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May, 2005
Volume 4, No. 5



The Woodman Tradeth...And the CCI Emergeth

by: *By Gail Osten*

Feature Interview with Ken Wood. Trader, Founder of Woodie's CCI Room

I was editing stories a couple of years back, likely for our "Back-to-School" issue in September, and two authors made reference to something called Woodie's CCI Room. An odd name, I thought, but it enticed me to learn more, so I Googled it. What I found was a virtual community that, it seemed, had a few things in common. They all were traders – some newer, some veteran, some commodities, some stocks – and they all were looking at and employing an indicator known as the Commodity Channel Index (CCI). And as a group, they rather seemed to bond, as well.

Then a year ago, I met Ken Wood (hereinafter referred to as Woodie), after whom the chat room had been named, and I was impressed and surprised on a number of levels. I expected a younger fellow, maybe a little bit boastful and flamboyant – the stereotypical trader type. Woodie is 180 degrees from that picture. He's is an avowed technical analysis junkie, and after dabbling in a number of indicators, he settled on using the CCI. He and his chat room members believe in trying to make the best of the markets for themselves, but they also are into helping each other. Rare indeed. Perhaps not surprisingly then, about 1,300 traders make their way to this room on an average day.

The following article outlines Woodie's view on technical indicators – his own in particular – and the qualities it takes for traders, whether futures or stocks or forex – to be successful.

GO: Ken, your career as a trader started in what many new traders would probably consider the "old days." By that I mean it was before things were as sophisticated technologically as they are today, and electronic trading was not even a gleam in the eye of those who brought it to prominence. What brought you to trading?

KW: I've been trading for about 28 years, and I became interested in the markets as I read the commodity charts – the highs, lows and closes – in the local newspaper at the end of the day. That's when I got started drawing my own charts from end-of-day data.

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"Well the comments could go on and on. I guess the one that I want to comment on the most is the kindness and generosity that Woodie has shown to all of us. He truly is changing lives and making a difference. I feel very blessed to be a part of all that he is doing. Thank you Woodie."

— Diana Carson



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GO: These were the days before you could easily have all of that information via a computer program, with instant charts at the push of a button.

KW: That's right. I just took a piece of paper and made my own scale, and drew my own charts that way – daily charts, end-of-day stuff. I tried a bunch of things trying to get something that would work. I would take a piece of paper and use quotes from QuoteTrek and my watch, and I would draw 5-minute charts.

GO: It's a little primitive, but it works! So many people have told us that when they had to manually construct their charts, they bonded with them and really understood what was going on in the markets. But people don't do that any more.

KW: What they do now is expect the computer to do everything for them so they really don't get a feel – other than if they watch one chart. People use so many charts that they don't have a feel.

GO: What markets were you charting back then?

KW: I charted and took my first trade in corn. My first system, believe it or not, was the 10-day moving average of the closes. When the price of corn closed above that 10-day moving average, I'd go long, and when it closed below, I'd go short. And my first trade was a disaster. In those days when one put an order in, we wouldn't know if we'd gotten filled for 45 minutes or so, so I'd put my order in at the same time I put a stop in. I actually got my fill on the stop back before I got my fill for my long. That first trade taught me a lot.

GO: How many trades did you have to do before you finally saw something in the plus column?

KW: It took quite a number of trades, to be quite honest. I'm a technical analysis junkie, and if it didn't work on one trade then I would look for something else. I jumped around just like new traders do today. Jump around trying to find something that works. I did a number of different things.

GO: Why not fundamentals?

KW: I always thought that technicals told you what was happening right now, and at that time when you heard fundamental news it was too late because it was already into the markets so to speak. Still today, even though we can get news happening all over the world in a matter of seconds, I really believe that technicals will show you that there is something going to happen fundamentally. I'm a technician through and through.

GO: Let's talk a little bit about the CCI (Commodity Channel Index) because that is really where your "fame" began, so to speak. Take it from there and bring us up to date with how you started with the CCI, what it is and why it became important in terms of your personal success.

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KW: Actually, Don Lambert developed the CCI back in the 1980s, but he developed it not for trading, but to test the computer. He wanted to test a computer because he is a mathematician, and mathematicians have this thing about testing new things, and computers were the thing at that time. Don did write an article on how he thought the CCI could be used to trade in the markets. He gave all of his original work to me. Today, 99 percent of the information found on the CCI is the way Don Lambert originally wrote in his article.

GO: And the basis of it is...?

