

WEIGHT WATCHERS INTERNATIONAL INC

Form 10-K

March 02, 2011

Table of Contents

**UNITED STATES**  
**SECURITIES AND EXCHANGE COMMISSION**  
**WASHINGTON, D.C. 20549**  
**FORM 10-K**

x **ANNUAL REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the fiscal year ended January 1, 2011.

or

.. **TRANSITION REPORT PURSUANT TO SECTION 13 OR 15(d) OF THE SECURITIES EXCHANGE ACT OF 1934**

For the transition period from \_\_\_\_\_ to \_\_\_\_\_.

Commission file number 001-16769

**WEIGHT WATCHERS INTERNATIONAL, INC.**

(Exact name of registrant as specified in its charter)

**Virginia**

(State or other jurisdiction of incorporation or organization)

**11-6040273**

(I.R.S. Employer Identification No.)

**11 Madison Avenue, 17<sup>th</sup> Floor, New York, New York 10010**

(Address of principal executive offices) (Zip code)

**Registrant's telephone number, including area code:**

**(212) 589-2700**

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Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(b) of the Act:

Title of each class	Name of each exchange on which registered
Common Stock, no par value	New York Stock Exchange
Preferred Stock Purchase Rights	New York Stock Exchange

Securities registered pursuant to Section 12(g) of the Act:

None

(Title of class)

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is a well-known seasoned issuer, as defined in Rule 405 of the Securities Act.

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark if the registrant is not required to file reports pursuant to Section 13 or Section 15(d) of the Act.

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant (1) has filed all reports required to be filed by Section 13 or 15(d) of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934 during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to file such reports), and (2) has been subject to such filing requirements for the past 90 days.

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant has submitted electronically and posted on its corporate Web site, if any, every Interactive Data File required to be submitted and posted pursuant to Rule 405 of Regulation S-T (§232.405 of this chapter) during the preceding 12 months (or for such shorter period that the registrant was required to submit and post such files).

Yes  No

Indicate by check mark if disclosure of delinquent filers pursuant to Item 405 of Regulation S-K (§229.405 of this chapter) is not contained herein, and will not be contained, to the best of registrant's knowledge, in definitive proxy or information statements incorporated by reference in Part III of this Form 10-K or any amendment to this Form 10-K.

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a large accelerated filer, an accelerated filer, a non-accelerated filer, or a smaller reporting company. See the definitions of large accelerated filer, accelerated filer and smaller reporting company in Rule 12b-2 of the Exchange Act.

Large accelerated filer  Accelerated filer

Non-accelerated filer  (Do not check if a smaller reporting company) Smaller reporting company

Indicate by check mark whether the registrant is a shell company (as defined in Rule 12b-2 of the Act).

Yes  No

The aggregate market value of the registrant's common stock held by non-affiliates as of July 2, 2010 (based upon the average bid and asked price of \$25.20 per share of common stock as of July 2, 2010, the last business day of the registrant's second fiscal quarter of 2010, as quoted on the New York Stock Exchange) was \$820,780,128. For purposes of this computation, it is assumed that shares of common stock held by our directors, officers and our controlling shareholders would be deemed stock held by affiliates.

The number of shares outstanding of common stock as of January 31, 2011 was 72,781,326.

**DOCUMENTS INCORPORATED BY REFERENCE**

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Portions of the registrant's definitive Proxy Statement for its 2011 annual meeting of shareholders scheduled to be held on May 10, 2011 are incorporated herein by reference in Part III, Items 10-14. Such Proxy Statement will be filed with the SEC no later than 120 days after the registrant's fiscal year ended January 1, 2011.

**Table of Contents**

**Weight Watchers International, Inc.**

**Annual Report on Form 10-K**

**Table of Contents**

	<b>Page</b>
<b>Part I</b>	
Item 1. <u>Business</u>	1
Item 1A. <u>Risk Factors</u>	13
Item 1B. <u>Unresolved Staff Comments</u>	19
Item 2. <u>Properties</u>	19
Item 3. <u>Legal Proceedings</u>	19
Item 4. <u>Removed and Reserved</u>	21
<u>Executive Officers and Directors of the Company</u>	22
<b>Part II</b>	
Item 5. <u>Market for Registrant's Common Equity, Related Shareholder Matters and Issuer Purchases of Equity Securities</u>	25
Item 6. <u>Selected Financial Data</u>	27
Item 7. <u>Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations</u>	30
Item 7A. <u>Quantitative and Qualitative Disclosures About Market Risk</u>	58
Item 8. <u>Financial Statements and Supplementary Data</u>	59
Item 9. <u>Changes in and Disagreements With Accountants on Accounting and Financial Disclosure</u>	59
Item 9A. <u>Controls and Procedures</u>	59
Item 9B. <u>Other Information</u>	60
<b>Part III</b>	
Item 10. <u>Directors, Executive Officers and Corporate Governance</u>	61
Item 11. <u>Executive Compensation</u>	61
Item 12. <u>Security Ownership of Certain Beneficial Owners and Management and Related Shareholder Matters</u>	61
Item 13. <u>Certain Relationships and Related Transactions, and Director Independence</u>	61
Item 14. <u>Principal Accountant Fees and Services</u>	61
<b>Part IV</b>	
Item 15. <u>Exhibits and Financial Statement Schedules</u>	63

**Table of Contents**

**BASIS OF PRESENTATION**

Weight Watchers International, Inc. is a Virginia corporation with its principal executive offices in New York, New York. In this Annual Report on Form 10-K unless the context indicates otherwise: we, us, our and the Company refer to Weight Watchers International, Inc. and all of its businesses consolidated for purposes of its financial statements; Weight Watchers International and WWI refer to Weight Watchers International, Inc. and all of the Company's businesses other than WeightWatchers.com; WeightWatchers.com refers to WeightWatchers.com, Inc. and all of the Company's Internet-based businesses; NACO refers to our North American Company-owned meeting operations; and China Joint Venture refers to Weight Watchers Danone China Limited and all of its businesses.

