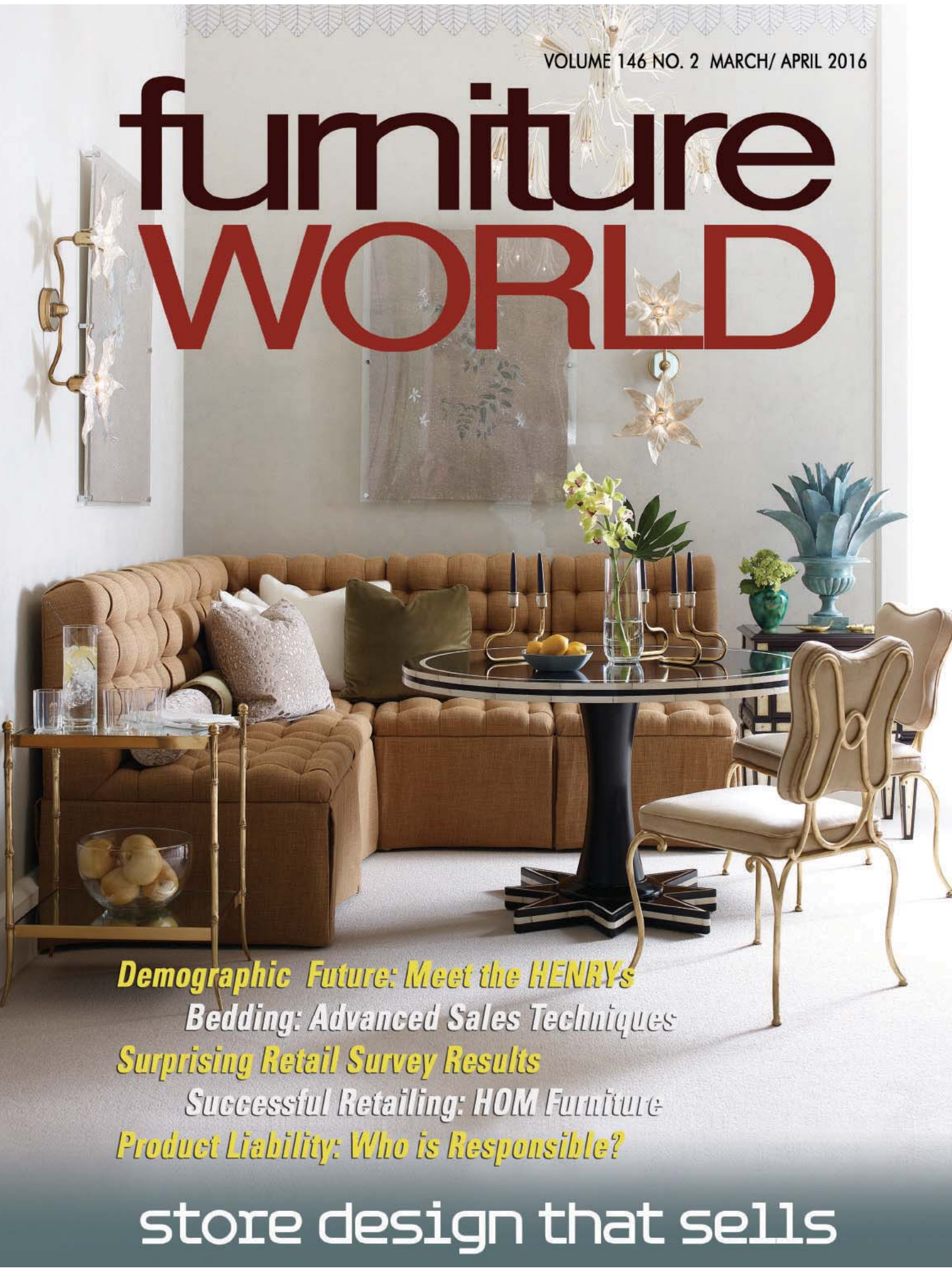


VOLUME 146 NO. 2 MARCH/ APRIL 2016

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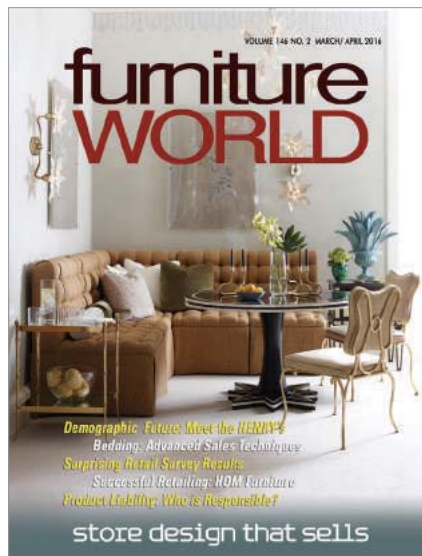
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FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE

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Editor's Corner

Would It Help?

I recently watched, 'Bridge of Spies' a movie directed by Stephen Spielberg, written by the Matt Charman and the Coen Brothers, starring Tom Hanks. Mark Rylance received the best supporting actor Oscar this year for his low-key performance as captured Cold War era Soviet spy Rudolf Abel. When asked by the Hanks character, insurance attorney James B. Donovan, why he didn't seem worried about his prospects, Able, who faced the death penalty replies, **"Would it help?"** It's a memorable line, nicely delivered, a great movie.

That brings me to what I really want to talk about, product liability for furniture retailers. Check out the excellent article by Melissa R. Stull and George W. Soule in this issue that gives a run-down of the risks for you and your business. Furniture tip-over is one of those risks that deserves your attention (see the public service ad on page 115). According to the CPSC, tip-over kills a child in the US every two weeks. It's something you, your salespeople and their customers who have children or grandchildren should think about.

Do you need to worry? **Would it help?** I don't think so. Would it be a good idea to show concern? Might you consider bringing this issue, tips and solutions to the attention of your customers and community? Yes, certainly! Start by buying responsibly, keeping the risk in mind. Maybe also reach out to your market through signage or a brochure. Remember, your customers' homes are also full of previously acquired furniture that may also pose a risk.

Have a Great Day

Russell Bienenstock
Editorial Director/CEO



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survey

RETAIL BRAND

Surprising results about furniture retailers in smaller markets.

by Jennie Gilbert

If you, as an independent retailer think that most of your prospective customers know your business, think again! This recent survey tells a different story.

This is the first of a two-part series on the results of a nationwide survey to understand today's U.S. consumer—specifically, the shopping behaviors and purchasing patterns for durable home goods such as furniture. The results were surprising. Preconceived notions of what consumers want were shattered, particularly for independent retailers as they grapple to compete against larger national and regional chains in today's digital age.

"My store is in a small town, so everybody already knows me and my business." This is an all too common myth encountered when talking with independent furniture retailers.

If your furniture business is located in a big city, you're acutely aware that most potential customers in your area don't know you or your business. You've likely experienced firsthand how difficult it is to win attention in a competitive, noisy marketplace, and understand the critical importance of standing out in the crowd.

However, if your business is located in a small town, it might be easy to assume that most potential customers in your area know your business. After all, small towns tend to foster tight-knit communities where everybody knows

your name. People are more likely to readily share information. That includes the places they shop and the products they purchase. Further, if you believe most of the potential customers in your small town already know about your furniture store, you may also think you don't need to do any marketing to stand out. After all, why pay good money to tell people what they already know?

Honestly, my brother Jim and I were passengers on this same train of thought. Between us, we have devoted more than two decades of our professional lives to helping independent retailers of furniture and other durable goods compete and succeed in a rapidly evolving retail environment. We serve more than 2,000 independent retailers across North America with a host of digital marketing solutions, spending much of our days talking with small business owners.

So, as we put ourselves in our customers' shoes when we're developing new website, e-commerce and marketing automation products, we used to work on the assumption that the smaller the town, the bigger the presence the independent retailer would have, especially if the store

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"We were shocked..."

to find out that only 42 percent of small-town consumers were able to name an independent furniture retailer."

was multi-generational.

Challenging Conventional Wisdom

Yet, despite this comforting logic, when we conducted a survey of nearly 1,800 respondents across the country, we found the conventional wisdom about widespread business awareness in small markets is simply not true. In fact, we found that if you sell durable goods like furniture in a small town, most of your potential customers do not know you or your business.

Here's some quick background on our survey: It began in the spring of 2014. During the year or so that lead up to it, we had been hearing a lot of angst and uncertainty from business

owners. They felt as though retail was evolving faster than they could keep up, and they didn't know what to do about it. No doubt, the retail industry is awash in data, but unfortunately, little or none of it is focused on the core durable goods categories: furniture, appliances, home electronics and mattresses. So our goal was to remove the uncertainty by embarking on a research effort to find answers to questions independent retailers had been asking.

Our nationwide survey asked consumers about their durable goods shopping habits and what qualities were important to them when it came to the online presence of durable goods retailers. Of the nearly 1,800 consumers surveyed, about 20 percent came from towns of 5,000 peo-

ple or fewer, and what they told us was eye opening.

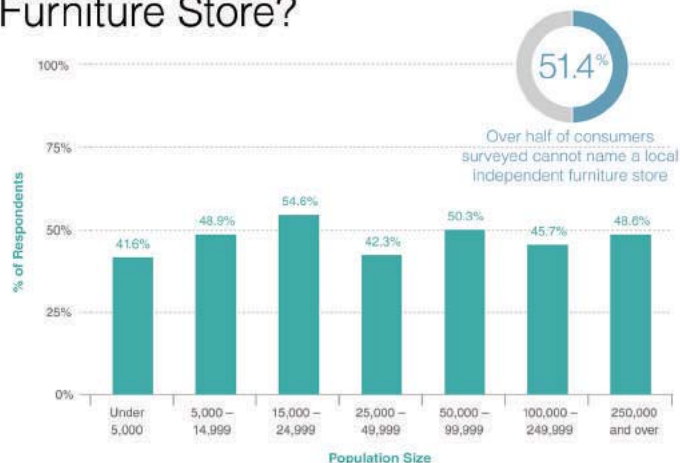
For example, we asked respondents to name all the local places they could buy furniture. This question was unaided: We didn't provide a list of possible retailers from which to choose, or guide their responses in any way. We didn't ask them to differentiate a national brand from a local independent. We wanted to find out what brands were most relevant and top of mind in their daily lives.

Distilling the Results

We were shocked to find that only 42 percent of small-town consumers were able to name an independent furniture retailer. In fact, consumers

By Population Size

Can You Name a Local Independent Furniture Store?



Source: Retailer Web Services

"Survey of nearly 1,800 respondents across the country found the conventional wisdom about widespread business awareness in small markets is simply not true."



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in small towns were less likely to successfully name an independent furniture store than consumers from towns with larger populations. By comparison, 49 percent of consumers in larger cities (populations of more than 250,000) were able to name at least one independent furniture retailer.

To ensure this result wasn't unique to just furniture retailers, we also asked respondents to list all of the appliance stores they knew in their area. Less than 20 percent of small-town consumers were able to identify an independent appliance retailer. By comparison, consumers in larger cities were able to name an independent appliance retailer 19 percent of the time—a single percentage point of difference!

The situation doesn't get any better for independent mattress providers: Just 32 percent of respondents—one in three—from towns of all sizes could name their local independent mattress retailer without any prompting. As for electronics stores, while 82 percent recalled Best Buy as a nearby electronics retailer, less than 13 percent could name a local independent electronics retailer.

It's interesting to see how consistent the awareness levels were across almost every community size. These responses run counter to the preconceived notion that consumers who live in smaller communities know their independent furniture retailers—or other independent durable goods stores for that matter—better than consumers in larger communities.

Bottom line: If you're an independent durable goods retailer in the business of selling furniture, most

"Just 32 percent of respondents—one in three—from towns of all sizes could name their local independent mattress retailer without any prompting."

of your prospects don't know who you are. And it doesn't matter how many generations your store has been there. Think of it this way: While your firsthand experiences would confirm that everyone you engage already knows you, this familiarity doesn't extend to those in your community who you don't engage with regularly—or at all. These strangers are your prospective customers!

The Good News

Comprehensive research shows regardless of the size of your market, durable goods business owners command the awareness and mindshare of less than half—and in some cases, less than 20 percent—of their prospective market. While the research challenges our basic assumptions, we encourage you to consider the positive side of the situation: If 51 to 87 percent of your target audience is truly unaware you exist at this moment, your market opportunity just

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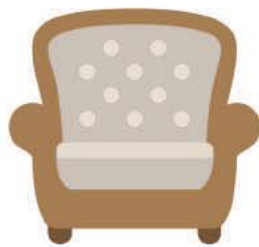
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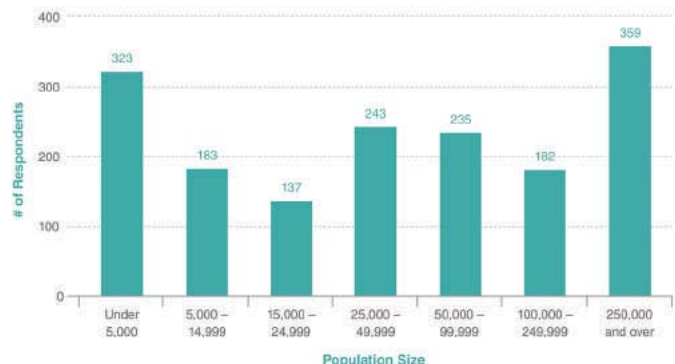
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By Population Size
Survey Respondents

Source: Retailer Web Services

Charts reflect responses of participants, but not all survey participants supplied answers to every question.

By Location
Survey Respondents

Source: Retailer Web Services

RE:THiNK



JENNIE GILBERT & JAMES KANE, JR.

New book co-authored by Jennie Gilbert details the results of a nationwide survey that identifies consumer shopping behaviors and purchasing patterns for durable goods for the home.

doubled, at least.

Using this knowledge to your advantage means you can grow your business without opening new stores or expanding to new territories. To win hearts and minds, no matter the size of your market, you must fight to win the attention and business of your neighbors just as diligently as if you picked up shop and moved to a new location.

Acknowledging you must reach out to prospects, whether your business operates in a small, medium or large market, is the first step in expanding your pool of customers. And while there are literally hundreds of ways to market your furniture business, in-depth discussions on the research findings with independent retailers led us to develop “11 surprising things” you can do now

to win customers in the digital age.

Next Issue

Part 2 in this series will discuss the high price of hiding prices on your website. It's one of the most hotly debated discussion points when we speak to independent retailers. With the websites of your national, regional and local competitors just a click away, your company's website must compare favorably to the other sites your prospects are viewing at the same time (an average of four to 17!) if you have any hope of being successful in the age of the Internet. We'll discuss the reasons why including prices is essential for your success.

About Gennie Gilbert: Jennie Gilbert is the Chief Operating Officer of Retailer Web Services, a Scottsdale, Ariz.-based company whose mission is to help independent retailers realize their dreams through the promise of technology. Jennie is a frequent speaker at durable goods retail conferences and the co-author of *RE:THiNK: 11 surprising things you should do now to win retail customers in the digital age* (Retailer Web Services, 2015), available on Amazon and at www.retailerwebservices.com.

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RE-INTEGRATE PRINT

How smart use of print media makes your digital marketing more effective.

by Bill Napier

Why is it... everyone thinks the print insert is dead... when it certainly is NOT!

I bet you're wondering why I'm writing about this, when virtually all of my Retail Rants on my website www.social4retail.com are about why and how you must focus on your on-line marketing strategies in this digital age. That's because three fundamentals, Frequency, Consistency and Reach still exist across all platforms, no matter what your marketing strategy is.

It started with an email from "Think with Google", which I subscribe to, everyone should. The information that was sent was how consumers reacted to the Super Bowl Ads. The article was titled: "How the Big Game Played Out on the Second Screen," that can be found at (<http://bit.ly/1R9YC7T>). Here is a quick summary of the research:

Commercials during the Super Bowl don't just make us laugh or cry—they also make us search. This year, there were more than 7.5 million search-

es for the brands advertised during the game. This searching represents a seven times higher response rate compared to a typical TV ad, even after normalizing for audience size. Second-screen searching—whether it's to re-engage with the ad, to learn more about the product, or to purchase—is a powerful indication of brand interest. For brands, that means a presence on the big screen isn't complete without a strategy for the small screen, too.

OK, I know it's the Super Bowl, but after reviewing the article, I became curious about how traditional marketing and digital interact when it comes to engaging consumers on their path-way to purchase. This is what I found... and it will enlighten you:

According to a study by e-Marketer (<http://bit.ly/1Qo9aNC>):

U.S. adult consumers who had used newspaper inserts, or FSI's (Free

Standing Inserts) cited deal-related benefits. Fully 70% said they checked the inserts to find out about sales and savings, while 62% said the fliers saved them time and money. 56% had clipped coupons from a newspaper insert in the 30 days prior to polling.

Interestingly, a majority of respondents enjoyed looking through newspaper inserts, with 57% browsing even when not in the market for an item. 56% reported doing so simply because it was a part of their routine. See more at <http://tinyurl.com/gt6tx5>

The proof that inserts do work, doesn't end there. Consider this research:

Two-thirds of newspaper readers either always or regularly look at inserts, according to Coda Ventures' Triad research, a Nashville-based research firm specializing in newspaper research. Coda Ventures recently reported that fewer than nine percent of newspaper readers state that they "seldom or never" look at inserts.

And, most important to advertisers, newspaper inserts drive action. Nine out of ten newspaper readers report that they take one or more of a broad range of specific actions after reading or looking at inserts.



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RE-INTEGRATE PRINT

Other recent research by Research and Analysis of Media (RAM), an international media research company, confirms the crucial role newspaper inserts play in consumer marketing. Data shows that nearly nine in 10 media consumers use newspaper inserts. This is much higher than the usage of direct mailers.

I could literally bore you to death

with statistics and research. Instead, I've pulled out the most relevant facts for this quick read.

When I contacted Valassis for supplemental information, the two charts on this and the following page really stood out:

Before proceeding with this discussion, please understand that I am not suggesting that you use newspa-

pers as your primary delivery vehicle. Subscription rates to newspapers are dying a slow death, except the Sunday editions where people look for your inserted promotions.

In some of the larger markets, subscriptions may still be relevant; however, in most markets, use delivery vehicles like the Valassis Red Plum, delivered in the mailbox, if it's not delivered in your local paper. AND don't rely on a "print-only strategy"; you have to integrate your promotional print program with digital too, because according to Valassis:

- 46% of consumers' interaction with media is spent with print and mobile.
- 60% of adult purchase decisions are influenced by both print and digital.

A survey conducted by Valassis (<http://bit.ly/1Ksenb6>) found that within 30 days of viewing a newspaper insert, 30% of people went online to get more information. This is just one of many reasons you MUST have a robust website with tons of content for consumers to shop.

Additionally, the Wall Street Journal substantiated the news that newspaper inserts drove more retail shoppers than digital ads, and are, without a doubt, the most powerful drive-to-retail media available to marketers.

So, how do you get started to take advantage of a fully integrated selling strategy with this information?

Benefits of Newspaper Inserts According to US Consumers, May 2014 (% of respondents)

You usually check the inserts to see what's on sale or other special savings.

70%

Checking newspaper inserts saves you time and money.

62%

You make a point to look at inserts when you are in the market for what they are selling.

41%

You enjoy browsing through inserts even if you are not looking for anything in particular.

57%

Checking store inserts is part of your routine because you know they are in the paper every week.

56%

Ad inserts make it easy to comparison shop.

55%

I use newspaper ad inserts to check for higher-quality brands as well as for bargains.

53%

You use store inserts to plan your regular shopping.

52%

Newspaper circulars help you to learn about new products.

49%

Insert ads give you a good idea of what products really look like.

49%

It is easier to browse through ad inserts that interest me than to search through the internet for the same information.

48%

Note: ages 18+ who have used newspaper inserts

Source: Newspaper Association of America (NAA), "How America Shows and Spends 2014" conducted by Frank N. Magid Associates, September 11, 2014.

FIVE STEPS

1. Only work with a company that knows this industry, unless you do it all in-house. Work with a company that specializes in the furniture

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category with the creative design, print and distribution for your print program. If you need a recommendation for a company that has dropped over a billion print inserts for thousands of retailers, and has a contract with Valassis, critical so that you get the best rate, visit <http://www.social4retail.com/print-inserts-still-work>. There you will also find more on this topic with downloadable research, videos and more.

Be sure to have a call to action, a coupon offer or something that you can track your promotion's effectiveness, AND be sure that this call to action is done digitally with integration on mobile and on your website. Using geography-based targeting is key to increase your ROI, delivering relevant,

localized messages to high-opportunity consumers via desktop, mobile or tablet.

2. Create a budget. Typical advertising budgets retailers should be looking at are between 5%-10% of sales. Be sure you take into consideration the key home furnishing shopping dates in the fall, spring, summer and winter so you get maximum engagement.

