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This year's International Consumer Electronics Show won't have a "breakthrough product," but mostly familiar gadgets with more bells and whistles.

Tech extravaganza is more about the 'extra'

By Benny Evangelista

SAN FRANCISCO — More than 150,000 people are expected to descend on Las Vegas this week, all hoping to find which of the 20,000 new products at the world's biggest consumer electronics

trade show is the next latest, greatest revolution in technology.

Yet the 2013 International CES figures to be more of a showcase for incremental evolutions — of televisions, phones, tablets and other gadgets — rather than the start

of any revolution.

"We'll see no breakthrough product," said Silicon Valley analyst Tim Bajarin, a veteran of many a CES.

Organizers of the four-day show, which opens Tuesday, expect attendance to be at least the

same as last year, when a record 156,000 people crowded into Las Vegas, even though the Consumer Electronics Show is also undergoing an evolutionary transition. Last year, Microsoft Chief Executive Officer

Tech continues on B8

LOCAL SUCCESS STORY

Tejas Office Products thrives on alliances

A half-century running a family business taught Lupe Fraga the importance of forging strong connections

By David Kaplan

HC Lupe Fraga took over a small East End office-supply business in 1962. Meeting payroll was hard, he recalled recently, and there were times when he'd wake up in a sweat.

Then there was the onslaught of big-box chains that drove out most of the other family-owned office-supply stores over the last 50 years.

But Fraga's Tejas Office Products is still in business, and he expects to take in almost \$40 million in revenue this year. He succeeded by adapting to change, making the most of his personality and forging alliances with Fortune 500 companies looking to work with minority businesses.

"You want to be around him and be on his team," said Richard Huebner, president of the Houston Minority Supplier Development Council. "He's great at building relationships."

Community involvement
The son of a Mexican immigrant laborer, Fraga also has become a community leader, having served as a regent at his alma mater, Texas A&M University, and chaired the Houston branch of the Federal Reserve Bank, Dallas. He currently sits on the board of the Greater Houston Partnership.

He is the brother of Felix Fraga, a former Houston city councilman and school board trustee.

Fraga said his business got a boost in 1974, when a man walked into his shop, then called Kendig's Office Supply, and asked, "Would you be interested in doing business with Shell?"

The energy giant was a pioneer among big corporations wanting to work with minority



Mayra Beltrán / Houston Chronicle

Customers know that a call to Tejas Office Products is likely to put them in contact with a member of the family, as founder Lupe Fraga has daughters Michele Fraga, left, and Alisa Fraga-Kautzmann and son Stephen Fraga all involved in the 50-year-old company.

businesses, Fraga said. He later took on Southwestern Bell as a client.

He changed the name of the business to Tejas Office Products in 1982 and six years later moved to 1225 W. 20th in the Heights.

In the 1980s, the office-supply industry changed dramatically with the entry of chains such as Office Depot and OfficeMax, Fraga said. A number of major corporations, including Shell, began doing business with one office product vendor nationally.

With the help of the Houston Minority Supplier Development Council, Fraga got contracts with hospitals in the Texas Medical Center and with aerospace and other companies.

In 2002, with the assistance of the same council, Tejas entered into a partnership with Staples. The alliance enabled

Staples to benefit from relationships Tejas has cultivated, Huebner said. Tejas does the deliveries, invoicing and collections, and Staples acts as wholesaler.

Three children all aboard

In Houston, Tejas delivers Staples products to Dow Chemical Co., Exxon Mobil Corp., CenterPoint Energy, Coca-Cola Co., Shell Oil Co., Lockheed Martin and others.

Other office-supply chains have established partnerships with local minority-owned businesses, Huebner said.

Office Depot joined forces with Lee Office Solutions, owned by Victor Bhatt, and Office Max has partnered with Today's Business Solutions, owned by Robert Jimenez.

All three local businesses do well, Huebner said. Lupe Fraga's son Stephen

joined Tejas in 2000 and is president. Daughter Alisa Fraga-Kautzmann is administrative manager, and daughter Michele Fraga is customer service manager. Alisa's husband, Frank Kautzmann, is an account executive.

Lupe Fraga is chairman, and his wife, Irene, used to be in charge of collections but is semiretired now.

"It's amazing how much they make it a family environment. I've gotten to know Lupe's children and grandchildren," said client Fred Wich, manager of corporate purchasing at CenterPoint Energy.

Bill Livesay, executive director of Andrews Kurth, another Tejas client, noted that when Lupe Fraga visits the law firm, he is gracious with everyone from senior management to mail-room workers.

Fraga grew up on Navigation

Boulevard, next door to restaurateur legend Ninfa Laurenzo.

"She and my mother were like sisters," he said.

Fortuitous friendship

After graduating from Texas A&M, he served in the Army, then took an accounting job at a pipeline coating company. There he struck up a friendship with James Kendig, the man who sold them office supplies. When Kendig was ready to retire, Fraga said, he offered to turn Kendig's Office Supplies over to him at a good price and even co-signed the bank note.

Irene, then Fraga's future wife, who was a hairdresser, would help out on weekends and evenings and even loaned the business \$2,000.

"I still haven't paid her back," Fraga said.

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STATE YOUR CASE

Contact lender before transferring title to mom's house

The information in this column is not intended as legal advice but to provide a general understanding of the law. Readers with legal problems, including those whose questions are addressed here, should consult attorneys for advice on their particular circumstances.

Q: My mother moved in with my husband and me nine years ago, and the title to our house is in her name. She would like to transfer the title to me. There is still a balance on the mortgage of about \$180,000. Can she give the home to me?

A: Yes, she can give you the home by executing a deed.

The transfer, however, might trigger a due-on-sale clause, meaning her mortgage company would have the right to call her note due. So, before she gives you the home, you and she need to contact the lender who holds the note to find out if your plan is acceptable.

Q: My husband and I have been married for 12 years. He has a daughter from his first marriage. His divorce decree required him to name his daughter as the beneficiary of



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his life insurance. She was a minor and in school at that time. After we wed, she finished college, got a job, and he changed the beneficiary to me.

His daughter is now 35. His ex-wife just found out, and she called us threatening to sue my husband unless he changes the beneficiary back to his daughter. Can she do this?

A: Yes, she can sue, but she probably won't win. You need to read your husband's divorce decree

to see what it says. More likely than not, the decree says that he was required to name his daughter as a beneficiary until she reached age 18, or finished high school, or graduated from college. That is the typical requirement included in many divorce decrees.

It is possible, though, that your husband's decree does require that he name her as a beneficiary for a longer period.

Q: My husband and I would like to put our home in a revocable trust, but we are concerned that we might not be able to get the

over-65 homestead exemption in Houston. Do you know if we can still claim the homestead exemption?

A: Yes, you can get the exemption. In my experience, the Harris County Appraisal District has from time to time wanted to see certain language in the trust agreement, but this is language that any experienced estate planner will routinely add to a revocable trust.

Q: My husband and I would like our son, who is 42 and married, to inherit our house in The Woodlands. What steps

will we have to take to get this done?

A: You and your husband can each sign a will, stating who inherits the assets you own when you die.

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