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furniture WORLD



Color & Design That Sells
Better Bedding: Closing The Sale
Showroom Outdoor WOW!
Retail Success: BoConcept
Seven Magic Sales Manager Traits

the big digital/print divide

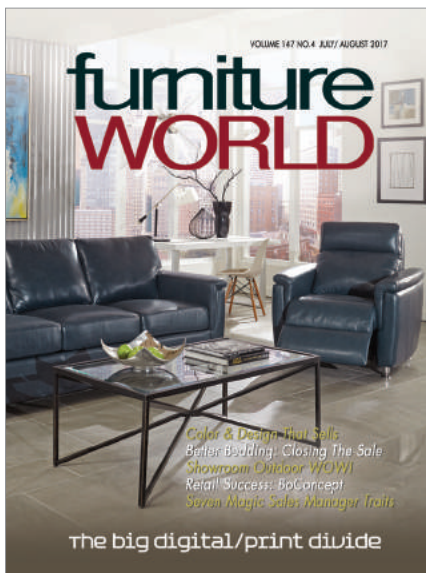
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COVER: Pictured is a selection from Omnia Leather's new, fast moving program, "Stationary and Power Solutions" by Omnia Leather. Retailers can build power motion or stationary upholstery in just a few easy steps. The Gallery requires only a minimal square footage commitment. All Omnia products are proudly made in America. See more about Omnia on pages 4-5 in this issue, or visit <http://www.omnialeather.com>.

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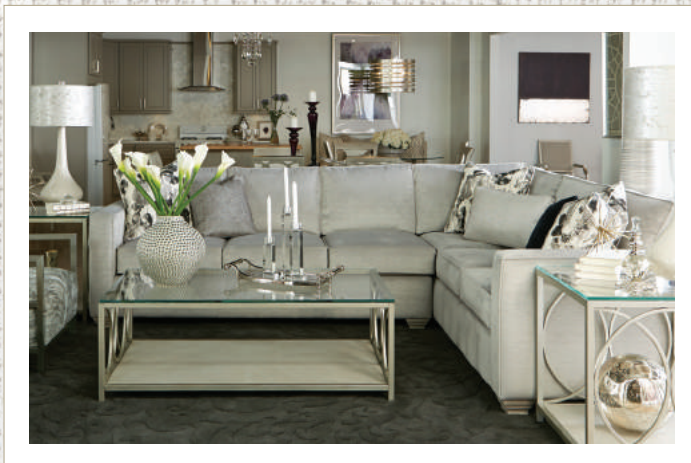


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Advertising That Clicks!

In this edition of Furniture World, our Point/Counterpoint duo, Bill Napier and Ed Tashjian, debate the efficacy of print vs. digital.

It's my view that whether you agree with Bill or Ed, it's prudent to focus on the importance of *making the right advertising impression*, rather than merely *counting impressions*.

In her book "Origins: How the Nine Months Before Birth Shape the Rest of Our Lives", Annie Murphy Paul writes about the importance of early messaging. Citing research on human gestation, she finds that conditions such as a mother's physical condition, diet, and auditory cues prompt fetuses to adapt their physiology, preparing them physically and mentally for likely conditions they will encounter after birth.

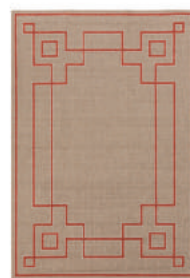
The difficulty with this, Paul suggests, "comes when pregnant women are, in a sense, unreliable narrators." If a newborn encounters an environment that doesn't meet his or her adaptive expectations, the chances for a long and healthy life decrease. Parents, therefore, who don't consider how circumstances over the nine formative months may shape an entire life, do so at some risk.

Similarly, furniture marketers risk losing business when they underestimate the importance of reaching out earlier to potential customers. Forming expectations for future shopping experiences in this way can jump-start many long and healthy customer-store relationships.

- **Consider early intervention:** Remember that the universe of potential customers who are not yet actively looking for your products and services is large. Don't underestimate the effect that early brand-focused messaging can have to establish positive expectations for your business, paving the way for increased traffic and sales.
- **Don't be an unreliable narrator.** New shoppers expect that their experiences with your brand at every retail touch point will align perfectly with the expectations created by your brand messaging. Don't disappoint.

Note: There's a lot of practical information in this issue of Furniture World about how to align customer expectations with retail reality, so please read on! Also check out Annie Murphy Paul's TED talk at <http://bit.ly/2tMtFmW>.

Russell Bienenstock
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✓ digital vs. print

POINT-COUNTERPOINT

How much is too much digital?

by Bill Napier & Ed Tashjian

Bill thinks there is too much hype about digital-only retail marketing. Ed takes a more nuanced view.

Editor's Note: Here's more from Furniture World's point/counterpoint duo, Bill Napier and Ed Tashjian. This is their third installment, having previously debated celebrity licensing and the millennial myth.

Point: Bill Napier

Are you buying into all the hype about only using digital marketing to promote your retail store? I'm not. I'll write and you decide.

All I ever hear about is Snapchat this, Facebook that, Instagram wherever, WhatsApp, Twitter me twit! You have to market here, there and everywhere on these digital platforms. Those of you who reach out in a small or big way using these platforms know what I mean.

Let me be upfront. I'm not saying all digital inbound marketing is bad, I'm just saying if that's all you're spending your money on, you're missing more than 30 to 70 percent of your market!

The other thing you hear is that traditional media, such as newspapers, mail in the mailbox, TV, etc., is dead. Well, I did some research. My conclusion is that I'm not buying this assertion either. Here's why:

First off, who are you marketing to on all these digital platforms? Generation Z, Millennials, Baby Boomers.

Second, with so many of these platforms, who has time to keep up with them all? I sure don't think it's people who work for a living, unless they're scamming their employers.

Have you ever heard of AdBlocker+? Yep, they block Ads. How about Ghostery? Ghostery detects and blocks tracking technologies to speed up page-loads, eliminate clutter, and protect your data. These platforms are very popular, and there's a good chance your ads aren't even seen!

AdBlocker is HUGE. I use it plus Ghostery, and it looks like a ton of those people you are targeting do too! The majority of ad block-

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"I'm frustrated because

I hear people who really know nothing about consumer marketing tell retailers how they should spend their money."

ers target banner ads and pop-up ads, and many block native and search ads as well. Some completely remove all advertising from a page while others focus on ads that compromise privacy by blocking tracking codes. Are you starting to catch my drift here?

I'm frustrated because I hear people who really know nothing about consumer marketing, tell retailers how they should spend their money. They have NO CLUE because they didn't do their due diligence. This causes many small and medium retailers to enter a fad zone of app plethora, blindly wasting their precious time and marketing funds.

OK, I'll get some blow-back here because someone will chime in and say that Facebook works for them. I bet it can, for a while, but let me tell you how I and 40 percent of other Facebook users (see the chart below) deal with retailers that clutter their news feeds. We hide them. It's bye-bye and they are gone forever!

So, before you waste your money on the next FAD, consider some of these tried and true marketing mediums that still work.

Direct Mail - This is the stuff delivered to your mailbox such as inserts and post cards. Direct mail has a household response rate

of 3.7%. Compare that to these smaller number engagements for digital:

- .2% mobile,
- .1% email,
- .1% social media,
- .02% Internet display

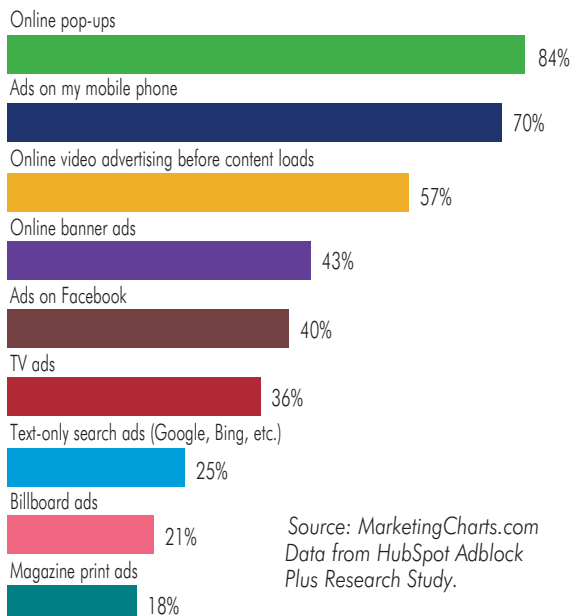
Notice that there's a DOT before the percentage number, not looking so hot, is it? And, direct mail looks even better when you consider that women, who have huge purchasing power, love to receive print in the mail. Studies show that mail is picked up by the same person 91% of the time and 81% of these people are women. Women make more than 80% of all purchasing decisions, and more than 85% of all household purchases.

Here are some other useful facts:

- 92% of shoppers say they prefer direct mail/ads in the mailbox for making purchasing decisions. 70% are curious to find out what's in their mailbox.
- 77% of people sort through their physical mail as soon as they get it (Epsilon)
- 74% always or sometimes notice advertising in direct mail.
- 42 percent of recipients read or scan mail pieces.
- 51% prefer companies to use a combination of mail and email when communicating with them.

"Then the next thing you hear is; traditional media, print in the mailbox, TV, etc., is dead. I did some research. And I'm not buying it either."

Most Disliked Ad Types



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POINT-COUNTERPOINT

- 23% bought or ordered something as a result of receiving direct mail in the last 12 months.
- Median household ROI for direct mail/newspaper in the mailbox is 18-20%.

And, if you're still hooked on reaching Millennials after reading Ed Tashjian's and my Point/Counterpoint article in the March/April 2017 issue of Furniture World (www.furninfo.com/Authors/Bill_Napier/42), they like it too! Thirty-six percent of people under 30 look forward to checking the mail each day.

Even the Wall Street Journal has piped in on this topic, writing that, "the good news is 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."

Summary

Print is not dead. If you are not using it as part of your marketing integration to attract, educate and engage your audience, your business will probably become pedestrian, if it hasn't already!

Print is still one of the main influencers when it comes to consumer purchase decisions.

The thing with digital ads is they

are fleeting. They're there one second and gone the next. But newspapers have real lasting power and tend to stick around in consumers' homes longer than most other media. This means people spend more time interacting with inserts, browsing deals and offers.

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.

In case you are wondering at this point, I don't sell print, direct mail, or traditional media of any kind. So, why am I writing this?

I just get really irritated when so called marketers, tell people how to market their stores' STUFF without having a clue about how furniture shoppers engage.

There are too many small and medium sized retailers struggling, but all the Big Retailers still use print in their mix. Although just a few years ago smaller retailers used too much print, the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. It is still a powerful way to drive traffic.

Counterpoint Ed Tashjian

Once again Bill makes some

excellent points, but little in life or marketing is "all or nothing." Read any marketing director job description and they demand experience and competence in Display, Re-targeting, SEO/SEM, Content, Email, Affiliates, Social, Mobile. If you are a marketing executive, you are doing yourself a disservice (and making yourself unemployable) if you do not explore these as well as the traditional media.

Much has changed in terms of tools and tactics over my marketing career. What has not changed is the strategic goal of marketing: Profitably growing revenue by delivering value from your customer's perspective, and equally important, capturing some of that value for your company. The profit

"Response rates can be misleading. What Bill neglects to mention in his analysis is the cost per inquiry. The response rate may be lower, but the cost is far lower."



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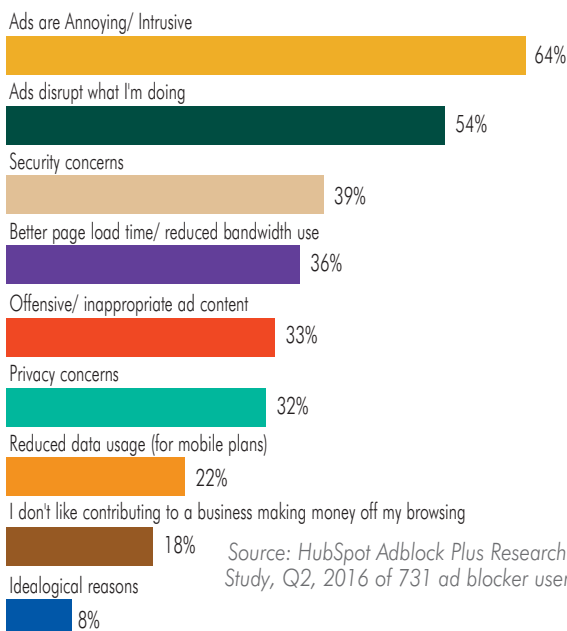
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COUNTERPOINT - ED

Why Do You Use An Ad Blocker?



Source: HubSpot Adblock Plus Research Study, Q2, 2016 of 731 ad blocker users.

"Although just a few years ago smaller retailers used too much print, the pendulum has swung too far in the opposite direction. Print is still a powerful way to drive traffic."

part means spending less money to acquire customers than you generate in operating income over the lifetime of that customer.

All great marketing begins with differentiation and the ability to tell your story. It's not enough to have great products. Your marketing must speak a verbally and visually sophisticated language that connects with consumers emotionally, explaining why your products are different and better. The role of marketing has always been to make your brand stand out and be noticed. The media you choose are the ones that can explain

that positioning and cost-effectively communicate that message with clarity, brevity, consistency and passion in traditional media, new media and at the point of sale. Positioning starts with defining what makes your brand unique and special and comparing it to an existing frame of reference, thereby demonstrating your superiority. Choosing a "category" you can own, and positioning yourself to be the most preferred in that category is what gives you a sustainable competitive advantage.

I wholeheartedly agree that print advertising and direct mail can be

effective, especially in the home furnishings category. I would argue that newspapers do not have much longevity, but they do have urgency, and when a prospect is looking for a sale, boomers at least are accustomed to looking in the newspaper. Obviously, it's working because the best retailers continue to use it.