Our fiscal year ends on the Saturday closest to December 31<sup>st</sup> and consists of either 52- or 53-week periods. In this Annual Report on Form 10-K:

fiscal 2001 refers to our fiscal year ended December 29, 2001;

fiscal 2002 refers to our fiscal year ended December 28, 2002;

fiscal 2003 refers to our fiscal year ended January 3, 2004;

fiscal 2004 refers to our fiscal year ended January 1, 2005;

fiscal 2005 refers to our fiscal year ended December 31, 2005;

fiscal 2006 refers to our fiscal year ended December 30, 2006;

fiscal 2007 refers to our fiscal year ended December 29, 2007;

fiscal 2008 refers to our fiscal year ended January 3, 2009;

fiscal 2009 refers to our fiscal year ended January 2, 2010; and

fiscal 2010 refers to our fiscal year ended January 1, 2011.

The following terms used in this Annual Report on Form 10-K are our trademarks: *Weight Watchers*<sup>®</sup>, *WeightWatchers.com*<sup>®</sup>, *POINTS*<sup>®</sup>, *ProPoints*<sup>®</sup> and *PointsPlus* .

**Table of Contents**

**PART I**

**Item 1. Business  
Overview**

We are a leading, global-branded consumer company and the world's leading provider of weight management services, operating globally through a network of Company-owned and franchise operations. With over four decades of weight management experience, expertise and know-how, we have established Weight Watchers as one of the most recognized and trusted brand names among weight-conscious consumers. In 2010, consumers spent over \$4 billion on Weight Watchers branded products and services, including meetings conducted by us and our franchisees, products sold at meetings, Internet subscription products sold by WeightWatchers.com, licensed products sold in retail channels and magazine subscriptions and other publications.

The high awareness and credibility of our brand among all types of weight-conscious consumers—women and men, consumers online and offline, the support-inclined and the self-help-inclined—provide us with a significant competitive advantage and growth opportunity. As the number of overweight and obese people worldwide grows, we believe our global presence and brand awareness uniquely position us to capture an increasing share of the global weight management market through our core meetings business and our additional growth vehicles, such as WeightWatchers.com.

In the more than 45 years since our founding, we have built our meetings business by helping millions of people around the world lose weight through sensible and sustainable food plans, exercise, behavior modification and group support. Each week, approximately 1.2 million members attend over 45,000 Weight Watchers meetings around the world, which are run by more than 12,000 leaders—each of whom has lost weight on our program. We are constantly improving our scientifically-based weight management approaches, and we are one of only a few commercial weight management programs whose efficacy has been clinically proven. Our strong brand, together with the effectiveness of our plans, loyal customer base and unparalleled network and infrastructure, enable us to attract new and returning members efficiently. Our customer acquisition costs are relatively low due to both word of mouth referrals and our efficient mass marketing programs.

Through WeightWatchers.com, we offer Internet subscription weight management products to consumers and maintain an interactive presence on the Internet for the Weight Watchers brand. We believe WeightWatchers.com is the global leading provider of weight management Internet subscription products. Currently, we provide two Internet subscription offerings: Weight Watchers Online and Weight Watchers eTools. Weight Watchers Online provides interactive and personalized resources that allow users to follow our weight management plans via the Internet. Weight Watchers eTools is the Internet weight management companion for Weight Watchers meetings members who want to interactively manage the day-to-day aspects of their weight management plans on the Internet. Weight Watchers eTools is offered for free as part of our Monthly Pass commitment plan, or Monthly Pass, which provides our meetings members with unlimited access to meetings at a discounted monthly rate. We currently offer our two Internet subscription products in eleven countries, including the United States, the United Kingdom, Germany and Australia.

Companies show continued interest in licensing our brand and other intellectual property as a platform to build their businesses since the Weight Watchers brand brings high credibility and access to the weight-conscious consumer. By partnering with carefully selected companies in categories relevant and helpful to weight-conscious consumers, we have created a highly profitable licensing business as well as a powerful vehicle to reinforce the Weight Watchers brand in the minds of our target consumers.

**The Global Weight Management Market**

We participate in the global weight management market. According to Marketdata Enterprises, the weight management industry had revenue of approximately \$60 billion in 2009 in the United States alone. The number

## Table of Contents

of overweight and obese people has steadily increased around the world over the past 20 years and is estimated to reach approximately 3.0 billion by 2015, primarily driven by changing eating patterns and increasingly sedentary lifestyles. Between 2007 and 2008, 68% of Americans over the age of 19 were considered overweight and almost half of these were obese. Numerous diseases, including heart disease, high blood pressure and Type II diabetes, are associated with being overweight or obese. We believe the growing population of overweight people who are motivated by both an increasing awareness of the health benefits of weight loss and the desire to improve their appearance is fueling the growth in demand for weight management programs. We believe this growth and awareness is also a result of an increasing willingness of employers and governments to promote and contribute towards the cost of weight management programs.

