

Betty Lin-Fisher is on assignment. Her Taking Action column does not appear today.



At top left, chief rigger Brian Hershberger inspects the partly inflated envelope of the unnamed Goodyear blimp being built in the Wingfoot Lake hangar in Suffield Township.



At bottom left, Charlie Shankle (from left), Tom McEwen and Tim Cartell shine a light on the envelope and use a walkie-talkie to check with a co-worker on the other side looking for tiny holes.

It's careful work in belly of beast

Expertise, methodical process go into creating new Goodyear blimp

By Jim Mackinnon
Beacon Journal business writer

You get to understand how Jonah might have been feeling. Workers are standing inside the envelope of what will soon become Goodyear Tire & Rubber Co.'s new blimp. The interior of the 192-foot-long envelope smells of rubber and plastic and glue. If it wasn't for a handful of lights brought in for the occasion, the work crew would be in utter blackness. But with the lights, they can see all the way across.

These workers meticulously explore 2,400 square yards of thin, two-ply, neoprene/polyester fabric panels as the blimp sits beached whalelike, half-inflated with air, on the floor of Goodyear's Wingfoot Lake hangar. Two sets of crews work on opposite sides of the fabric, communicating via walkie-talkies to make themselves understood. The latest American icon-in-progress, still unnamed, probably won't take flight from the World War I-era hangar in Portage County's

Suffield Township until at least March. Later this week, it is to assume recognizable form when helium is pumped into the 202,700-cubic-foot envelope to make it lighter than air. The blimp will continue to float, albeit tethered inside the hangar, as 20 people work to get it ready to join its two sister ships in the United States. You could call this place Blimp Garage. Unlike the gang on Discovery Channel's popular *Monster Garage* TV program, the Goodyear crew doesn't turn out customized airships

of all shapes and sizes. One blimp pretty much looks like all the others. When it comes to Goodyear blimps, the company tries not to mess with success, not to mention waste precious dollars. "We're not a manufacturer," said Ron Dunay, manager of the airship repair station and a former Air Force mechanic who worked on F-15 fighter jets. "We're refurbishing. It's not a brand-new airship. It's built to new specs."

Please see **Blimp, D3**

Ohio.com View more photos of the blimp under construction.
<http://www.ohio.com>

Scissors, glue out; mouse pastes

More scrapbookers go digital; they like ease of putting it together

By Holly Ramer
Associated Press

CONCORD, N.H.: Wendy Armstrong won't confess how much money she used to spend on scrapbooking supplies, but she does admit nearly kicking her daughter out of her nursery to make more room for the piles of paper and decorative doodads.

The baby kept her room, but "believe me, it was a very hard decision," joked Armstrong, a stay-at-home mother who lives near Portland, Ore. "This was not so much a scrapbooking hobby as a collecting hobby."

Two years later, Armstrong



Tiffany Brand and her daughter, Alexandra, look at pictures on the family computer as part of the change to digital scrapbooks.

JIM COLE/Associated Press

is ready to get rid of her collection.

But she hasn't given up on scrapbooking. Rather, she's joining a growing number of scrapbookers who have gone digital.

Armstrong, 43, now creates all of her scrapbook pages on her computer. No more physical cutting and pasting, no more agonizing over a layout to the point of paralysis.

"I had two kids, a backlog of

a gazillion photos, and I was just getting to the point where I'd literally have layouts that sat on my desk for months just not quite finished," she said.

Switching to digital scrapbooking brought a huge sense of relief. "All of a sudden I didn't totally panic about finishing my layouts like I did with paper scrapping because I never really had to finish," said

Please see **Digital, D4**

Business takes a holiday

December slow for business-to-business sales; prepare for next year

By Mary Jacobs
Dallas Morning News

DALLAS: For ordinary mortals, New Year's Eve is Dec. 31. But for many people in business-to-business sales, this year ends Dec. 16.

Why? "It's the last Friday before the Christmas break, and people are going to be taking off," said Jim Penny, executive vice president with Management Standards, a sales and management training firm in Dallas.

"It's a fact of life - there are limited selling days in December," said Barry Caponi, president of DEI Management of Dallas, a sales consulting and training firm.

Star players don't write off the last half of December as hopeless.

A few years ago, Caponi closed the biggest deal of his career in the week between Christmas and New Year's when he was a salesperson for a software company.

"A lot of big deals close toward the end of the fourth

How to close deals in December

These are suggestions for closing business deals in December:

- Map out the decision-making process in detail. Identify all the players who might be involved, such as finance or legal personnel.
- Know who the decision makers are and how to contact or send documents to them over the holiday break. If you send a document for a signature or an OK, make sure your contact person expects the package.
- Make sure the decision makers have your contact information, too.
- Make sure you also can reach people in your company who might be needed.

quarter," Caponi said. "Sometimes it's because customers want to close during the fiscal year; sometimes it's because sellers will offer extra incentives to meet their numbers before the year ends."

Penny said: "A majority of deals happen in the last month of any quarter. In other months, it's not a problem. But in December, you've got customers who want to unload the annual budget, and you've only got two weeks to work with."

Have a plan in place for

December.

"Take an honest look at your pipeline and figure out what is truly closeable for the remainder of the year," he said. "If you're a sales manager, sit down with your team and determine a strategy to close those deals as early as possible."

But do so knowing that, despite your best-laid plans, some deals may run into late December. It's up to the salesperson to anticipate how to keep the deal rolling even

Please see **Retail, D6**

COMING MONDAY: Corporate holiday parties are suffering from a bit of a hangover.