I'm particularly fond of magazine advertising in shelter books for home furnishings. I like them because of their context and lifestyle targeting. When someone sits down to read a shelter book, they are in a home furnishing's

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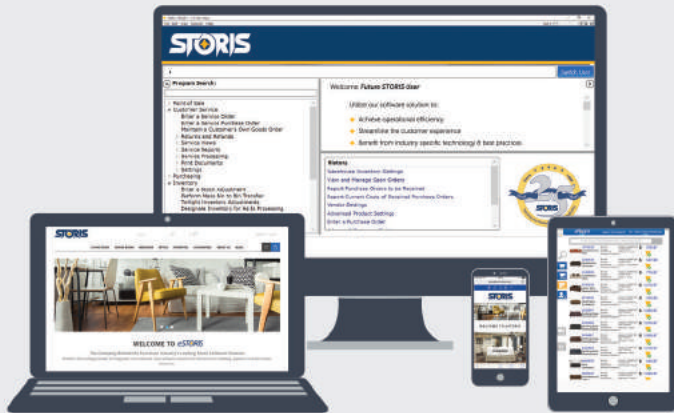
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"The normal rules of marketing don't always apply to home furnishings. That's why when consumer packaged goods companies takeover furniture companies, they typically fail."

state of mind. That is the particular weakness of digital on a non-home furnishings platform. It is too easy to ignore. If we are honest with ourselves, all advertising is easy to ignore.

In spite of very low response rates, digital advertising can be very effective in the right context. Response rates can be misleading. What Bill neglects to mention in his analysis is the cost per inquiry. The response rate maybe lower, but the cost is far lower. Digital allows you to reach more people on more platforms. This is especially helpful for prospecting and identifying new customers.

The other area where digital advertising works is for online transactions. That's because it gives shoppers a quick and efficient way to buy. One of the biggest problems in selling home furnishings is that the trail of breadcrumbs is long, with plenty of pitfalls along the way. For example, the traditional way of advertising requires a four-step trail.

Traditional Advertising Trail

1. The target customer of a home furnishings retailer receives a direct mail postcard in their mailbox.

2. It is well targeted and they are in fact interested, but they can't get to the store right away.

3. When they do get to the store, they discover the item isn't in stock, or are served by an inexperienced salesperson who scares them off.

4. Or, they meet an experienced salesperson, who knows he or she only gets paid when the item ships and tries to sell what's in stock, not what is advertised.

This is why the normal rules of marketing don't always apply to home furnishings, and why when consumer packaged goods companies take over furniture companies (thinking they can make a killing), they typically fail. While average sale amounts and gross margin dollars are high, it is a very difficult business that requires shrewd retailing to be successful. The ones that are most successful have what marketers call "lifetime value capture." Through great customer service, they sell the same customer over and over, amortizing the cost of acquiring that customer over many years.

No tactic is a panacea. Just as any handyman has many tools in his box, so the effective marketer has many tactics and knows when

and how to use them. If the only tool you have is a hammer, everything starts to look like a nail. Both new and traditional forms of media are important.

About Bill Napier: Bill Napier is Managing Partner of Napier Marketing Group. He has been the chief marketing officer of several small, medium and large companies throughout his career, most notably Ashley Furniture Industries.

Bill is also a featured writer and speaker in the retail industry. His passion is to help retail brands & brick mortar retailers grow their businesses by creating, guiding and deploying successful marketing B2B/B2C solutions integrating traditional marketing with the web/social media. He has demonstrated this with his FREE website www.social4retail.com with hundreds of articles and "how-to" strategies for retailers and brands. Bill can be reached at: billnapier@napiermkt.com or 612-217-1297.

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BoConcept

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

"The new, Manhattan flagship store will set the stage for USA expansion of the 300 store global furniture franchise."

If you happen to find yourself in the vicinity of the trendy, fast-paced shopping district of Madison Avenue, New York City, you'll discover the gleaming, new flagship corporate store of BoConcept. The Danish-founded global retail furniture franchise, with nearly 300 locations across 60 countries, is in the midst of an aggressive push to gain new market share across the United States. The corporation is already established in Boston, Los Angeles, Miami, Seattle and San Francisco.

Madison Avenue will dramatically showcase BoConcept's specialized home and office high-impact designs. Conceptualized by world-renowned industry royals like Oki Sato and Karim Rashid, styling is upscale, urban-minded and decidedly unique.

Corporate leaders are CEO Torben Paulin, CFO Morten Rose-Nielsen and COO Troels Dyrup Petersen. The previous CFO, Hans Barslund, retired this spring. His son is now about to take over the Miami franchise, Steen Knigge, Director of U.S. Marketing, told us. "It's all family!"

Steen invites you to visit and see "The core of our brand, statement

pieces that elevate modern design potential. Presenting our progressive designs in the heart of one of the world's fashion centers puts us on a larger stage than ever before!"

He emphasized, "The very first 'unique' thing about the Madison store is that it will start as a corporate store. We are not changing our strategy of being franchisee-based. However, as we are ending our 14-year long relationship with our current New York City franchisee (Niki and Shaokao Cheng) on August 31 this year, we want to make sure we have uninterrupted presence in Manhattan. Another unique part of the store is that we will work on our new merchandising concept for potential roll-out across the chain. It will give us first-hand knowledge of

"More than a franchise, BoConcept represents a mindset for modern and sophisticated living elements."

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validity, a level of control we do not normally have in the U.S. market.

"And, finally, it serves as our ground zero for the upcoming expansion, a store where we will present BoConcept to new franchisees."

The name, BoConcept? "It's derived from the Danish word 'bo' which means 'living' or 'to live'... the 'Living Concept', the concept of living. Basically, it describes the holistic approach BoConcept takes to creating furniture for every room in the house, while still remaining

true to the Danish heritage."

But let's go back six decades to the more contemplative, slower-paced environment of a carpentry school in the town of Aarhus, Denmark. Two young students, Jens Aerthoj and Tage Molholm, both cabinet makers with some experience under their belts, were seeking additional training in drawing, construction, calculation, book keeping and economics. They became friends. After graduation, Tage worked in a furniture factory and Jens took part in Denmark's

national service program. But while Jens was serving in the military, his rapidly developing family and many friends urgently needed to furnish their homes. So he made a bold decision. When once again a private citizen, he bought his former masters' workshop in Herning, a picturesque town four hours by train

Pictured below is BoConcept's store in Punta del Este, Uruguay. Latin America is BoConcept's fastest growing market, with the Uruguay franchisee already planning store number four in Paraguay, and store number five in Argentina.





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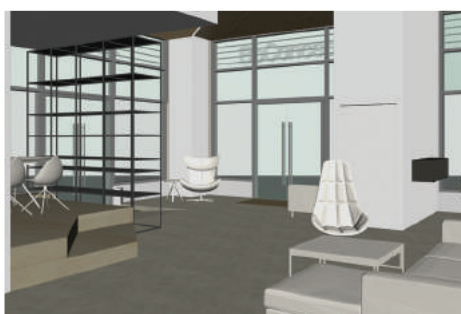
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Torben Paulin, BoConcept's CEO, plus renderings of the interior of the new Manhattan flagship store.



from Copenhagen.

When we think of Denmark, what does our mind conjure up? Hans Christian Andersen, Copenhagen's little mermaid, the scintillating Northern Lights, Elsinore and Hamlet. And, of course, the genius of the multi-faceted sculptor and designer George Jensen. Beauty and creativity abound in Denmark. With such environmental and artistic inspiration and his own good common sense, Jens, now a master cabinet maker, had flexed his innovative muscles back at carpentry school and designed a well-conceived desk, and a dining table with six chairs. Unfortunately, none sold particularly well. And, on top of that, Jens was lonely, it was dreary working by himself. He thought of his school friend, Tage, and invited him to visit Herning one hot summer day. It was 1952, the beginning of it all.

Tage was immediately interested and a partnership was formed,

the Aertthoj-Jensen & Molholm Furniture Factory. Steen Knigge continues the story: "Armed with their tools, saw, plane, try square and chisel, the two men could make any kind of furniture. But they decided they didn't want to. Machines were becoming more common and precise. Their idea was to let the machines do all the hard work, leaving the cabinet makers to focus on the important details.

"Jens was dedicated to and skilled in furniture design, and Tage was experienced in industrial furniture production. They both agreed that mass production and industrialization was the way forward. This would allow them to keep prices down without compromising quality, and make well designed furniture affordable to a much wider audience. Many furniture factories had failed to make this transition successfully. But for the Aertthoj-Jensen & Molholm

Furniture Factory, the new ideas and vision made complete sense.

"Tage Molholm managed the assembly and painting departments. The factory employed a staff of 15. By the late 1950s, there was no room for further extensions on their industrial site. But production demanded increasing space. They were using more and more machines, a milling cutter, circular

"Our customers' income levels tend to be \$100,000+, with many having household incomes of over \$250,000."



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"Jens, now a master cabinet maker, had flexed his innovative muscles back at carpentry school and designed a well-conceived desk and a dining table with six chairs. Unfortunately, none sold particularly well."

saw, band saw and the first veneering press in the Herning area. And, vitally important, there was also a growing pool of customers who wanted more furniture!"

The '50s, was the era of the exciting Scandinavian furniture design revolution and the concept rapidly surged globally. The clean lines, the attention to the maxim, "Form follows function", captured imaginations. The fledgling company produced dining room furniture, then added cabinets and wall systems. By 1970 the employee roster had doubled and the product lines included beds, wall systems and bookcases. They became a limit-

ed company, A/S AEJM MOBILER. In 1979, the first flexible furniture system in Denmark appeared and the concept of interaction with customers began to evolve, "They could become their own bookshelf designers".

The introduction to the Copenhagen Stock Exchange in 1984 also marked the birth of the Capri wall system, the first of the "knock-downs" and, in the factory, more CNC controlled machines were utilized to give designers "a freer hand". Four years later chests of drawers and children's furniture were introduced.

On the edge of the Millennium

the by now four production facilities in Denmark merged and, that same year, upholstery ("modular, flexible, youthful!") was added to the line. By 2002, a new strategy emerged. The company moved dramatically to a focus on retail.

To ensure "the best shopping experience" for customers, 2004 marked "the founding of BoConcept University, created to train and educate sales consultants from all over the world in service and interior design".

But a glitch occurred in 2008... the worldwide financial crisis. "After years of growth, decreasing sales forced BoConcept to optimize



From left: Lasse Aerthoej-Jensen, Mogens Aerthoej-Jensen and Jens Aerthoej-Jensen.

Lasse owns the current Los Angeles franchise, Mogens is the Director of IT, and Jens is co-founder of the original company. Jens was the designer, product developer and CEO for many years.



Cabinet no 26, a best-seller from 1960. Also pictured is the first BoConcept store located in BelleEpine France in 1983.



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"We span the age spectrum, with a sweet-spot at 29-45. Albeit we have a good following amongst empty-nesters who are downsizing their houses."

and fine-tune the whole organization." In the midst of reorganization, interior design services were introduced, reaching out to the consumer by booking home visits, providing them with design advice, offering 3D drawings and style tips.

Four years later, in spite of the international crisis, growth continued. The Shanghai Distribution Center was added "to help the expansion strategy in Asia". And, on-line shopping was "now open for customers on websites in select countries".

In its 60th Anniversary year, BoConcept had more than 260 stores worldwide. The corporate structure there was undergoing a transition. "The evolution from wholesale to retail outreach," Steen explained, began when "There

was enough furniture to set up inspiring shop-in-shops in existing furniture stores. Then, in 1993, the first brand store was opened in Paris." And the French loved Danish design. It was then that the name BoConcept appeared.

"Just over a year later, there were seven BoConcept Brand Stores in France, the U.S.A. and China." Most stores were opened as franchises from the beginning, although the first two stores in France were directly owned. "The first goal was to establish 75 Brand Stores and, during this phase, several countries saw rapid growth, for example, Japan, with five stores in just two years."

In response to this came a decision to restructure in 1999. Mogens Aerthoj spearheaded a joint IT plat-

form and combined activities to market four existing brands, Club 8, BoConcept, Zenia House and Dencon.

"In the meantime," Steen told us, "the development and growth of BoConcept Brand Stores continued. In 1999, the company established a Danish upholstered furniture factory to handle production of sofas and upholstered chairs." Now, in BoConcept Brand Stores, "Customers could purchase sofas for lounge rooms ranging in size from tiny to huge. They could also choose whether to cover their sofas in leather or fabric in precisely the colors they dreamt of."

Amalgamation and streamlining took place under the definitive slogan, "One Company – One Brand", this in 2002. "CEO Viggo



BoConcept store in Bellevue, WA



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"We refresh our studios/stores

twice a year, a smaller change after our annual January Design sale, and a more complete change when we launch our new collection in September/October each year."

Molholm made the biggest strategic decision since the day his father and his father's friend, Tage Molholm and Jens Aerthoj, founded the company." In the future the company would be retail-driven, focusing on one brand. The goal was that BoConcept rise to become the number one interior design brand worldwide.

The company made a big investment to support the strategy. That investment was their European Distribution Centre at a cost of more than DKK 100 million. The Center virtually ran itself, ensuring the efficient delivery of products to the company's then 110 brand stores.

To emphasize their focus on retail, when their last wholesale customers disappeared in 2006, names were changed. Said Steen, "The name of the Group's operating company was changed to BoConcept A/S and the public listed company to BoConcept Holding A/S. From this

point on BoConcept design could only be purchased in BoConcept Brand Stores and Studios. In that same year, BoConcept relocated its upholstered furniture production to the Baltics, to optimize efficiency.

"Increased growth in Asia was also supported by the establishment of upholstered furniture production in China. Both factories are still managed by Danes with years of experience at Bo Concept. The outsourcing strategy was clear, the focus was on the customer. Production was, therefore, located where the best price and quality could be achieved as close to customers as possible.