## **Our Services and Products**

### *Our Weight Management Plans*

In each of our markets, we offer services and products that are built upon our weight management plans which are comprised of a range of nutritional, exercise and behavioral tools and approaches. **PointsPlus** and **ProPoints**, our current weight management plans, are innovative, new systems, with similar methodologies, developed from a combination of the latest nutritional scientific research and insights of customers who have experienced prior Weight Watchers plans. For example, the **PointsPlus** system is similar to the patented **POINTS** Weight Loss System as it specifies a simple value for each food. The **PointsPlus** value of a food, however, is determined by a unique and proprietary formula based on the food's protein, carbohydrates, fat and dietary fiber content. The formula takes into account how these nutrients are processed by the body as well as their impact on satiety. Subject to certain nutritional guidelines, consumers following the **PointsPlus** program can eat any food as long as the **PointsPlus** value of their total food consumption stays within their personalized **PointsPlus** budget. Since nutritious foods generally have low **PointsPlus** values, this approach guides consumers toward healthier eating habits. Under the **PointsPlus** program, consumers are taught different techniques shown to help them in their weight loss efforts, such as being encouraged to choose specified **Power Foods** as part of their daily **PointsPlus** Target. To, among other things, maximize eating satisfaction in relation to other similar foods. **Power Foods** are foods that are shown to be healthier and more satisfying food choices based on unique and proprietary formulas assigned to categories of similar foods. At the end of 2009 and during 2010, the **ProPoints** program was launched in Continental Europe. At the end of 2010, we launched the **PointsPlus** program in the United States and Canada, and the **ProPoints** program in the United Kingdom and Australia.

### *Our Meetings*

We present our program in a series of weekly meetings of approximately one hour in duration. Meetings are conveniently scheduled throughout the day. Typically, we hold meetings in either meeting rooms in civic or other community centers or in leased locations.

Our group support system remains the cornerstone of our meetings. Members provide each other support by sharing their experiences and by providing encouragement and empathy with other people experiencing similar weight management challenges. This group support provides the reassurance that no one must overcome their weight management challenge alone. Group support assists members in dealing with issues such as emotional eating and finding time to exercise. We facilitate this support through interactive meetings that encourage learning through group activities and discussions.

In our meetings, our leaders present our program in a manner that combines group support and education with a structured approach to food, activity and lifestyle modification developed by credentialed weight management experts. Our more than 12,000 leaders run our meetings and educate members on the Weight Watchers method of successful and sustained weight management. Our leaders also provide inspiration and motivation for our members and are examples of our program's effectiveness because they have lost weight and maintained their weight loss on our program.

## **Table of Contents**

Meetings typically begin with registration and a confidential weigh-in to track each member's progress. Leaders and receptionists are trained to engage the members at the weigh-in to talk about their weight management efforts during the previous week and to provide encouragement and advice. Part of the meeting is educational, where the leader uses personal anecdotes, games or open questions to demonstrate some of our core weight management strategies, such as self-belief and self-discipline. For the remainder of the meeting, the leader focuses on a variety of topics pre-selected by us, such as seasonal weight management topics, achievements people have made in the prior week and celebrating and applauding individual successes. Discussions can range from dealing with a holiday office party to making time to exercise. The leader encourages substantial participation and discusses supporting products and materials as appropriate. At the end of the meeting, new members are given special instruction in our current weight management plans.

Our leaders help set a member's weight goal within a healthy range based on body mass index. When members reach their weight goal and maintain it for six weeks, they achieve lifetime member status. This gives them the privilege to attend our meetings free of charge as long as they maintain their weight within a certain range. Successful members also become eligible to apply for positions as leaders. Field management and current leaders constantly identify potential new leaders from members who have strong interpersonal skills. Leaders are usually paid on a commission basis.

Our traditional payment structure in our meetings business is a pay-as-you-go arrangement. A new member pays an initial registration fee and then a weekly fee for each meeting attended, although free registration is offered as a promotion during certain times of the year. We also offer prepayment plans consisting of pre-paid meeting vouchers and coupons.

In fiscal 2006, we introduced the Monthly Pass commitment plan in NACO. We subsequently introduced Monthly Pass in eight additional markets, including the United Kingdom, Germany and Australia. Monthly Pass is generally offered at an approximate 20% to 25% discount to the typical pay-as-you-go weekly fee depending on the country. Under the terms of Monthly Pass, a fee is charged automatically to the member's credit card on a monthly basis until the member elects to cancel. Monthly Pass is available for purchase throughout the year. As part of Monthly Pass, members receive unlimited access to meetings at this discounted monthly price plus free access to Weight Watchers eTools, the Internet weight management companion for Weight Watchers meetings members. More than half of our member attendances, and more than three quarters of our meeting paid weeks, were attributable to Monthly Pass in each of the markets where it has been offered for at least a year.

As of the end of fiscal 2010, less than 17% of our total worldwide attendance was represented by franchised operations. We estimate that, in fiscal 2010, these franchised operations attracted attendance of approximately 10 million people. Franchisees typically pay us a fee equal to 10% of their meeting fee revenues. We have enjoyed a mutually beneficial relationship with our franchisees over many years. In our early years, we used an aggressive franchising strategy to quickly establish a meeting infrastructure to pre-empt competition. Since then, we have acquired a large number of franchises and expect to continue to do so opportunistically.