KW: It was a simple thing – when the CCI went above the +100 line you'd buy it, and when it went below the -100 line you'd sell it. That's how it is in all charting packages. Many years ago, right after the CCI article appeared, I was doing work on momentum – because I always found that for some reason momentum gave a little bit of a warning ahead of time of what was going to happen. And the CCI is classified as a momentum indicator. I began using the CCI and started to develop patterns on it about 13 to 14 years ago; I noticed that these particular patterns were continuously showing up on daily charts at that time – all the time. And so, that's when I started developing the patterns on the CCI and not on the price bars. As I went along, I gave names to these patterns because at that time, and still today, the technical association does not recognize patterns on indicators.

GO: Why?

KW: They recognize patterns like head and shoulders on price bars, but they don't have a head and shoulders on an indicator. My head and shoulders on the indicator on the CCI is called the ghost pattern. It is not written up anywhere in the annals of a technical association.

GO: What else did you learn?

KW: OK, I started with the CCI "ghost," and I worked with that. Then I started to do intraday stuff, again with the 5-minute charts, and I found the same patterns developing there. Early on I found it didn't make a difference whether it was a 5-, 10-, 15-, 30-, 60-minute chart or daily charts – the same patterns eventually showed up. I used it on currencies, cattle, all sorts of things, and found the same patterns showing up on their charts.

GO: How does it differ from other indicators?

KW: Most people look at the price bars, and they use multiple indicators. They use the combination of both, where I advocate the use of just the CCI indicator. In fact, I teach and mentor many traders to trade without the use of price bars because most people who look at price bars get scared out of trades when they see the price bars going up and they are short. That has a psychological affect on a lot of traders.

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GO: Take that a little bit deeper. There are a lot of available indicators, and some people will use several indicators that they think, when used in combination to confirm a signal, will work for them. Is there any reason for perhaps looking at a couple of other indicators plus the CCI?

KW: You know, in day trading the secret is reaction. If you are day trading and want to get an entry into a trade, the faster you can get into that entry from a signal, the better off you are. If you are using multiple indicators, that means your mind now has to go through multiple indicators, which a lot times can have conflicts with one another – this causes a lack of reaction on your part. And when you do react, you're late on entry. Taking that a step further, people use 1-minute, 2-minute, 3-minute charts to day trade, which is absolutely fine, no problem. But when using a 3-minute chart, some people take four minutes to reach a decision...then why use a 3-minute chart?

GO: So are you telling me then that the CCI allows you to be able to pull the trigger with more certainty?

KW: Yes. Most indicators are lagging indicators, but the CCI and the momentum indicator are considered leading indicators. When you see the patterns develop on the CCI, usually the pattern develops one or two bars ahead of a lagging indicator. We get positioned into a trade, and then the other people with their lagging indicators come in to help move the market for us once we are established into the trade.

GO: Let's turn the discussion to your chat room. I've been hearing about it with increasing frequency over the last year or two. How long has it been around?

KW: I started the chat rooms about seven to eight years ago because I had a number of people I had met on some text chats – you remember the old bulletin boards. We were just talking trading, and they suggested that perhaps we could hook up some place where I could tell them what I was doing. Those were the early days of the voice chat. I tried a paid chat room and didn't like that because I felt like I had to be right 100 percent of the time, and I couldn't be. Everything I've done since then has been free to help traders.

GO: How many rooms do you have?

KW: Ten on hotcomm.com, and we are working with traders continuously. In fact, I moderated the chat room this morning. We took ten trades; we had eight big winners and two small losers – losers were for a total of six ticks. We had a hell of a day this morning. Not every day is perfect, Gail, but we have a lot of good days. But it's not the Holy Grail.

GO: How many people come into the site on a given day?

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KW: On a 24-hour basis we possibly have around 1,300-plus traders coming through. It's interesting to think about how much it has grown. A year ago we were getting 26,000 hits a month, and currently we're over 80,000 on the website.

GO: Is there a benefit to having a lot of people, or are there limits in terms of the number of people that should be on the site?

KW: This is what we have done in the last couple of months. At one point, we had just one chat room for everything. But we were growing leaps and bounds because we had a variety of different traders trading a variety of different things and using the CCI, and having success with that. Success clearly creates a few growing pains. We had people posting hog trades and currency trades, and then we had new traders asking about the settings for this and that. We had people saying, "I'm long IBM stock, and what's happening with that?" In sum, the text chat was going through so fast that you couldn't even read what was going on because there were just too many people posting different things.

GO: And now?