"In stores, accessories were

Pictured above is a window box in the Los Angeles store featuring a new outdoor concept. Also, the contemporary styled Ottawa sofa from Karim Rashid and a display featuring the Monza table and Adelaide chairs.

added to furniture collections so customers could buy all the furnishings for their homes. Accessories at BoConcept are a collection of Danish designed artistic household items sourced from all over the world, often from small suppliers with specialized skills in crafts like knitting and beadwork. Strict quality requirements naturally serve as the foundation for these partner-

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Above, two examples from the communication platform BoConcept will introduce in September 2017 to support the launch of their Adelaide Living Collection. Tag line reads, "Make The Most Out Of Your Space".

ships."

Steen continued, "Today, collection year 2018, we work with 10 'must have' studios that are carefully selected based on purchase intention, sales and design. If a store is not large enough to have 10 'must have' studios, our Visual Merchandising team works with the store Visual Merchandiser to 'construct' the correct store look. We refresh our studios/stores twice a year, a smaller change after our annual January Design sale and a more complete change when we launch our new collection in September/October. The latter is done at our annual global confer-

"Generally speaking, assembly of furniture is included in the price.

Yes, it can be delivered 'flat-pack' and will be done so if delivered out-of-state. "

ence held at Herning, Denmark. Here, all franchisees, visual merchandisers and many sales associates meet for three days of inspiration, information and showroom planning.

"It should be mentioned that we do not have any 'Inspiration Stores' (smaller stores) in North America. But, in general, Inspiration Stores are placed at a high-street location to create awareness and to serve as a 'feeder' for the Brand store, likely located some distance away. In some countries, like Hong Kong, all stores are Inspiration Stores, mostly a function of smaller retail spaces and very high rent.

"There are some differences between the stores geographically. For example, in the North-East of the United States we sell more fabric, a darker color palette and more wood. In Florida we sell more white/light leather and metal/glass. These differences are captured during our showroom planning."

We asked Steen to describe to us the annual global conference in Denmark, the BoConcept Inspiration Camp. "The get-together is held at headquarters at Herning. Attendees are all owners from across the world, prospective franchisees, vendors, and Bo-Concept corporate staff again from across the world. As well as

all store visual merchandisers and several top sales associates.

"Here the upcoming collection is presented as are future strategies within marketing, sales, IT, etc. All store showroom planning for the launch is done, as well as National Meetings for all countries.

"The three days culminate with a Party which doubles as an annual award show.

"The party is incredibly well organized, with food, drinks, entertainment, etc., but it's done in a way that doesn't scream 'production', but rather screams 'let's have a great time regardless of where you're from or what you work with'. There are 'dance-offs', various traditions in dancing, it's all part of it. It's never a 'business talk with a glass in your hand' atmosphere. It is such a great time that the festivities always go way past closing time and into morning. And it's a happy mix of owners, staff, corporate, young and old, all dancing, partying and having fun together!

"The CEO and management is as much a part of the partying as are the owners and staff from across the world. Past parties are ALWAYS the first thing you talk and laugh about every time you meet a colleague from another place or country. It's the glue that keeps the BoConcept together.

"And, in fairness, while it's a great morale booster every year, it also helps to on-board new owners to the family – many times equally important."

In outreach, BoConcept boasts

MAKE THE MOST OUT OF YOUR SPACE | BOCONCEPT.COM

a customer-targeted newsletter that is probably one of the best in the industry. "The newsletters are created and edited out of our headquarters in Denmark. This is done two to three months before we initiate one of our campaigns. We have two writers who compile the newsletters and edit them according to the local market. They are designed specifically for the subscribers who have signed up on the U.S. website and those who have

entered a sweepstakes or contest.

"We started mailing out the newsletter in 2009. It was converted to a more convenient platform in 2014 in an effort to make strides towards a more comprehensive newsletter that covered specific activities, tips for how to handle challenges and more.

"The newsletter platform gives us metrics such as opening rate, bounce rate, click-through rate, best 'article' in newsletter, how

a click-through acts on the site (which other pages they visit, etc.), time of opening the newsletter and more. We are also doing split-tests on headlines, articles and offers – ultimately, optimizing for future newsletters.

"We localize them. Individual stores also sometimes take snippets from them, and create their own local newsletters. Finally, we develop newsletters for local stores which might be for upcoming events or

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RETAIL PROFILE



BoConcept, vintage photo and today's style.

special promotions."

We talked with Steen about the appeal of Scandinavian design, and the emotional/intellectual response it engenders. He responded, "It rests upon a desire to have less opulent, more functional and clean furniture. Also, the tendency for smaller dwellings makes Scandinavian Designs a perfect option since they are visually minimalist, uncluttered and crisp. The multi-functionality of Scandinavian design (dual purposes such as extendable tables, storage beds, coffee tables that turn into dining tables, etc.) is part of this, too."

BoConcept has achieved demographic identification, "We span the age spectrum, with a sweet-spot at 29-45. Albeit we have a good following amongst empty-nesters who are downsizing their houses.

"Our customers' income levels tend to be \$100,000+, with many having household incomes of over \$250,000. Of course, this has to do with price, quality, etc., as

well. Many younger people are on-board with BoConcept via smaller and entry-level priced furniture or accessories. Our customers tend to be college/Master/PhD educated with broad appeal in metro and urban areas."

We asked how they handled their external marketing. Said Steen, "We have not advertised a lot the last few years, something we are changing in the next six to 12 months. It should be mentioned that advertising is something the local store/franchisee is responsible for, obviously with guidance from my department. We are adding a Supplementary Fund this year, specifically earmarked for above-the-line advertising to create brand awareness and lift brand image. We as the franchisor will match the local store/stores efforts in this arena.

"Generally speaking, we focus on digital advertising (hyper-local behavioral), shelter magazines and outdoor. We did have a two year plus relationship with Danish actor

Mads Mikkelsen (known from the Hannibal TV series), Le Chiffre in James Bond, Star Wars Rogue Nation and others. We created three mini-films, between three and six minutes long, and used them to create a viral campaign. A new commercial (not Mads) will launch in September when we also launch our new collection. We are expecting to spend behind this commercial during the fall."

When we talked about targeted approach to Millennials and Henry's (High Earners, Not Rich Yet), he told us, "This is mostly done via digital advertising as well as social media, predominantly Facebook and Instagram."

In the area of service, Steen said that it has been "An important part of the strategy since the day the first BoConcept Brand Store was established, outstanding service to make BoConcept a unique shopping experience. In its efforts to achieve this goal, our Retail Operations organization develops systems to ensure the efficient operations."

"BoConcept focuses on

digital advertising (hyper-local behavioral), shelter magazines and outdoor."

As a vital component of service, "flexible delivery and assembly" is detailed on the BoConcept website. Generally speaking, assembly of furniture is included in the price. Yes, it can be delivered 'flat-pack' and that is how all out-of-state deliveries are done."

We asked how BoConcept "identifies" potential associates; on their website there is a statement, "Passion and persistence are

what move the people behind the BoConcept brand." Some clarification from Steen: "This depends on whether you look at BoConcept the franchisor or BoConcept the franchisee. For corporate, we have extensive personal testing, creating what we call a GARUDA profile, basically creating a personal profile based on a myriad of questions; you'll be A Result Seeker, An Integrator, A Baser, etc.

"We have recently hired a new Global Director for HR, renamed the department of People and Performance as it now encompasses both the HR part and the part formally known as BoConcept University (or BCU). New templates, strategies and guidelines for hiring are being rolled out in the next six to 12 months.

"As far as the franchisee goes, we support them with GARUDA



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"We've created three mini-films and used them to develop a viral campaign. A new commercial will launch in September when we initiate our new collection."

profile testing (where applicable), templates for hiring, manuals for interviewing, etc., in order to build the best team at their individual store. Sales Associates that are the most successful are ones who have a knack for the furniture industry and a high motivation for sales."

BoConcept's supply chain? "We manufacture all furniture ourselves so we can control the supply chain. However, we do buy fabrics and leathers, etc., from outside vendors that go through extensive vetting so they fulfill our Corporate Responsibility strategy as well as sustainability. Depending on location, we can ship from Denmark (all board furniture comes from there), Lithuania (upholstery) or China (upholstery).

"For retail operations, we assist stores with 'specialists' – being it retail sales, marketing, visual merchandising or coaching. We help analyze sales, space management,

showroom layout, etc., for each individual franchisee. Extensive best practice sharing across stores helps the individual franchisee.

"Finally, we work with an advisory board consisting of three key franchisees. We meet face-to-face four times a year and monthly via Skype to initiate, discuss and conclude on various strategic initiatives – subjects run the gamut! – which then will be rolled out across the chain. Each franchisee represents his/her geographical area. That way, the franchisee has a relatively large say in the strategic direction of the local BoConcept business."

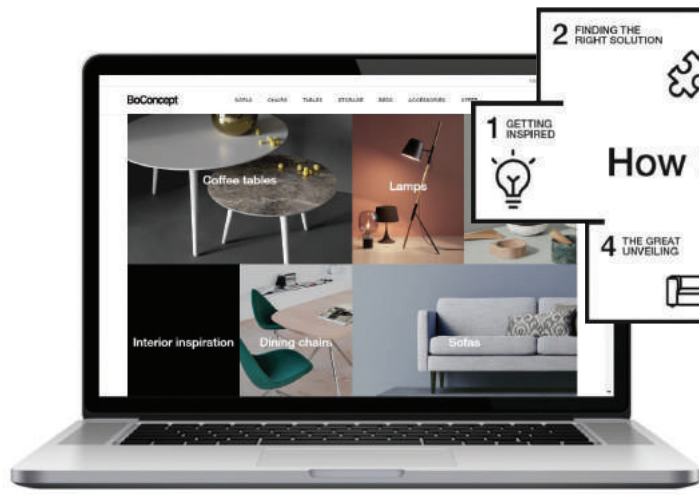
Steen has been with BoConcept since 2011 and has an extensive background in marketing, advertising and retail. Born in Denmark, he received his MBA in New Hampshire in 1989, moved to New York City in 2003 and is now a U.S. citizen.

"Madison Avenue will serve as our starting point for our upcoming

expansion. We are right now looking for new partners across the U.S., with Los Angeles, Atlanta, Chicago and New York as priority locations. Other markets such as San Diego, Austin, Houston, Dallas and Denver, are also key for us .

"BoConcept's strategic transformation consolidates our franchise model, reducing complexity and enhancing profitability. The efforts we have made to streamline operations are already paying off and we're eager to see its full potential achieved through our rapid U.S. growth plans.

"More than a franchise," Steen concluded, "BoConcept represents a mindset for modern and sophisticated living elements. Together with strong, motivated franchise partners, the future is bright as we achieve our goal of becoming the true global leader in modern furniture."



2 FINDING THE RIGHT SOLUTION

3 DESIGNING YOUR SPACE

1 GETTING INSPIRED

4 THE GREAT UNVEILING

5 MAKING IT HAPPEN

How it works

Featured on BoConcept's website is complete information on interior design services, charting how it works from start to finish plus a video case study detailing how the Kuwano family was helped to find "the perfect furnishings".



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STAY ON TREND

by Dixon Bartlett & Caroline Hipple, Norwalk Furniture

A vision and compelling story can only take you so far. You must also create a process that can be used to translate your ideas into great buying decisions. Here's how.

In the competitive world of home furnishings marketing, organizing merchandising efforts around trends and colors will help you to optimize your buying resources. It will also help you to create powerful and compelling stories on the visual display and merchandising sides of your retail business.

Our goal at Norwalk is to provide on-trend, beautiful and productive fabric and product collections which allow designers and retailers to create inspiring yet functional environments for their customers' homes. As a retailer, you should rise above the competition by also having a unique vision for your store that inspires customers to buy.

Great Vision Is Not Enough

A vision and a compelling story can only take you so far. You must also create a process that can be used to translate your ideas into buying decisions for the products you choose to display and sell. Robust financial analysis combined with a solid trend discernment process will allow you to do just that! With such a process in place you can engineer in risk so that you are

confident, that when you come to Market, you will buy from lines that offer colorful and up to the minute choices; plus make room for the counter point - price sensitive, affordable, neutral options.

A Simple 3-Step Process

A "Good, Better, Best" strategy can help you to make room for depth and breadth in both your product and fabric choices, from basic to inventive.

Step #1: Create an original working hypothesis: This step incorporates who you are as a retailer, and how you want your customers to view your brand and

"Prior to shopping the markets and meeting with the most talented resources, do your homework."

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"The magic funnel

becomes a central organizing principle at retail to manage both open to buys and beautiful displays with confidence."

the story that informs your brand.

It is important to do basic inventory planning based on sales data calculations of GMROI to get rid of slow moving items and identify best selling products and categories. But, this is not enough to effectively compete with the many high growth companies that are experts at telling powerful visual stories to create brand identities. Using the trend analysis process we call the "Magic Funnel" is an effective and organized way to find your competitive mojo.

Step #2: Use The Magic Funnel:

Every six months organize a "magic funnel" to create a buying plan that will define the coming season. This process combines both art and science. The art portion is the trend, color and design work. The science part consists of data analysis, including sales and gross margin calculations, sales by SKU, sales by collection, and sales by square foot of floor space. The goal of this ongoing analysis is to arrive at the

most powerful seasonal assortment of efficient and productive products. You can see which products, trends and colors are progressing or receding, trending up or down in sales. Gross margin contribution per square foot is the most critical measurement. How do you create layers of product that together sell the fastest with the highest margin? That is the goal!

Create a "good, better, best" assortment to make that happen. The GOOD allows you to have products that are compelling from a price position. The BETTER represents the bulk of what you sell and profit from. The BEST is a category that allows you to experiment with goods that are more expensive or adventurous from a design standpoint. By including adventurous products in your mix, you engineer in risk that helps your assortment stay fresh, interesting and relevant to your target customers.

At Norwalk, we review at least 3000 fabrics to get down to an

edited number of 125. So, how do we possibly refine the number from 3,000 to 125? Since you probably face a similar challenge when shopping lines and collections, how can you use this process to make the best buying choices for your stores?