Our franchisees are responsible for operating classes in their franchise class territory using the program and marketing guidelines we have developed. We provide a central support system for the program and our brand. Franchisees purchase products from us at wholesale prices for resale directly to members. Franchisees are obligated to adhere strictly to our program content guidelines, with the freedom to control pricing, class locations, operational structure and local promotions. Franchisees provide local operational expertise, advertising and public relations. Franchisees are required to keep accurate records that we audit on a periodic basis. Most franchise agreements are perpetual and can be terminated only upon a material breach or bankruptcy of the franchisee.



## **Table of Contents**

### *Our Product Sales*

We sell a range of products, including bars, snacks, cookbooks, food and restaurant guides with *PointsPlus* values, Weight Watchers magazines and *PointsPlus* calculators, which complement our weight management plans and help our customers in their weight management efforts. We have focused on selling consumables that drive recurring purchases. Our products are designed to be high quality, offer benefits related to the Weight Watchers plans, be competitively priced and be easy to merchandise.

We sell our products primarily through our meeting operations and to our franchisees. We have grown our product sales per attendee in our meeting operations by updating our selection of products. In fiscal 2010, sales of our proprietary products represented approximately 18% of our revenues. We intend to continue to optimize our product offerings by updating existing products, selectively introducing new products and sharing best practices across geographies.

Revenues from WWI, including revenues from meetings and product sales, comprised 83.4% of our total revenues in fiscal 2010, 85.9% of our total revenues in fiscal 2009 and 87.7% of our total revenues in fiscal 2008.

### *Our WeightWatchers.com Offerings*

Through WeightWatchers.com, we are well positioned to benefit from the large self-help weight management market as well as several trends taking place in the global Internet marketplace, including an increased willingness of consumers to access and pay for web content, the proliferation of broadband access and the growth of e-Commerce and Internet advertising. According to the U.S. Census Bureau, U.S. retail eCommerce sales as a percent of total U.S. retail sales more than tripled between the third quarter of 2001 and the third quarter of 2010. We offer two Internet subscription products Weight Watchers Online and Weight Watchers eTools. We have offered these products in the United States since 2001 and subsequently have launched them in ten other countries, including the United Kingdom, France, Germany and Australia. While these products have similar functionality across markets, each is tailored specifically to the local market.

Revenues from WeightWatchers.com contributed 16.6% of our total revenues in fiscal 2010, 14.1% of our total revenues in fiscal 2009 and 12.3% of our total revenues in fiscal 2008.

### *Subscription Products*

Weight Watchers Online is a product based on the Weight Watchers approach to weight management and is designed to attract self-help-inclined consumers. Weight Watchers Online helps consumers adopt a healthier lifestyle, with a view toward long-term behavior modification a key aspect of the Weight Watchers approach toward sustainable weight loss. Weight Watchers Online allows consumers to learn how to make healthier food choices and lead a more active lifestyle by providing them with online content, functionality, resources and interactive web-based weight management plans. As of the end of fiscal 2010, WeightWatchers.com had over a million active Weight Watchers Online subscribers.

Weight Watchers eTools is an Internet weight management product available to consumers who are Weight Watchers meetings members. Weight Watchers eTools allows users to interactively manage the day-to-day aspects of their weight management plans online, discover different food options, stay informed and motivated, and keep track of their weight management efforts.

As Weight Watchers Online and Weight Watchers eTools reflect different value propositions, the subscription products are priced differently. Both subscription products currently offer an initial pre-paid subscription term of one or three months, continuing thereafter on a pre-paid month-to-month basis until canceled. In the United States, Weight Watchers Online costs \$65.00 for the initial 3-month term or \$47.90 for the initial one-month term. The ongoing monthly fee for Weight Watchers Online is \$17.95. In the United States,

## **Table of Contents**

Weight Watchers eTools costs \$29.95 for the initial 3-month term or \$12.95 for the initial one-month term. The ongoing monthly fee for Weight Watchers eTools is \$12.95. In addition, Weight Watchers eTools is included for free in purchases by consumers of Monthly Pass.

### *Features of Subscription Products*

We believe WeightWatchers.com's personalized and interactive Internet subscription products provide customers with an engaging weight management experience. Our Internet subscription products help customers monitor their weight management efforts, encourage exercise and a more active lifestyle, and provide guidance toward healthier eating habits by offering the following interactive resources:

*PointsPlus* Tracker

*PointsPlus* Calculators

Power Foods lists

Weight Tracker and Progress Charts

Nutritional Guidelines

Hunger Tracker

Fitness Workouts and Videos

Recipe and Food Databases

Recipe Builder

Meal Ideas

Restaurant Guides

### *Mobile Solutions and Other Market Opportunities*

We believe that mobile weight management tools and resources are an important market opportunity for us. In fiscal 2009, we launched our iPhone® application which provides subscribers with access to a suite of weight-loss tools as well as helpful content. In fiscal 2010, we launched our iPad® application which provides subscribers with access to a robust set of recipe tools. We continue to explore opportunities to enhance the mobility of our programs and products.

In addition, we believe men represent an important market opportunity for us and have a version of our Internet subscription products customized for men. Based on our internal research, we believe many men trust the Weight Watchers brand as a source of sensible weight management advice. We believe web-based offerings, combined with appropriate content and imagery, are well suited for men. We believe we

can also continue to expand our Internet revenues from sources other than our Internet subscription products, including third party advertising on our website.