The average cost just for the print portion runs between \$.08-\$.10/each as a delivered price, which should include everything: design, print, and distribution for the printed insert. But there are a variety of options to consider: Red Plum wrap, ROP ads, solo mail options and more. This is why

"A survey conducted by Valassis found that within 30 days of viewing a newspaper insert, 30% of people went online to get more information."

you need to deal with a specialist that knows all of the available options and can recommend the best platform based off your store's profile and budget.

3. Know your target audience. Have a target market profile created by Valassis for your retail location(s). This will highlight the areas you should focus on, based on your store's information. This will include zip codes, income levels, market indices - propensity to buy, and more, so you can develop a plan.

I suggest you test a number of offers on the different demographic groups you've identified in your area. If you're targeting Boomers, you may

"Based on a 5-year trend 89% of households went through the ads in the mail and 44% made a purchase."

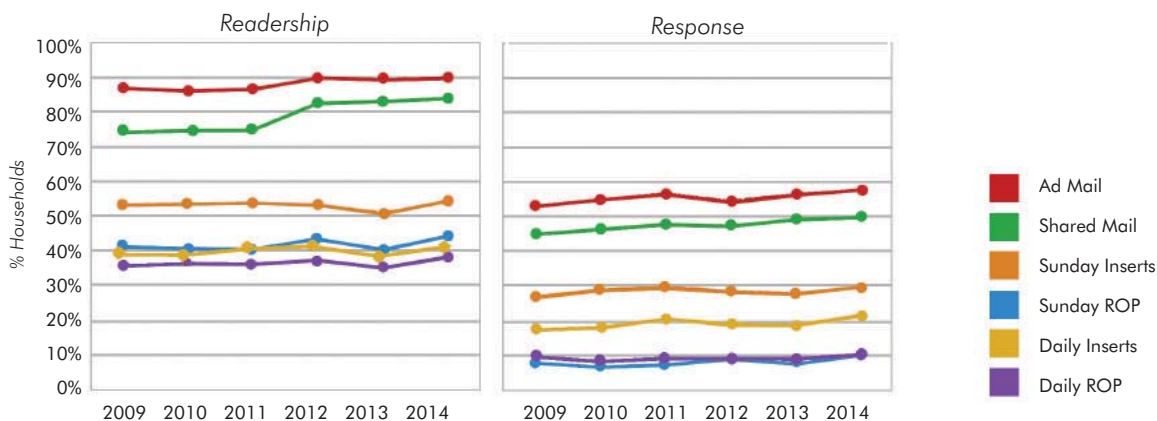


Chart shows readership was steady or increased for print media products over the time period studied as were response rates. Source: Advertising Readership & Response Tracking Study, TNS Custom Studies. CY09-CY14, Newspaper data reflect readership of any local or metro daily/Sunday newspaper in a 7-day period. Base: Approximately 2,925 respondents per year. Chart layout and information compliments of Valassis.



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Millennials reported
their favorite coupon
sources include
mail and newspaper.

MAIL	61%
NEWSPAPER	52%
INTERNET	47% coupons downloaded
INTERNET	42% print at home
MOBILE	39%

At left, Millennials' favorite coupon sources (Valassis research)

want to focus on mattresses, recliners and other products your CRM/POS software shows are most likely to engage that demographic. The same with younger Millennials, maybe beds/bedrooms... that's the first item people buy when they move out of Mom & Dad's, out of apartment living, etc.

4. Don't assume anything. Ask consumers how they heard of you, what brought them to the store, website visits before and after the promotion drops, what they bought vs. what was promoted and more.

You need to gauge effectiveness,

so start with the basics and work with your CRM/POS programs to fine-tune this strategy.

5. Analyze, fine-tune and REPEAT at least monthly. Bi-monthly if you're in a competitive market.

Knowledge is power and information creates knowledge. Fine-tune what you know and then put it to good use by repeating this process over and over. REMEMBER, "Water dripping on a stone leaves a mark," and also remember the three pillars of marketing: Frequency, Consistency and Reach.

Conclusion

So why is it that everyone thinks printed inserts are dead when in fact, they have been shown to:

- Have demonstrated dynamic and lasting effectiveness.
- Have the ability to target specific days of the week – such as mid-

week (via shared mail) and/or Sundays (via the newspaper).

- Reach a large, influential and "targeted" audience.
- Make the overall shopping process easier for consumers.

For additional information on this topic with downloadable research, videos and more, visit; <http://www.social4retail.com/print-inserts-still-work>

About Bill Napier: Bill Napier is Managing Partner of Napier Marketing Group. He has been the CMO of several small, medium and large companies throughout his career, most notably Ashley Furniture Industries Inc. from 2000-2005. His passion is to help retail brands and brick & mortar retailers grow their respective businesses by integrating traditional marketing with the web/social media.

Bill will be located in the NAHFA Retail Resource Center Space #13, 1st Floor of Plaza Suites, 222 S. Main St. High Point, NC 27260 during market.

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HOM

GABBERTS/DOCK68

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

“There are just as many definitions of success as there are ways to achieve it. Focus, imagination, hard work, inspiration, motivation and uncommon common sense can get you there. And maybe a touch of magic. Talk with Rod Johansen, President and CEO, HOM Furniture, Coon Rapids, Minnesota. Or turn yourself into that “little bird” of fantasy, listening in while perched on the Board Room windowsill. You’ll hear strong hints of all the above. Plus just a scintilla of humor that peers

over high hurdles and around hairpin corners and perceives no possible impediment. But, by all criteria, HOM has achieved extraordinary status as a leader in the field, now venturing into previously unmapped regions.

The Team: Wayne Johansen, Chairman of the Board, in charge of strategy and investments. Rodney Johansen, President and CEO, oversees areas related to marketing, merchandising, purchasing and financial. Carl Nyberg, COO, oversees sales, operations, IT and HR.

And family members working in

the company. Alex, son of Wayne, IT tech and programmer. Kyle, son of Rodney, merchandise manager for HOM and Gabberts brands. Brian, son of Carl, is IT programmer. Matt, son of Carl, who works part time and attends college.

A countdown of HOM showroom locations as of February, 2016: seven Minneapolis-St. Paul (MSP) area, Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Onalaska (LaCrosse), Hermantown (Duluth), Eau Claire, Fargo, St. Cloud, Rochester. Gabberts, Edina, Little Canada, Sioux Falls, Sioux City, Fargo. DOCK86,

Ownership team. Wayne- Johansen - Founder and Chairman, Rodney Johansen - CEO, Carl Nyberg -COO



“Vision, mission and corporate philosophy are very much alive at HOM Furniture.”

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Gabberts shoppers flow into a glamorous setting resplendent with white marble flooring, 25 foot ceilings, dramatic drapes framing 20 foot windows and a magnificent 700 piece chandelier (top left). The first vignette is a clean, upscale contemporary/modern interior anchored by a towering fireplace.



Little Canada, Rogers.

It's fascinating to trace the history of HOM and to form a picture of the flow of the family and the corporation from strength to strength. Said Rod, "Our grandfather came from Denmark in the 1900s. On the other side of the family, the same time frame, we have German descent."

Along the way there have been mentors. "Our industry is still very local, which allows regional retailers to be comfortable exchanging great ideas with each other and even partnering. We've had a fair amount of peers who have been mentors to us, and been involved with dealer groups that helped us grow for over 20 years now. The learning and the friendships have been very valuable to our organization. We have been exceptionally fortunate to also have organized our company

so that my brother, Wayne, has been able to stay out of the day-to-day operations of the company for many years, allowing him to work on other opportunities to grow the company in unique ways. His focus is to make the company operate at an extremely high level but at the lowest cost when it comes to our physical plant. As an executive team, we work collaboratively."

Back in 1974, Wayne Johansen "started a wholesale and retail import gift business out of Mexico, selling leather handicrafts, jewelry and pottery". In 1977, Rodney Johansen joined his brother, Wayne, in the business. 1979, Wayne and Rod opened their first waterbed specialty store which became the Midwest's largest specialty waterbed retailer, Waterbed Room. In 1981, Carl Nyberg joined

the company and later became partner. In 1990, they opened three HOM Oak and Leather Furniture stores in the Minneapolis St. Paul market. 1993, with the national decline of the waterbed business, Waterbed Room converted to Total Bedroom branded stores, and added a complement of innerspring mattresses to its waterbed and bedroom furniture lines. In 1997, HOM Oak and Leather and Total Bedroom merged into one full line furniture brand, HOM Furniture.

Said Rod, "The name HOM has no family or origin background. The name was simply made up and developed as part of a marketing strategy that fortunately was fairly right on and has served us well."

In 2008, HOM acquired Gabberts Furniture. Then, the following year, HOM also acquired Seasonal

"The issue was transitioning

into each store, so customers would know they were leaving one store and entering another, plus creating allure and allowing guests to step up or step down with products and not feel bad about it."

Concepts, closed Seasonal Concepts' remaining three MSP metro showrooms, and rolled Seasonal Concept galleries into all HOM stores. A busy year! 2010, HOM opened off-price furniture brand DOCK86, and acquired Hoigaards Patio division which they rolled into Gabberts' Patio department. The following year, Gabberts galleries were added to the out state locations of Sioux City and Sioux Falls within HOM locations, and later in Fargo. In 2012, HOM acquired the Abbey Carpet and Floor franchise in Ham Lake, and opened HOM Floors locations in all MSP HOM locations. 2015, HOM opened its first superstore in Little Canada, featuring all brands, Gabberts, HOM, Seasonal Concepts and DOCK86, under one roof, making it the largest retail furniture complex in Minnesota.

It was in the summer of 2014 that HOM announced its plans for their new complex at Interstates 694 and 35E, Little Canada, featuring 80,000 square feet for HOM Furniture, 42,000 square feet for a Gabberts Design Studio and Fine Furniture Showroom, and 60,000 square feet to accommodate DOCK86. Also planned, a 10,000 square foot customer service and pickup area.

In 2015, The Team polished their already sparkling vision. Said Rod, "Our multi-brand initiative has been evolving over the past five years. We first started after we purchased Gabberts and added Gabberts branded locations adjoined to an existing HOM location. Then, in 2003, we

put our DOCK86 brand with HOM in adjoining locations. With the success of each of these tests, we felt that by adding all three brands together in one location, we would bring our customers the best of all in furniture retail and design.

"Customers now can virtually see every price point available in the

marketplace under one roof. A customer can find a sofa for under \$300 or a \$10,000 sofa on display and everything between, with hundreds of choices on display to choose from. It was instantly a success. Customers feel they can see it all in one convenient location from three brands they have grown to know and trust for their fur-

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niture needs."

As they had before, the Team called upon their friend and co-conspirator for the past 20 years, retail strategist, Miss Connie Post, Chief Executive of Affordable Design Solutions. They'd collaborated twice before joining HOM and DOCK86 in side-by-side stores. This time they shared "merging the three distinct brands and price points, a furniture shopping destination unlike any other in the metropolitan area". Miss Connie was keen to take on the challenge, although "It was no easy feat, especially when Rod said he wanted common departments, mattress, flooring, carpets and area rugs, bathrooms, café and clearance for all three stores. And for Gabberts and HOM to share their customer service, special order departments and delivery services in most situations!

"We wanted to change the landscape for high-end shoppers in the Minneapolis market, to give them a unique experience," she explained.

Rod added, "Our overall mission is to deliver quality and value at every price point and show a large enough assortment so that the customer feels comfortable making a decision based on a selection that satisfies them to feel confident they can make a buying decision."

The new store is a second location for Gabberts. "Since we bought Gabberts in 2007, we've been trying to revitalize and expand the brand," Rod explained. "We needed a second location because customers don't drive across the city to shop for furniture."

"We designed the Gabberts' store to be a wow!" Miss Connie succeeds from the moment shoppers cross the threshold through a separate entrance to the 42,000 square foot store. "I had a blank canvas from HOM and Gabberts, but DOCK86 was already in place and I had to revise part of it to make it all work. The issue was transitioning into each store, so the customer would know they were leaving one store and entering another, plus creating allure and allowing

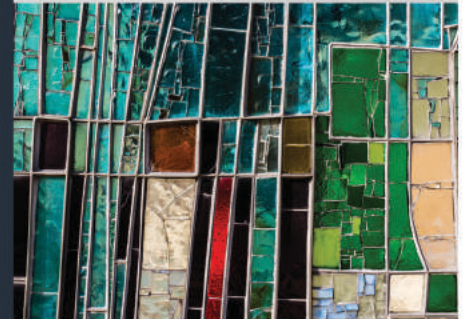
guests to step up or step down with products and not feel bad about it. We had to make sure there was a separate entrance for each store, and then clear, distinct entrances to enter another store."

Gabberts shoppers are typically in an income bracket of \$250,000 with two or even three homes. They flow into a glamorous setting resplendent with white marble flooring, 25 foot ceilings, dramatic drapes framing 20 foot windows and a magnificent 700 piece chandelier. The first vignette is a clean, upscale contemporary/modern interior anchored by a towering fireplace. "I simply wanted to take the customers' breath away when they entered... and that is exactly what we did!

"Store environments are spacious,

"One of the biggest

disconnects in marketing is that a beautiful catalogue will go out but, when customers come into the store, the furniture doesn't look remotely like it did in the promotional materials."



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"We see some HOM customers trading up... but also HOM and Gabberts customers shopping at DOCK86."

so the furniture has room to breathe," said Miss Connie. "Most retail stores are tighter with more merchandise in the space. At Gabberts you're able to focus on each vignette as you walk through. We tried to create an environment as similar as possible to that of the customers' large homes."

A Gabberts' tour: "Subtle cues guide shoppers through the retail experience. A fluid floor plan winds through the store, enabling guests to move seamlessly between environments. Post incorporated architectural elements, including expansive windows and glass walls to define areas. The transparent openings offer glimpses of the next vignette without blocking sight lines or diminishing the open floor plan, enticing guests to transition to the next experience. Flooring materials signal when shoppers leave one environment and enter another and window moldings and grids, as well

as chandeliers and both faces of a two-sided fireplace, are in different styles to mirror the environments they accentuate. The ingenious floor plan also makes the shared departments like bedding, rugs and flooring easily accessible. Post's sophisticated use of vignettes to tell lifestyle stories is one of many design choices that elevate the store's visual impact. She created an astounding u-shaped penthouse, surrounded on three sides by a panorama of the Minneapolis skyline at night, exactly as it would appear if a residential high rise were transplanted to the Gabberts' store location.

"Another inspired vignette replicates actor Patrick Dempsey's Malibu living room, complete with bookshelves and a floor-to-ceiling fireplace. She also introduced a chic environment patterned after Giorgio Armani's vacation home in Switzerland near St. Moritz as it appeared in Architectural

The DOCK86 website has a promotional feel and promises, "The staff at Dock86 is dedicated to '86' the high cost of home furnishings. We will search everywhere to find unique buys on the largest selection of highest quality products and eliminate unnecessary costs in order to pass on savings up to 70 percent off to the consumer."

Digest."

Wow, indeed! Almost as good as being there! And a short course in retail interior design of the highest order.

Post explained that the environ-



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"For sales, we have both hourly and commission pay programs. We have an annual company bonus based on the success of the company."

value furniture section."

Staffing for an enterprise tagged by some industry experts as "the prototype for a new generation of furniture showrooms", could also be challenging. "Recruiting is done through most normal channels you would expect. College internships for design staff at Gabberts, for example. We do work with college design classes with curriculum and a variety of different ways

ments also serve as backdrops for photo shoots. "One of the biggest disconnects in marketing is that a beautiful catalogue will go out but, when customers come into the store, the furniture doesn't look remotely like it did in the promotional materials. My vision was to create a retail format that would work on every level, so customers wouldn't experience disappointment."

The original 60,000 square foot Gabberts store in Edina, Minnesota, remains the brand flagship and the new Little Canada location will serve affluent customers from a different geographic area. "This second location is on the opposite side of the city,

25 miles from the other store," said Rod.

One of the interesting aspects of selling multiple brands has been observing brand crossover. "We see it going both ways which was the intention. We see some HOM customers trading up but also HOM and Gabberts customers shopping at DOCK86." Rod believes that Miss Connie excels in differentiating brands. "She really nailed the presentation of the brands for different economic constituencies. If you are in Gabberts you are 100 per cent certain you are in the high end part of the store. If you are in the DOCK86 bargain shop, you know you're in the

"Some of our senior ID team only work in the home. They don't take store customer opportunities and only use the sales floor as a tool. We do some external events for HOM and Gabberts."

John Nelson - Executive Director of Sales working with Carri Brandenburg (top left).

Kyle Johansen - merchandise manager for the HOM and Gabberts brands, and Rod Johansen - President and CEO.

Jerry Underwood, Executive Director of Marketing pictured top right.



HOM
GABBERTS/DOCK68

to engage students looking to enter design fields. And we also look at a variety of different competitors that are in retail space. For furniture repair and refinishing, we are very active in

teaching at vocational-tech schools that have wood finishing.

"Obviously, it depends on the job we are looking to fill, but for virtually all jobs we want quality people with

good people skills who are customer focused. In jobs related to sales and customer service, we are comfortable training these folks so we have them doing things the way we believe will



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Gabbert's website explains that, "Gabberts Design Studio & Fine Furniture is famous for its selection of fine quality furniture, interior design team, unique artisan items and custom finishes, fabrics, and textures that are unavailable elsewhere."



best serve the customer and the company long term."

HOM offers entry training. "How long initial training continues depends on the job. All employees go through new hire orientation classes to understand company philosophy and how the company works. In sales, there are a couple of weeks of classroom and showroom training. And then there are onboarding programs that continue for some time after. Sales has continuous training related to selling skills and product education as does customer service and delivery related to product education in all departments, especially warehouse and delivery areas. Product handling and safety is being trained consistently as a key initiative of our company.

"For sales, we have both hourly and commission pay programs. We have an annual company bonus based on the success of the company. Health plans are competitive to maintain and acquire staff. We offer up to a five per cent 401K match for retirement, and also professional retirement education for employee and spouse. We have been very aggressive in our company 401 Plan to educate staff on benefits resulting in 97 per cent of staff being involved in our Plan.

"Our team is fairly long term when you think of retail environments espe-

cially. Roughly one third of staff has five years or more employment out of the approximately 1,100 staff. Our nine member executive team averages 25 years with the company and seven of them came up through the ranks. Our ownership team has been together over 40 years now. This year, we retired three store managers who had been with us for numerous years, so we are seeing new opportunity for our up-and-comers. 2016 represents the 43rd year that the company has existed."

Rod addressed the possibility of staffers switching between HOM, Gabberts and DOCK86. "There is movement between the different brands. In sales, we see movement from each brand to another, but probably don't see as much from Gabberts towards HOM and DOCK as the Gabberts sales staff

generally have interior design degrees and have the best audience there to utilize their education. For all other job functions, we see movement from

"Both Gabberts and HOM have a strong interior design presence. Since DOCK86 is located next to HOM, designers can support DOCK customers interested in a different experience."