- Prior to shopping at furniture shows and meeting with talented resources, do your homework. Shop the retail capitals of the world, attend the leading trade shows, and subscribe to trend and color services. All this will give you visual cues that inform your working hypothesis.
- Review social media, shelter magazines, catalogs and movies. Look at what trending retailers are doing, and notice set designs on popular television programs. Listen for cues your customers are receiving about colors and themes.
- Combine all this imagery in a story board format, a "Magic

At right is the story board Norwalk used to create it's newest collections for summer 2017. Retailers can use a similar "magic funnel" process to identify leading trends that inform display and inventory purchasing decisions.





Photo Credit: Louisa & Doris, Company C for Norwalk

"The counter trend to the ubiquitous linen neutrals may take the form of vivid blues, greens, oranges, fuchsias and yellows."

Funnel" that will hopefully result in strong ideas to inform your product purchases.

- Meet with your teams in a consistent space, a "war room" or "play room" designated for assortment planning meetings. Hold quarterly assortment planning meetings, where the sales and productivity of each category and associated, coordinated floor vignettes are analyzed. It's good to make this room as visu-

al as it can be. Display images of products, vignettes and display zones.

- The best assortments are realized when retailers bring their financial and creative teams together in a regular, organized process to plan seasonal buys. Have your buyers speak to your financial and creative teams about the sales and gross margin contributions of their respective categories. Identify the best performers and the worst. Make it your mantra to celebrate the best, adjust the middle and eliminate the worst. Also, it can be helpful to have an outside TREND advisor lead the creative team to help determine the next seasons trends by color and theme. Having your buyers present helps insure that the moods and styles of your selections remain consistent across product categories. Having the financial folks present helps give your creative people an appreciation for the success of a good better

best assortment plan. When you hold these meetings monthly or quarterly, it creates excitement and anticipation, energizing the whole team. Each participant should be assigned a topic to present to build their analytic and presentation skills.

Step #3: Shop! One outcome of these meetings will be the development of a market shopping plan that identifies strengths you can continue to build on, weaknesses that need to be corrected, and products to replace.

To organize your shopping, each buying category should have an inspiration book filled with product images to find, colors/trends/textures to include, and target manufacturers to shop. The best shopping plans include a notebook listing SKUs to replace and suggestions for vignettes or displays to create. Fabric swatches, Pantone chips, materials, etc., will be useful as well. Breaking up the shopping by category; accessories,



casegoods, upholstery, rugs, etc. This will help to focus your market shopping, be more efficient and result in a tighter assortment.

Once at market, look for the sweet spot where your working hypothesis (Step #1) and Magic Funnel work (Step #2) meet the work of the talented designers, manufacturers and thought leaders in our industry. When your vision merges with theirs, you will know that you have found the most marketable products, colors and trends that will work for your clients.

This process can be adapted for either retail or manufacturing businesses. For retail it becomes a central organizing principle to manage both "open to buys" and beautiful displays with confidence.

Trends For Summer Buying

So what's up for spring and summer 2017 for our industry? Based on our research, we believe that there is both a trend and a counter trend retailers should look at... from ubiquitous neutrals to bold and bright layers of color.

1. There is a strong trend direction that will bring natural colors inspired by the Earth into the home. Giving these neutral hues

an edge and energy, is the juxtaposition of charcoal and ebony. While still neutral, sand, vicuña and caramel colors lend a warmer tone, which allow them to pair perfectly with burnished brass and golden hues. With patterns that are decidedly tribal and ethnic in their inspiration, look for geometric Kuba patterns and mud cloths as well as raffia weaves and animal skin patterns.

2. Also on the natural side of the design, 100 percent linen and cotton patterns that feature a soft hand and color variations of wheat, sky, maize, blossom and pear in natural fibers will appeal to the environmentally yet aesthetically sensitive consumer.

3. The artisanal fabrics of the American southwest have long been popular in Arizona, New Mexico and Nevada. The inherent warmth of the rich mix of Indian, Mexican and European heritage that defines is being redefined into a far more sophisticated palette that will appeal to a wider range of customers.

4. Chinese Influenced design will re-emerge in a new form. First made popular in the 13th century with the import of Chinese ceramics into Europe, the color celadon,

"100 percent linen and cotton patterns that feature a soft hand and color variations of wheat, sky, maize, blossom and pear in natural fibers will appeal to the environmentally, yet aesthetically sensitive consumer."

used as a pottery glaze has always connoted calm, tradition, sophistication and worldly elegance. Ranging from the softest grey-blue green hues to deep jade, celadon pairs beautifully with deep burnished gold tones and traditional wood finishes. And it offers another way to warm up omnipresent grey hued upholstery. Add a touch of raspberry to the mix and you have quite a punch.

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"Over the last 31 years I have attended more than 60 furniture markets," says Jack Steger, President, Steger's Furniture, Pekin, Illinois.

"Every time I go, I wish my store looked as good as the manufacturers' showrooms. Thanks to Connie and her talented team, it now looks better than most!"



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STAY ON TREND

5. The counter trend to the ubiquitous linen neutrals may take the form of vivid blues, greens, oranges, fuchsias and yellows married expertly together with rugs, sofas, pillows and chairs. Color is clearly a way to attract customer attention as a counterpoint to a sea

of linens and greys in your stores, and those of your competitors.

About Caroline Hipple: Caroline Hipple is the President of Ohio-based Norwalk Furniture. She is an industry strategist, adventurous merchant, culture advocate and fearless problem solver.

Prior to her role as President of Norwalk Furniture, Caroline served as the Chief Energy Officer for HB2 Resources, a consulting resource for the home furnishings and retail industry. She also served as president and chief operating officer of the home furnishings retailer Storehouse. In the seven years that Hipple served as president, store sales increased from \$89 million to \$148 million. She also held a number of management positions with This End Up Furniture Co.

As one of the few women who has led a major home furnishings retail chain, she is known for com-

bining solid business strategy and positive workplace culture with an innate sense of style and insight into consumer home decorating needs. Hipple has received numerous awards and is the author of "A Pathway to Profit", a book about how to set up a process to energize employees.

About Dixon Bartlett: Dixon Bartlett is the Chief Creative Officer of Norwalk Furniture, a furniture industry veteran who has held diverse management positions requiring innovation, initiative, creativity, team building, honest communications and unimpeachable ethics. Joining the newly formed This End Up Furniture Company as a delivery driver's helper, he rose to vice president of new ventures. He was instrumental in the company's phenomenal growth from a few stores to over 230 stores becoming the 19th largest furniture retailer in the country.

He took over the merchandising and marketing responsibilities for contemporary lifestyle retailer Storehouse in 2000, helping to create the aesthetic for the "soft modern" look that the whole furniture industry has emulated.

About Norwalk Furniture: Norwalk Furniture provides trend right custom upholstery to retailers and designers throughout the US. Known for its service and quality standards, it delivers exciting looks at affordable prices, all within 35 days. Norwalk can be seen at its showrooms in High Point and Las Vegas or online at norwalkfurniture.com.

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OUTDOOR WOW!

by Russell Bienenstock

Create that WOW factor, and make sure your displays tell a compelling story. This is the best way to generate above average sales in the outdoor furnishings category.

The outdoor furniture category has been gaining momentum over the past few years due to widening product choices, expanded categories, and growing consumer demand. This has attracted increased attention from full line furniture retailers looking to expand beyond indoor spaces in a more meaningful and profitable way.

The problem for many stores who want to ramp up outdoor sales is two-fold. First, furniture stores are not always top-of-mind for shoppers thinking of updating their outdoor spaces. This topic was explored in the July/August 2016 issue of Furniture World (<http://www.furninfo.com/furniture-world-articles/3628>). Second, retail displays in outdoor furniture departments often fail to impress.

Furniture World asked design experts, Connie Post, Owner and CEO of the well known furniture industry design firm Affordable Design Solutions, and Christi Barbour, founder and partner at the High Point based residential, commercial, and showroom interiors design company Barbour Spangle Design, to share their thoughts about how retailers can get attention and create excitement in their outdoor furnishings departments.

Low Hanging Fruit

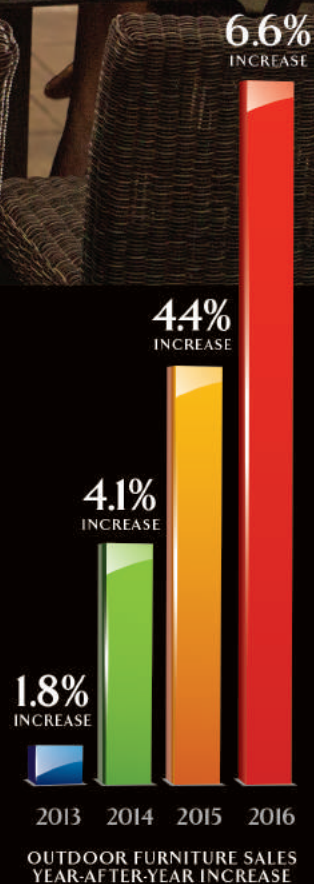
Connie Post observed, "There are few retailers who expend much effort on display for the extended living category. It's a simple fact that outdoor furniture is low hanging fruit for each and every retailer that sells a sofa or dining set. WHY? Because women like to decorate and create the perfect living environments for their families and friends no matter the budget.

"Most retailers treat outdoor furnishings as a commodity category, in it for the fast seasonal buck. But no real efforts are made to display it properly. Creating that WOW factor is necessary to create great sales."

-Connie Post



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"A central focal point

can be surrounded by much less elaborate displays. These will be equally as well received once you've set the mood." -Christi Barbour

"Most retailers treat outdoor furnishings as a commodity category, in it for the fast seasonal buck. No real efforts are made to display it properly. Many do not even stock enough SKUs, or demonstrate the commitment required to WOW their customers. Creating that WOW factor is necessary to generate great sales.

"Outdoor is baffling to many home furnishings retailers, and some have not achieved satisfactory results with outdoor furniture in the past. Well I am here to say that the world of retail has changed!

Christi Barbour generally agrees. "There's always room for improve-

ment, she suggests. "We see some retailers that do an amazing job displaying outdoor furniture, others that do a poor job, and many floating somewhere in the middle.

Targeting is Important

Barbour told us that compelling stories for an outdoor home furnishing store or department can't be created in a vacuum. "In order to differentiate and target outdoor furniture displays effectively, they must be fine tuned to resonate with target customer groups." Displays can't just be a mirror that reflects a general ideal of a typical customer's lifestyle," she advises. "The story needs to be finely tuned to the lifestyle each shopper who visits wants to live." Targeted buying and focused display is what's needed. Retailers must ask themselves, "What's the setting and lifestyle? Does it address urban, suburban or rural primary residences, or perhaps vacation homes? Are customers looking for functional spaces and/or a little bit of an oasis, an escape? Taking the time to know and consider the desires of customer groups is important. So is developing a working knowledge of the products and categories needed to attract attention and address those desires with a thoughtful display story. Because, if the story isn't there, it won't convey the lifestyle that customers are trying to live."

Opportunity Knocks

"Retailers who just line up outdoor furniture and expect it to sell on it's own," adds Post, "are leaving money on the table. They are sending customers somewhere else to complete the setting.

"Retailers should take note," she emphasized, "The bar has been raised by online retailers and wonderful magazines that come in the mail from Front Gate, Pottery Barn and others. Every photograph is decked out to the nines with decor, shot in perfect REALISTIC settings.

"Imagine this; a husband and wife have been discussing new outdoor furniture for their patio, deck or porch. Believe you me, the lady of the house will look through magazines and surf the web to see what is NEW and get an idea of what will fit her lifestyle. Over coffee in the morning, or after dinner she will share finds with the hubby. Let's say this Mr. and Mrs. America come to your store, and they walk out of your store because your products and displays fail to measure up to their online research. Their expectations from shopping at home were high. They were seduced by lovely photography that told a story about how they want to live and entertain, one that was beautifully decorated and complete. When retailers set a low bar in terms of product selection and display, shoppers who are looking to fulfill their dreams, will be less

"Whether a store uses an outside designer to bring this story to life or does it internally, displays should give customers a glimpse of what their backyards, patios, porches or deck spaces could be."

-Christi Barbour

likely to buy. Naked furniture says nothing, a completely decorated vignette says; "Take me home, you want to live here!"

"Gentleman & Ladies, it starts at the front door, a porch or a landing. That is the first impression made before guests enter a home. Women know this. A beautiful wreath on the front door, or a welcoming doormat is top of mind with most women. What retailers need to know is that she will not only decorate this extended living space with smart looking chairs or rockers, she will add an outdoor area rug, a garden stool, and maybe a piece of pottery to house

a beautiful plant.

"Women might not be able to justify redoing the living room upholstery every few years, but will add new decorative details, paint the walls and add a rug to spice it up. But when it comes to that deck, patio, screened porch or back stoop she will update more often simply due to the natural elements of dirt, rain and snow that make everything look tired more quickly."

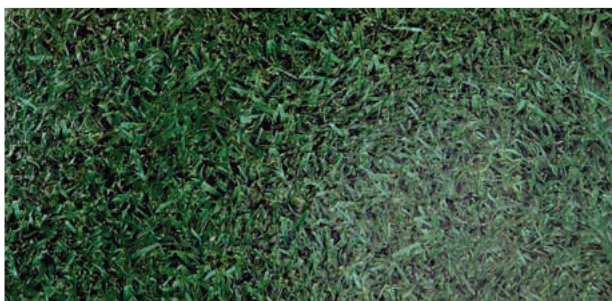
She Wants It All?

Post continued, "Here in lies the low hanging fruit; the same woman

who decorates and moves her furniture around yearly is the same woman who wants a beautiful outdoor space to live in. From the top to the bottom, she wants perfection, everything to go together in a colorful display which includes, rugs, outdoor lighting, pillows galore, statues, fountains and outdoor wall décor. She wants it ALL! Just like she does for the beautiful spaces inside of her home."