KW: As mentioned earlier, we now have ten chat rooms going, with the one for trading the indexes being the main room. There's one for students who are learning the CCI to ask questions. Then we have a stock room where people are posting their stock trades using the CCI and whatever they are using. The CCI works on stocks as well as futures. We have the commodities room where people are trading their hogs, cattle, etc. There's a coffee shop where people can go just to do idle chatter during the day if they want. And we have an open trading room for those who want to go for trading any kind of style – stochastics or whatever they want to use. The new rooms are the forex room, the seminar room for all the free seminars, a Spanish-speaking room and a Trade Maven room, because many are now using it. All chat rooms are located on hotcomm.com. Again, all that is required is a positive attitude and a positive post.

GO: Let's touch on chat room rules and why they are important, because I'm sure some people probably would prefer not to have rules at all.

KW: That's true. Two of the main rules are to maintain a positive attitude, and if you are going to post in a chat room, make a positive post. One of the psychological detriments to trading is being in a negative atmosphere. When everyone is feeling negative, how can you feel good about yourself and make positive trades? The other thing is that we want people to post their trades because putting their trade on the line for other people to see helps them focus. Again, when you have 1,300-plus traders coming through the rooms on a 24-hour basis, you have to have some sort of control. It would only take one or two bad apples in order to turn a room into a very negative environment.

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August, 2003
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GO: You've seen all kinds of people in the chat room.
Psychologically, what's the biggest barrier to success in trading?

KW: The biggest psychological barrier is one's self. We are the obstacle because of the mind games that we want to play. Clearly 85 percent of trading is psychological, and 15 percent is made up of what we use to trade.

GO: I note that psychologist and trader Brett Steenbarger, who has done quite a bit of writing for us, recently wrote something for Woodie's CCI traders, and I thought it was kind of interesting. I'd really like you to comment on the three things he discussed: perfectionism, ego and overconfidence as they relate to how you see traders on an everyday basis. Let's start with perfectionism.

KW: I'm a Virgo, and Virgos by nature are perfectionists. Even if I had a winning trade, I felt I could do better...if there were ten points to be made and I was only taking the middle six, why wasn't I getting the seven and nine? It took me a long time to overcome, basically beating myself up to do better and better. One of the things that I say every time I moderate the chat room is that there will be better trades down the road, and I guarantee it.

GO: Let's talk about ego for a second. How does it manifest itself? You can either be high on ego or low...it's a double-edged sword.

KW: That's correct. A lot of people who get into trading let ego get in their way constantly. They ask, "How many points did you make today, Woodie?" I'd tell them I made ten points. And they would boast that they had made 20. The next day you ask them how many points they made, and they might admit that they lost 20. Egos and boasting get in the way of trading instead of working with a plan to keep you on a steady keel. It also works the other way. People who don't feel good about themselves aren't going to feel good about their trading. Ego is a big problem. I watch people that come into the chat room with their names all in capitals, and that usually signals an ego problem.

GO: Well, either that or they just pushed the cap lock key. Let's talk about overconfidence, a little bit related to ego, but different, too.

KW: Overconfidence can become a big thing especially when you've had some success. I see this in the room a lot. It is a very difficult time for traders because they might have made one or two trades and are feeling very good and confident. They start to beat on their chest and think, "I've got this made now; I've now conquered the markets." They get this feeling of euphoria, and it's a very hard time for traders to keep themselves on the straight and narrow, sticking with their trading plan. One of the rules that we have in the room is that "There is no boasting, just posting." We don't want people to post just because they had a good trade. Instead they should just post so others in the room can learn from it.

GO: How long each day is the room open?

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March, 2003
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KW: The room is open 24/7, but the moderators are there basically just when the U.S. markets are open. Occasionally a moderator in Poland moderates the German DAX. I have some people that will moderate the Hang Seng Index when it opens up. With the euro, sometimes at night my moderators will moderate.

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March, 2003
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GO: Which contracts are you following, Woodie?

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KW: I personally follow, right now, the YM, the euro and the mini-Russell.

March, 2003
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GO: No mini S&P?

KW: No, but we did trade the ES market for many years until about a little more than a year ago. It had such tight range that there was no follow-through. We changed over to something that had movement. The Russell has about a \$900-a-day range, where the ES has been averaging around \$350. There's nothing wrong with a lot of contracts; it's just that we're looking for those with a better range to trade, and we are traders.

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March, 2003
[The Windmills of Your Mind and the Pathways to Your Trades \(Part 2 of 2\)](#)

GO: Now obviously you've become successful after having your successes and failures. Do people in your room report success with what they are doing? There is no 100 percent in anything. Are there some people that will be successful, and are there other people that will not be successful?