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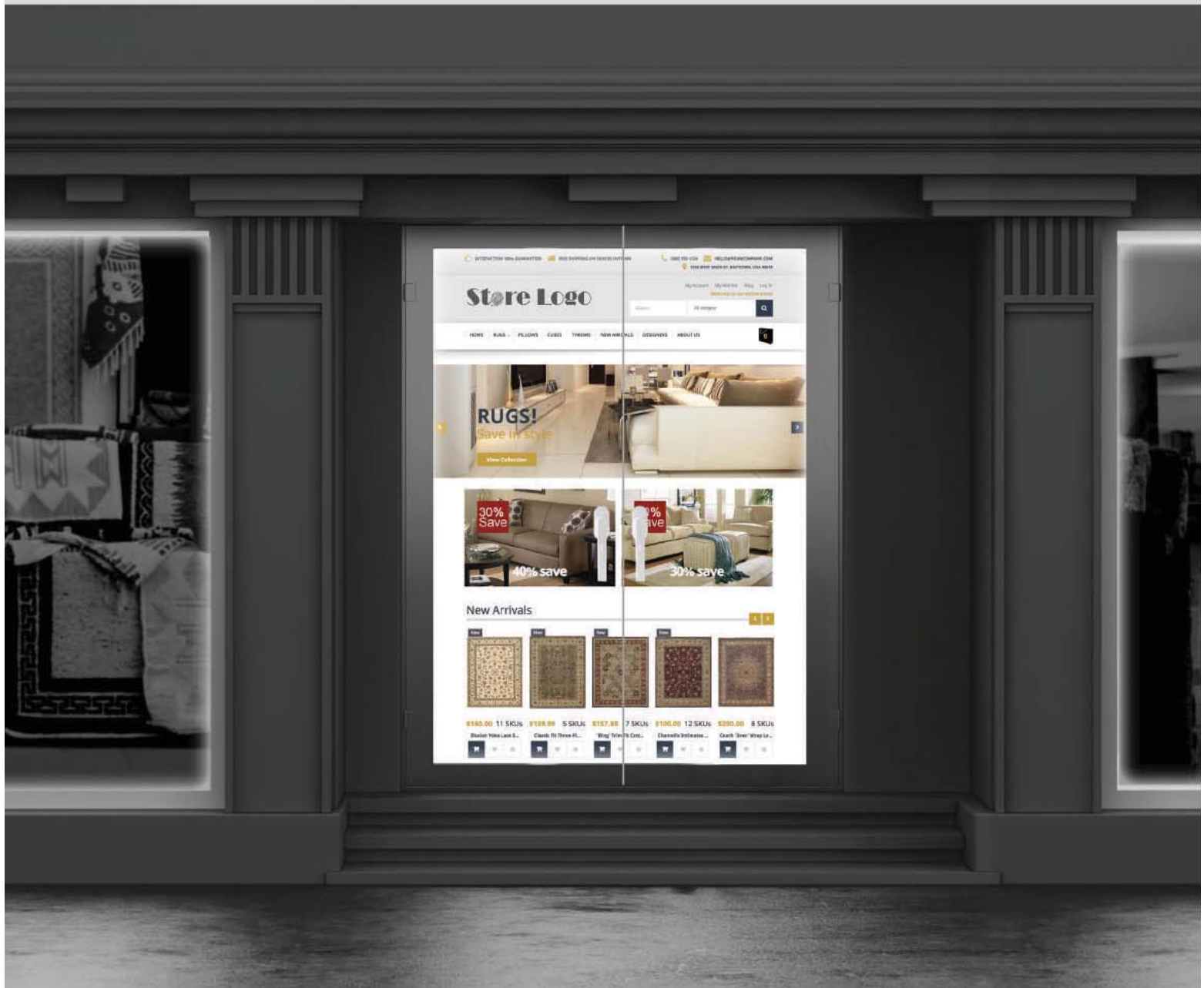


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each brand. For example, our GMM at Gabberts was a former Gabberts employee who came to work at HOM, and when we acquired Gabberts we immediately placed him into that position at Gabberts. He also manages the fine furniture category at HOM as always."

From all reports, cross-fertilization between departments is thriving. "It works well because of our customer focused approach. We have always had pretty high standards, so while we try to take great care of all customers, we have an accelerated focus of service when we are working with our Platinum/VIP customer types. When we initially purchased Gabberts we were extremely concerned that we would serve the high end consumers as well as they had been in the past. We found out relatively soon after the purchase that our standards were as good or better and have not looked back. Two years ago, we moved the Gabberts branded merchandise into the HOM central warehouse system and that has been just fine.

"Both Gabberts and HOM have a strong interior design presence. We

don't offer it at DOCK86 but, because DOCK is located next to HOM in both cases, they can support the DOCK customer who is interested in a different experience.

"Our designers do make house calls. Some of our senior ID team only work in the home. They don't take store customer opportunities and only use the sales floor as a tool. We do some external events for HOM and Gabberts. Gabberts will do more of this type of targeting as we are looking

"We were amongst the first to go to 15 second TV commercials as a way to get our multiple messages out and yet get frequency and reach necessary targets"

to reach a higher end design consumer. The benefits of having all three brands and price points though, does allow our designers to serve all customers looking for design assistance. We do mount regular in-store events in both HOM and Gabberts with a variety of topics, many of them seasonal. Many have a charitable element.

"Gabberts' designers attend the High Point Market, generally two or three at each Market. Staff also visits many vendor factories for training and expanded knowledge."

Rob Johansen is HOM's strong right arm in marketing. "We, like most, have utilized and tried almost everything possible when it comes to marketing! We've used different mediums and, truthfully, executed properly they can all be effective. We've utilized TV and newspaper inserts, our primary vehicles for mass media over the years, and still continue to use these two vehicles. Some of the areas where we have been early adopters, have been the use of cable TV and how to buy these products efficiently. We were amongst the first to go to 15 second TV commercials as a way to get our



multiple messages out and yet get frequency and reach necessary targets.

"We use a fair amount of digital signage both inside and out in our showrooms, and also exterior store signage is a critical piece of our marketing. When we developed the brand HOM, store signage was a part of the strategy along with locations. Two things we felt all along was to invest in strong locations and have signage that was large and powerful. That says to our market that we are a worthwhile place for people to consider. With an ever-changing landscape, these two constants have served us well.

"And we have our company web team as we do with all marketing. We built our own custom site after trying to use off-the-shelf platforms from some of the largest providers, with poor results from support to functionality. After going through this twice, not being able to satisfy what we felt was necessary, our team felt they could produce a better product long term for us. We do a fair amount of our own photography along with all of our own video and TV production in house also."

Sales on Internet? "We do e-commerce, and while it is still a small percentage of our business we are growing at a pretty good pace. We look for this to continue for some time."

Importance is placed on internal and external "keeping in touch" vehicles. "We do a monthly e-mail newsletter for both HOM and Gabberts, as well as an internal newsletter every quarter directed to our staff for employee and company news."

Charitable outreach, a high mark on HOM's list of essential elements, is handled "in a variety of ways. We run design events and functions at all brands in various ways. Gabberts tends to do a lot in-showroom with a

"Two things we felt all along was to invest in strong locations and have signage that was large and powerful. That says to our market that we are a worthwhile place for people to consider."

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"Rod Johansen and his team of warriors chose to rewrite the book on home furnishings retail with their 150,000 square foot format that has proven to beat the odds."



design event, fashioned around an event to support a cause. We also host different groups that meet and use our meeting facilities. Most of our major events tend to be organizational in nature even if it has a HOM handle on it. Our HOM Open Golf Tournament is a good example where business partners of all brands join in to support some worthy causes.

"HOM Teal Strides for Ovarian

"We have always had pretty high standards, so while we try to take great care of all customers, we have an accelerated focus of service when we are working with our Platinum/VIP customers."

Cancer is also a complete company event. It actually was something we started to support because our events coordinator from Gabberts was a survivor of ovarian cancer. Shortly after we started our relationship with MOCA (Minnesota Ovarian Cancer Alliance), Wayne's and my mother was diagnosed with ovarian cancer, and passed away from the disease a few years later. Our relationship has grown to where we are now the major sponsor of MOCA's largest fundraising event with over 3,500 participants this past September, and over \$350,000 raised.

"We support a mixture of local events, too. For example, our Eau Claire HOM store has sponsored for over 10 years a Wine and Cheese event that raised \$50,000 this year with over 400 guests for the local Boys and Girls Club. Our Sioux Falls location has been involved in their local Junior Achievement branch for over 20 years and, company-wide, we support hundreds of individual requests for all of our different community events.

"We like to keep most of our fundraising local to support our local

communities, even though we support industry programs such as the ADL (Anti-Defamation League) Furniture Chapter and City of Hope. Last year we started partnering with our local TV stations with a new program called Trees of Hope. This program also supports national groups. Another company event we sponsor is called 'A Night of Giving', and it supports Ronald McDonald Houses in the Minneapolis-St. Paul area."

Miss Connie Post talked of issues that arose "at the latest NRF Conference at the Jacob Javitz Center in New York. We heard that we're in an era of rising operating costs and that many retailers are looking to downsize their super-sized stores. It would appear that our country is heading for a shortage of workers in the near future, therefore the old 80/20 rule may just have to do to survive.

"Then along comes Rod Johansen and his team of warriors who chose to rewrite the book on home furnishings retail with their 150,000 square foot format that has proven to beat the odds and that same old 80/20 rule!

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"Rod believes that Miss Connie excels in differentiating brands. 'She really nailed the presentation of the brands for different economic constituencies.'"

entities that will attract three separate price points, demographics and value perspectives all under one roof from my point of view is a pure genius direction to move forward and for future growth. Never mind the challenge to do each and every one of the subsequent stores bigger and better than the last! Rod has presented me with a personal challenge to always set the bar higher each time I design a new store. I am presently working on new designs to elevate the exterior brand image that, according to Britt Beemer of America's Research Group, accounts for 57 per cent of a retailer's marketing brand identity.

"I love my job! I get up every day looking forward to working at the next great challenge, thanks to clients like the Rod Johansens!"

Vision, mission and corporate philosophy is very much alive at HOM Furniture. Rod considered the future,

both long and short term. "As I said, Wayne isn't involved in the day-to-day operations, so he works on projects that sometimes are very time consuming. Sometimes he is able to work on new concepts and not taxed on a daily basis. I think it is what he enjoys doing and it gives him generally a lot of flexibility. For myself and our partner, Carl, we are still committed to running the company for the time being. We both have a few more miles of tread, and we also do have it so we can get away. The digital world makes such luxuries possible that would not have been possible even 10 years ago!

"Long term, we have a great team of seasoned executives, great young managers and family members. That will allow us to decide the best way to operate the business as we move forward and beyond our current day-to-day involvement in the company. We look to grow the business at a pace that will continue to both allow growth for our employees, and keep the business healthy and prospering.

"Our industry is an industry that will always be relevant. People need to sit and to sleep, and the home is a core part of a family. The great thing we have going for us is that we are also a fashion business. That gives us a mechanism to help our customers change as their lives, wants and needs change. I think some of the biggest issues I see us facing are people! Finding people who want to work in our industry in manufacturing will continue to become harder and harder. And that will continue to change where we will get our products and the cost of them also."

In 2003, the off price DOCK86 brand was added to HOM stores in adjoining locations. By adding all three brands together in one location, the management team felt they gave customers the best of all worlds in furniture retail and design.

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YOUR FURNITURE FUTURE: THE HENRYs

by Pam Danziger

Furniture brands: meet the HENRYs!

They are your gatekeepers to your future prosperity.

HENRYs (High Earners Not Rich Yet) are an often overlooked and not a well understood segment of consumers. HENRYs have high incomes, (\$100,000-\$249,999) putting them in the top 20% of all U.S. households, but not nearly as affluent as the Ultra-affluents (top 2-3% with incomes \$250,000+), the traditional target market for luxury brands.

Quoting comedian Rodney Dangerfield, HENRYs "get no respect," especially among furniture brands that target the high-end of the market (RH, Ethan Allen, Henredon). They are the lower-income, mass-affluent, but they number nearly 24 million households, much larger than the 3.3 million that rank among the Ultra-affluents.

For the furniture brands that aim for the middle-mass market, thinking IKEA, Ashley, Raymour & Flanigan, Pottery Barn, La-Z-Boy, HENRYs are poorly understood. Yet they represent the best potential customer, as HENRYs have spending power far exceeding that of today's middle-income customer.

As we look across the entire \$288 billion furniture and home durables market, the HENRYs account for roughly 40% of total consumer expenditures, as compared with only 10%

attributed to ultra-affluents, according to data collected by the Bureau of Labor Statistics. The other 80% of households with incomes below \$100,000 make up the remaining 50% of the total home market.

That means for furniture companies aiming at the high-end, low-end or in the middle of the market, the HENRYs are the segment that ultimately drive their businesses and are key to their growth.

Younger HENRYs: More Valuable to Furniture Brands

As a demographic segment, HENRYs are strictly defined by income, but income varies with age. Predictably young people start out with lower incomes which rise as they gain experience and stature in their careers, only to drop back down again with retirement. The age window of affluence, when people's incomes reach their peak, is between 35 and 54 years. This is also the age range when people's spending on home furnishings is at its highest.

But during that 20-year period of highest earnings, the younger 35-to-

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44 year olds are of more value to furniture marketers than their more senior middle agers, who range from 45-54 years of age. Unity Marketing's research among affluent consumers conducted over the past 11 years consistently finds that younger affluents spend between 1.5 and 2 times more on higher-end home goods than their older affluent counterparts. Today those prime 35-44 year olds are mostly GenXers, a generation that is roughly half the size of the generations on either side, Boomers above and Millennials below.

Problem is that between now and about the middle of the next decade, the relative numbers of young affluents 35-44 years with heady appetites, and enough spending power, to indulge in high-end home furnishings will be thin on the ground. Not until around 2026-2029 will the Millennials cross

over and make up the majority in the prime spending and earning period. This could mark the next home furnishings boom OR bust if brands don't successfully make the transition to the tastes and values of the next luxury generation – Millennials.

Opportunity lies just over the horizon: Rapidly growing numbers in the 25-to-34 age range – But they are not as affluent.

For furniture brands, the population projections show powerful opportunities emerging for marketers that can tap the potential of the 25-to-34 year olds, the Millennial cohort. While today, these consumers have less income and so less money to spend on furniture, being younger they have a powerful appetite to acquire more material possessions, including items for the home. Further, until Millennials' incomes start to grow, the generation's most highly educated consumers with the best prospects for achieving high incomes as they mature will start their ascent up the income ladder as HENRYs.

Furniture brands must start today to position for the future and that means getting up close and personal with young HENRYs on the road to affluence. Brands must understand that the

next generation is not going to decorate and furnish their homes in the same ways as their parents' or grandparents' Boomer generation, nor are they shopping for home furnishings in the same way. So brands must adapt to the Millennials unique perspective on home.

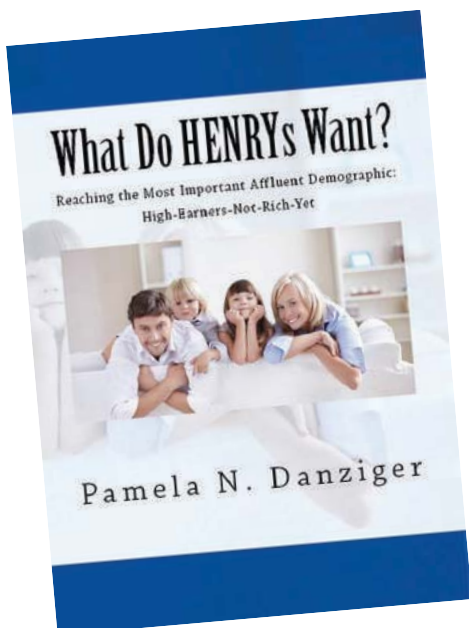
What's Needed New Branding Strategies

The key challenge for furniture brands and young HENRYs is not how they connect – high-tech gimmicks and internet marketing tactics – but how retailers can connect with new and compelling reasons why their brands are meaningful and important to this digitally-empowered generation.

Getting to the "why" of the brand is where the future of the home furnishings market will be built. New branding strategies are what's needed. It is all about tailoring the brand message to the unique psychology of younger consumers on the road to affluence.

Today, high-end brands telling stories of exclusivity, status, indulgence and over-the-top extravagance repel more than they attract. New narratives are required that connect with

Pamela Danziger, Unity Marketing, has published a new mini-book to serve as a guide to the most important affluent demographic for luxury brands' future.



"Not until around 2026-2029 will Millennials cross over and make up the majority in the prime spending and earning period. This could mark the next home furnishings boom OR bust."

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"Telling stories of

exclusivity, status, indulgence and over-the-top extravagance repel more than they attract."

the unique consumer psychology of the next-generation affluent customer, which is democratic, not elitist.

For example, too many furniture brands think the way to appeal to younger consumers is through style alone, as if all young people gravitate toward sleek, sophisticated modern designs. While some urban young people may in fact do so, Beekman 1802 Mercantile, launched by partners Josh Kilmer-Purcell and Brent Ridge, goes in a different direction, back to the farm, rather than to the city to find its design inspiration. Its carefully selected line of home furnishings celebrate a back-to-basics lifestyle that is traditional hearth and home, yet re-imagined for a 21st century lifestyle. Using reclaimed barn wood and re-purposed industrial gears, what's old is new again at Beekman 1802 Mercantile. Its design sensibility fits into the 200 year old farmhouse the 'Beekman Boys' call home, yet its offerings are upscale in a downhome country way.

Furniture brands must also appeal to young HENRYs preferred way of shopping, which is online and mobile accessible. Beekman 1802 Mercantile fits the bill as well. While the customers might enjoy a weekend getaway to visit the store in Sharon Springs, New York, a 3 hour drive outside NYC, the full collection of furnishings, along with food, handcrafted soaps and beauty products, clothing and garden accessories, are all accessible online.

Luxury: A State-of-Mind, Not a Price Point

For HENRYs, a luxury lifestyle is

a state of mind, not a price point or brand. The luxury stories furniture brands craft for HENRYs must go well beyond stated status, privilege, and exclusivity, all values linked to the 1% who are not their role models. Young HENRYs are looking to both brands and shopping experiences that capture their mood and their spirit. They want home furnishings that speak to their unique values, which is inclusive, yet individualized; self-expressive, not self-absorbed nor narcissistic; made for them, not their parent's or grandparent's lifestyle, and furnishings that deliver unique and meaningful experiences.

About Pamela Danziger: Pamela N. Danziger is an internationally recognized expert specializing in consumer insights for marketers targeting the affluent consumer. She is president of Unity Marketing, a marketing consulting firm she founded in 1992. Pam uses qualitative and quantitative market research to learn about luxury marketers' brand preferences, shopping habits, and attitudes about their luxury lifestyles, then turns these insights into actionable strategies for marketers. *She has published a new mini-book to serve as a guide to the most important affluent demographic for luxury brands' future. Entitled, What Do HENRYs Want?, (visit <http://bit.ly/1RfgwUX>). It is a concise overview of the HENRYs, why this new demographic group is important to brands, and how to connect with this high-spending customer, poorly understood by marketers serving both the mass market and also the luxury markets. For more information visit Unity Marketing at www.unitymarketingonline.com or email Pam188@ptd.net.*

"Young HENRYs want home furnishings that speak to their unique values, which is inclusive, yet individualized; self-expressive, not self-absorbed nor narcissistic; made for them, not their parent's or grandparent's lifestyle."

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Best Selling DESIGN



Surya

The Ryden table lamp has a beveled mercury glass base with antique copper finish. It is topped with a crisp ivory shade, for a clean-lined modern look well suited to contemporary spaces.

Dimension: 14W x 23.25"H.

Contact information on page 128.



Kas Rugs

The Harbor Rug Collection is hand-hooked in China of UV-treated polypropylene. These rugs are perfectly aligned with today's home décor trends and bring a touch of sophistication to any living space.

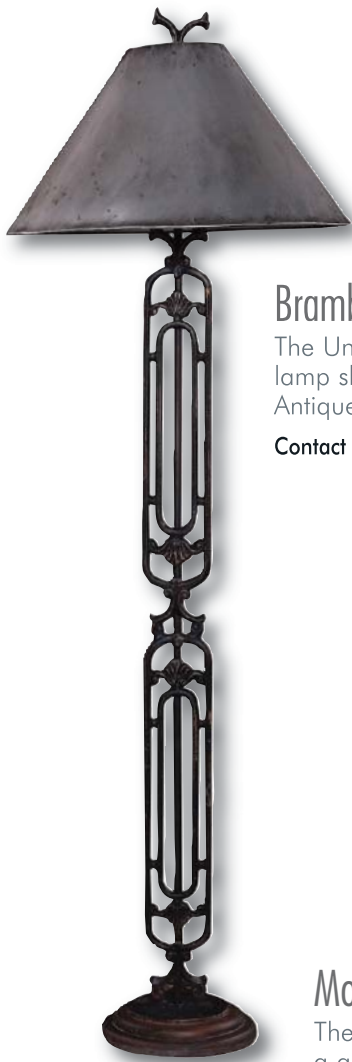
Contact information on page 128.



Legends

The Industrial Collection is crafted from solids and veneers, finished in a beautiful rustic chestnut. Features include sliding barn door on the chest, false bottom hidden storage chest, English dovetailed drawers, felt lined top drawers and ball bearing drawer glides.

Contact information on page 128.



Bramble

The Unity Floor lamp with tin lamp shade is shown in an Antique bronze metal finish.

Contact information on page 128.



Fashion Bed

The redesigned Prodigy 2.0 offers advanced technology, comfort, and convenience. Features include the industry's first capacitive-touch remote, sleep time, gentle-wake alarm, and a snore button. Along with head and foot articulation, Prodigy now includes pillow-tilt.

Contact information on page 128.



Moe's Home

The Ario Dining Table features a geometrically designed base of solid iron, reminiscent of a stained glass window. The heavy solid acacia wood top is finished in a rich deep brown.

Contact information on page 128.



Omnia

The Riverside Drive, begins as a stylish recliner and expands to fit any room or home theater. Add motorization, storage consoles and cooler cup holders for optimum comfort.

Contact information on page 128.

Best Selling DESIGN



Pearson

The Pippa Wing Chair is known its graceful curves, fluid framework and antique, throne-like vibe. The wingback chair remains a symbol of comfort and elegance in modern décor, and will complement any space. Nails are optional.

Contact information on page 128.



Bassett Mirror

The Chinoiserie Natura features a boldly colored, winding fruit tree bursting with life. Elegant yet simplistic, this piece combines the best of Mother Nature and glamour.

Contact information on page 128.