But it's possible to add too much in the way of accessories," suggests Christi Barbour. "One big problem our designers see is that retailers over-accessorize their outdoor departments. They really miss the

"At FWDG in Beaufort, SC, 4' x 3' high planter boxes from Foster's Point were used to divide the outdoor department from the rest of the indoor showroom." -Connie Post



Pictured are 4' x 3' high planter boxes sourced from Foster's Point that can be used as dividers in outdoor department displays. Also shown is LSI flooring that looks like real grass. Photos compliments of Affordable Design Solutions.





"Oversized murals

have a tremendous affect. At Oasis Home, vignettes are decorated top to bottom in realistic fashion."

-Connie Post

Floral, pond and stone mural flanked with 8' used shutters made into a wall. A well done showroom helps to differentiate a store from the competition. Photos supplied by Affordable Design Solutions.



mark by over-filling them with grill equipment, fake glasses of lemonade or iced tea, then, on top of that, they add layer upon layer of accessories.

"Sometimes there is just too much going on, but from a design and sales point of view, less is sometimes better. There's another problem with over-accessorized spaces. It can make it hard for shoppers to understand which products are actually for sale and which ones are just window dressing.

"We've noticed that over accessorizing is a bigger issue at stores that carry lower end goods. Retailers may think that doing this helps create a mood, but it's not really necessary to telling a compelling story.

"As a retailer," Barbour continued, "telling a story through display is very important because at the end of the day what retailers need to do is give their consumers a glimpse of their own lives. Whether a store uses an outside designer to bring this story to life or does it internally, displays should

give customers a glimpse of what their backyards, patios, porches or deck spaces could be. That has to be the starting point. The presentation doesn't necessarily have to be a product story from the standpoint of a particular manufacturer. The best outdoor departments capture a shopper's imagination when they're walking through the store. When shoppers see them they should think, 'We could have that on our patio. That could be our patio!'

"That realization, that excitement, can easily be channeled by sales associates into successful sales presentations because suddenly there's an engaged buyer who wants to purchase everything there, take it home so they can live that dream."

Retail Display Ideas

"Last October I had the pleasure of re-branding Oasis Home with a new outdoor furniture showroom and presentation," Post recalls.

This gave me the opportunity to develop ideas about how to treat the category and encourage better presentations.

"These ideas include using oversized murals on the walls of outdoor home furnishings displays. This has a tremendous impact. At Oasis Home vignettes are decorated top to bottom in realistic fashion that include: rugs, wall decor, lights, faux food on tables, beach towels rolled, decorative accents and tons of flowers! A well-done showroom makes products look better and will help differentiate you from the competition.

"I am a big believer in movable walls and displays. In the renovation of FWDG in Beaufort, SC, 4' x 3' high planter boxes from Foster's Point were used to divide the outdoor department from the rest of the indoor showroom. We also added an aisle down the middle of the department with LSI flooring that looks like real grass and stone path (see exhibits).

"Another showroom project in Denver, CO., Incorporated a



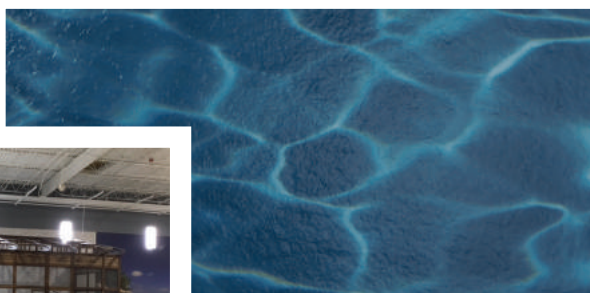
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Pictured is a showroom project in Denver, CO, that will incorporate a faux swimming pool created with LSI vinyl tiles that look like water. Also pictured is a photo of a faux fireplace and screened-in porch under construction. The 12' wide faux sky light. The applied tree mural creates the illusion of real open skylight. LED lighting will be applied inside the outer lip to shine onto the mural of the tree/sky. Photos compliments of Affordable Design Solutions.



screened in faux porch along with a faux swimming pool created with LSI vinyl tiles that look like water! Lounge chairs will sit all around the faux pool for customers to test out. This will have a cabana set up against a huge mural of the ocean in the background. There is also a faux outdoor fireplace. It will be worth the trip to see this 178,000 sq ft store once the installation is completed late this summer.

"Point of sale imagery," Barbour added, "is a great way to create a mood. Add a wall of artificial greenery or use graphics to give your buyer a glimpse of green space. Ikea is doing a really good job of incorporating graphics into its outdoor vignettes, giving the impression that you're sitting outside. It lends just a little bit of life-style atmosphere, but isn't over the top. Remember that not every surface has to be covered to convey

that this is an outdoor space.

Space and Time

"For some stores obviously," Barbour continued, "it's going to make sense for them to keep outdoor furnishings displays open year round and for others balancing the product display space from season to season makes more sense. There's really no magical formula. And if there is the opportunity to display the outdoor category in an outdoor environment, we hands down think it's a good idea. This is true even if it's just one setting with the balance of the outdoor items shown inside the store. Some landscaping may be needed to create an outdoor patio. Outdoor displays can be enhanced with the addition of decorative fencing, a wall, fireplace or cooking feature. Any of these elements will help. Again, tell a story that helps customers to see themselves and their own environment. Any time there's an opportunity to do an exterior display in conjunction with retail sales on an interior floor, we highly recommend that. It has a big impact on sales."

"Telling a story through display is very important because at the end of the day **what retailers need to do is give their consumers a glimpse of their own lives.**" -Christi Barbour

Display Focal Points

Barbour also suggested that retailers should create at least one special vignette or one focal point that helps set the outdoor display apart to create a powerful outdoor ambiance. "Consider adding pavers, fencing, the impression of landscaping, outdoor lighting, a water or fire feature, an outdoor kitchen, pergola, gazebo or tall fireplace. This is especially important in a multi-category store where consumers may not be specifically shopping for outdoor furniture. Seeing visual cues of outdoor living will draw them in.

"And, while we are discussing focal points, for retailers that choose to install an outdoor kitchen area, why not host cooking classes, grilling demonstrations and events. Bring in a grill master, and invite customers to come by your store, grab a hot dog, hamburger and



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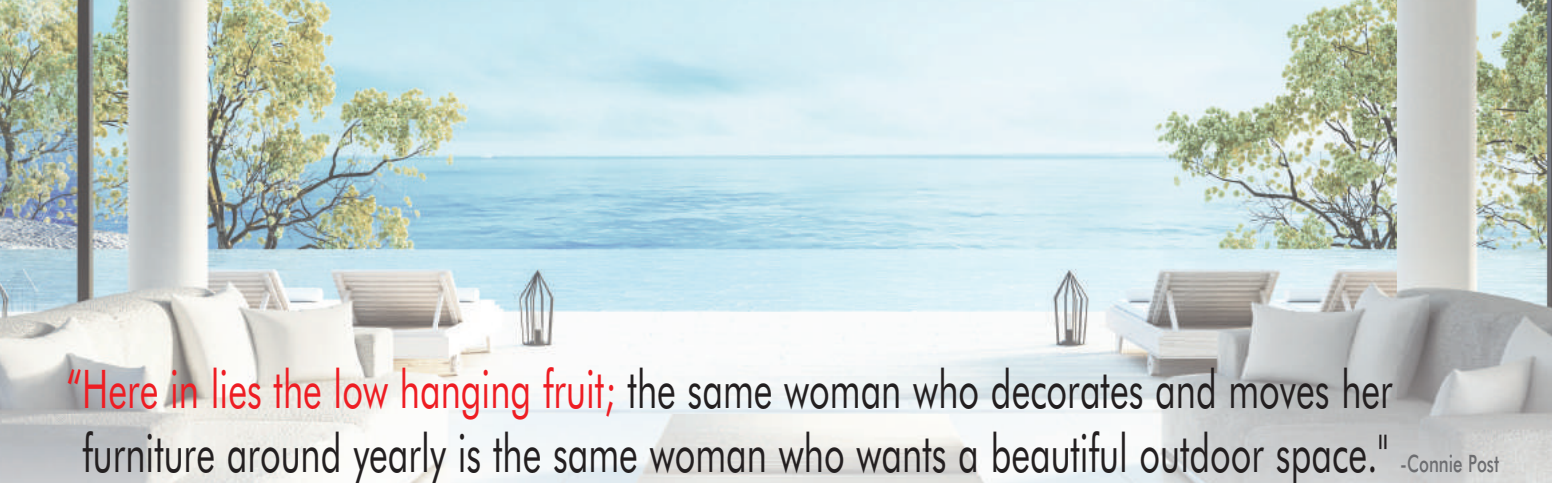
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"Here in lies the low hanging fruit; the same woman who decorates and moves her furniture around yearly is the same woman who wants a beautiful outdoor space." -Connie Post

learn more about outdoor living or promotions on products from companies X, Y and Z. It's an excellent way for stores to differentiate their outdoor furniture displays from mass market big box stores."

Barbour again emphasized that it's not necessary to go over the top with too many focal point areas. "A central focal point," she notes, "can be surrounded by much less elaborate displays. These will be equally as well received once you've already set that tone, set that prominent area apart, and gotten shoppers in the mood."

Color & Accessories

Many of Barbour Spangle Design's clients choose to add color with accents that are easily changed from season to season. "They choose to show sofas, loveseats or chairs in neutral fabrics, then add pops of colors with pillows, tableware and accents," said Barbour. "This allows them to change the look and feel of their displays at lower cost, and builds in flexibility. Consumers may also choose to buy larger investment pieces in neutral colors so they can change the personality of a space more easily by updating rugs, lighting and umbrellas.

"Aside from adding color to displays, rugs help to anchor seating and dining arrangements. Especially today, consumers are

looking to create shaded areas. Using umbrellas also add height to displays, another visual cue to attract attention."

Other Retail Tools

In closing, Furniture World asked Post and Barbour about High Point, Las Vegas and the Chicago Casual Show. Barbour suggested, "Retailers who are serious about the outdoor category need to visit furniture markets. These shows and Chicago in particular have wonderful presentations, great examples of how to present products, and knowledgeable people who can be very helpful."

Post agreed, "The most wonderful thing about making time to attend the Chicago outdoor show is you leave with a sense of the future. By this I mean the evolution of outdoor life. Extended living spaces are the newest trend and low hanging fruit for furniture retailers, another chance to bring customers into the stores. By attending markets you can get the best display ideas for your stores, see the latest styles.

"Simply working with reps in stores doesn't give a good picture of the opportunities that await retailers with outdoor furniture!

About Connie Post: A retail design strategist, author, trend translator and developer of both product and brands, Connie Post

has built a career on understanding where consumers are, what they want most, and where they are going next. A standard bearer of visual marketing in the home furnishings industry, she is responsible for the look of more than 20 million square feet of retail and wholesale space. Driven by a design philosophy that emphasizes affordability and return-on-investment, her firm, Connie Post Affordable Design, provides retailers and manufacturers with fresh and innovative environments that elevate the guest experience. For more information, visit www.conniepost.com.

About Christi Barbour: Christi Barbour is a founder and partner at the High Point based residential, commercial, and showroom interiors design company Barbour Spangle Design. Founded by Christi Barbour and Christi Spangle, Barbour Spangle Design believes in offering broader solutions for clients, a bigger playground for creativity and innovation, and productive collaboration. The firm specializes in luxury residential, showroom, commercial, healthcare and educational design, applying best ideas and solutions from each to any project. From materials to technology to aesthetic trends, they offer clients a universe of design possibilities to create spaces that genuinely work for, excite and inspire their users. For more information, visit barbourspangle.com.

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CLOSING

THE SALE -PART 1

by David Benbow

How can a quiet, modest, non-pushy RSA ever be a good closer? Here's how!

I have heard a lot of Retail Sales Associates (RSAs) say, "You know, I just can't be a closer! I like people and I love to talk about products, but I am scared of trying to close the sale. It seems pushy, and I don't want to be seen as a pushy salesman!"

I've heard others say, "Closers are born, not made. You have to have a certain aggressive, pushy personality to be a closer. I'm just not like that. I can't do it."

Well, let me say this. "YES, YOU CAN!"

Everybody knows that, once in a while, you will find a salesperson who possesses a big, aggressive outgoing personality and you think that this salesperson could probably sell ice to an Eskimo. But, these personality types are few and far between. You do NOT have to be one of these persons to be a good closer. In fact, some of the best closers I've ever observed were rather quiet and serious people. How can a quiet, modest, non-pushy RSA ever be a good closer? I hope this article will give the reader some insight into that very

proposition.

What Is Closing Anyway?

Let's actually define and analyze the term "closing the sale" and see if we can figure out why the concept is so intimidating to a lot of RSAs.

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“Let me remind the RSA

who does not want to be pushy that the customer probably came into the store to buy something; to solve some home furnishings problem.”

Dictionary. The OED defines closing as (1) the action of drawing together or ending (2) coming to terms, agreement or union (3) making fast. As usual, the OED is not very helpful when applying terms to the activity of selling products. The terms “agreement” and “coming to terms” loosely define what we are looking for. On to the Wikipedia definition, which paraphrased says, “Achievement of the desired outcome, which may be an exchange of money or acquiring a signature.” Okay. So, definitions alone don’t give us much information, do they?

Another description I found on the Internet comes closer to the argument I am trying to make. Here it is; “The reason making a sale is often referred to as closing the sale is that most sales involve a sales cycle. When a deal is closed, the sales cycle is complet-

ed.” Now, we are closer to what I am talking about. Closing the sale does not exist in a vacuum. It is part of the whole sales process or sales cycle. You could also say it is Act Five of the Play we call “The Sale.”

Our Five Act Play

To put this in a theatrical perspective, let’s define the acts of our “The Sale” play.

Act One: The Meet and Greet, for more detail see Furniture World Digital Edition from 6-9-2015.

Act Two: Qualify the Up, for more detail see Furniture World Digital Edition, 7-7-2015, 9-28-2015 and 1-14-2016.