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KW: There is nothing 100 percent in trading. We have people from all walks of life, all levels of assets. We have brand-new traders all the way up to one who has been trading for 42 years. Not everyone is absolutely perfect for this thing. Results of people posting trades in the room – good, bad or indifferent – we want them to do it. If they are doing something wrong – whatever their reasoning for exit or entry – by posting, we can help them. We can build on the negative and make it a positive. If they have a good trade, we can build on that by saying that was a good job, but maybe you could stay in a bit longer if you use a trend line break as an exit, etc. We can help traders both ways. You have to remember that the chat room is like a support group. They have support groups for alcoholics, they have support groups for gamblers and support groups for this and that, but no one has a support group for traders. The thing we do with the chat room is provide support for traders.

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February, 2003
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GO: Are there other sites that offer support for traders?

KW: There could be, but my experience with a lot of other chat rooms is most of these people wanted to be paid for their services.

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GO: Is yours the only free one?

KW: No, there are other free ones, but most of them are paid.

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GO: As regards chat rooms, I've moderated a panel at investor shows, and we have had discussions that indicated that chat room interaction is very good for some people and less good for other people. Everybody is different. Not everyone trades the same way. Do people become too reliant on chat rooms?

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December, 2002
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KW: That's a very good question. I have a number of traders who during the day will not come in to the chat room because they feel that there is so much information given out that it gets them confused. They feel that they do better when they trade by themselves. They come back to the chat room at the end of the day. It does affect some people that way – it's just too many people, too many things going on, and too much information for them. But they do come back at the end of the day to discuss different trades with other traders. We run practice charts, and after hours a lot of people can come in and practice trades on playbacks. If people want to test out something, they can come and we have the charts running, and they can test out new ways of doing something or a new CCI pattern or whatever it is.

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December, 2002
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GO: I've heard a number of stories about your motto, "Traders Helping Traders," and it always fascinated me. It seems we don't see enough giving back in this business.

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November, 2002
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KW: We actually go way beyond that. Case in point is one of our traders who has been a trader for 42 years was undergoing heart surgery. At the time we had a very famous cardiologist from Chicago who ran cardiology at Loyola Hospital, and he taught many of these doctors, one of whom was operating on one of our traders. If any complications were to arise, the cardiologist from our room volunteered to help. He also arranged to have a helicopter at the hospital in case something happened and they had to fly the patient immediately to Loyola Hospital.

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Here's another one – one of our traders in Florida completely lost his home in a hurricane. One of the traders in our room, a lawyer in Chicago, cut the red tape and helped our trader in Florida get back on his feet again. We had other people come up with homes they could live in, and one of the traders opened up his home so this person and his family could live there for six weeks until they could find a place of their own. Stories like this just go on and on, so it's definitely a family atmosphere.

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GO: I want to briefly touch on one unusual point of the site. I know that because the site is free, there also is the ability for site participants who are doing well to make a contribution to Make-A-Wish. Can you tell me how that came about?

October, 2002
[Chairman Newsome is Solid on Market Integrity and Modernization of Regulations \(Part 1 of 2\)](#)

KW: I have so many people in the background helping me. Because of what we have done here to help them in their trading, many want to give something back. There are many people doing many things in the background, like moderators who help tremendously with the chat room. I have other traders in the room who say, "Woodie, this is helping me tremendously. This has changed my life, this has changed my trading. I want to do something; I want

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to send you some money." I say, "No, I don't want the money, but if you want to do something, then just make a small donation to the Make-A-Wish Foundation so we can put a smile on some kid's face."

GO: How did you happen to pick Make-A-Wish?

KW: I ran a seminar in Orlando a few years ago, and we had \$600 left after we had paid all the bills. A few people suggested we just make a donation to a charity like Make-A-Wish. That was great because at the time I knew the executive director of Make-A-Wish here in Phoenix, and that's how we got started. We support some other charities, too. There is a trader in the room who one day a year has 50 handicapped children out at his home. They take the kids out fishing and have a barbecue, so we donate food and other things for the barbecue. And other people make donations to other charities of their liking.

GO: Finally, I'd like you to offer three pieces of advice to our readers that ultimately might make their trading more successful in the long run.

KW: The first one that comes to my mind is to keep it simple. People want to think that more is better. I think you've got to keep it simple, whether it's an indicator or a price bar – whatever you choose to use, keep it simple and program your mind so that it talks to you. The second thing is you must have a trading plan. The trading plan is a list of different things – the way you traded, the type of charts you used. I also think it is important for a trader to keep a trading journal – put down what you did right, what you did wrong so you can build on that, and what you can do to make it better. I think these are the three key things that traders need to do.

GO: Are people who use journals faithfully consistently better traders?

KW: Basically I find that to be true. It gives them the feel for the rhythm of the markets.

GO: Woodie, this has been a most fascinating interview. I've been wanting to do it for some time.

KW: Thanks for the opportunity, Gail.



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