Maxwood

The Jackpot Collection is a new line of classic solid wood youth furniture that is affordable, easy to assemble, fully in-stock and ready to ship.

Contact information on page 128.



Elite Leather

The Rue Chair with its curved arms and hand pleated finish provides a stylish twist to modern settings. Features include down and feather cushions and a two tone coloration of deep-sea Azul.

Contact information on page 128.



Nourison

The Prismatic area rug collection has daring, 3D-like designs. Designs are and tufted from a sumptuous wool blend, woven with gently shimmering silk-like fibers.

Contact information on page 128.



La Barge

This iron ore Console Table features soft brass accents and a honed white agate inlaid top.

Contact information on page 128.



Lazzaro

The Clayton Collection's sofa and chaise combination is made from solid-birch hardwoods by trained artisans. The set features flawless tufting on the seat and back for classic style. Vertical stitching along the base gives it a contemporary twist.

Contact information on page 128.

Best Selling DESIGN



Momeni

The Amelia Collection is machine made in Egypt of 100% polypropylene.

Contact information on page 128.

Dimplex

The Camilla provides a dazzling centerpiece that transforms any room into a glamorous entertaining space. Built-in fireplace warms up to 1000 sq. ft. with remote controls that operate the fireplace and settings. No assembly required, available in a Mink finish with logs or acrylic ice.

Contact information on page 128.



Donco

This Twin over Twin bunk bed in a rich Slate Grey finish, is crafted from solid Pine with built in ladder. Comes mattress ready with complete slat kits.

Contact information on page 128.

Maitland Smith

The inspiration for the scalloped floral pattern featured on the table top, and fluted pattern on the base, were inspired by Pueblo Indian pots in the collection of the Museum of Indian Arts & Culture.

Contact information on page 128.



Capel Rugs

This eye-popping floral collection captures the colorful spirit of wildflowers. Hand tufted in India of 100% wool pile, this bright and lively collection is available in three vibrant colorways: grey, black and mushroom. Sizes include 5' x 8', 8' x 10' and 9' x 12'. A 5' x 8' rug may retail for \$449.

Contact information on page 128.



Arthur W. Brown

With a multitude of standard choices, a wide variety of creative options and the flexibility of customization, retailers can help their customers create a truly personalized wall system for any room.

Contact information on page 128.

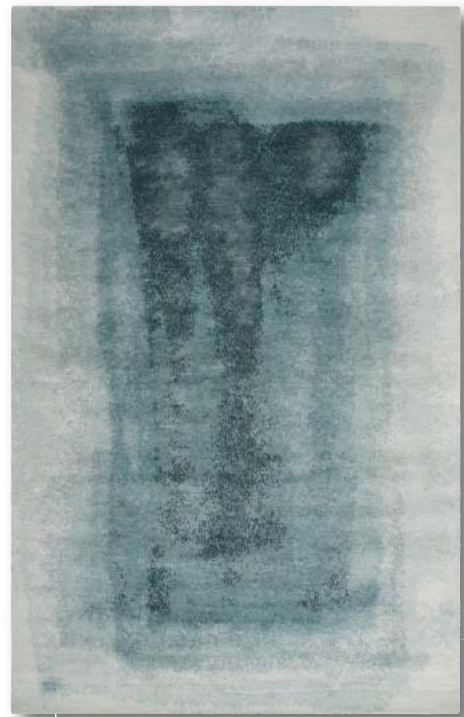
Canadel

The Downtown Collection features metal adornments, fresh textiles, an extensive palette of colors and an array of options all with metropolitan styling that's refined yet uncomplicated.

Contact information on page 128.



Best Selling DESIGN



Jaipur Rugs

This exquisitely made hand-knotted rug is crafted in a combination of wool and eco-friendly bamboo for a lustrous finish. Shown here in Watercolor.

Contact information on page 128.

CordaRoy's

This patented foam chair converts to a bed. Just remove the washable cover to reveal the bed, available in youth, full, queen, king, or a king sofa with two foam mattresses inside.

Contact information on page 128.



Furniture of America

The "Foreman" convertible sectional features cushioned flannelette seats and a pull-out sleeper that turns into a comfortable bed.

Contact information on page 128.



Broyhill

The Martense Street Step Cocktail Table has a metal base, hand padded and molted with shades of bronze and silver. Its solid Pine scooped tops are hand scorched revealing the natural character of wood. The table is designed to nest or use as "throw" tables.

Contact information on page 128.



Tayse Rugs

The Expressions collection is made from high-definition printing technology that allows for true reproduction and perfect color. Suggested Retail \$249 for 5' x 7'.

Contact information on page 128.

Klaussner

Affinity combines straight line contemporary cases with a rustic finish and metal accents. The Mango veneers are distressed and burnished.

Contact information on page 128.



Elran

The Miles collection features a sloped, capped arm enhanced by a tufted, lower lumbar inside back design. Manual recliners feature an inside pull handle & power is also available as an option.

Contact information on page 128.

ADVANCED *Bedding* TRAINING *Sales*

Part 7: Steps Of The Sale The Selection Process

by David Benbow

If not executed properly, the selection step can wind up badly for both RSA and the customer. Here's how to do it right!

In previous issues, we discussed the Greeting and Qualifying steps of the sale. This time we address the next step, Selection.

Simply stated, the Selection Step of the sale is: Find the product your customer will buy.

For any product category, but especially bedding, finding the right products to show is critical. So, how do you decide which ones to show? Let's say, for example, that your store displays forty-two floor models. Do you show them all? Let's hope not. RSAs, ideally, limit showings to three products. If you show more than five, the customer may get confused and impatient. So, all you have to do is decide which three (out of forty-two) to show, right?

On paper, this may sound easy, but in practice, it is a lot harder than it sounds. John F. Lawhon believed that success in the Selection Step was all accomplished in the Qualifying Step (if you qualified the way he suggested). In his book 'Selling Retail', Mr. Lawhon suggested that if a customer is 100% qualified, then finding the right item is just a matter of first showing two beds that don't quite measure up, then showing the third bed, already picked out by the RSA, which

is perfect in every way. Mr. Lawhon's statement is based, however, on what I think is a flawed premise. That premise presumes that the Up knows exactly what he wants, every time, when he walks in the door. As any experienced salesperson knows, shoppers may only have a vague idea of what they need or want. The Up's thoughts can evolve and change as he is given new information by a skilled RSA. Haven't we all seen customers buy something quite different than what they originally intended? Therefore, it can often take more than just qualifying before the Selection step.

The Selection Step can be quite complicated. If not executed properly, it can wind up badly for both RSA and the customer.

Please note: The RSA still must thoroughly qualify the Up. Do not shortchange qualifying just because the customer's goals may evolve.

Seek And Ye Shall Find

How easy is it to find something if you don't know where to look? The customer does not know where to look. That is why she needs an RSA to help her. If that RSA is to be



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"The customer may get confused and impatient if you show more than five. So, all you have to do is decide which three out of the forty-two to show, right?"

successful, he or she must know ALL the beds and products on the floor and have Qualified the Up BEFORE showing any beds. Only then will it be clear where to look. The good RSA will then lead the customer through a process of showing, comparing and eliminating to find the bed or product the customer will buy.

The unfortunate RSA who fails to do this will be like the blindfolded child

trying to pin the tail on the donkey.

The Goals Of The Selection Step

While the ultimate goal is to find a product that the customer will buy, there are at least four sub-goals or parameters that need to be satisfied

in the RSA's search.

1. Try to sell the best quality bed that the customer is willing and able to buy. This opens up the discussion of Starting-At-The-Top, which so many manufacturer reps recommend. Why do reps recommend this? For starters, maybe the Up will be so impressed with the most expensive bed that he will actually buy it. (If you don't show it, they won't buy it). But the real reason is that the "top" or "umbrella" bed will be so expensive that all the lesser, cheaper beds will look like bargains in comparison; the result being, it is to be hoped, the customer will buy the best quality (and most expensive) bed that satisfies his needs, and not some cheaper model. Remember, some cheaper models may feel good on the floor, but the customer may not get the same support, comfort and long-term value the better bed will give.

2. Find the bed that the customer likes better than anything else they've tried, either at our store, or at a competitor's store. No matter what the RSA, or the store, or the manufacturer thinks about the bed, the customer still has to like it. It's sort of like the old dog food story; the manufacturer loads up the product with vitamins, healthy ingredients, fancy packaging, a high-powered marketing program and a high price tag, only to find out the dog won't eat it. And, I have seen a lot of really spec-heavy beds with big price tags that customers just didn't like when they stretched out for a comfort test.

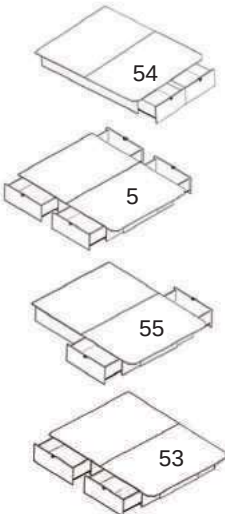
How does the RSA know if the customer likes the bed? Remember, although a dog will let you know if he likes his dog food, your customer may



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RSA

STEPS
OF THE
SALE

"How does that feel?
How do you like that one?
Which one do you like
best? Do you like this one
better than anything else
you've seen?"

not be so forthcoming. So, how does the RSA know? Ask! "How does that feel?" "How do you like that one?" "Which one do you like best?" "Do you like this one better than anything else you've seen?"

3. Try to find a bed that satisfies their needs. The qualifying step should have determined what these needs are. In the Qualifying step, the RSA should have learned a lot about what the customer does not like about their old bed and what needs to be done to correct the problem. Make sure the new bed answers the problems and concerns of the customer.

I understand that this is very much like finding out which bed the customer likes best, but it adds an extra dimension to the goal of satisfying the customer's needs and wants.

4. Find a bed that is priced at a point the customer is willing to pay. When the customer first walks in and is greeted, there is no telling what the customer is thinking when it comes to price. Who knows what he was told at "Opaque-Window Furniture and Beds" over in another part of town? Maybe your Up saw your ad and thinks that Easy Rest queen set for \$249 sounds just right for him. A big

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ADVANCED ^{Bedding} _{Sales} TRAINING

part of the Selection Step is educating customers about the real value of a mattress purchase.

Why Is The Selection Step So Important?

Selecting the right beds to show isn't easy. What if the RSA picks out the wrong three beds?

1. Let's assume an RSA is afraid to show expensive beds, and the customer finds a cheaper bed that feels good at the moment. The result is that both the store and RSA lose sales volume and profit, the RSA loses commission, and the customer may lose the long term comfort and support that comes from buying a high quality bed. If the new bed under-performs after a few months, the customer will remind the RSA of what a nice job he did in helping him find his new mattress.

2. If the RSA only shows expensive beds, (which starting at the top

"Who knows what he was told at Opaque Window Furniture and Beds over in another part of town?"

can sometimes lead to), the customer probably will leave without buying. Don't forget, the customer may love the \$2999 queen set you've picked out for him; it may meet his needs and wants perfectly; but he may tell you he "needs to think about it" because there is no way he's popping \$3K for a mattress set. Besides, he found a bed he liked okay down the street for \$499. It's not great, but it will do. Ask yourself, does your store carry \$499 beds? Yes? Would you rather have the \$499 sale than no sale at all? Never let a customer walk on a high dollar bed, without showing cheaper beds before he leaves. If he doesn't like the cheaper beds, he'll let you know. If he walks, you have to assume he WILL NOT BE BACK.

3. Only show spiffed beds if they fall into the three bed selection that meets the criteria we discussed above. Pushing a spiffed bed because it pays a few extra dollars is usually a mistake.

Keep Control Of The Sale

I wrote an entire article on the subject of Controlling the Sale in the March/April 2014 issue of Furniture World. It can be found in the archives of Furniture World's website at (www.furninfo.com/Authors/DavidBenbow/37). You must control the sales process, and this is especially important in the Selection Step. The RSA who allows her customer to wander around the store, pushing on mattresses indiscriminately, will lose the sale, and she should. If you are unclear as to what controlling the sale

"Maybe he saw your ad and thinks that Easy Rest queen set for \$249 sounds just right for him."

means, I suggest you take a quick break and read the above-mentioned article. You can bring it up on your smart phone.

How To Show Products

Keep several things in mind when showing products. Explain to the customer that you will ask him to try out several beds (hopefully, no more than three.) He will need to lie on the beds and tell you how he likes each one.

As you show each bed, tell the customer the price and little else. Don't give your opinion of the bed. Don't say how comfortable it is. Don't recommend a bed. The customer must make the decision on FEEL, but he should probably also know the price. Do NOT pitch any bed (features and benefits) until the customer shows buying signals. Do not try to influence the customer's decision until he shows a buying signal. Let him make it based



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on his pure reaction to the feel of the product.

Note: Some will argue that price should not be mentioned, either, when showing. I suggest that the RSA follow store policy in this matter.

As you are showing beds, also mention and show pillows and mattress protectors. I would like to see all stores provide temporary pillow cases to customers so that various pillows can also be shown while the mattress selection is proceeding. Most customers do not like to place their head on a soiled pillow floor model. Regarding mattress protectors, emphasize the importance of keeping the new bed clean and fresh. (Manufacturers will not warranty a dirty, soiled and stained mattress.)

Here are questions
you may be asking

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If you have read this far, you may be asking some of the following questions.

1. How do I determine which bed to start with?
2. How many beds can I show? Is there a limit?
3. At what point should I stop showing beds?
4. How do I know when I've found the right bed for the customer?
5. What if I never get any buying signals?
6. What if the customer found a bed somewhere else he likes better?
7. How do I know if I am in the right price range?

Let's take each question one at a time.

What bed do I start with?

Your customer may often walk in with an ad in hand, point to the \$249 Easy Rest queen set, and say, "I want to see this bed." Do you respond, "Oh, no! Our sales manager says we've got to Start-At-The-Top every time. Follow me over there to the Summa Cum Laude Awe-Pedic. You will love it."? Now, don't get me wrong. I think every customer should be shown premium bedding, and maybe even the most premium. (Unshown is unsold, as the old saying goes.) I think, however, that a certain ethical principle might suggest that it is better to walk the customer, straightaway, to the advertised bed he asks about. Let him

**"The RSA
who allows her
customer to wander
around the store,
pushing on mattresses
indiscriminately,
will lose the sale,
and she should!"**

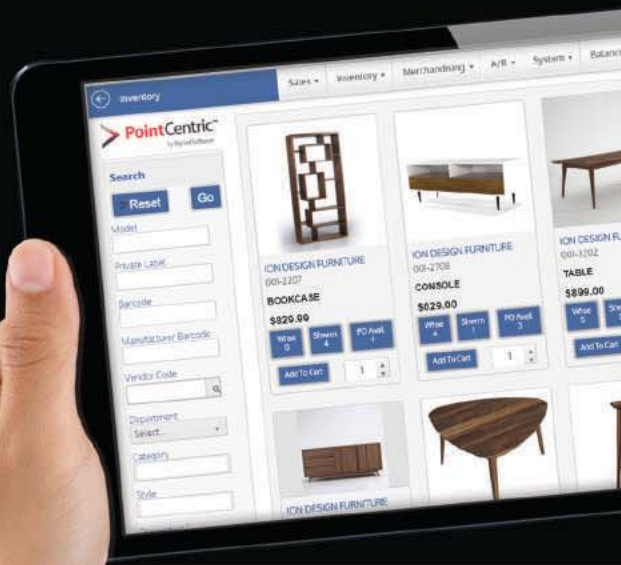
see it. When he is disappointed, THEN show him premium beds, or even start at the top. Let me mention one thing at this point. Starting the show at the top, correctly and effectively, requires a high level of skill and practiced techniques. Just barging headlong into the top bed with every customer can yield some very unpleasant results. Mr. Lawhon believed, and he's hard to argue with, that the Qualify step should reveal the price point the customer feels comfortable with. Can customers be stepped up? Of course they can, it happens all the time. If your store does not mandate Starting-At-The-Top every time, find out what kind of price is on the customer's mind. (See my articles on qualifying in the Furniture World Online Archives.)

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Eclipse and Eastman House Accelerate Growth

Eastman House celebrates 150th anniversary of mattress making excellence.

"Our two flagship brands had a banner year in 2015," says Stuart Carlitz, CEO of Eclipse and Eastman House. "We signed six additional licensees, so we now have 45 factory members bringing comfortable, quality bedding to consumers in 55 countries worldwide. And, in 2016, the Eclipse and Eastman House Sleep brands have geared up for an even better year."

GROWING BRANDS

Eastman House is a leading U.S. mattress brand. Products include: the Eastman House Hand Tufted Collection, Eastman House Natural Latex, 150th Anniversary Collection, and Eclipse Chiropractors Care Sleep System mattresses.

The Eclipse brand founded in 1905 combines old world traditions with innovative technologies that greatly improve the consumer's sleep experience.

Together, these iconic brands offer today's profit minded bedding retailers a huge selection of mattress lines and models at price points, constructions and quality levels that make sense," adds Carlitz.

NEW 150TH ANNIVERSARY COLLECTION - EASTMAN HOUSE

New for the April High Point Market is Eastman House's new 150th Anniversary Collection. This line has been developed with models featuring Latex, Gel, Memory Foam and

various innerspring units.

One of the top of the line 150th Anniversary collection models is a "Hybrid" Euro pillow top model featuring a completely foam encased innerspring unit, with gel memory foam and an individually encased coil unit in the pillow top portion. "We will help our retailers really get behind and promote the 150th Anniversary Collection," explains Matthew B. Connolly President of Eclipse International and Eastman House. "Other models in the collection include a variety of comfort levels and combinations of materials. The Eastman House 150th Anniversary Collection features Eastman's Coil on Coil design at popular retail price points starting at \$999. And, these are just a couple of the Eastman House highlights we will be focusing on for Highpoint."

ECLIPSE'S PATENTED TECHNOLOGY INTRODUCTIONS

Eclipse will continue to place an emphasis on features such as the patented Spinal Zone Sleep System, and patented "Zoned Quilt Technology" which adds additional support in the center third of the quilt with lumbar support, complimenting the Spinal Zone feature. "All of the Eclipse models that feature any of our patented technologies receive the "Seal of Approval" from The Congress of Chiropractic State Associations, the largest Chiropractic association in the U.S explains Connolly. "Plus we will showcase our "Zoned Quilt Technology" once again in Highpoint on our fast growing Cotton Organic Line."

For more information call Stuart Carlitz at 732-628-0800-ext 222 or email BeddingIndustries@gmail.com.

Pictured are the Eastman House 150th Anniversary Euro Pillow Top and Eastman House English Hand Tufted mattresses.



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Eclipse/Eastman House of the Southeast
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Eclipse/Eastman House of California
Cannon Sleep Products

Eclipse/Eastman House of Texas
Sleep Designs, Inc.

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RSA

THE SELECTION PROCESS

Show how many beds?

In a perfect world, the RSA would show three beds. The customer would then pick the last one, it would be written up and everybody would live happily ever-after. But, what if you pick out three beds, show them, and the customer hates them all? What do you do, take out a card and tell her to ask for you when she comes back? Of course, if you show three beds the customer does not like, you may not have qualified him very well. I would recommend at this point one of two things. Either start over with smarter qualifying, or turn the customer over to another salesperson or to a sales manager, if one is available.

Let me be clear on one point. If your store is merchandised professionally, a product will be located somewhere on your floor that the customer will

be willing to buy. Keep showing beds until you find it. It is a very clumsy technique and confusing to the customer, but it is better than letting the customer walk.

(For more on merchandising, consult my Furniture World on-line article "What's On Your Floor?")

When to stop showing beds?

Stop showing beds when your customer shows unmistakable buying signals. I use a term called "Landing on the Bed" to describe that moment when a customer finds the one that feels the best.

There are two other situations where the RSA might stop showing beds. These are if a customer bolts and walks out, or if the RSA turns the sale over to another RSA or Sales Manager.

How do I know when I've found the right bed?

Normally, customers will let you know when the right bed has been found. If you ask, "How does that one feel?" every time every time a new bed is shown, the customer usually will answer. It's not hard to perceive when the customer suddenly becomes enthusiastic. There are those cagey customers, usually men, who curb their enthusiasm, but give themselves away when they start talking terms, such as "What kind of a deal will you make me on this one?" That statement, or some derivative thereof, is

usually a pretty strong indicator of landing the tough customer.

No buying signals?

There may be several possibilities here. The most common is that the RSA just didn't qualify the customer well enough to find out what he wanted. The second possibility is that the customer, not wanting to be perceived as a cheapskate, didn't tell the RSA the truth about his budget. The third, and this is a very important one, is that the customer found a better deal at another store. One thing all RSAs and Sales Managers should remember; many of the beds on your floor can be found in other stores, in your town, with different covers and different names, but otherwise, exactly the same. The other store may have offered a better deal on the very same bed you are showing.