**Licensing, Endorsements and Publishing**

*Licensing and Endorsements*

We license the Weight Watchers brand and our other intellectual property in certain categories of food and other relevant consumer products to carefully selected partners. We also endorse carefully selected branded consumer products. We seek to increase our licensing revenues by targeting sizeable product categories where the Weight Watchers brand can add real value. In order to achieve this goal, our global licensing team focuses on strategically increasing the number of categories and geographies of our licensed and endorsed products.

**Table of Contents**

We typically partner in our licensing and endorsement arrangements with third parties that excel at new product development and have strong marketing and sales expertise, manufacturing and distribution capabilities, financial strength, prior performance in previous licensing and endorsement deals and senior management committed to building the Weight Watchers brand. In connection with our acquisition from the H.J. Heinz Company, or Heinz, in September 1999, Heinz received a perpetual royalty-free license to continue using our brand in its core food categories. We plan to continue to choose our licensing and endorsement partners carefully after identifying and prioritizing product categories that enhance the Weight Watchers brand and have long-term growth potential.

Select current licensees and endorsees include:

**LICENSEES AND ENDORSEES**

**United States**

Applebee s  
 Bimbo Bakeries  
 Boca  
 Conair  
 Dawn Foods  
 General Mills  
 Greencore  
 Kraft Foods  
 Lala Foods  
 Morrison s  
 Schreiber Foods  
 Wells Dairy

**United Kingdom**

Finsbury Food Group  
 Greencore Prepared  
 Walkers  
 Warburtons  
 Yoplait

**Continental Europe**

Bischoffszell & Gastina  
 Campofrio Group  
 COOP  
 Kuhlmann  
 Marie Frais  
 Senoble

**Australia and New Zealand**

Conair  
 Fonterra  
 Tasti

**PRODUCTS/CATEGORIES**

Select Applebee s Menu Items  
 Fresh Bread  
 Frozen Meat Alternatives  
 Scales  
 Sweet Baked Goods  
 Green Giant Frozen Vegetables and Progresso Light Soups  
 Chilled Meals  
 Certain JELL-O Gelatin Products  
 Yogurt  
 Hospital Cafeteria Menu  
 Cheese  
 Ice Cream Novelties

Cakes  
 Ready to Eat Meals  
 Biscuits and Cookies  
 Bread  
 Yogurt

Chilled Meals and Pasta  
 Meats  
 COOP Healthy for You Range  
 Salads and Sauces  
 Chilled Meals, Salads and Quiches  
 Yogurt

Scales  
 Yogurt, Desserts, Cheese and Milk  
 Breakfast Cereal and Bars

We ask each of our licensees to include on their packaging information about our services and our products, such as our toll-free numbers and a URL for WeightWatchers.com. This marketing and promotional support reinforces the value of our brand.

Our licensing and endorsement arrangements give us access to weight-conscious consumers through products sold at retail and increase the awareness of our brand. We continue to believe there are significant

## **Table of Contents**

opportunities both in the United States and internationally to take advantage of the strength of the Weight Watchers brand and our other intellectual property through additional licensing and endorsement arrangements.

### *Weight Watchers Magazine*

Weight Watchers magazines are published in most of our major markets. In the United States, Weight Watchers Magazine is an important branded marketing platform that continues to show strong circulation and advertiser acceptance. As of fall 2010, our US magazine had a readership of 10.1 million, according to MediaMark Research, Inc., an industry tracking service. In addition to generating revenues from subscription sales and third-party advertising, Weight Watchers Magazine also reinforces the value of our brand and serves as a powerful tool for marketing to both existing and potential customers.

## **Marketing and Promotion**

### *Word of Mouth*

The word of mouth generated by our current and former customers is an important source of new customers. Over our more than 45-year operating history, we have created a powerful referral network of loyal customers. These referrals, combined with our strong brand and the effectiveness of our plans, enable us to efficiently attract new and returning customers.

### *Media Advertising*

Our advertising enhances our brand image and awareness, and motivates both former and potential new customers to join Weight Watchers meetings or subscribe to Weight Watchers Online. We have historically taken advantage of a range of traditional offline advertising vehicles such as television, radio and print. Further, WeightWatchers.com has developed a strong capability and presence in Internet advertising. Our advertising schedule supports the three key marketing campaigns of the year: winter, spring and fall. We allocate our media advertising on a market-by-market basis, as well as by media vehicle. We select our media vehicles (television, radio, Internet, magazines and newspapers) based on their efficiency and effectiveness in reaching our target audience.

### *Direct Mail and Email*

Direct mail and email is a critical element of our marketing because it targets potential returning customers. We maintain databases of current and former customers in each country in which we operate, which we use to focus our direct mailings and email. During fiscal 2010, NACO sent over 31 million pieces of direct mail. Most of these mailings are timed to coincide with the start of our marketing campaigns and are intended to encourage former meetings members to re-enroll. WeightWatchers.com made a substantial investment in developing email targeting capabilities. Its email promotional programs are an important customer acquisition vehicle for both our Internet and meetings businesses.

