stations across America.

This idea was a hit from day one! According to Sporting News, the long-unloved Lions "not only sold out the stadium, they also had to turn people away at the gates." In 1966, the Dallas Cowboys signed on to play every Thanksgiving, too, for similar publicity reasons.

Since those early days, football-themed traditions have flourished in American families. Apart from watching games on TV, one of the most popular is organizing a pre-turkey game of family touch football a la the sitcom "Friends." (Its famed episode "The One With the Football" aired Nov. 21, 1996.)

If you've never organized a game, this could be your year! To get started, Google "Scott's Family-Friendly Touch Football" and click the first link.



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