What if the customer found a bed somewhere else?

One extremely important question that must be asked when the RSA isn't reading any buying signals is this; "Have you shopped anywhere else?" The customer says "Yes," the RSA must then ask; "What is the best deal you've found before you came in our store?" If the customer answers honestly, continue this line of questioning until he has found out exactly what the customer likes in the competitor's store. A good RSA follow-up question is; "Did the salesperson give you a

"Mr. Lawhon believed, and he's hard to argue with, that **the Qualify step should reveal the price point the customer feels comfortable with.**"

DYNAMIC *Retail Solutions* FOR THE MODERN WORLD



Randy Coconis, president of Coconis Furniture, challenged us to transform a former lumberyard showroom into a destination furniture store that would look at home in the surrounding farmlands of Heath, Ohio.

"When it comes to exterior design, Connie is by far the best," Randy says. "She gave the entire building height on the exterior, and kept it open on the inside so that you can see the entire showroom when you walk in the front door. Look left, it's a wow. Look right, it's a wow!"

"The mattress department is laid out perfectly, and the reps all tell us it's the best mattress department they've ever been in. It looks good, it's easy to work, and our bedding business now accounts for 27 percent of overall sales," he reports.

"Connie also did a great job with the recliner display, with large, lifestyle graphics. She made that department look a lot bigger than it really is. She's great at furniture layout, she understands different markets, and she's easy to work with."

Post and her team were also able to mimic the beautiful beams in the buildings' pole-barn construction with plywood and good quality, faux wood-grain wallpaper.

"You really can't tell those beams aren't the real thing," he says. "She's always able to locate the right resources to make it happen. She's awesome!"



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"When buying signals are detected on the RSA's radar, it is time to STOP showing and START presenting features and benefits."

chance he has of making the sale.

How do I know if I'm in the right price range?

Again, buying signals will tell you quickly. If you get no buying signals, something is wrong. You may very well be in the wrong price range if the customer shows no enthusiasm.

Buying Signals

card with the description of the bed?"
The more the RSA finds out, the better

I've talked a lot about buying sig-

nals. Just what are buying signals, anyway? They are various statements, body language, eye movement and facial expressions that give strong hints as to the customer's thinking. When couples are the customers, they often make exchanges, either verbally or nonverbally, with each other that indicate some sort of agreement has been reached. These signals are not hard to spot, especially if the RSA is alert and is watching for them. Often, the customer will just say, "I like this one," or, "when can this be delivered?" When buying signals are detected on the RSA's radar, it is time to STOP showing and START presenting features and benefits. And that will be the next installment of our discourse on the Steps of the Sale.

About David Benbow: David Benbow, a twenty-three year veteran of the mattress and bedding industry, is owner of Mattress Retail Training Company offering retailers retail guidance; from small store management to training retail sales associates. His years of hands-on experience as a retail sales associate, store manager, sales manager/trainer and store owner in six different metropolitan areas qualifies him as an expert in selling bedding. David is the author of the recently published book, "How to Win the Battle for Mattress Sales, the Bed Seller's Manual", a complete, text book for mattress and bedding retail sales associates, beginner and experienced professional alike. The book can be purchased on-line at <http://www.bedsellersmanual.com> or www.mattressretailtraining.com.

He offers hands-on training classes for retailers on a variety of subjects and on-line classes that can be downloaded from the websites mentioned above. David can be contacted via e-mail at dave@bedsellersmanual.com or by phone at 361-648-3775.



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Great STORE DESIGN

Sleep Simple store design boosts sales for Vermont retailer.

by Melody Doering

"Simplicity," wrote Leonardo da Vinci, "is the ultimate sophistication."

Keeping it simple, however, in the world of bedding retail is difficult. Nevertheless, Serta's Retail Concepts Group has created a sophisticated retail solution with their Sleep Simple concept for America's Mattress stores.

America's Mattress was started about 20 years ago as a test partnership with a local retailer. The test proved a success and there are now nearly 200 owners with more than 400 stores across the country. Licensed retailers, who agree to sell exclusively Serta mattresses, are provided with an America's Mattress development territory uniquely for them.

Within the past year, America's Mattress teamed with Martin Roberts, of Martin Roberts Design, to reconfig-

ure both their stores' interior plans, as well as their sales process. According to Mike Juoni, Senior Manager of the Retail Concepts Group at Serta Simmons Bedding, the Sleep Simple concept sought to fulfill three primary goals: Improve the overall experience for the customer - giving customers a recognizably different experience; Differentiate with a unique presentation in the marketplace - creating separation from competitors, avoiding the same look and feel from every other store; Provide a proprietary, documented, and repeatable experience - an updated design and experience that is scalable, opening the doors to new candidates."

The result was an elegant retail solution that achieves these goals by tying the customer experience to store design. It's a model that bedding retailers selling multiple bedding lines may benefit from studying.

The overall design, fixtures, top-of-bed, wall art, and cabinetry provide a welcoming feel for each retail customer. The sales process, specifically created to flow with the design, allows both the retail sales associate and the customer to follow a simple and comfortable process.

Currently there are ten stores, operating under the new format. With pending stores and conversions of some existing stores, America's Mattress plans to have roughly 30 more Sleep

Simple stores in 2016. Each retailer carries a selection of Serta mattresses and motion bases, plus a selection of PureCare sheets and other premium sleep related accessories along with a selection of Serta and iComfort pillows and protectors.

Furniture World spoke with Martin Roberts about the Sleep Simple design process, and with Jennifer Stygles, the owner of the America's Mattress Store in Williston, VT, whose customers put Sleep Simple to the test every day.

The Design Challenge

No stranger to designing for mattress retailers, Martin has an immediate grasp of the challenge for consumers who simply want to get a good night's sleep. "The average mattress store 10 years ago was probably 1,500 to 2,500 square feet. Today, retailers are looking at bigger stores with 50 or 75 beds on the floor. That makes the process of buying a lot more complicated.

"We began by coming up with a brand name and brand positioning, which was all about trying to create something that was simple for the retailer to sell, simple for the customer to buy, and simple for the customer to make a decision about comfort, specification and price."

Professional buyers, in furniture and bedding stores, are subject to many



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Jeff Bulkley, Cains Home Furnishings Owner

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Diane Doucet Salo, Furniture World Owner

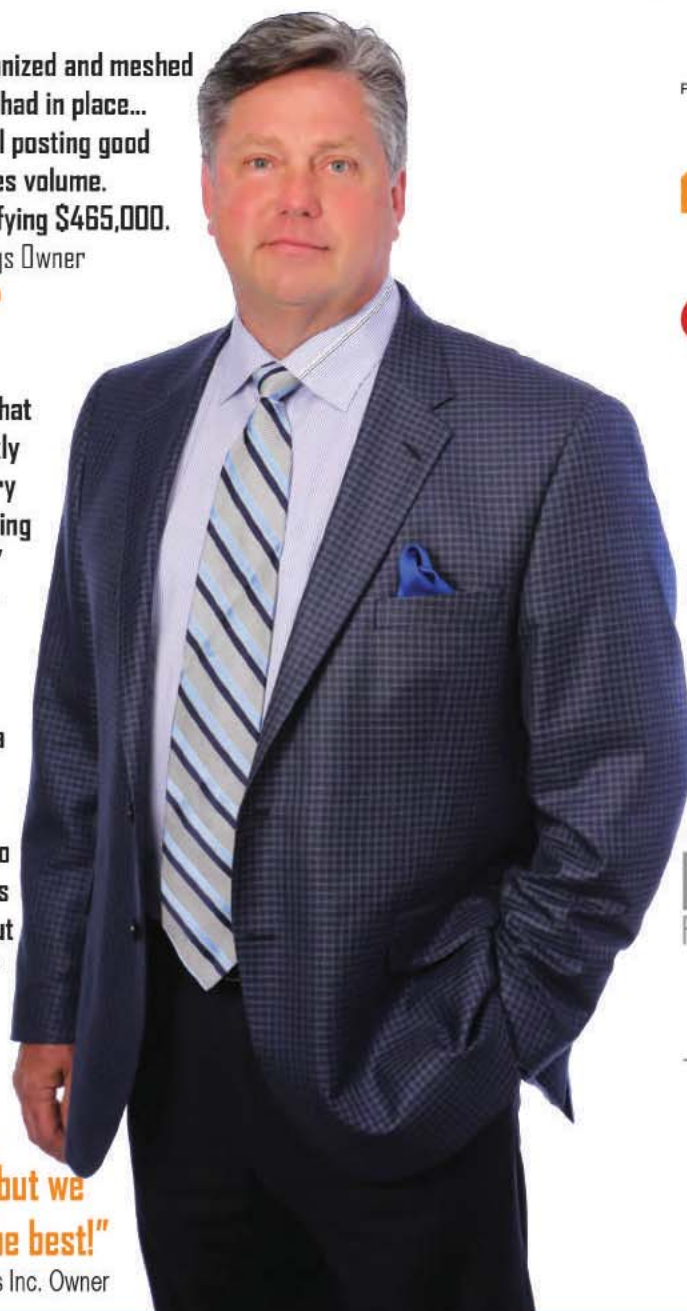
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Whether browsing alone or accompanied by a sales associate, shoppers can instantly recognize level of softness, construction and price. Five stars denoted top-of-the-line, and promotional beds have two stars.

Statistics below from Serta segmentation report 2013.

Consumer Research Results

- 58% suggested an improved store atmosphere/conditions
- 54% suggested improved mattress testing conditions
- 69% suggested better/more accessible information

of the same stresses as consumers. Martin observed, "Retailers go into showrooms at High Point, for instance, and they are faced with a sea of products and manufacturers encouraging them to buy certain things, perhaps even providing incentives. But they may ignore the most important thing, which is *how the customer buys*. By making that a simple process that customers can identify with, they can increase their sales dramatically in the same amount of square footage. It's all about the under-pinnings of the process behind the product, not just having more product."

Jennifer Stygles' America's Mattress store opened November, 2015, and she is already seeing how her customers are benefiting from the Sleep

Simple concept. "Our customers have already been doing their research either online or by shopping around for a day or two. I just had a customer in here that had gone to four different mattress shops in one day. She came back and said "Oh my goodness, this place is the easiest place to buy."

Store As A Selling Machine

Curiously, keeping it simple turns out to be hard work. Serta wanted a truck to arrive at a new retailer's store and for everything to be unloaded, assembled, and ready for business in a few day's time. "That was kind of the brief," Martin reflected, "It isn't just about making the store design look pretty. It's first of all about understanding the selling process in mattress stores, and about coming up with a formula that would make it better for the consumer, as well as more productive for the retailer. And of course, eventually more productive for the brand. Being an industrial designer by background, I tend to think of stores as being selling machines. In other words, it is important to create something that sells more merchandise or

there's no point in doing it. The function of a store is to sell more."

"So Sleep Simple became a brand name," Martin explained. "We developed that idea to be unique, a bit like the ThinkPad or Apple products. We tried to keep the idea of Sleep Simple, so that the idea is simply about sleep."

"The other thing we wanted to do," he continued, "was create some Americana inspired graphics at the point of sale, because it's called America's Mattress. We didn't want huge flags all over the place that would distract from the promotional graphics, making it difficult for the customer to get to the information that they need. We created what we call a 'Tommy Hilfiger-inspired graphics program,' which has some elements of stars and stripes, red, white, and blue. Graphic panels on the walls give a hint about the American heritage of the collection. These panels are stretched graphics over aluminum frames, very light and easy to ship. They can be changed to keep the store fresh and interesting."

Jennifer is an enthusiastic proponent for the Sleep Simple concept. "The best thing about the store is the layout. It's not just a plain-vanilla box with 50

"I tend to think of stores as selling machines. In other words, you have to create something that sells more merchandise or there's no point in doing it."



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"In a million years I didn't see myself in the bedding industry," said Jennifer Stygles. "I started about five years ago in the furniture industry."



Wellness and Sleep essentials display at the Williston store.

mattresses in it, lined up like soldiers. The store is oriented in a way that there's a flow to it; from the flooring to the paint to the artwork.

"The back wall, being bright red, really sticks out. We have the traditional Serta logos along with phrases like 'American quality' and 'American comfort' and 'The sleep you need guaranteed.' You know, you kind of just feel at home here."

The Williston Store

Jennifer's "simple" store in Williston, VT (Burlington area), is a meticulously crafted outlet, where almost every eventuality has been considered. Martin adds, "We've minimized the number of graphic signs and messaging inside the retail space so a customer can focus on their decision of what they want to buy.

"We've trained the installation staff how to cross-beam the lights, so the lights aren't in the eyes of customers when they're lying on the bed. We've put low-level lights to light the beds

horizontally so that you see all the textures on mattress tops: all the silk threads that are used in the quilting and the detailing. Halo or spot lighting lights the beds from above.

"It can all arrive flat in the truck and be assembled onsite. From cash registers to shelving systems that hold candles and scented pillows. Every single thing is in that truck, so it literally comes in and the team assembles it all. They pack up their trash and drive away." The amount of downtime for the retailer is minimized so they can be in business very quickly without having months of waiting for construction to be done and components to arrive and things to be shipped from abroad. All of that is taken care of at a very reasonable cost.

Getting Into The Business

Jennifer spoke about getting into furniture retail and opening her new store. "In a million years I didn't see myself in the bedding industry. I started about five years ago in the furniture

industry. After I had my first child I went back to work for part-time as a general bookkeeper for Brown Furniture in West Lebanon, NH. I worked for Philip Desmond, who's been in the furniture business for over 30 years. He showed me the ropes; how everything worked, how to keep inventory low, and gross margin high. Philip took me under his wing and mentored me. Then an opportunity arose to become a partner in a bedding store.

"I'm a numbers person and I could see that it doesn't cost a lot of money to open a mattress store or keep high levels of inventory. So that's how I got into the mattress business, and then it just took off from there. I really like the support America's Mattress gives, from website support to frequent conversations with Gordon Hecht, the regional manager about ideas, promotions, advertising and getting people to the door. With the help of my sales rep, Peter O'Brien, we really nailed down the best sellers at all price points."

Sales Process

Besides the carefully designed physical layout of Sleep Simple stores, a comprehensive sales process was formulated covering greetings, demonstrations, and confirmations; whether the shopper wants full-service, or prefers to browse on their own. Either way, the store's design streamlines the sales process by eliminating unnecessary steps.

After greeting customers and asking qualifying questions about their sleeping position and problems they may be experiencing with their current mattress, Jennifer fits customers who prefer full service for a pillow, after first

"A similar approach to store design is possible for retailers carrying multiple bedding brands, and worth considering."

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"We have two tripod displays.

The one to the right says, 'You select your comfort' where we determine if the customer likes a firm, plush, or ultra-plush mattress."

fitting it with a disposable covering. Pillow in hand, she directs them to the right, where a tripod gives information on comfort levels. "Once you fit them with a pillow," she explained, "they use it to sample different mattresses. We seem to have success with Pure Care or Dr. Greene pillows. People really love those pillows."

Next, customers are directed to displays having vertical graphics at eye height that can be used to sort beds into firm, plush and ultra-plush categories. Once a shopper picks a particular softness, that already eliminates two-thirds of what's available inside

the store to look at.

Jennifer went into more detail: "We have two different tripod displays. The one to the right says 'You select your comfort,' where we determine if the customer likes a firm, plush, or ultra-plush mattress."

She points out the feather icons and helps customers decide what level of softness they would like to try. Jennifer and her sales team guide customers through the logical choice progression. Unless a customer states a preference for a specific type of support, the first option is softness, followed by construction. "We ask the customer

questions as they are selecting the comfort level. Maybe they have a firm bed now and they're saying that their back is killing them because of the way they're sleeping."

The next step is to direct customers to the tripod that explains the various support options: innerspring, a hybrid of innerspring and memory foam, or specialty foam. "Once the customer has selected the support method, more unnecessary choices are removed, leaving a manageable number of mattresses to consider. Customers are actually very open with us," Jennifer reported. "They'll come up and say, 'I just went to the Tempur-Pedic store, or I usually sleep on a Stearns and Foster or a Sealy.' Being mattress experts, we have an idea of what those mattresses are, and what's in our store that compares to them."

The method of qualification highlights three or four mattresses for the customer to try. Star icons on the headboard signage indicate price levels. Jennifer went on, "If I'm a person that likes a plush mattress and I am not looking to spend a ton of money, then I want to be looking for two feathers and three stars. The customer is thinking, 'I know which mattresses are in my budget and I know what's in my comfort level, so I don't have to try out every mattress.'

"So we narrow it down to about three or four different mattresses," Jennifer continued, "and the customer will let you know, 'Well, what do you have for half that price?' And what's great about our store is that we have the Value Center with the same icon system of price range, comfort, and support. So the Sleep Simple store truly hits every single customer, whether they're on a minimum budget or a



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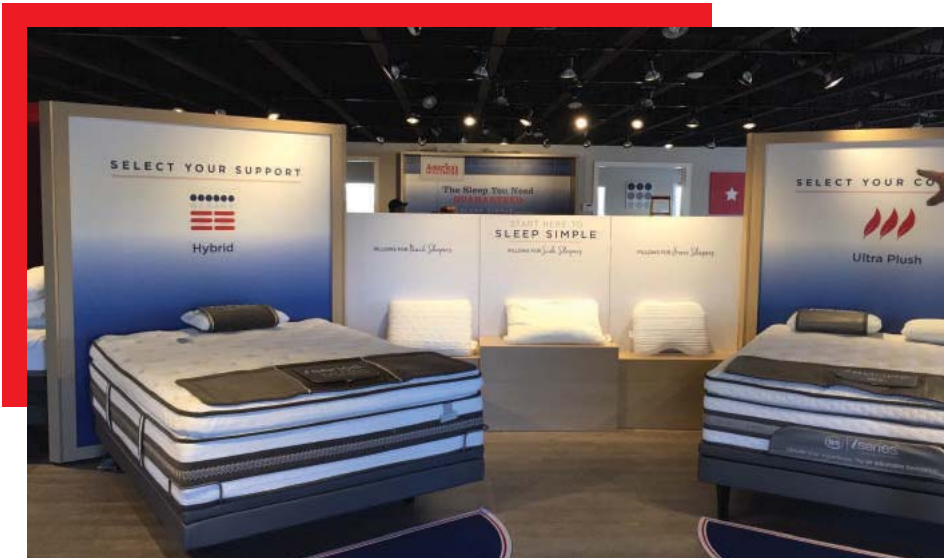


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After pillow selection (center), customers select comfort level at the tripod display pictured at right featuring one two or three feathers. At left, customers choose from three support options; innerspring, a hybrid, or specialty foam.

maximum budget. And within the first 15 minutes of their stay, they're going to realize which mattress is for them.

"Self-service shoppers can use recognizable icons for comfort, support, and value on each mattress. They can spot their perfect choice based on their need for a restful bed and their budget. "The headboards are all magnetic strips where the information is laid out," Jennifer explained. "One feather is for firm, two are for plush, and three is for ultra-plush. Then the star rating shows the price range. Five stars, obviously, are the top-of-the-line beds. And it goes down to two stars, which is the lower end."

Closing And Attachments

When the customer has chosen a mattress, they are led to the closing station. Throughout the sales process, Jennifer has been talking about the warranty and guarantee. "What I always try to stress with customers is if you don't like your mattress within the 120 nights, we can exchange it for you. However, it needs to be protected. So I roll it into my presentation how effective these mattress protectors are, using terminology that they can understand. I talk about how much fluid your body loses at night, and that things are shedding off your body. We have displays that show them what happens to a mattress over time. At some point the customer comes to understand that we

want them to protect their investment, just like having car insurance.

"You never wait until the end to bring up the attachments," she added. "People usually say no if you wait until the last minute. I mention it probably three times during each sale. The customer's already thinking toward the end, 'Oh man, I already spent \$2,000, I don't want to spend any more money.' So if you mention it throughout the time they're here, then it's built into their brain that they need to protect their investment.

"Sheets are a little bit different. They are hard to incorporate into a sale. When you're in an area like Williston where there is a Bed Bath & Beyond, and a Wal-Mart, there are plenty of other options out there. We are looking to develop a three-price-range package deal. So, Instead of saying to somebody, 'Here's sheets for \$300,' we can say, 'Here's a package that includes delivery, the pillows, sheets, mattress protectors.' It sounds better when you're bundling things together. It's like when they first came out with bundling the TV, phone, and internet. You're going to be saving money."

When asked about how she presents adjustable bases, she replied, "It's kind of a second thought when people are trying out the different beds and they ask, 'What kind of base is this?' It's like back in the day when you thought having a reverse camera in your car was a luxury. Now pretty much every car comes with one. A

lot of people are watching TV in bed, and their neck is killing them because they are propped up on a mound of pillows. We get them thinking, 'Oh wow, for an extra 700 bucks I can get an adjustable base?' It is something that people are growing accustomed to. About one out of every 7 or 8 customers choose an adjustable base."