Act Three: Selection, for more detail see Furniture World Digital

Edition 3-25-2016.

Act Four: Presentation, for more detail see Furniture World Digital Edition 7-7-2016.

Act Five: Closing the sale, which we discuss in this article.

This article is about Act Five, wrapping up the play to a satisfactory finish for both the customer and the salesperson. But, Act Five doesn’t make sense without the first four acts.

I think everyone reading this would agree that any play or movie which left you hanging at the end of Act Four would be a very annoying and unsatisfying movie experience. No Academy Awards will be won for directing a movie that had no final act. So, what does that say about the sales associate who allows his Sales Cycle or Sales Play to end without the final Act Five, the Closing? Who is happy? Is the store happy? Is the salesperson happy? Is the would-be customer happy? No, no, and no! Nobody is happy. The timid RSA who fails to perform Act Five has ruined the play for everybody.

Let me remind the RSA who “does not want to be pushy” that the customer probably came into the store to buy something; to solve some home furnishings problem. If



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"Closing the sale does not exist in a vacuum. It is not a stand-alone activity. It is part of the whole sales process or sales cycle."

this customer leaves with his problem unsolved, he or she is NOT going to be happy. She may not have met a pushy RSA, but she's still not happy.

So, for those RSAs who don't want to be "pushy," remember that your play has five acts, not four. Closing the sale is merely the final act of a five act play. Also remember that Act Five cannot happen without the first four acts preceding it. To repeat myself, "Closing the sale is NOT a stand-alone act. It is merely the culmination of the whole Five Act Sales Cycle (aka Steps of the Sale.)"

Don't Neglect The First Four Acts

John F. Lawhon, in his famous book, *Selling Retail*, stated "If you perform the first four steps of the sale correctly, step five (closing the sale) is usually just a matter of writing it up."

So what can we conclude from the above discussion? How about this? Maybe RSAs who are poor "closers" are also weak at the first four steps of the sale? We might also ask the questions, "If the RSA is afraid to ask for the sale, is it

possible that this same RSA may also be afraid to ask qualifying questions? Or, maybe this non-pushy RSA also doesn't know his products very well? Or maybe, he greets every new UP with a weak, "How may I help you?"

The RSA who is afraid to be "pushy" probably should perform a little self-analysis on these subjects. "If I'm bashful about asking for the sale, is it possible I'm also bashful about the first four steps of the sale?" If this is true, how do we overcome this timid attitude?

Re-Make Attitudes?

If the RSA is timid about doing his job, we might ask the question "Why?" There is no question that some people just do not have outgoing, bombastic personalities. Is that a reason why these folks should not consider a career in sales? If you want to use that as an excuse, fine, it's up to you. That being said, however, I very strongly believe that being quiet and reserved is NOT an impediment to becoming a great salesperson. It's only an impediment if you let it become an impediment.

So, what is the prescription to

remedy this apparent roadblock to sales success?

Preparation Is The Key

The answer is training and preparation. Have you ever noticed that real experts in their field are usually more than willing to talk about their field of expertise? (At least, they should be when they are asked about it.) When you know your stuff, even if you are reserved, you like to talk about what you know when the subject comes up. The RSA who has become expert in his field, will be sought out by the would-be customer. What is an expert RSA? An expert Retail Sales Associate is one who is *thoroughly familiar* with his store's

- Products
- Inventory
- Financing
- Policies
- Advertising.

These are the Five Groups of Knowledge. It doesn't stop there. The expert RSA also is *thoroughly familiar* with the Steps of the Sale and how to execute them. The RSA who has become expert on all these subjects is somebody the customer is eager to listen to. This RSA expert WILL be a closer, even if he doesn't think of himself as a closer.

What is the bottom line? Knowing your stuff will make you more confident. When you are more confident, you WILL become

CLOSING THE SALE

a better salesperson and a better CLOSER.

To make one more point about the theatrical perspective; how great is a play where the actors do not remember their lines? Or, where the actors just read the lines as if the script was an assembly manual for a lawnmower? So, don't worry about learning how to close the sale if you don't know much about the first four acts or even less about the Five Groups of Knowledge.

Asking For The Sale

So, we are prepared and trained and we perform the first four acts to great applause, but we still are afraid to be so pushy as to ask for the sale. What now?

Let's discuss the concept of "Asking for the Sale." First, let's look briefly at when we should ask for the sale and when we should NOT ask for the sale. I use a term in my book, "How To Win The Battle

For Mattress Sales", called Landing on the Bed. It was a term that we used many years ago in a mattress chain that has now been absorbed into a larger chain. Landing meant this: the customer had found a bed on our floor that he preferred over any other bed he had been shown; and had expressed his preference in tones that were interpreted as

Unmistakable Buying Signals. In other words, he was saying, "I really like this bed; better than any other bed." BUT, he had not said he would BUY the bed. That is what I call Landing on the Bed.

RSA should not ask for the sale until the customer is Landed on the Bed.

If the would-be buyer is not



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"First, let's look briefly at when we should ask for the sale and when we should not ask for the sale."

"When the customer says NO

a huge percentage of previously stalwart, intrepid RSAs suddenly have their knees buckle and then reach for their card."

Landed on the Bed, I don't know why any RSA would ask him to buy. How can you ask the customer to buy if you don't know which bed he likes? However, when the customer is Landed on the Bed, the RSA must begin the process of Asking for the Sale. Asking for the Sale does not have to be complicated and it does not require a fast-talking, glib personality. Most of the time, my experience suggests, and as Lawhon has pointed out, if the RSA has reached the point in the Sales Cycle where the would-be buyer is demonstrating unmistakable buying signals, then it becomes the simple process of asking the customer, "Would you like to go ahead and get this one?" That simple phrase was, for over twenty years, my favorite

closing question. Does that sound pushy?

There are numerous ways of phrasing this simple closing question. For example:

1. Would you like to go ahead and set this up for delivery?
2. Did you want to go ahead and take this one with you tonight?
3. Did you want to go ahead and set this up on our monthly payment plan?

Did any of these sound pushy, or like we are trying to trick the customer into doing something he did not want to do?

It's Not Always That Easy

You may be saying right now, "Yeah, that sounds good on paper, but what if they say 'NO'?" And, they do say NO; a lot of the time.

When the customer says NO, a huge percentage of previously stalwart, intrepid RSAs suddenly feel their knees buckle and then reach for their card. Don't do that. There is still plenty of time to make the sale.

When you get a NO, back off for a minute and begin to analyze and ask the question, "Why did they say NO? Obviously, I have more work to do."

Why Do Customers Say No?

There are many reasons why a customer, even after having given unmistakable buying signals, suddenly turns on the RSA, and gives a resounding NO to the closing question. We'll talk about some of the main reasons why they do this.

1. **FEAR:** In an article from Furniture World, April/May 2003, Peter Marino made the statement that most customers "fear making a buying mistake." In the same article he said, "If the RSA fails to ask for the sale, it

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The advertisement shows several colorful sale signs: 'Mattress Sale', 'Recliner Sale', 'Dinner Sale', 'Winter Wonderland Sale', 'Christmas Sale', and 'Holiday Sale'. Each sign features a starburst graphic and a price tag.



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CLOSING THE SALE

"Negative answers

should prompt the RSA to restart the qualifying process, wait for a new buying signal, and then Ask for the Sale, again."

could mean that the RSA doesn't fully believe in the products he is presenting." (Or, rather, doesn't know much about the products he is trying to present.) John F. Lawhon also stated that he believed that fear was the primary reason most RSAs do not ask for the sale. So, both parties are scared. The customer is afraid to make a decision and the RSA is scared to ask for the sale. And, sadly, this is where a great many Sales Cycles crash after promising beginnings.

A very big part of closing the sale is easing the customer's fear that

he may be making a bad decision.

2. CONTEMPT: which can also be described as a lack of trust. This is related to fear, but slightly different. A lot of customers, for good reason, sadly, are contemptuous of sales people. They don't think RSAs know what they are talking about half the time. They think RSAs are just out to make a buck and don't care about the customer's welfare. They think RSAs come and go, "trying sales", and won't be there the next time they come in the store. The better

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CLOSING THE SALE

customers, upper income earners with college degrees, frequently assume that the RSA is some kind of beauty school dropout that knows nothing about how to do his job correctly. I hate to say this, but so often, the customer is justified in having this attitude; which is why I keep stressing the idea of training and preparation. The RSA who works hard, prepares himself for his job, and makes a good impression with his knowledge can quickly dispel this attitude of contempt that so often walks through the door with the customer. This is especially important when the RSA is dealing with the high income customer who is willing to spend the most money.

3. HATE: this is a strong term that I do not like to use, but a lot of people HATE shopping for mattresses. This revulsion toward mattress shopping probably goes a long way to explain the recent phenomenal success of the "Bed in a Box" category. Why do people hate shopping for beds? Peter

"Delaying, threatening to walk out without buying, etc., are all known, proven ways to bargain for a better deal. And, they work."

Marino laid out a few reasons in his book *The Golden Rules of Selling Bedding*.

- *Negative reputation of salespeople (often well deserved).*
- *Difficulty in determining quality.*
- *Bogus advertising (HALF OFF EVERYTHING!!).*
- *Confusing selection (a sea of pale covers).*
- *What if I get it home and don't like it.*
- *How do I know if I'm making the right decision?*
- *Too many mattress stores, everywhere.*

4. GET A BETTER DEAL: a lot of customers, particularly men, are pretty cagey about the bargaining process. Delaying, threatening to walk out without buying, etc., are all known, proven ways to bargain for a better deal. And, they work. This is especially painful to watch when a flinty-eyed, hard-nosed customer is face to face with a timid, fearful, unprepared RSA. Some stores "combat" this problem with a One-Price policy, but these deal-seeking customers RARELY buy from One-Price stores. They are looking for "Monty Hall." Many years ago, I had just opened the doors on a brand new store, and lo and behold, the first customer who walked in the door, literally said, "I am looking for Monty Hall." I grinned and retort-

ed, "You just found him." Ten minutes later, the store had a \$1000 sale and he had a new mattress. For those who are now hopelessly confused, Monty Hall was the host of the old TV game show "Let's Make a Deal."

"No" - Just Another Objection

In previous editions of *Furniture World*, we discussed Objections and how to handle them. NO is just another objection that we RSAs have to handle. It is not the end of the sale. Sometimes it may actually be the beginning of bigger things. I would suggest reviewing my articles on Objections for a refresher in how to deal with objections. (They are found in the *Furniture World Digital Edition* archives.) Obviously, we have to find out why the customer, who seemed so enthusiastic a few minutes before, is now vigorously shunning our entreaties to set up his delivery. Remember, when you get an objection, what do you do? You go back to qualifying. Ask questions which will draw out the reasons why the customer is resisting your closing argument.

We're Just Getting Started

There is a lot more to closing the sale than we've talked about in this edition. Our next discussion of *Closing the Sale* will get into much more detail about specific ways to overcome the customer's fears and resistance without making the RSA



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CLOSING THE SALE

look pushy. I understand nobody wants to look pushy. And customers don't like pushy salespeople either. But there is a difference between being pushy and being persuasive. Persuasive is what we want.

Always remember that the first closing question is usually resisted by the customer. He may even give you an outright "Not Yet, or No." These negative answers should prompt the RSA to restart the qualifying process, wait for a new buying signal, and then Ask for the Sale, again. This can be done over and over, until the customer finally realizes that a YES answer is really for his own good. And, it is actually better if the RSA can accomplish all this without seeming pushy. It can be done. I've seen it happen, many times.

About David Benbow: He is a

twenty-three year veteran of the mattress and bedding industry and 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.

"Upper income earners, frequently assume that the RSA is some kind of beauty school dropout that knows nothing about how to do his job correctly. This is why I keep stressing the idea of training and preparation."

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Cheryl Bruene, General Manager, Frederick Furniture, Grundy Center, Iowa

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(Be sure to read Larry's timely article in this month's *Furniture World*!)

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Best Selling DESIGN



Himolla

The Artica recliner from Himolla has 360 degree rotation. It is available with a choice of two base sizes and two seat heights. Other features include choice of quality leathers/ colors, plus either high gloss polished chrome or powder coated anthracite frame.

Contact information on page 112



Kas Rugs

Barcelona, machine woven transitionals in 18 colors of polypropylene. Made in Turkey with 1/2 inch high pile.

Contact information on page 112.

Furniture of America

The "Claudette" bed features LED lights, tufted headboard, and faux-crocodile leather foot board in a brilliant rose finish.

Contact information on page 112.





Jaipur Home

The Krieger Sideboard from the Geometric Palettes Collection is constructed of iron, with drawer and door fronts handcrafted from solid Mango in an Eco-Friendly blended finish. Contact information on page 112.



Null

Pieces from a small scale five piece collection, a modern style interpretation of Mid Century classic design. The lightly distressed harbor gray finish is complemented with warm mineral finished metal bases. Sculpted drawer fronts are beautifully designed adding character and appeal to this collection. Contact information on page 112.

Standard Furniture

The Nelson Grey Youth Sleigh bed has metal straps, plus a foot-board storage option. Constructed of Pine and random Pine planks, it is finished in reclaimed rustic grey. Contact information on page 112.



Whittier Wood

The McKenzie Bookcase Collection is made of certified sustainable, solid American Alder and Red Birch veneer hardwoods. It is available in a variety of stain and paint finishes. Contact information on page 112.

Best Selling

DESIGN



Artography

From Marilyn Monroe to Sammy Davis Jr. and Jayne Mansfield, these licensed and authenticated iconic images spanning 75 years will complement any ensemble.

Contact information on page 112.



Country View Woodworking

The new American Modern dining collection is perfect for small scale settings where a pedestal base would be too large. Chairs are available in two finishes: #165 on Brown Maple or #118 on Elm.

Contact information on page 112.

Craftmaster

This new scallop front sofa is 85" in length. It features loose box backs, two sizes of nail head trim, and three accent pillows. The light color body fabric is contrasted with a beautiful sea glass blue jacquard and a lattice embroidery.