### *WeightWatchers.com Website*

The WeightWatchers.com website is an important global promotional channel for our brand, services and products. The website is an important vehicle for communicating our services and products in greater detail than could be achieved in more traditional advertising vehicles. In addition to being a gateway for our Internet subscription products, the website contributes value to our meetings business by promoting our brand, advertising Weight Watchers meetings and keeping members involved with Weight Watchers outside of meetings through useful offerings, such as a meeting locator, low calorie recipes, weight management articles, success stories and social media functionality. In fiscal 2010, our Meeting Finder feature generated on average over 1.3 million meeting searches per month globally. The Meeting Finder makes it easier than ever for our existing and potential members to find a convenient meeting place and time. The WeightWatchers.com website attracts, on average, over 8.1 million unique visitors per month in the United States alone.

## **Table of Contents**

### *National Accounts and At-Work Meetings*

As healthcare costs continue to be a significant concern on the minds of employers and their employees, we believe that our broad range of services and products uniquely positions us to serve the corporate market and help companies reduce their healthcare costs and improve the overall well-being of their employees. Our strategy is focused on leveraging our organizational capability to serve companies of every size through our National Accounts department and our local At-Work selling teams. As a result of this strategy, we now have the capability to sell, market, and service companies at the local level, the mid-market level, and the national level of the corporate market.

### *Public Relations*

We carry out many of our key public relations initiatives through the efforts of current and former Weight Watchers leaders, members and subscribers. These leaders, members and subscribers engage in local promotions, information presentations and charity events to promote Weight Watchers and demonstrate the program's efficacy. In addition, some become media-trained ambassadors and represent us in various local public relations activities. We currently have over 450 media-trained ambassadors as part of our grass roots network.

In addition, we have continued a science-based public relations initiative we launched during the winter of 2005 to capitalize on Weight Watchers' position as one of only a few clinically proven commercial weight management programs. This has included an increased investment in third-party scientific research, the inclusion of a science center on the WeightWatchers.com website and increased efforts to share our consumer and program insights with leaders in the scientific and medical communities as well as the general public.

### *Weight Watchers Magazine*

In addition to generating revenues from subscription sales and third-party advertising, Weight Watchers Magazine reinforces the value of our brand and serves as an important marketing tool to both existing and potential customers. We offer Weight Watchers magazines in most of our major markets.

## **Seasonality**

Our business is seasonal, with revenues generally decreasing at year end and during the summer months. Our advertising schedule supports the three key enrollment-generating seasons of the year: winter, spring and fall, with winter having the highest concentration of advertising spending. The timing of certain holidays, particularly Easter, which precedes the spring marketing campaign and occurs between March 22 and April 25, may affect our results of operations and the year-to-year comparability of our results. For example, in fiscal 2009, Easter fell on April 12, which means that our spring marketing campaign began in the second quarter of fiscal 2009 as opposed to the first quarter of fiscal 2008. The introduction of Monthly Pass in the meetings business has resulted in less seasonality with regard to our meeting fee revenues because its revenues are amortized over the related subscription period. Our operating income for the first half of the year is generally the strongest. While WeightWatchers.com experiences similar seasonality in terms of new subscriber sign-ups, its revenue tends to be less seasonal because it amortizes subscription revenue over the related subscription period.

## **Entrepreneurial Management**

We run our company in an entrepreneurial manner that allows us to develop and test new ideas on a local basis and then implement the most successful ideas across our network. In addition, many of our meeting products were developed locally and then introduced successfully in other countries. Local managers have strong incentives to adopt and implement the best practices of other regions and to continue to develop innovative new services and products.

## **Table of Contents**

While having strong local leadership has always been a cornerstone of our strategy, we have also been investing in building our global corporate management team. Our management team plays a critical role in driving and facilitating the global coordination necessary to optimize our international assets and share best practices across geographies.

### **Competition**

The weight management market includes self-help weight management regimens and other self-help weight management products and publications such as books, tapes and magazines; commercial weight management programs; Internet weight management approaches; dietary supplements and meal replacement products; weight management services administered by doctors, nutritionists and dieticians; surgical procedures; the pharmaceutical industry; government agencies and non-profit groups that offer weight management services; and fitness centers.

Competition among commercial weight management programs is largely based on program recognition and reputation and the effectiveness, safety and price of the program. In the United States, we compete with several other companies in the commercial weight management industry, although we believe that the businesses are not comparable. For example, many of these competitors' businesses are based on the sale of pre-packaged meals and meal replacements. Our meetings use group support, education and behavior modification to help our members change their eating habits, in conjunction with flexible food plans that allow members the freedom to choose what they eat. There are no significant group education-based competitors in any of our major markets, except in the United Kingdom. Even there, we believe we possess the largest share of the market.

We believe that food manufacturers that produce meal replacement products are not comparable competition because these businesses' meal replacement products do not engender behavior modification through education in conjunction with a flexible, healthy food plan.

We also compete with various self-help diets, products and publications, such as low-carbohydrate diets, which gained in popularity and media exposure beginning in 2003.

### **Trademarks, Patents and Other Proprietary Rights**

We own numerous domestic and international trademarks, patents and other proprietary rights that are valuable assets and are important to our business. Depending upon the jurisdiction, trademarks are valid as long as they are used in the regular course of trade and/or their registrations are properly maintained. Patent protection extends for varying periods according to the date of patent filing or grant and the legal term of patents in the jurisdiction in which the patent is granted. The actual protection afforded by a patent may vary from country to country depending upon the type of patent, the scope of its coverage and the availability of legal remedies in the country. We believe the protection of our trademarks, copyrights, patents, domain names, trade dress and trade secrets is important to our success. We aggressively protect our intellectual property rights by relying on a combination of trademark, copyright, patent, trade dress and trade secret laws, and through the domain name dispute resolution system.