Stores With Multiple Brands

One of the most powerful effects of creating a store concept where the sales process flows from a store's design is that it becomes consistent and repeatable, to which Jennifer can attest. "We like to get to know the customer and just make the experience as easy as possible. We get a lot of referrals from family members."

A similar approach to store design is possible for retailers carrying multiple mattress brands, and worth considering. But to do so, retailers must focus first on creating an organized system that's built into their store's design. To make it work, that system must be considered before store buyers choose products to inventory and every time sales associates take their next up.

Martin concluded, "The point about Simple Sleep is that we've refined the system to work well, in addition to creating the thought process that directs the selling system. It's not just pretty design, it's something that really works."

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LEAN

Case Study

By David McMahon, CMA, CSCP

In the fifth installment on LEAN retailing, we look at how LEAN techniques took one retailer from losing money to more than 10% profit.

LEAN Operations is the 5th article in our series on LEAN retailing. The previous four articles can be found on the furninfo.com site at www.furninfo.com/Authors/DavidMcMahon/6. As a reminder, the definition of LEAN is:

LEAN is the art and science of continuously examining and improving a business's processes, people and products so that the customer experience flourishes allowing the business to realize its potential.

As has been mentioned previously, LEAN is not about developing an organization. It is NOT about making broad cuts in expenses or people. It is about making cuts in areas of organizational waste so that business productivity accelerates.

The concept of LEAN and how to use it with respect to improving Sales, Marketing and Inventory performance have all been covered in recent issues. Here, this information will be used to show how to use LEAN to identify opportunities and produce better results within your daily retail operations. To do this, let's consider the case of retailer "XYZ Furniture" that went from constantly being in debt and losing money to becoming debt free and showing profits of over

10% bottom-line. This is the true story of a retailer that joined a performance group I facilitate. XYZ Furniture had little profitability over the five years previous to joining the group. In fact, their best year had been a 3% bottom-line. This is what their net income looked like from 2006-2010:

2006	2007	2008	2009	2009
2.5%	3.0%	1.4%	0.5%	-3.5%

XYZ had increased their long-term debt load and pushed out their pay-

"Let's consider the case of retailer 'XYZ Furniture' that went from constantly being in debt and losing money to becoming debt free and showing profits of over 10% bottom-line."



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The Show is delighted to welcome star speaker David Chilton, well-known as a former “Dragon” on CBC TV’s *Dragons’ Den* and best-selling author of *The Wealthy Barber*, on **Sunday, May 29, at 9 a.m.** Join us for breakfast and an inspiring talk!

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Industry Bash

Saturday, May 28, 6 p.m. To wrap up the opening day of the Show and make the most of the mild weather, all Show participants are invited to party and network! On the menu: great BBQ specialties, drinks and a live band!

Canadian Home Furnishings Awards Gala

The Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance will celebrate the Canadian industry on **Friday, May 27**, and honour some of its members.

Extended hours on Sunday

Visitors will have the opportunity to tour the floor till **7 p.m.** on **Sunday, May 29**; drinks will be offered starting at 4 p.m.



Town Hall meeting

The third Town Hall will again be bringing industry participants together to discuss various issues. On **Monday, May 30, at 8:00 a.m.**, come and share your opinion with industry professionals. Coffee and muffins will be served!



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"Effective employees

were given a "work-buffer" and assigned the proper amount of work at the proper time. Inefficient employees were retrained and reduced."

ables to survive. They were living off a line of credit and credit cards. Obviously, there was little cash available to reward the owners or their employees. XYZ was an unhappy organization.

This lackluster performance of this retailer located in middle-America was not due to the housing crisis that lead to the Great Recession. Sales were constant through the 2006-2010 period, so volume was not to blame.

By 2010 XYZ Furniture's management decided to commit to turning their business around. Here are the

LEAN techniques used to accomplish this feat.

Establish Benchmarks & FIND the GAPS

First, XYZ Furniture's operational statistics were compared to other retailers in the performance group, as well as to known data from the industry at large. These stats are summarized in Figure #1 below. The gaps are tabulated in the far right column. These gaps showed where there were

opportunities for improvement at XYZ Furniture.

From this summary gap analysis, it's clear that XYZ had fallen behind in several areas of their operation:

- *Inventory management and sales of product were trailing. The Gross margin being achieved on pricing and selling strategies was 4% behind the group.*
- *General administration expenses of overhead, accounting and office were 2% greater.*
- *Selling Commissions and man-*

Figure #1: Operational Statistics for Retailer XYZ vs. Group Averages 2010

Operational Department	"XYZ Furniture" Ratio to Sales Volume	Approximate Group Average Ratio to Sales Volume	The GAPS
Inventory Margin on Sales (GM)	42.0%	46.0%	4.0%
General Administration, Office, Accounting	14.0%	12.0%	2.0%
Occupancy, Retail Facility	6.0%	7.0%	-1.0%
Advertising	4.0%	5.0%	-1.0%
Selling Commissions and management	9.0%	8.0%	1.0%
Net Customer Service, Damages, Staffing, VCB Income	1.5%	1.0%	0.5%
Warehousing, Staffing, Equipment, Facility	6.0%	4.5%	1.5%
Net Delivery, Staffing, Equipment, Income	2.0%	1.0%	1.0%
Finance, Credit, Interest	3.0%	2.5%	0.5%
Total Operations	45.5%	41.0%	4.5%
Profitability	-3.5%	5.0%	8.5%

LEAN *Case Study*

agement of the salesforce were 1% greater.

- Customer service expenses less vendor charge back and credit income were .5% greater.
- Warehousing, staffing, equipment and facilities were 1.5% greater.
- Delivery costs less delivery income were 1% greater.

Overall, XYZ's operations were 8.5% more costly. This opened the owner's eyes to their massive opportunity. The first step with any improvement is realization through education. The next step is commitment to action.

80/20 Thinking & Trimming The Fat

Trimming the fat with a proper LEAN strategy does not mean slashing all costs. It means getting the microscope and the paring knife out. This is the

process of finding the resources that are producing benefits (tangible or intangible), finding resources that are detracting, and then moving resources out of the detractors and into the producers.

The retailer in this story did this by employing 80/20 analysis. Here is what was discovered:

- Approximately 20% of items produced 80% of margin dollars. When looking at these items in detail, their individual gross margins ranged from 43% to 47%.
- Most of the day to day administrative tasks were being handled by a couple of employees. This caused some people to be over worked and ineffective, and others to be under-worked and inefficient.
- A minority of salespeople wrote the majority of business. A few of the top writing salespeople had the lowest margins.
- Most customer service issues came

from a few vendors.

- The majority of deliveries happened at the end of the month. This caused under capacity in resources at the start of the month and over capacity at the end.

Finding Solutions

Here are some of the policies they set in motion:

1. A new pricing review structure was put into place for best sellers, special order and new untested merchandise. The review focused on continually pushing the upper margin limits of what HOT items could fetch.

2. Administrative tasks were streamlined. The effective employees were given a "work-buffer" and assigned the proper amount of work at the proper time. Inefficient employees were retrained and reduced. The salary per employee as a result was increased due to fewer people functioning better.

3. Salespeople were placed on a variable commission schedule based on gross margin percent. So, in effect those that could sell at a higher gross margin got a raise, and those that could not got a reduction.

4. Products, with constant credit issues, were removed and replaced. Service issues declined.

5. Delivery scheduling was moved to a coordinator who was incentivized on weekly delivered sales volume and full trucks. This resulted in

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**- Cary Schram, Boulder Furniture &
Mattress, Boulder, CO**



Hear It From Our Members

MEGA isn't just a buy group. Too often this industry sits back and allows the box stores to take our business. MEGA helps me on systems to combat these stores. It's not one thing it's everything: products on the floor, advertising, computer system upgrades, website, floor lay out, warranties, professional uniforms and store branding. It is not just a typical "buy group". We are better and stronger because of MEGA.

**- Nigel Guisinger, Willamette
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Figure #2: Operational Statistics for Retailer XYZ vs. Group Averages 2015

Operational Department	"XYZ Furniture" Ratio to Sales Volume	Approximate Group Average Ratio to Sales Volume	The GAPS
Inventory Margin on Sales (GM)	48.0%	48.0%	0.0%
General Administration, Office, Accounting	9.0%	11.0%	-2.0%
Occupancy, Retail Facility	5.0%	6.0%	-1.0%
Advertising	5.0%	5.0%	0%
Selling Commissions and management	9.0%	9.0%	0%
Net Customer Service, Damages, Staffing, VCB Income	1.0%	1.0%	0%
Warehousing, Staffing, Equipment, Facility	4.5%	4.5%	0%
Net Delivery, Staffing, Equipment, Income	0%	.5%	-0.5%
Finance, Credit, Interest	2.5%	2.5%	0%
Total Operations	36.0%	39.5%	-3.5%
Profitability	12.0%	8.5%	-3.5%

less overtime, faster turns and fewer resources needed to fulfill customer needs.

6. The latest technology tools and training were deployed. This was critical to helping the various parts of the operation work in sync together

day-in-day-out.

Execute to conclusion

With any plan, execution is what matters. This business did not always succeed right away in improving the

execution of the above solutions. They did, however, persist. They did not take their eyes off the prize. They mandated success. It took time. Some things were achieved faster than others. But in the end they became one of the highest producers in the performance group. More recent metrics for the operational departments at XYZ Furniture are summarized in Figure #2 above.

"Overall, XYZ's operations were 8.5% more costly. This opened the owner's eyes to their massive opportunity."

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group as a whole.

There were obstacles along the way. However, they recognize that on any road to success, if there were no road blocks, everyone would be traveling on it. When a new challenge presented itself they would follow a LEAN strategy. LEAN is a never-ending road of self-evaluation, solving challenges and producing results. Winning is a constant pursuit.

About David McMahon: David McMahon, CMA, CSCP is a Management Consultant, Certified Supply Chain Professional and Certified Accountant. He is Vice President of Performance Groups for PROFITsystems, a HighJump Product. See many more of his articles on the www.furninfo.com website. David McMahon can also be reached at david.mcmahon@highjump.com.



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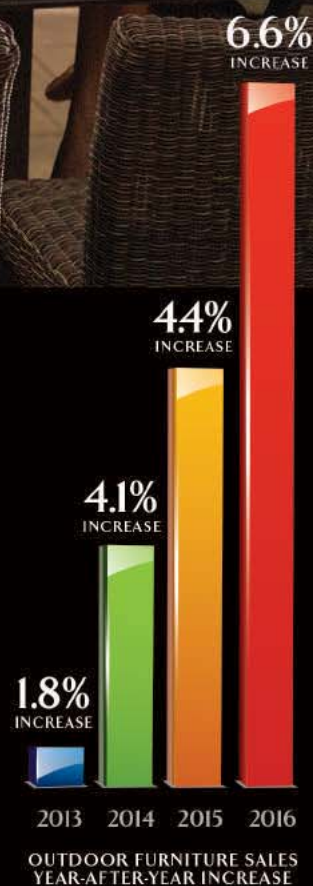
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GUERRILLA MARKETING

Revisited

Part 1: Use Your Home Town Advantage and spend less!

by Larry Mullins

"Marketing is not an event, but a process...

It has a beginning, middle, but never an end...

You improve it, perfect it, change it, even pause it, but you never stop it completely."

-Jay Conrad Levinson

The late Jay Conrad Levinson was one of the most brilliant and celebrated marketing experts of all time. His studies in psychology led him to top advertising agencies and a decade long teaching stint at UC Berkeley where he taught the secrets of Guerrilla Marketing, one of the best known brands in marketing history. Guerrilla Marketing is the use of unconventional marketing tools applied in cases when financial or other resources are limited or non-existent. Guerrilla Marketing was named by Time Magazine as one of the top 25 best business books of all time. Over 21 million have been sold, and Jay's concepts have influenced marketing so much that his books appear in 41 languages and are required reading in MBA programs worldwide.

Few independent furniture entrepreneurs follow the processes of Guerrilla Marketing recommended by Jay Conrad Levinson, yet these processes represent ideal and affordable marketing solutions for independent furniture stores. Levinson's concepts embrace the Home Town Advantage (HTA). This is a plus that Big Box franchises have rarely been given the latitude by their corporations to exploit.

Big Boxes overwhelm smaller fur-

niture dealers with huge advertising budgets and tsunamis of promotional material. Even so, their advertising material is generally impersonal, repetitive and dull. Flyers are often hastily mass produced by professionals who have never studied the evidence-based principles that make advertising work. Franchise websites are equally dry and lacking in personal home town color and appeal. If smaller independent dealers exploited their own Home Town Advantage they would, without increased expense, take the lead and increase their local market share.

Dispelling the Myth of the Effectiveness of Big Budgets

People simply are not paying much attention these days to intrusive advertising appeals. Like the most recent crop of presidential hopefuls, corporate Big Boxes with the fattest bankrolls can no longer count on their flood of messages resonating due to their sheer quantity. And here lies the opportunity for every independent furniture store owner to disrupt the status quo and change the game. The trick is to clearly define a small, attractive hometown niche in which they can be the key



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Sofa with Curved Wood Trim, Accent Pillows.
LIST: \$1799, BLOWOUT: \$699

Robbie 4 Pk. Counter
48" x 48" Table expands to 64" x 48".
LIST: \$1799, BLOWOUT: \$799

Wicker Big Man Recliner
Succumb to comfort with excellent seating in leather-like upholstery.
LIST: \$799, BLOWOUT: \$279

Quincy Chaise Sofa
Reclined, soft and comfortable with decorative pillows included. Recliner also on other side of the sofa. Choice of colors.
LIST: \$1499, BLOWOUT: \$579

Topman TV Console
With dining storage. Fully adjustable. Great management. Also 15" Flat TV. 50".
LIST: \$899, BLOWOUT: \$499

Entire Stock! All Beautyrest, BeautySleep and Posturepedic Mattresses at Doorbuster Blowout Discounts

PRINCE OF QUEEN SET
62% OFF
BLOWOUT: \$499

PRINCE OF QUEEN SET
50% OFF
BLOWOUT: \$699

LUXURY QUEEN SET
40% OFF
BLOWOUT: \$1099

LUXURY QUEEN SET
50% OFF
BLOWOUT: \$1499

Buy one Tempur-Pedic mattress at \$300 in Price Reduction!

10% APR for 3 YEARS
on all purchases over \$1000

FREE
on all purchases over \$1000

120 Night
on all purchases over \$1000

January 11 - 17 Shopping Spotlight

PARTIAL LISTING OF DOORBUSTERS (ITEMS JUST RELEASED)
See more at www.slumberlandwillmar.com

Dual Power Reclining
Wicker Sofa, Reclining Footrest, Reclining Headrest, Reclining Backrest.
LIST: \$1799, BLOWOUT: \$1079

Wicker Down Bed, HL, FL, Side, Support, Matt.
LIST: \$999, BLOWOUT: \$299

**Wooden 4 Pk. Dining Set, Counter Height, 48" x 48" Table, 4 chairs, 4 stools, 4 benches.
LIST: \$1079, BLOWOUT: \$499**

(SEE MANY MORE DOORBUSTERS ON THE OTHER SIDE AND AT www.slumberlandwillmar.com)

WILLMAR HIGHLIGHTS SHOPPING SPOTLIGHT TODAY

GOOD DAY WILLMAR!

Slumberland Furniture rocks Willmar with a massive renovation blowout of famous brand home furnishings

Shoppers come from near and far to acquire furniture and mattress sets for a fraction of regular retail prices

Slumberland Furniture in Willmar provided the area with beautiful services, low prices and top city selection since 1984.

The Slumberland store home features over 30,000 square feet of famous brand furniture, accessories, and mattress sets.

January 11 - 17 Shopping Spotlight

PARTIAL LISTING OF DOORBUSTERS (ITEMS JUST RELEASED)
See more at www.slumberlandwillmar.com

Dual Power Reclining
Wicker Sofa, Reclining Footrest, Reclining Headrest, Reclining Backrest.
LIST: \$1799, BLOWOUT: \$1079

Wicker Down Bed, HL, FL, Side, Support, Matt.
LIST: \$999, BLOWOUT: \$299

**Wooden 4 Pk. Dining Set, Counter Height, 48" x 48" Table, 4 chairs, 4 stools, 4 benches.
LIST: \$1079, BLOWOUT: \$499**

(SEE MANY MORE DOORBUSTERS ON THE OTHER SIDE AND AT www.slumberlandwillmar.com)

GUERRILLA MARKETING
is about spending the same amount of money, or less to achieve a much larger return on investment.

This broadsheet advertisement above was used creatively to appear as an editorial presentation. This format has proven remarkably effective.

player. Nothing is better at helping you do this than Jay Conrad Levinson's Guerrilla Marketing strategies.

So, what is Guerrilla Marketing? Jay defines Guerrilla Marketing as a strategy of utilizing unconventional secrets and tactics for achieving conventional goals—big profits—for your small business. Understand that marketing itself is each contact with ANY part of your business with ANY segment of the general public. Your marketing must be a circular process resulting in large numbers of REPEAT and REFERRAL customers.

Just before his death Levinson updated and summarized his Guerrilla Marketing strategies in one small (124 page) volume, titled Guerrilla Marketing for the New Millennium. The book is brimming with fresh ideas, most of which cost nothing to apply. If you want to turbo-charge your business in 2016, make use of the limited sample of the Guerrilla Marketing philosophy offered in this article to develop an effective blueprint to reinvent your business.

The Seven Sentence Marketing Strategy

NOTE: Suggested responses for guidance and clarity have been added. Fill yours in and you will have a great Guerrilla Marketing Strategy!

1. The purpose of my store's marketing is:

Your Possible Response- The purpose of my marketing is to improve the lives of my customers by offering honest values in home furnishings, providing outstanding service, employing serious follow through, and being a source of helpful information.

2. I will accomplish this purpose by:

Your Possible Response- Applying the principle that marketing itself is each contact with ANY part of my business with ANY segment of the general public. I will make sure these contacts are the most gracious and comfortable possible and every element of the shopping experience is pleasant and

rewarding.

3. The target audiences for these appeals are:

This answer will depend upon your

"Like the most recent crop of presidential hopefuls, corporate Big Boxes with the fattest bankrolls can no longer count on their flood of messages resonating due to their sheer quantity."

GUERRILLA MARKETING *Revisited*

demographic profile.

4. The marketing weapons I intend to employ are:

Your Possible Response- Guerrilla Marketing strategies and tactics, selected from Jay Levinson's top 100.

5. The marketing niches for my store are:

Again, your demographics will dictate this.

6. My store's identity will be:

Your Possible Response- We are the primary hometown store for our market niche, and the most trusted source for products, information and advice.

7. The goal for my advertising budgets will be:

Your Possible Response- Programs that produce record sales and profits for less than five percent of gross sales in promotion costs.

100 Guerrilla Marketing Weapons

I don't have space for all 100 of

Levinson's Guerrilla Marketing "weapons." Suffice to say that advertising alone is not marketing. "Don't think for a minute that if you are advertising, you are marketing," he directs. Advertising is just one of 100 weapons of marketing. There are 99 others. There is a tie for first place. If you are advertising you are doing only 1% of what you can do. Here are a few other contenders for first place:

- Your marketing plan
- Your niche positioning
- Your logo
- Phone demeanor
- Your silent salespeople (indoor and outdoor signs—handouts—business cards)
- Hours of operation—days of operation (your convenience or your clients'?)
- Community involvement
- Dress code
- Guarantee
- Referral program
- Follow-up
- Sales training
- Credit options
- Benefits you offer
- How you greet and how you say goodbye
- Social media
- And dozens more in the book. Your job as a business owner is to use as many as you can.

The Eight Power Traits Of Successful Marketers.

Every successful CEO or marketing department manager Jay Levinson studied had eight specific character traits. Measure yourself against the list:

PATIENCE: Jay considers this the most important trait. I suggest you brand yourself as the "value-added hometown store" with slogans like: "Big city selection, hometown prices and personal service," and "We are your friends and neighbors with nationwide buying power." You must be persistent in addition to being patient. Make sure the staff memorizes your slogans.

IMAGINATION: Remember the declaration of Émile Coué: "When imagination and will are in conflict, antagonistic, imagination will win every

**How To Win
the Battle for
Mattress Sales**
The Bed Seller's Manual



"The Best Overall Resource For Mattress Sales Professionals!"

291 pages of sales boosting power by Furniture World Magazine's contributing editor David Benbow.

Visit <http://www.bedsellersmanual.com> for more information.

Your Identity Ticket

"Establish your identity as a trusted and reliable advisor, someone they would not hesitate to recommend to their friends, family and neighbors."

time without exception." Imagination means vision, and there is no such thing as an effective marketer who lacks vision. Vision is far more important than willpower.

SENSITIVITY: The quality of empathy is of key importance in marketing. First-rate marketers are sensitive to their market, their prospects, the economy, the community, and their competition. "It's a key personality trait," says Levinson.