Contact information on page 112.





Borkholder Furniture

Simplicity is a clean-lined, modern interpretation of Shaker style that encompasses bedroom, dining and occasional furniture with functional open shelving and angular posts and pilasters. Developed for smaller living spaces with an emphasis on functionality, the collection is aimed at apartment and townhouse dwellers, as well as vacation retreats.

Contact information on page 112.

TÖV

The Adeline Dining Table with contrasting white lacquer top and brushed gold base is shown with Beatrix chairs in grey velvet. Contact information on page 112.



Feizy

The tribal-inspired designs of the Turvey Collection are hand-tufted with a durable fiber blend of wool, polyester and cotton. These eco-friendly designs enhance for both indoor and outdoor spaces.

Contact information on page 112.

Best Selling DESIGN



Moe's Home

The Javadi Side Table is crafted from solid reclaimed Elm, has metal letter-box style hardware and is set on metal hairpin legs. Shown in a rich, brown finish.

Contact information on page 112.



Maxwood

Made from solid Maple, this popular JACKPOT!™ "All In One" Maxtrix play panel high loft bed is available in pink/grey and blue/red grey. The panels create a play-house structure underneath the bed, with lots of details like a mail slot. The panels can be removed to convert the bed into a standard high loft bed or any other Maxtrix bed configuration.

Contact information on page 1120.



Nouveau Concept

The AV442 is a TV base measuring 52". It can be used in a corner or on a straight wall.

Contact information on page 112.



DownTown Company

The Sophia Collection is classic old world design luxury bedding with embroidered scalloped edge. Made of 100% long staple cotton percale, 400 thread count, it is available in sheet sets, duvets & shams.

Contact information on page 112.



Surya

The Belhaven table lamp has a curved, ceramic body with a gold faux silk shade and crystal finial.

Contact information on page 112.



Nourison

From the Calvin Klein Home Prairie Collection, the Prairie Arctic Rug has a clean and concise design comprised of shifting bands placed side-by-side in a cool coloration of speckled silvers on a luminous pale ground.

Contact information on page 112.

Dimplex

The clean, contemporary lines of the Haley Media Console are elevated by a dash of industrial design. Integrated speaker compartment and a linear fireplace add to its consumer appeal.

Contact information on page 112.



Omnia

Classic yet unconventional, the Dunhill provides optimum comfort. Available in all sofa configurations and over 400 leathers and fabrics, it is made in California.

Contact information on page 112.



Best Selling

DESIGN

FROM THE CANADIAN FURNITURE SHOW



Handstone

The Algoma solid top dining table from the Canadian manufacturer of custom-made, solid wood furniture using hand-selected kiln-dried Cherry, Maple and Red Oak.

Contact information on page 112.



Dutailier

The Austin Glider balances geometric angles with a contemporary look. This chair combines comfort and technology with a swivel base, adjustable headrest and integrated Technogel seat support. Handcrafted in Canada

Contact information on page 112.



Huppé

The aptly named Slim, is made of solid Cherry in six finishes. Huppé creates contemporary furniture designed for sleeping, living, working and dining.

Contact information on page 112.

Bugatti

The Flex sectional is available in a variety of different configurations and fabric choices. Bugatti is currently celebrating it's 25th year in business.

Contact information on page 112.



Trica

The Absolute Buffet features a fully welded steel frame, adjustable feet, adjustable cam shelves and anti-glare, anti-fingerprint etched tempered glass. It is available in powder coated finishes or brushed steel.

Contact information on page 112.



Palliser

The Atticus collection features blown fibre-filled back cushions paired with an engineered seat for softness and structure. Modern top-stitching details contribute to its refined look. Available in multiple options for sofa and sectional configurations.

Contact information on page 112.

Stylus

The Boca leather sofa features rich, top grain leather. Shown here in Apollo Grey with Walnut finish legs.

Contact information on page 112.



Beaudoin

Upholstered bed from Julien Beaudoin Ltée a manufacturer of bed frames and related products, such as bed supports, folding beds and head boards. Designed, manufactured, and distributed internationally Quebec.

Contact information on page 112.



The Canadian Furniture Show is held each year in Toronto at The International Centre. Canada's only national furniture show attracts local as well as international exhibitors and visitors.

In 2017, the show featured products from 235 exhibitors including the best selling designs shown here.

The 2018 edition of the Canadian Furniture Show will be held from Friday, May 25, to Sunday, May 27, 2018.

Seven magic

SALES MANAGER TRAITS

HOW THE BEST SALES PERFORMANCE MANAGERS GET RESULTS

by David McMahon

The seven traits of the most successful sales performance managers, plus tips on how to develop them.

In the over 40 performance group meetings we have held over the years, I've noticed that the best performing sales managers share seven common traits. This article sums up those traits that together greatly improve store traffic, customer service and sales performance.

1. The Sales Floor Is Their Office:

I've seen managers that are "available" and managers that are "present". Those who are "present" for salespeople and customers usually outperform those that are merely "available". Sales managers who are connected with the daily goings-ons on the floor facilitate higher levels of customer service. It is all too common for sales managers to sit in their office and become disconnected from the floor. When this happens, both close rates and average sale suffer.

2. They Use Selling Systems To Guide The Sales Process:

The use of a defined but concise

selling system leads to improved salesperson and customer communication. Better communication increases the chances of favorable outcomes for both customers and salespeople. Customers get solutions that are better aligned for their situations, and the sales associates get bigger, more frequent sales. Top managers customize a five-to-seven-step selling system, which acts as a guide from the initial greeting through to

"It is all too common to have a sales manager who sits in some physical office disconnected from the floor.

When this happens both close rates and average sale suffer."

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"Designers don't want

to sell mattresses or protection plans. Mattress salespeople don't want to go on a house call or shy away from custom solutions. Upholstery salespeople rarely sell occasional, rugs or lighting. The list goes on."

the follow-up after the close. This enables new employees to get up to speed faster and helps average performers improve their game.

3. They Develop Product Category Specialists:

Retail home goods showrooms often contain a variety of categories and vendors. Within each area there are a multitude of choices. Commonly, salespeople tend to gravitate toward what they are comfortable talking about. Often, this is not what is best for their customers. In a worst case scenario, salespeople will avoid certain segments of merchandise altogether. I've seen this happen quite a bit. "Designers" don't want to sell mattresses or protection plans. Mattress salespeople don't want to go on house calls or shy away from custom solutions. Upholstery salespeople rarely sell occasional, rugs or lighting. The list goes on.

This is why top managers actively develop or employ product specialists. This isn't to say that someone cannot be a specialist in every area. They can. Category focused selling systems can assist with this development.

4. They Have Goals That Make Sense:

Top managers help individuals set goals. These goals should be cus-

tomized to the person rather than be the same for all. Having the same goals for all the goods in your store is a recipe for lackluster sales performance. Consistent top performers need to push the envelope. It's in their nature. Average performers must improve their averages, and below average performers need to work to get to average results. Two types of goals are useful here; a standard goal and a stretch goal.

A standard goal for an individual may look at the past three or six months of performance, then add in improvements in certain areas. Standard goals look at things such as average sale and protection percentage, while a stretch goal might look at the best monthly performance achieved, and then add in the improvement.

Goals should be public, tracked and recorded by the salespeople themselves.

5. They Staff To The Store's Goal And To Typical Weekend Traffic:

This might be the most important thing that the best managers do. We live in a time where brick-and-mortar traffic is on average declining due to an increase in online browsing and buying. Even with this trend, under-staffing is a big reason why showrooms under-per-

form. This occurs because some managers staff to their weekly traffic, causing sales volumes to decline further. In cases like this, a downward sales spiral can occur as the under-performing store steers itself toward the ground.

Alternatively, top managers set store goals, and then figure out how many people they need to reach that goal. They then watch customer traffic on the weekends to see if they are sufficiently covered. This ensures there is less double-teaming of customers so selling systems work as intended most of the time. Multitasking with customers leads to poor revenue per guest. Top managers and top salespeople want to spend the appropriate amount of time with

"Top managers customize a five-to-seven-step selling system, which acts as a guide from the initial greeting through to the follow-up after the close."

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THE MAGIC SEVEN

each customer. Otherwise they risk being pulled in multiple directions, serving more people less professionally.

6. They Believe That Sales People Can Effect In-Store Traffic:

Traffic comes from either advertising or location, right? Not in many top performing stores! Some stores with the best quality traffic have low traditional advertising spends as well as average per square foot rental costs. My belief is that the best traffic comes from word-of-mouth and non-traditional advertising.

With regard to word-of-mouth, gossip, networking, posting, bragging or whatever you want to call it, both the positive and negative flow from customer experiences. Top managers work with their sales teams to produce traffic. They implement productive selling

systems, teach product knowledge, and correct staffing levels. This is what helps to generate positive word-of-mouth.

Value-added activities are other tools that can be used to produce positive word-of-mouth traffic. These activities may include:

- *Making sure every customer is "thanked" for visiting.*
- *Special order updates.*
- *Delayed shipment notifications.*
- *Before delivery contact.*
- *Delivery in process tracking.*
- *After Delivery follow-up.*
- *Anniversary of purchase courtesy call .*
- *Next Purchase follow-up.*
- *Private event invites.*
- *Local charity and donations.*

7. They Get Involved With Salespeople And Customers:

The seventh trait of the most successful sales performance managers expands upon trait number one. If the manager's office is the sales floor, when necessary he or she can get involved in interactions between customers and salespeople. Done right, this can add a layer of reassurance, and increase sales. Leaders can build confidence and validate decisions. Managers who are good leaders excel at this, and produce some great results. This can be as simple as a short greet. A simple example would be,

"Hi, I'm _____ the store manager, and I just wanted to say thank you for coming in today, I'm sure _____ is taking great care of you. We are here to help you. Let me know if you need anything at all."

There are many ways to put a spin on this approach. Bottom line, however, is that top sales managers are involved with what is going on in their showrooms. They are like the conductors of an orchestra. They set the tone and rhythm of the business. They do not spend their time in a glass room responding to a series of chaotic events as they occur. Top managers and leaders don't let themselves be controlled by the game because they control it first. They are not fire-fighters – they are rain makers.

Adapt these concepts and ideas to your specific situation. Small improvements in front-end management can have the largest impact on your business. Don't get comfortable - seek to continually improve.

About David McMahon: David McMahon, CSCP, CMA, EA is VP of consulting and performance group at PROFITsystems, a HighJump Company. He holds professional certifications as a Certified Supply Chain Professional and is a Certified Management Accountant. David directs four performance groups, the Kaizen, Visionary, Gladiator, TopLine groups and multiple consulting projects. He can be reached at david.mcmahon@highjump.com.

"Some manager's staff to their weekly traffic and subsequently their sales volumes decline further. In cases like this, a downward sales spiral can occur."



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furniture sales

PRE-SUASION

by Larry Mullins

It's a new and revolutionary way to influence and persuade. What if your sales people knew exactly what to say and when to say it before they make an appeal of any kind?

"Every Battle is Won Before it is Fought." -Sun Tzu

We have been told by the great communicators that the best way to win over the confidence of a client is to achieve the role of a "trusted advisor." The down-side to this advice is it takes time—days, weeks even months.

Robert Cialdini's new book, "Pre-Suasion", suggests that there is a shortcut. His thesis is that the best communicators are able to enhance their effectiveness and elevate their successes by learning exactly what to say and when to say it before they make an appeal of any kind.

This seems almost counterintuitive. I have always assumed the way ace performers out-perform other retailers is by developing desirable product features and associated benefits with clarity and logic. Not so, according to Cialdini's research. "Much more than their less effective colleagues," says Cialdini, "they didn't rely on the legitimate merits of an offer to get it accepted; they recognized that the psychological frame in

which an appeal is first placed can carry equal or even greater weight."

The Principles of Influence

My job has always been to discover new, legitimate ways to persuade customers to say "yes." The article "6 Principals of Influence" in the March/April edition (www.furninfo.com/Furniture-World-Articles/3673) featured Robert Cialdini's book, "Influence". Written ten years ago. His book is rich with promotional ideas and marketing tactics. Yet very few furniture retailers were aware of it.

There are six key tools of influence:

1. **Reciprocation:** When we are befriended we tend to want to reciprocate in some way.
2. **Liking:** We like and want to do business with people who seem to like us.
3. **Social Proof:** We identify with people from the same hometown, the same country, the

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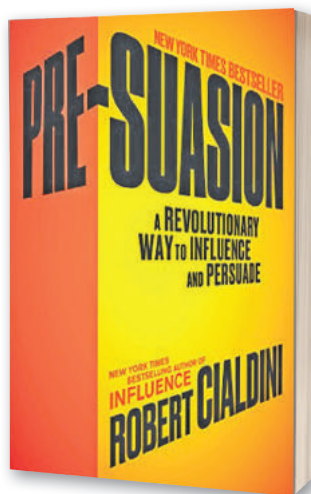
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Cialdini's newest book, "Pre-Suasion", contains priceless information for independent furniture stores that want to exploit the weakness of the Big Box franchises.

same political party, etc.

4. Authority: We tend to respect symbols of authority such as uniforms, badges and certificates.

5. Scarcity: The perceived value of an item increases if it is in limited supply.

6. Consistency: When we make some sort of commitment, no matter how modest, we are much more likely to agree to a larger commitment along the same lines.

"The question is, are Cialdini's ideas just psychobabble, or is there a practical way to apply them to your existing programs?"

Using Pre-Suasion at Retail

Cialdini's newest book, "Pre-Suasion", contains more priceless information for independent furniture stores who want to exploit the weakness of the Big Box franchises. The Big Boxes continue to use the same-old price-item, race to the bottom tactics in their current presentations.

The question is, are Cialdini's ideas just psychobabble or is there a practical way to apply them to your existing programs? There is indeed.

To prove this I will present a retail case study of a furniture store that successfully used a few of Cialdini's six Principles of Influence married to the new concepts of "Pre-Suasion". Then, this article will give you some additional ideas for applying the principles of Influence and Pre-Suasion.