### **History**

#### *Early Development*

In 1961, Jean Nidetch, our founder, attended a New York City obesity clinic and took what she learned from her personal experience at the obesity clinic and began weight-loss meetings with a group of her overweight friends in the basement of a New York apartment building. Under Ms. Nidetch's leadership, the group members supported each other in their weight-loss efforts, and word of the group's success quickly spread. Ms. Nidetch and Al and Felice Lippert, who all successfully lost weight through these efforts, formally launched our business.

## **Table of Contents**

in 1963. Weight Watchers International, Inc. was incorporated as a Virginia corporation in 1974 and succeeded to the business started in New York in 1963. Heinz acquired us in 1978.

### *Artal Ownership*

In September 1999, Artal Luxembourg, S.A., or Artal Luxembourg, acquired us from Heinz. Artal Luxembourg is an indirect subsidiary of Artal Group, S.A., which together with its parent and its subsidiaries is referred to in this Annual Report on Form 10-K as Artal. Subsequent to Artal's acquisition of us, Artal Luxembourg transferred ownership of its shares in us to Artal Participations and Management S.A. and Artal Holdings Sp. z o.o., each also members of Artal. Currently, Artal Holdings Sp. z o.o. is the record holder of all our shares owned by Artal.

### *WeightWatchers.com Acquisition*

In July 2005, we acquired control of our licensee and affiliate, WeightWatchers.com, by increasing our ownership interest from approximately 20% to approximately 53%. Subsequently, in December 2005, WeightWatchers.com redeemed all shares owned by Artal in it, resulting in our current ownership of 100% of WeightWatchers.com.

### *Tender Offer and Share Repurchase*

On December 18, 2006, we commenced a tender offer in which we sought to acquire up to 8.3 million shares of our common stock at a price between \$47.00 and \$54.00 per share, a transaction that we refer to in this Annual Report on Form 10-K as the Tender Offer. Prior to the Tender Offer, we entered into an agreement with Artal whereby Artal agreed to sell to us, at the same price as was determined in the Tender Offer, the number of its shares of our common stock necessary to keep its percentage ownership in us at substantially the same level after the Tender Offer. Artal also agreed not to participate in the Tender Offer so that it would not affect the determination of the price in the Tender Offer.

The Tender Offer expired at midnight on January 18, 2007, and on January 26, 2007 we repurchased approximately 8.5 million shares at a price of \$54.00 per share. These repurchased shares were comprised of 8.3 million shares that we offered to purchase and approximately 0.2 million shares purchased pursuant to our right to purchase up to an additional 2% of the outstanding shares as of November 30, 2006. On February 2, 2007, we repurchased approximately 10.5 million of Artal's shares at a purchase price of \$54.00 per share pursuant to our prior agreement with Artal. In January 2007, we amended and supplemented our revolving credit facility to finance these repurchases.

### *China Joint Venture*

On February 5, 2008, we entered into a joint venture with Danone Dairy Asia, an indirect, wholly-owned subsidiary of Groupe DANONE S.A., to establish a weight management business in the People's Republic of China. Pursuant to the terms of the joint venture agreement, we and Danone Dairy Asia own 51% and 49%, respectively, of the joint venture entity, Weight Watchers Danone China Limited. In connection with the joint venture agreement, we entered into a license agreement in July 2008 to grant the China Joint Venture an exclusive license within the People's Republic of China to certain of our intellectual property rights for the purpose of engaging in the operation of weight management classes, the manufacture and sale of branded products in the meeting room, the publication of a weight management branded print magazine and the offer of weight management products and services over the Internet. In consideration for granting these rights, we receive a royalty of ten percent on all the China Joint Venture's revenues, net of certain taxes. The license agreement has a term of ten years and is automatically renewable for successive ten year terms after that time. In September 2008, the China Joint Venture launched its first weight management services centers.



## **Table of Contents**

### **Regulation**

A number of laws and regulations govern our advertising, services, products, operations and relations with consumers, employees and other service providers in the countries in which we operate. Certain federal, state and foreign agencies, such as the Federal Trade Commission, or FTC, regulate and enforce such laws relating to advertising, disclosures to consumers, privacy, consumer pricing and billing arrangements, and other consumer protection matters. Since we operate our meetings business both in the United States and internationally, we are subject to many distinct employment, labor, benefits and tax laws in each country in which we operate, including regulations affecting our employment practices and our relations with our employees and service providers. Laws and regulations directly applicable to communications, operations or commerce over the Internet such as those governing intellectual property, privacy, libel and taxation, are more prevalent and remain unsettled. Our operations, particularly our WeightWatchers.com operations, are subject to these laws and regulations and we continue to monitor their development and our compliance. In addition, we are subject to other laws and regulations in the United States and internationally, including securities laws.

During the mid-1990s, the FTC filed complaints against a number of commercial weight management providers alleging violations of federal law in connection with the use of advertisements that featured testimonials, claims for program success and program costs. In 1997, we entered into a consent order with the FTC settling all contested issues raised in the complaint filed against us. The consent order requires us to comply with certain procedures and disclosures in connection with our advertisements of services and products.