EGO STRENGTH: Jay observes: "The first people who will tire are your co-workers, followed closely by your family and friends. They will counsel you to change because they are bored. Your prospects are not bored because they have barely heard of you. Your customers are not bored because they will forever read your

marketing material to justify the fact they still do business with you."

AGGRESSIVENESS: You will need to be bold and confident and willing to try new things. With Guerrilla Marketing you will be able to get better results with the same promotional budgets (or less).

CONSTANT LEARNING: Successful Guerrilla Marketers are constant learners.

GENEROSITY: Guerrilla Marketers want most of all to improve the lives of their clients. They are generous with their time and their information.

ACTIVE AGENTS: Jay notes: "Many furniture entrepreneurs read books, articles, and take courses. But they keep the information inside of them. Guerrillas learn in much the same

way, but they take action on what they learn. They know that action is the power behind Guerrilla Marketing. There are eight and only eight traits that great marketing experts have in common. Make sure these traits apply to you!"

Think And Act Big Without Spending Big

Modern technology gives small business a blatantly unfair advantage over the big boxes because it allows them to think and act big without having to spend big.

Levinson: "The greatest boon to Guerrilla Marketing has been the affordable, powerful, easy-to-use technology of today. I hate to use the word 'empower,' but technology

BRUCE FURNITURE ... 7 reasons why we are the BEST place to buy your mattress ...

- 1** **FACTORY-TRAINED SALES CONSULTANTS**
"One of our Bruce Furniture sales consultants will guide you to the perfect bed for your body and your budget."
WE GUARANTEE IT!
Michael Bruce, Owner
- 2** **DOUBLE THE DIFFERENCE! LOWEST PRICE GUARANTEE**
"Bruce Furniture guarantees our prices to be the lowest for 30 days after your purchase is in your home or we will refund double the difference to you."
- 3** **FREE DELIVERY**
Bruce Furniture provides free professional delivery, set-up, removal and disposal of your old bedding.
- 4** **NO BRAND SELECTION**
We top America-made famous brands under one roof ... Serta Perfect Sleeper, Tempur-Pedic, iComfort, plus the benefits of adjustable lifestyle choices for as low as \$599. Prices to fit every budget. Queen sets start as low as \$198. Long term financing available. Acquire a premium mattress set for only \$27 a month.
- 5** **Home of the NO BUYING MISTAKE COMFORT GUARANTEE**
- 6** **FREE! Greet the Dawn Rested, Pain-Free and Ready for Anything!**
No obligation ... Drop by and get your free copy of the "Better Back Guide" Sleep Guide.
- 7** **WE GIVE BACK TO OUR COMMUNITY**
Bruce Furniture helps donate beds to needy families, habitat for humanity homes, salvation army, crossroads shelter, and compassion ministries.

SPECIAL OF THE WEEK WHILE THEY LAST!
SERTA Push Queen Sets
Regular: \$898
DOORBUSTER: \$399

MONDAY-WEDNESDAY: 9 - 5
THURSDAY: 9 - 8
FRIDAY-SATURDAY: 9 - 5
SUNDAY: 1 - 5

BRUCE FURNITURE & FLOOR COVERING
• KEARNEY • HASTINGS • HOLIDEGE • ALLIANCE
www.BruceFurniture.com

Bruce Furniture
2026 Central Avenue
In Kearney, Nebraska
(308) 237-5141

VISA **MasterCard** **Discover**

Note the Free Give-away. Advertising space is expensive real estate. Make every square inch count.

GUERRILLA MARKETING
is about telling your story with clarity and conviction
Rather than screaming price.

Bruce Furniture clearly defines the advantages they offer. Few stores answer the question: "Why should I buy my mattress from you?" in such a compelling way.

Sitting Pretty or Sitting Duck?

Without print advertising, your company is...



... a target for the competition!

To clearly define your company's brand and impress qualified prospects, you want the full depth of your message to hit home with an audience that is relaxed, attentive and receptive to what you have to say. For this, nothing surpasses the impact of print advertising.

Digital has its uses, but a bold, innovative print ad concept, surrounded by respected editorial content, is a powerful and economical way to convert thoughtful, actively engaged readers into loyal customers.

Furniture World Magazine's broad reach to furniture and bedding retail executives, plus its unique, in-depth and helpful business-focused editorial content, will get your message noticed!

furniture
WORLD
since 1870

Discover the power of print!™

For a customized market analysis and information on advertising opportunities, contact Barton Bienenstock, Publisher at 914-235-3095 or sales@furninfo.com.



Founders, Don Surdoval & Ira Bakst in the early 90s



Representatives from STORIS at Award Ceremony for #1 Place to Work in NJ

Focus on Development Produces Unrivaed Software Results

For over 25 years, one furniture industry retail technology company has remained true to their core values. Under the same ownership since its inception, STORIS Retail Software Solutions' goals are driven by technology innovation. This has allowed the company to have a laser-focus on product enhancement and deliver a software solution that translates into financial gains for their client base.

The company's core software solutions and companion applications are industry-proven. This allows STORIS to focus their development efforts on product enhancement and the design of new features. STORIS has released a new version of their software, on average, every 6-9 months for over a decade. And they have no plans of slowing down. New software releases are rolled out to clients for no additional charge, allowing STORIS retailers to benefit from the latest technology innovations on the market. Features brought to the latest software suite recently include enhanced mobile application design, advanced promotional logic & margin controls, and a Finance Application Queue.

And the proof is in the success of their client base. Ethan Allen, Ashley HomeStore leaders, and American Furniture Warehouse are just some of their clients that reported double-digit growth in 2015. In addition, the Dufresne Spencer Group was named the fastest growing Top 100 Retailer in 2015, and reported 91% revenue growth the year after going live on STORIS.

It is this client community that is an integral part of STORIS' success. With more Top 100 retailers than any other software company, STORIS has a strong-base of successful retailers that are always generating ideas for consideration. These ideas are then developed into the STORIS application and rolled out to their entire client base. STORIS' clients are all part of the home furnishings industry and range from retailers generating \$1 Million in annual sales to over \$1 Billion. Their client Product Suggestion Portal is a new tool that allows all clients to have equal vote on their favorite suggestions. Their unified voices help propel features to the front of the development queue, making the enhancements rolled out in each new release driven by retail demand.

STORIS is planning on releasing the latest version of their software this summer with enhancements focused around user-experience. To learn more about how STORIS can help your business call 1.888.4.STORIS or visit STORIS.com.

Bassett® Finds Opportunities With STORIS Partnership

In 2011, Bassett was looking to streamline their retail software. Their previous multiple-database infrastructure made it difficult to operate efficiently across their growing national retail operation. As a Top 100 retailer, they needed a solution that would provide the ability to seamlessly scale their business. Bassett decided to switch to STORIS, because they knew the conversion would be worth it. STORIS' commitment to development, the flexibility of the system to support business needs, and the ability to grow the company are just some of the benefits Bassett has gained. Bassett now has a unified, seamless business solution to operate their corporate enterprise. Below Bassett highlights just some of the areas that delivered a Return on Investment with STORIS.



BUSINESS SPEED AND AGILITY

Bassett appreciates all of STORIS' efficient features. The design puts similar processes such as look ups together in "all-in-one" screens, which makes finding information or completing tasks expedient. Running software updates are easy and quick, so they keep up-to-date on enhancements with limited interruption.

TIGHTER INVENTORY CONTROLS

Bassett has increased their margins substantially, adding to the company's profitability. Pricing and discount controls help them maintain ideal ratios between the cost of goods and ultimate selling price. As a public company, Bassett feels confident in their accountability to their shareholders.

BUSINESS INTELLIGENCE

STORIS' reporting is extensive and provides Bassett with a wealth of data. They enjoy the dashboards that update in real-time and the transparency that it offers. Being able to drill-down into the data goes a long way in uncovering actionable insights and gives a complete picture of performance across all stores.

ENHANCED CUSTOMER EXPERIENCE

Bassett is excited about the benefits their customers are receiving from STORIS. With streamlined order entry at the POS, they were able to cut down checkout times. Using STORIS' CRM InTouch & UpSystem enables them to efficiently service customers as they enter the store and actively follow up with leads.

MOBILE TECHNOLOGY ADVANCES

Bassett is utilizing mobile technology in many of their stores to engage with customers. Their showroom staff is able to provide accurate product knowledge, inventory information, and build sales quotes from anywhere on the showroom floor. Mobile technology helps their team display professionalism.

A STRONG, RELIABLE PARTNERSHIP

Bassett knows that they have found a long term, dedicated partner. STORIS' consulting and support teams are strong and responsive, with experienced individuals working towards Bassett's success. STORIS has a thriving community of retail partners and Bassett is benefiting from being a part of that network.

Your Action Ticket

"All the other tickets are worthless without your action ticket. Guerrilla Marketing is about action, constant action."

definitely empowers small businesses. Technology is the game-changer that is revolutionizing small businesses. Now small business owners can dream extravagant new dreams and attain them in surprisingly brief time periods." If you are a tech-shy independent you are needlessly throwing away your Home Town Advantage. (H.T.A.)

Your most powerful secret weapon against the Big Boxes is technology. Most corporate chains with nervous IT department fiefdoms will not allow franchises to host their own websites, or handle local social media accounts. This is the prevailing policy, even though these same IT departments are constantly overwhelmed with other priorities and cannot help individual franchises. As a result, local franchises are helpless while savvy independents grin as they use today's simple technology to press their overwhelming H.T.A. Levinson points out that modern technology is so inexpensive that you can invest for a low four-figure sum what in 1982 amounted to a medium six figure sum.

Modern technology has removed the ceiling and opened up a whole new world of opportunity for smaller businesses. "Now you can connect with allies everywhere, 'being connected' has never been so low cost and yet so high in value. Guerrillas can now be online, with the power of instant email, and the enormous supremacy of the World Wide Web."

It all begins with your own website of course. You will need tech help, but also don't try to design a website unless you have the assistance of a

black belt marketer. He or she will help you design the most powerful website and you can immediately begin to promote it offline. The process of promoting your website offline should never stop. Every flyer, handout, insert, ROP ad, cable TV spot, business card, etc., should feature your website address. Technology offers the opportunity for smaller furniture stores to gain local credibility, speed and power in an age when local "credibility is crucial, speed is revered, and power comes from being part of a networking team. Speed comes from cellular, pager, fax, email and voicemail technology." Levinson adds: "If you are Guerrilla Marketing with technology you are headed in the right direction. If you are Guerrilla Marketing without technology you are not Guerrilla Marketing at all."

Your Action Ticket.

"All the other tickets are worthless without your action ticket. Guerrilla Marketing is about action, constant action. Your mission is to capitalize on your momentum and to go soaring into the new millennium without missing a beat." It's not your father's millennium. It's a whole new ballgame and your tickets to the old ballgame won't get you very good seats.

Jay suggests five tickets to the new ballgame:

1. The Technology Ticket, of course. You must banish all traces of technophobia. We discussed the

benefits of technology, but never let technology overwhelm your message. Glitzy and costly websites and flyers cannot take the place of Evidence Based Advertising that is rich with benefits and content.

2. Your Identity Ticket. Your connection with your customers is precious. You must "follow up or fail." You are to establish your identity as a trusted and reliable advisor, someone they would not hesitate to recommend to their friends, family and neighbors.

3. Your Humanity Ticket. Our society is becoming more and more impersonal, in spite of technology. The human touch, the hometown touch, is vital. So your marketing messages

"Most corporate chains with nervous IT department fiefdoms will not allow franchises to host their own websites, or handle local social media accounts."

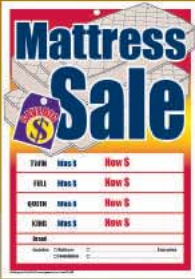
5% off ALL Furniture TAGS & SIGNS

VIEW MORE TAGS: WWW.SIGNS4RETAIL.COM

- ✓ Proven-effective, home furnishings messages!
- ✓ Bright, vivid colors!
- ✓ Sturdy 10-pt card stock!
- ✓ 3 sizes available! (shown below)
- ✓ In stock for 24-hour shipping!



#T-FURN2



#T-MAT



#T-SALE



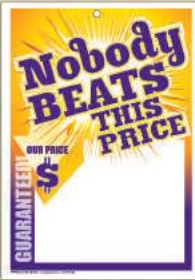
#T-SALE3



#T-SALE4



#T-ELP



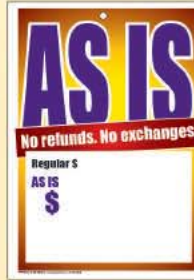
#T-NOB



#T-BLOW



#T-ANN



#T-ASIS



#T-OUR



#T-FLOOR



#T-CL



#T-SSAV



#T-MEM2



#T-STARS2

Sale Tag Prices (packs of 100)
MIX AND MATCH different tags by size for quantity discounts.

Size	1 pack	6 packs	12 packs	24+ packs
5" x 7"	\$21 ea.	\$19 ea.	\$16 ea.	\$15 ea.
3.5" x 5"	\$16 ea.	\$14 ea.	\$12 ea.	\$11 ea.
8.5" x 11"	\$31 ea.	\$28 ea.	\$27 ea.	\$26 ea.

5" x 7" tags have drilled hole and slit for easy hanging.
3.5" x 5" and 8.5" x 11" tags have drilled hole only.

*Plus UPS shipping. Prices subject to change without notice.
99% of all tag orders ship within 24 hours.
UPS Ground, 2nd Day & Next Day shipping available.



- ▲ Tag Gun Kits are the quickest and least expensive way to tag upholstery!
Kit includes: 1 sturdy HAWK™ Gun Kit, 5 Needles and 5,000 Barbs. \$59



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Unbreakable Plastic Tag Holders ▶ stand tags up and get your low prices noticed! As low as \$2.50 ea!

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- ◀ Vinyl Envelopes protect your tags. Heavy-duty 10-mil vinyl. Reinforced hole. As low as 47¢ each!



TAG SHOWN: #T-FLOW

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Over 100 home furnishings messages ready for 48-hr shipping include:

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- Mattress Sale
- Dinette Sale
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- ✓ 100 home furnishings-specific messages at www.signs4retail.com!
- ✓ Bold designs for maximum visibility!
- ✓ Heavy-duty, fade-resistant, 13-oz vinyl for long indoor/outdoor life!
- ✓ 3 sizes of each: 3'x10'...\$119
4'x15'...\$199 4'x20'...\$279

WindBlade Pole Banners
Stand Tall Out Front Of Your Store! Proven-Effective home furnishings sales messages!

- ✓ Super, heavy-duty, knitted-polyester for long life!
- ✓ See-through, 2-sided viewing!
- ✓ Easy, no tools installation!
- ✓ 2 sizes of each:
12'...\$149 (required pole sold separately \$59)
15'...\$179 (required pole sold separately \$69)



WINDBLADE SHOWN: #WB-P-SALE

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WORLD

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To order call 1.800.346.8116
or visit www.signs4retail.com

Use promo code **FWORLD5**
for 5% off your order!

Your Humanity Ticket

"Marketing messages are warm and human, empathetic to the details of their lives, helpful and informative."

to your clients must be warm and human. They should be empathetic to the details of their lives, "caring of their progress, helpful and informative."

4. Your History Ticket. Unlike the new Big Boxes, you have a tradition of service, a legacy, a hometown advantage. Tell your story and use it.

5. Your Action Ticket. "All the other tickets are worthless without your action ticket. Guerrilla Marketing is about action, constant action. Your mission is to capitalize on your momentum and to go soaring into the new millennium without missing a beat."

Permission Marketing vs. Intrusive Marketing

Jay Levinson recommends the book: *Permission Marketing: Turning*

Strangers into Friends and Friends into Customers by Seth Godin.

Jay writes: "It changed my entire outlook about marketing and can change the beauty of your bottom line." The Big Boxes are practitioners of old fashioned intrusive advertising such as TV, radio, traditional print, etc. But such intrusive marketing is not working anywhere near as well as it used to.

Permission marketing is the game-changer you need. The trick is for you to gain permission to market to your hometown niche. Learn this trick and watch your bottom line explode.

Briefly, you offer a client an enticement to accept your advertising messages. The enticement could be in the form of free information on decorating, or care for leather furnishings, or perhaps membership in a special club. All you ask for in return is permission

to market your goods to these people. Nothing else. Permission marketing is so important it really needs its own article, and I will cover it in Part Two.

This has been a long article, but I have barely scratched the surface of the Guerrilla Marketing philosophy. It is a concept that fits smaller furniture stores with hometown histories like a glove. The one thing you can never do too much of is learn. An hour a day of learning adds up to nine 40-hour weeks of learning a year. Such a program would make you unstoppable.

About Larry Mullins: *Larry Mullins is a contributing editor for Furniture World. He has acquired 30+ years of experience on the front lines of furniture marketing. Larry's mainstream executive experience, his creative work with modern promotion specialists, and his mastery of timeless advertising principles have established him as one of the foremost experts in home furnishings marketing. Larry's turnkey Mega-Impact programs produce legendary results for everything from cash raising events to profitable exit strategies. His newest, innovative Internet Leverage Strategies have achieved record-breaking increases in sales and profits in recent months. Larry is founder and CEO of UltraSales, Inc. Call for a free, no-obligation consultation. He can be reached directly at 904.794.9212 or email him at: Larry@LarryMullins.com.*

See more articles by Larry at www.furninfo.com.

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a look at PRODUCT LIABILITY

The product liability landscape for furniture retailers and manufacturers.

By Melissa R. Stull and George W. Soule

Furniture safety and liability present special challenges for manufacturers and retailers.

Homes are full of furniture that are the subject of litigation, the focus of standards, and the target of Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) investigations.

Typical Claims in Furniture Product Liability Cases

Nationwide over the last 10 years, the most frequent accident scenario in reported product liability cases involving furniture, concerned a chair breaking when the plaintiff sat down. In those cases, plaintiffs alleged that the chair was structurally unsound, contained a manufacturing defect, or was not assembled properly. Several such accidents occurred on the retailer's show floor. Other cases involved furniture that tipped on users when pulled or opened; glass in furniture that broke; furniture upholstery or stuff-

ing that ignited; furniture that was coated with toxic material; furniture that collapsed when leaned on; and furniture casters that rolled on a user's foot.

Plaintiffs asserted a host of allegations in these cases:

- **Design defect**—where plaintiff alleges the furniture design is inherently defective.
- **Manufacturing defect**—when a flaw in the manufacturing process renders furniture defective.
- **Failure to warn or instruct**—finding defect due to inadequate instructions or warnings.
- **Misrepresentation**—when a party supplies false information for others to rely on.
- **Negligent assembly**—for example if a retailer failed to exercise proper care in assembling a piece of furniture.

- **Premises liability**—when a retailer knows of or could reasonably discover a dangerous condition, such as a slippery step, and fails to protect its customer from the danger.

In addition to establishing the basic elements of each allegation, the plaintiff must also prove causation, i.e. that the defective condition of the furniture or inadequate warning caused the accident or injury. The specific requirements to prove causation vary by state. For example, in Minnesota, a “direct cause” is a cause that had a substantial part in bringing about the accident or injury. In California, courts focus on whether the defect in the product was a substantial factor in producing the injury to determine a defendant's liability.

These cases raised a multitude of typical issues encountered in personal injury litigation, such as:

- **Daubert challenges**—claims that a party's expert opinions are not admissible in court.
- **Spoilation claims**—claims that the product was not properly preserved after the accident or injury.
- **Statute of limitations**—claims that the lawsuit is barred because it was not filed within the time limits proscribed by law based on when the



Service Lamp Corp.

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"The retailer may be liable

in negligence, for example, for its activities in assembling the product or in staging the product in the show room."

claim accrued

- **Statutes of repose**—claims that the lawsuit is barred because it was not filed within the time limits proscribed by law based on when the product was designed or manufactured.

The Retailer's Responsibility

In some cases, plaintiff can assert an independent negligence claim against the seller. The retailer may be liable in negligence, for example, for its activities in assembling the product or in staging the product in the show room. A retailer may have a duty to inspect the product before offering it to customers or displaying it in the store. The seller may also be responsible as an "apparent manufacturer" when it labels the product with its identification and holds itself out as the manufacturer.

In other cases, sellers defend against product liability claims, such as design defect, manufacturing defect, and failure to warn that are more properly the responsibility of the manufacturer. Many states have enacted statutes to govern the liability of sellers in product liability actions. Under such statutes, sellers may be liable when they exercise control over the design, manufacture or labeling of the product; or if they modified the product, had knowledge of the defect, or made separate misrepresentations about the product. If the seller did not engage in such activity, it may seek dismissal from the lawsuit. For example, the Mississippi "innocent seller" statute has preclud-

ed liability for a seller and assembler when it did not "exercise substantial control over the manufacture" of the product and did not have knowledge of the allegedly defective condition. Similarly, a retailer of a kitchen chair in New Jersey was not liable for strict liability when it did not exercise control over the design, manufacture or labeling of the chair, nor was it aware of any defects in chair.

Even an "innocent" seller, however, may be liable for strict liability under these statutes when the plaintiff cannot recover from the manufacturer. If the manufacturer is not subject to service of process—because, for example:

- *If the manufacturer is a foreign entity.*
- *The plaintiff would not be able to enforce a judgment against the manufacturer.*
- *The manufacturer is bankrupt.*
- *If a defective product caused a plaintiff harm.*

Indemnification from the Manufacturer

An innocent retailer may seek indemnification from the product manufacturer in a case where the claims are based on the product's design, manufacture, or warnings. Indemnity may be provided by common law, contract or statute.

The more difficult issue arises, however, when the seller negotiates or imposes a broad indemnification provision on the manufacturer, making it

responsible for all claims arising from the product. Big box retailers have significant market power over manufacturers, importers and distributors, and may exact such a provision as a condition to selling the product. When the fault for the accident properly lies with the retailer (e.g., because of improper assembly), such broad indemnification provisions are enforceable only when the parties' intent is expressed in clear, unequivocal terms. If the agreement is ambiguous, the courts will not impose indemnity in favor of a negligent party.

Reaching all Parties

In cases involving generic products, the plaintiff may have difficulty

"The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that a child dies every two weeks and a child is injured every 24 minutes in the U.S. from furniture or TVs tipping over, according to CPSC data."

product LIABILITY

in proving the identity of the seller or manufacturer. Many cases involve overseas manufacturers, particularly from China, complicating identification of the manufacturer, service of process, and establishment of jurisdiction over the manufacturer. This could pose a problem for a local retailer, as the retailer may be the only or easiest defendant plaintiff is able to sue.

Additionally, when a plaintiff fails to name all potential parties, such as the seller, manufacturer, or designer, the named defendants may need to bring in parties not directly involved in the lawsuit by filing a third-party claim. The defendant, however, might wish to consider the effect that doing so may

have on its business relationship with the potential third-party defendant.

The Effects of Product Misuse

In some product liability cases, the accident occurs when the plaintiff uses the product in a manner not intended by the manufacturer. For example, the plaintiff might become injured while attempting to stand on a bar stool to change a light bulb. In situations such as these, the defendant may allege misuse as an affirmative defense to the claims against it. Whether the defendant may defeat recovery based on product misuse depends on whether

the misuse was “reasonably foreseeable” by the manufacturer because the “failure to design a product to prevent a foreseeable misuse can be a design defect.”

However, typically a “manufacturer will not be liable if an unforeseeable misuse of the product caused the injuries.” Some states make unforeseeable misuse a complete defense. Other states make misuse a factor to be considered in comparing the fault of all parties involved.

Injuries to Children

Furniture accidents involving use



Tip-over prevention is everyone's business!

Every two weeks, a child dies in the U.S. when furniture, an appliance, or a TV tips over on them, according to the U.S. Consumer Product Safety Commission. By working together, we can help reduce the risk and prevent tragedies involving our industry's products.

Together, we can reduce the risk.

MANUFACTURERS: The furniture you produce or import needs to meet the ASTM Standard Safety Specification for Clothing Storage Units (F2057-14).	RETAILERS: Make sure all products you sell meet the voluntary stability standard.	SALES REPS: Make sure the lines you represent meet the voluntary stability standard.	DESIGNERS: Clients with small children need to know the importance of anchoring furniture, appliances and TVs.
Learn more: www.ahfa.us/furniture-tip-over	In-store resources: www.anchorit.gov/get-involved	Learn more: www.ahfa.us/furniture-tip-over	Learn more: www.anchorit.gov/get-involved

"If the manufacturer

is not subject to service of process because, for example, it is a foreign entity, or bankrupt, the seller may be liable if a defective product caused a plaintiff harm."

by and injuries to children are, unfortunately, common. The Consumer Product Safety Commission (CPSC) reports that "[a] child dies every two weeks and a child is injured every 24 minutes in the U.S. from furniture or TVs tipping over, according to CPSC data." Accidents involving dressers tipping over on children, children pulling down televisions, and entanglement in window covering cords have been widely reported in recent years and sometimes result in action by the CPSC and/or lawsuits by the children's family. The accidents have also lead to introduction of new products such as anti-tip TV straps, wall anchor systems, and cordless blinds.

Are manufacturers required to "child-proof" every piece of furniture that could be placed in a home where children are present? In some cases, the defendant may argue that the child was not an intended user of the product. This argument has met with mixed reception. For example, in *Stratos v. Super Sagless Corp.*, the manufacturer of an electric hospital bed argued that it could not be held strictly liable for the death of a toddler because its product was not intended to be "played with" by children; rather, the bed was intended to be used as a home health care product for adults. The Pennsylvania court stated that unless the product is accompanied by express warnings or instructions that children should not use the product, it can look to the product's targeted purpose, intended audience, and knowledge of the ordinary consumer. The court found that the product was

marketed for home use where children could be present, and was not explicitly limited to adult use; therefore it was up to a jury to decide whether the child was a "reasonably obvious unintended user of the bed."

Conversely, in *Beaver v. Howard Miller Clock Co.*, a manufacturer of a grandfather clock that tipped over on a small child was found not to have a duty to make its clock—a product not intended for use by children—"child-resistant." Michigan law does not require manufacturers of "simple products to design safety features to protect users—including children—from open and obvious dangers associated with the product." The court determined it must "necessarily consider what the product's ordinary user would understand about [the product's] characteristics." The risk of a clock tipping over should be obvious to the ordinary user, i.e., the children's parents, regardless of what the children involved in the accident may have known. Therefore, the clock was not defectively designed because it could tip over, nor did the manufacturer have a duty to warn of this danger.

However, the risk of televisions tipping over and injuring a child has been found not to be an open and obvious hazard to the average consumer. In the *Simmons* case, the Indiana court addressed the plaintiff's failure to warn and design defect allegations against the manufacturer of a television that fell on a ten-month-old child. A manufacturer must warn if misuse is reasonably foreseeable and must also warn regarding "latent dan-

gerous characteristics of the product, even though there is no defect in the product itself." The defendant argued it was not obligated to warn and was not liable under a design defect theory because the characteristics and risks associated with the television were are open and obvious. While it may be obvious that televisions are heavy, the court found the risk of televisions tipping over was not obvious to the average consumer.

Regulation by the CPSC

In addition to defending lawsuits, furniture manufacturers and retailers must navigate CPSC investigations when products are involved in accidents or do not perform as intended. The CPSC is "charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death associated with the use of the thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction." The commission investigates incidents, injuries and complaints regarding a variety of consumer products, including furniture, and makes determinations whether a product should be recalled or otherwise be subjected to corrective action. Recently, for example, CPSC Chairman Elliot Kaye called on the entire furniture industry to make more stable products less prone to tip-over accidents.

The CPSC initiates investigations independently and based on information provided from consumers, manufacturers or retailers. Manufacturers, distributors, and retailers must file a

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Owner Ashley Furniture Homestores

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Bill Dixon
Vice-President, Ashley Furniture HomeStores Southeast

"I would recommend Trax to anyone who is looking for these solutions for their business."

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product

LIABILITY

Section 15(b) Report if a product fails to comply with an applicable rule, regulation, or standard found in the Consumer Product Safety Act or if the product “contains a defect which could create a substantial product hazard” or “creates an unreasonable risk of serious injury or death.” The applicable statute requires disclosure of information relating to the product and claims of injury or incidents as a result of the product’s use. Failure to report can result in fines.

If the CPSC determines corrective action is necessary, the manufacturer and/or retailer will oftentimes agree to a voluntary course of action. If the parties cannot come to an agreement, the CPSC may bring legal action to seek a mandatory recall.

Involvement by the CPSC can be linked to product liability litigation. A recall can generate publicity and litigation when product users learn about the recall. Those plaintiffs may try to use evidence of the recall at trial, the admission of which is likely to be heavily contested. Conversely, a product liability lawsuit may come first and prompt action by the CPSC. While it is unlikely a lawsuit alone is grounds for mandatory reporting to the CPSC, a lawsuit can notify the CPSC of a potential issue. Even without a recall, a report to or an investigation by the CPSC creates documents and communication that can be discoverable and possibly admissible in litigation.

The Role of Standards

There are many standards that apply to furniture products. Some are

imposed by regulating bodies such as the American Society for Testing and Materials (ASTM), as in the case of hinge performance testing, and the American National Standards Institute (ANSI), as in the case of stability tests; while other standards may be required by the retailer in a sales contract.

Most states have statutes or court decisions governing the effect of compliance or noncompliance with standards in a product liability case. Generally, evidence of a product’s compliance with a government or industry standard is admissible at trial to prove the product is not defective—but such evidence is not dispositive. Likewise, evidence of noncompliance is admissible, but not conclusive, to prove that the product is defective.

Some states have given the manufacturer an additional advantage in trial if the product complies with standards adopted or approved by a law or government agency. These states have adopted statutes creating a presumption, which can be rebutted by the plaintiff, that the product is not defective if it complies with a government standard.

Conclusion

Product liability cases involving furniture raise a number of common issues. Litigants and counsel need to analyze these issues in light of the laws of the state in which the suit is brought. These issues also bear pre-suit consideration by furniture manufacturers and retailers — in establishing a product safety program, designing

“Sellers may be liable when they exercise control over the design, manufacture or labeling of the product; or if they modified the product, had knowledge of the defect, or made separate misrepresentations about the product.”

and manufacturing the product, performing risk assessments, developing warnings and instructions, negotiating sales contracts, and monitoring post-sale product performance.

About The Authors: *Melissa R. Stull and George W. Soule are the founding partners of Soule & Stull LLC in Minneapolis. They defend manufacturers and retailers, and try product liability, personal injury, and commercial litigation cases in Minnesota and nationwide.*

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by Gordon Hecht

“When shoppers call your store, they begin to judge whether or not to include you in their shopping travels.”

Sure, I’ve been in our wonderful home furnishings industry for a long time, but I was not around 140 years ago when Alexander Graham Bell invented the telephone. I’m pretty sure that there weren’t any fancy ring tones or call waiting back then, so the first call went through fairly easily. Legend has it that the first words spoken were “Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you” was actually a call for help as Bell had spilled acid on his leg and was in pain.

If I were scripting that call today it would go something like this:

Bell: Mr. Watson, come here, I want to see you.

Watson: Thank you for calling! I want to see you also, how can I help you?

Bell: It seems that I have spilled some acid onto my leg.

Watson: Wow, that seems painful; tell me what kind of acid and I will bring you something to neutralize it and some new pants.

Bell: Thank you, I have another call coming in, can I put you on hold?

Okay, I might delete the last line. However, just like Bell and Watson, every day your business gets calls

from people needing your products to relieve their pain, and every day your service or sales teams end the call without a solution or invitation. Chances are good that you are including those 7 to 10 hyphenated digits that are your unique phone number in every paid advertisement with the goal of encouraging shoppers to call you. When those shoppers call, they begin to judge whether or not to include you in their shopping travels.

It all starts with your greeting. Your initial goal is to pick up that call within three rings. Few shoppers will ever wait beyond six rings when making a sales inquiry. Unless your store is named Mega-Furniture Mart, resist the urge to use automated answering. And triple dog shame on you if your caller has to “Press One for Sales”. Most of your shoppers are human, and they prefer a human voice when they call. Next, synchronize your greeting with your promotion. If you are the “Home of Next Day Delivery” or are advertising “60 months Free Financing” make that part of your greeting. While working for a large Mid-Atlantic retailer in the 1990’s our office team was rewarded for using the phone greeting “Thank you for calling XYZ Furniture, we are your Bassett Bedding Headquarters!”

After the greeting, it's time to LISTEN! Each shopper who calls you has a mission in making that call. It's usually a product or promotion inquiry, but doesn't always start that way. I'll bet that at some point in the past week you got a caller asking "What are your store hours?" or "When do you close tonight?" There is the slim option that they are checking your hours because they want to do an after-hours raid on your break room fridge, thus explaining the missing half of olive loaf and cheese sub that you left there. More likely, they want to visit your store-and probably other stores on your street. It's the golden opportunity to differentiate yourself from your vanilla box neighbor by simply asking a few questions. Start by giving your store hours, and do a quick follow up with one of these

questions:

- "Was there a special item that you were looking for?"
- "Did you have a question about our sale ad?"
- "Have you shopped/visited us before?"

The cool thing about these questions

is that shoppers are LESS RELUCTANT to answer them while on the phone compared to answering them in person. Perhaps it's the anonymity, or perhaps it's the surprise that you didn't just say, "We're here 10-8" and then hang up. I'll take it a step further and wager that very few CALLERS will slip into the "Just Looking" mode that we hear in the stores.

"Every day your business
gets calls from people needing your products to
relieve their pain, and every day your service or sales
teams end the call without a solution or invitation."

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"Hello Larry: I appreciate the opportunity to offer some feedback on our recent renovation event. The traffic was off the charts. At certain times during the event it felt similar to a BLACK FRIDAY event. A buying frenzy sort of atmosphere prevailed. The credibility of the renovation event was enhanced because major modifications were being performed during store hours. Furthermore, the event was sales driven...the staff had a great story to tell. Giving the customer a background as to what was going on at our store, and how that translated into savings for them, was a key to success. The custom preprints you prepared helped dramatically with advertising messages that were consistent with what the customer experienced once they arrived at the store."

Regards ... Gerard Ninow, Sales Manager

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OPPORTUNITY DOESN'T KNOCK IT RINGS!

Often your caller is asking about merchandise. Use that phone for a WIRE TRANSFER of ENTHUSIASM! Professionals will put a smile on their face and congratulate that caller for asking about their special item. They'll even go a step further and describe the selection of goods available. The concept is to let the caller know that your store has a wide variety of choices with varying options on size, color, availability and pricing. After gaining permission to ask a few discovery questions, such as who the item is for, and when they need it, you can narrow the choices and make it easier for the shopper to decide, once in the store. Imagine a conversation like this;

Store Personnel: Hi, thanks for calling Mega Mart, home of same day delivery!

Caller: Hi, how late are you open today?

Store Personnel: We're here from 9-7 pm every day! Is there a special item you are looking for?

Caller: Yes, I saw that you had queen size mattresses on sale for \$399, I was wondering if you have that available in King Size?

Store Personnel: Great Choice, we have that mattress and many more available in King Size-and ON SALE! We want to make sure that you get the right bed for you-can I ask you a couple of quick questions?

Caller: OK

Store Personnel: Is the bed for you and for everyday use?

Caller: No, actually I am giving it to my daughter who just got married.

Store Personnel: Congratulations to them. Wow! What a great gift! If your daughter was shopping, what kind of a bed do you think she would want?

Caller: She would love to have one of those fluffy pillow top mattresses, I guess.

Store Personnel: Our \$399 Queen Mattress does come in a plush style and in King Size too. It's a little bit more in King at \$599. I also have some really cool pillow top beds on sale, from about \$799. Would you be willing to extend your gift budget a bit.

Caller: I can go a little higher, but want to stay under \$1000, if possible.

Store Personnel: We have THREE great beds in King, all super comfy and all in your budget. Can you stop by today?

Caller: I can be there in about an hour.

Store Personnel: Great! My name is Charlene, ask for me when you come in. I'll show you those three beds first so I can save you time and money. And if you remind me, I'll be sure to put a great big bow on the mattress set when we deliver it!

It would be idealistic to think that EVERY incoming call will go like this. Years of retail experience has taught me that not every call is a happy call. However-properly designed, every TV, Radio, Newspaper, and web-based advertisement that you pay for is designed to invite sales call inquiries. Store owners and managers WIN

when they train and rehearse their office and sales teams to engage the customer to see that a ringing phone (or whatever sound they make these days) not as an intrusion on their day, but as a Wake-Up Bell of Opportunity.

"It's a golden opportunity to differentiate yourself. Start by giving your store hours, and do a quick follow up with one of these questions..."

About Gordon Hecht: Gordon Hecht is a Growth and Development Manager for National Bedding Company's America's Mattress stores, over 400 mostly locally owned and operated bedding stores across the country selling Serta-branded and America's Mattress-branded mattresses. He has been recognized for outstanding sales and management achievement with several organizations including Ashley Furniture HomeStores, Drexel-Heritage, RB Furniture, Reliable Stores, and Sofa Express. He has served as Store Manager, Multi-unit manager and National Director of Sales.

He is based in Columbus, OH and is married with one adult son. Questions and comments can be directed to him at ghecht@serta.com.



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BedFax	559-868-4187	info@bedfax.com	62	Maxwood	203-683-4895	info@maxwoodfurniture.com	15
Furniture Library	336-883-4011	info@furniturelibrary.com	12	Mega Group USA	888-332-3344	jims@megagroupusa.com	85
Bramble	608-897-2281	jack@brambleco.com	3	Mega Motion	800-800-8586	dvalkanoff@pridemobility.com	9
Broyhill Furniture	336-888-4900	Laura.Holland@heritagehome.com	57	Mexico Int'l Furn. Mkt	+ 52(33)3343 3400	expos@afamjal.com.mx	97
Canadel	819-228-8471	CanadelFurniture@comcast.net	55	MOE'S Home	604-688-0633	alicia@moeshome.com	51
Canadian Furniture Show	514-866-3631	info@tchfm.com	87-92	Momeni	201-549-7220	reza@momeni.com	81
Capel Rugs	800-382-6574	CCapel@capel.net	47	Morry Dickter	1-800-521-9935	mdaassoc@aol.com	96
CordaRoy's	352-332-1837	steve@cordaroy.com	49	Myriad Software	800-676-4243	sales@myriadsoftware.com	67
Cory Home Delivery	201-795-1000	patrickcory@corycompanies.com	101	Nationwide Furniture	336-722-4681	www.nationwidegroup.org	75
Country View Woodwkg.	330-674-1390	rmiller@cvwld.com	79	Nourison	201-368-6900	Giovanni.Marra@nourison.com	21
Custom Design Software	800-884-0806	jerryk@customdesignsoftware.net	119	Nouveau Concept	800-465-0716	info@nouveauconcept.com	60
Dimplex	519-667-7026	jbradley@dimplex.com	19	Ohio Hardwood Furn.	877-643-8824	ohiohardwoodfurnituremarket.com	72
Donco Trading Company	800-934-3881	don@doncotradingco.com	23	Omnia Leather	909-393-4400	anthony@omnialeather.com	4-5
Eclipse	800-233-7467	BeddingIndustries@gmail.com	68-69	Pearson	800-327-6944	Laura.Holland@heritagehome.com	52
Elite Leather	909.548.8600	ggalarado@eliteleather.com	53	PROFITsystems	866-325-0015	info@profitsystems.com	43
Elran	800-361-6546	erica@elran.com	85	PureCare	800-758-8563	sbergman07@gmail.com	61
Fashion Bed Group	800-876-2641	http://fashionbedgroup.com/contact.asp	11	RM Innovations	888-488-9517	www.rminno.com	36-37
Furniture Hall of Fame	336.882.5900	kmcneill@furniturehalloffame.com	125	Sears Hometown Store	847-286-1863	www.OwnASearsStore.com	33
Furniture Of America	866-923-8500	rockyy.ca@foagroup.com	25	Service Lamp	800-222-5267	jeana@servicelamp.com	113
Furniture Wizard	619-869-7200	marty@furniturewizard.com	126-127	Smith Business Systems	866-871-3999	smoore@smithbsi.com	76-77
Genesis Software	509-536-4739	crystal@_@genesissadvantage.com	111	STORIS	888-478-6747	sales@storis.com	13, 83, 106-107
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HPMA	336-869-1000	www.highpointmarket.org	65	Tayse Rugs	770-769-4215	laila@tayse.com	81
IMC	336-884-1884	imcenters.com/highpointmarket	122-123	TD Retail Card Services	866-729-7072 ext 3603	TDRCS.com/furnitureworld	27
IRG	860-651-4447	mbannon@irrug.com	45	TEMPOE	844-863-2948	www.tempoe.com/retailer	39
Isuzu	866-441-9638	www.isuzucv.com	Inside Back Cover	Tidewater Finance	866-785-0235	tcsmarketing@twcs.com	73
Jaipur Home	479-273-1525	nsoni@jaipurllc.com	35	Trax	888-534-1253 dave@traxsales.com	dave@traxsales.com	117
Jaipur Rugs	404-351-2360	info@jaipurrugs.com	56	TruckSkin	877-866-7546	joe@truckskin.com	98
KAS Oriental Rugs	732-545-1900	hari@kasrugs.com	50	UltraSales	303-530-5366	lmullins@ultrasales.com	121
Klaussner	888-732-5948	lburke@klaussner.com	17	Whittier Wood Furniture	800-653-3336	barofskc@whittierwood.com	41

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