### **Employees and Service Providers**

As of January 1, 2011, we had approximately 26,000 employees. In addition, in certain of our markets, our service providers are self-employed. As of January 1, 2011, we had approximately 56,000 employees and service providers. We consider our relations with our employees and service providers to be satisfactory.

### **Financial Information About Segments and Financial Information About Geographic Areas**

Information concerning our operating segments and our geographic areas is set forth in Note 15 of our consolidated financial statements, contained in Part IV, Item 15 of this Annual Report on Form 10-K. Information concerning some of the risks to which we are exposed resulting from our international operations and foreign currency exchange rates is set forth under the heading **Risk Factors** of this Annual Report on Form 10-K.

### **Available Information**

Corporate information and our press releases, Annual Reports on Form 10-K, Quarterly Reports on Form 10-Q and Current Reports on Form 8-K, and amendments thereto, are available free of charge on our website at [www.weightwatchersinternational.com](http://www.weightwatchersinternational.com) as soon as reasonably practicable after such material is electronically filed with or furnished to the Securities and Exchange Commission (*i.e.*, generally the same day as the filing). Moreover, we also make available at that site the Section 16 reports filed electronically by our officers, directors and 10 percent shareholders. Usually these are publicly accessible no later than the business day following the filing.

We use our website at [www.weightwatchersinternational.com](http://www.weightwatchersinternational.com) as a channel of distribution of material Company information. Financial and other material information regarding Weight Watchers International is routinely posted on and accessible at our website.

Our Code of Business Conduct and Ethics and our Corporate Governance Guidelines are available on our website at [www.weightwatchersinternational.com](http://www.weightwatchersinternational.com).

**Table of Contents**

**CAUTIONARY NOTICE REGARDING FORWARD-LOOKING STATEMENTS**

Except for historical information contained herein, this Annual Report on Form 10-K includes forward-looking statements, within the meaning of Section 27A of the Securities Act of 1933, as amended, and Section 21E of the Securities Exchange Act of 1934, as amended, or the Exchange Act, including, in particular, the statements about our plans, strategies and prospects under the headings Business and Management s Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations. We have generally used the words may, will, could, expect, anticipate, believe, estimate, plan, intend and similar expressions in this Annual Report on Form 10-K and the documents incorporated by reference herein to identify forward-looking statements. We have based these forward-looking statements on our current views with respect to future events and financial performance. Actual results could differ materially from those projected in the forward-looking statements. These forward-looking statements are subject to risks, uncertainties and assumptions, including, among other things:

competition from other weight management industry participants or the development of more effective or more favorably perceived weight management methods;

our ability to continue to develop innovative new services and products and enhance our existing services and products, or the failure of our services and products to continue to appeal to the market;

the effectiveness of our marketing and advertising programs;

the impact on the Weight Watchers brand of actions taken by our franchisees and licensees;

risks and uncertainties associated with our international operations, including economic, political and social risks and foreign currency risks;

our ability to successfully make acquisitions or enter into joint ventures, including our ability to successfully integrate, operate or realize the projected benefits of such businesses;

uncertainties related to a downturn in general economic conditions or consumer confidence;

the seasonal nature of our business;

the impact of events that discourage people from gathering with others;

our ability to enforce our intellectual property rights both domestically and internationally, as well as the impact of our involvement in any claims related to intellectual property rights;

uncertainties regarding the satisfactory operation of our information technology or systems;

the impact of security breaches and privacy concerns;

the impact of disputes with our franchise operators;

the impact of existing and future laws and regulations;

the impact of our debt service obligations and restrictive debt covenants;

the possibility that the interests of our majority owner will conflict with other holders of our common stock; and

other risks and uncertainties, including those detailed from time to time in our periodic reports filed with the Securities and Exchange Commission.

You should not put undue reliance on any forward-looking statements. You should understand that many important factors, including those discussed under the headings Risk Factors and Management's Discussion and Analysis of Financial Condition and Results of Operations, could cause our results to differ materially from those expressed or suggested in any forward-looking statement. Except as required by law, we do not undertake any obligation to update or revise these forward-looking statements to reflect new information or events or circumstances that occur after the date of this Annual Report on Form 10-K or to reflect the occurrence of unanticipated events or otherwise.

**Table of Contents**

**Item 1A. Risk Factors**

*You should consider carefully, in addition to the other information contained in this Annual Report on Form 10-K and the exhibits hereto, the following risk factors in evaluating our business. Our business, financial condition or results of operations could be materially adversely affected by any of these risks. The following discussion of risks is not all inclusive but is designed to highlight what we believe are the most significant risks that we face. Additional risks and uncertainties, not presently known to us or that we currently deem immaterial, may also impair our business, financial condition or results of operations.*

**Competition from other weight management industry participants or the development of more effective or more favorably perceived weight management methods could result in decreased demand for our services and products.**

The weight management industry is highly competitive. We compete against a wide range of providers of weight management services and products. Our competitors include: self-help weight management regimens and other self-help weight management products and publications such as books, tapes and magazines; commercial weight management programs; Internet weight management approaches; dietary supplements and meal replacement products; weight management services administered by doctors, nutritionists and dieticians; surgical procedures; the pharmaceutical industry; government agencies and non-profit groups that offer weight management services; and fitness centers. Additional competitors may emerge as new or different products or methods of weight management are developed and marketed. More effective or more favorably perceived diet and weight management methods, including pharmaceutical treatments, fat and sugar substitutes or other technological and scientific advances in weight management, also may be developed. Thi