Memorial Day Challenge

Memorial Day always presents a challenge for retailers. How can you frame a sales promotion around a special holiday that honors our

fallen heroes? Last year, one major Big Box franchise promoted early in the month with a weak price-item, extended interest sales flyer. The only reference to Memorial Day was in the heading.

The question of how to frame a respectful and appropriate Memorial Day event came up for a local client. Leather by Design, a high-end independent retailer, that was offered a great deal from the local newspaper... a two page "wrap" that would run as a broadsheet on four different days prior to Memorial Day weekend.

We developed an ad that did not ignore the meaning of Memorial Day. It was strongly promotional, but featured no prices. A section of the presentation was devoted to honoring Memorial Day by giving away free roses for the graves of veterans (see the exhibit). An illustration of a military cemetery was shown along with a rose. The copy went like this:

"Dear Friends and Neighbors: Leather by Design will partner with our community to put long-stemmed roses on the graves of veterans for Memorial Day weekend. We have

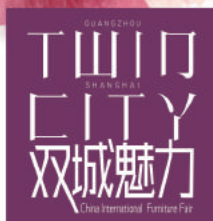


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11-14 September 2017

home / home decor / home textile / outdoor / office /
hotel / commercial / machinery & raw materials



China Import and Export Fair Complex & PWTC Expo



National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) in Hongqiao

FURNITURE SALES PRE-SUASION

A test indicted that callers raising funds for a university were greatly influenced by a successful image. One group was given a plain script, and another saw an image of a runner winning a race on the copy sheet. Remarkably, after a three-hour shift, the group exposed to the photo generated 60 percent more revenue than their co-workers.



purchased a supply of long stem roses with the sole purpose of giving them away to anyone who wishes to decorate the grave of ANY veteran. Again, the roses are FREE. No coupon required. Just stop in during our normal business hours and pick them up. There is absolutely NO obligation to purchase furniture. The roses are even located near the front entrance so you may breeze in, pick yours up and exit. This is our small, humble way to say, "Thank you, veterans!"

Framing Pre-Suasion Identity

Leather by Design frames its Pre-suasive identity around being family owned and operated, and an

independent, hometown merchant.

A few years ago the store moved from a large mall to a free-standing building. Traditionally we know that furniture stores get a great deal of overflow mall traffic from larger stores, but this traffic consists of overwhelmingly casual "lookers." Once Leather by Design moved to a free-standing location it became a destination. Customers who pulled into the parking lot had already made a commitment to at least look and listen to their offers. This may seem a moderate commitment but as was explained in the previous article, it can be significant as one of the six principles of influence. Having made a small commitment, people are more likely to make a larger one

to achieve Consistency. The key is to follow through in media, social media and personal relationships.

Operations Manager Steve Lent has developed a greeting that helps utilize Social Proof, another of the tools of influence. Steve never fails to mention that Leather by Design is a hometown store, family owned and operated. He weaves in phrases like "We are fanatic about customer service at Leather by Design" and "No sale is complete until you are satisfied."

Pre-Suasion Principles

Pre-Suasion is about timing, the privileged moment. It's about setting up situations that improve your

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Leather By Design featured a tribute to veterans in their Memorial Day event advertising.

Attention is crucial to communication. If you detect that an individual is multi-tasking while they are conversing with you on the telephone, (you hear the clicking

of computer keys or the sound of newspaper pages turning) it advises you that your information is relatively unimportant. That describes the importance of active listening. Successful communicators are great listeners. When they want to make an important point they preload it with importance.

There was an important case history in Cialdini's book regarding selling furniture online. In the study the scientists addressed this question: How does one get an online client to focus upon the quality and comfort of a particular sofa in preference to a lower priced but inferior product? This was especially important to me because Leather by Design's key brand is Stressless, a high-end product imported from

Norway. We describe it as "The world's most comfortable furniture."

The study revealed an attempted solution. The research team put a background of fluffy clouds on a website splash page. Unfortunately the team members were not graph-

"How does one get an online client to focus upon the quality and comfort of a particular sofa in preference to a lower priced but inferior product?"



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FURNITURE SALES PRE-SUASION

ic artists and the cloud background made the copy on the page almost illegible. Although Cialdini agreed with the solution, I prefer to emphasize comfort by illustrating attractive men and women enjoying the comfort of Stressless recliner units.

One finding was surprising regarding banner ads. Seemingly dismissible information presented in the background captures a valuable kind of attention and allows for potent, almost uncounted, instances of influence.

Pre-Suasion Communication

If you want to emphasize a particular point, should you raise your voice? No, not according to the famous psychiatrist Milton Erickson. When interviewing a client, he would actually lower his voice when introducing a crucial concept. To hear what Erickson was saying, patients had to lean forward into the information—

an embodied signal of focused attention and intense interest.

You may have noticed that TV advertisers have increased their scene switches or “cuts” dramatically by over 50 percent. Viewers end up confused as to the point of the ad and become irritated by having their focus rapidly and haphazardly whipped around. Even though cut-happy TV commercials attract more attention, they produce significantly less memory for the ads’ message and persuasive power. A much better solution would be to use cuts to swing attention to the part of the message you want them to focus on.

Holding Attention

How do you hold attention once you have it? The communicator should fasten his audience’s focus on the favorable elements of his ad. This effort will likely go unchallenged by opposing points of view which get locked out of the viewers’ attention as a consequence.

Key to holding interest is the ever-prevailing question in a prospect’s mind: “What’s in it

for me?” Copywriters who haven’t fully investigated the importance of weaving the consumer’s self-interest into their work should be embarrassed. For example, there follows copy that failed, yet after slight changes it became overwhelmingly successful:

Failed copy: “After all these years, people might accept that antiperspirants just aren’t going to get any better. They might even accept the ugly stains on clothes from hot days and hard work. They won’t have to anymore.”

Revised copy: “After all these years, you might accept that antiperspirants just aren’t going to get any better. You might even accept the ugly stains on clothes from hot days and hard work. You won’t have to anymore.”

The lesson is simple: Information about the self is an exceedingly powerful magnet of attention.

Motivational Images

This one surprised me. Research, however, indicates that when individuals are subtly exposed to words like win, attain,



“Seemingly dismissible information presented in the background captures a valuable kind of attention and allows for potent, almost uncounted, instances of influence.”

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"If you ask an individual

if she is adventurous and willing to try new things she will be very likely to say 'Yes'. And on the average, she will be 75.4 percent more likely to then comply with your request for information."

succeed, master, it increases their performance on an assigned task. Moreover, it more than doubles their willingness to keep working at it. Like Cialdini, I believed it unlikely that motivational signs and images would work. Research has proven they do. For example, a test indicated that callers raising funds for a university were greatly influenced by a successful image. A control group was given a plain script, and another group received a script that also included an image of a runner winning a race. Remarkably, after a three-hour shift, the group with the adorning photo produced 60 percent more revenue than their coworkers. Your sales team may want to brainstorm ways to use motivational messages to inspire their efforts.

I had an interesting and amusing experience with Pre-Suasion here in St. Augustine at the Farmers Market. I noticed a booth offering neck and shoulder massages. There seemed to be no action going on. I suggested to the young lady in charge that they change their sign to read: "First three minutes are FREE." She did so and a line of takers quickly developed. Later I saw my wife had joined the crowd. She told me the young lady giving the

massages had given her a card that offered house calls. My wife thought she might schedule one. So a couple of weeks went by and the young entrepreneur showed up at our door. As she prepared to give a massage she told my wife that things were pretty dull at the Farmers Market until some "marketing genius" came by and told her to give the first three minutes free. "After that my business really took off" the young lady said.

The Opportunity

In summary, the opportunity for the independent furniture store has never been more exciting. At this writing consumer confidence is higher than it has been for many years. If most independent furniture retailers take a step back and examine the shopping experiences they are creating, they will realize that they have a huge advantage over their larger competitors. They can pre-frame themselves as hometown, family owned and operated institutions, with a mission to improve the lives of our clients and their families.

At every touch point in the shopping experience there is an opportunity to generate a

positive, uplifting message, and position your store as a trusted advisor for clients. Never, in the history of our industry has there been a more exciting prospect for independent furniture stores to frame themselves favorably and enjoy the resulting prosperity.

**Thanks to Scott Davis of the Furniture AwareHouse in Greencastle, Indiana for both the Memorial Day roses giveaway idea and the copy he crafted.*

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

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



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BUILT ON QUICKSAND

by Jeff Giagnocavo

Today, as a home furnishings business owner, more than ever before, it is easy to build your advertising strategy on quicksand.

If you are not proactively using your customer's email addresses to market and promote your home furnishings business, you may be like the owner of a store that is built on quicksand.

Today, as a business owner, more than ever before, it is easy to build an advertising strategy that leaves you sinking in a cycle of ever increasing costs, loss of control and lower returns.

Continuing with this metaphor, let's take a closer look at the causes of this quicksand phenomenon:

1. Your Media Partners are quicksand because they can change rates, distribution and content guidelines at any time despite what may be working well for you at the moment.

2. Facebook is quicksand that has been willing to offer free and reduced charges for years, but is now looking to charge top dollar. Facebook has continuously dialed up their choke-hold on small businesses. The consensus among those marketers spe-

cializing in Facebook advertising and promotions, is that only six percent of organic status updates are shown to your audience. This means that on average, only six of 100 of your Facebook page likes are engaged with you at any moment.

Retailers do have success paying to boost Facebook posts, but given the rise in cost of online advertising, especially in the mattress niche due to the direct to consumer guys, many retailers are getting less return per dollar invested in online media like Facebook and Google.

"Google is quicksand too. They always change the rules. As soon as you begin to understand them, they change!"

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"It is easy to build

an advertising strategy that leaves you sinking in a cycle of ever increasing costs, loss of control and lower returns."

3. Yes, Google is quicksand too. They will always change the rules. As soon as you begin to understand them, they change! For example, a couple of years ago, Google released its "Penguin" update to their search engine ranking algorithm. This caused many businesses with #1 page rankings to sink like quicksand. Those retailers who over-relied on Google to engage with customers saw customer traffic and engagement plummet.

4. Your Vendors can be quicksand as well. They can change the rules in favor of bigger and better opportunities despite your years of partnership.

Of course these business partners are very, very important. However,

they do control the rules of engagement and ultimately can change, at the turn of a dime, how they operate and impact your business.

Vendors may offer you a premium position on their website. Sometimes this position is earned through a combination of dealer loyalty, tenure and respect. At other times this position is purely a "pay for play" reward. If you're not a top retail dog, and the rules change, you may find yourself trending downward.

paying Google, but once they get there, it's imperative to encourage visitors to take the next step. If you don't offer to give them more information, and get them to voluntarily offer their contact information in return, you will leave a lot of potential sales on the table. Here is a list of places you can collect email addresses.

Your homepage: Offer information of value in exchange for customers' names and emails.

Entrance pop ups: Ask them to enter a contest or offer valuable information in exchange for emails.

Exit pop ups: When your customer is ready to leave your site, a pop up can appear to ask for name and email in exchange for information or a savings offer.

Coupons/specials page: Offer to send the customer a savings pass offered only to email subscribers.

Email Marketing

Email marketing and the ability to maintain and engage customers with creative messages is, in my opinion, one of the most important things retail store owners can do to ensure long-term success.

So, what if you haven't invested enough time and energy to develop a good list? All is not lost. There are many ways to collect email contact information from your present and potential customers.

On Your Website

Unless you want to read endless reports about impressions, clicks, page views, and other metrics that can't be taken to the bank, you should commit to using your website as an email collection tool. You will need to drive traffic to your website, and that probably means

"Your Vendors can be quicksand. They can change the rules in favor of a bigger and better opportunity despite your years of partnership."

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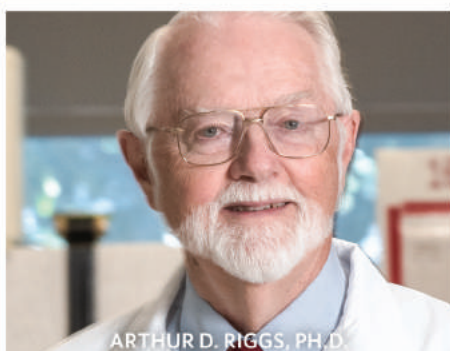
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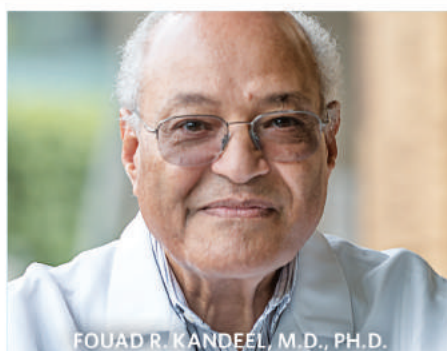
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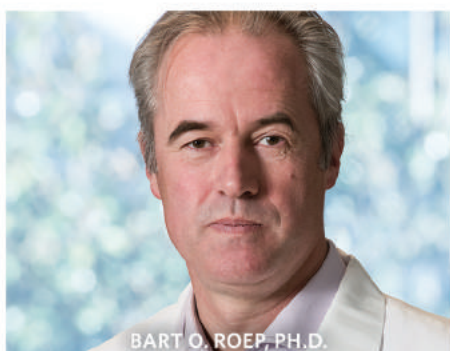
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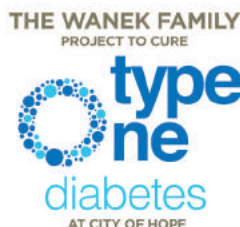


RAMA NATARAJAN, PH.D.



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A diabetes powerhouse made even stronger — City of Hope's Diabetes & Metabolism Research Institute. Here, major breakthroughs have changed the lives of millions of diabetes patients around the world. One of the biggest, synthetic human insulin, was developed through research conducted at City of Hope, which is a direct result of work pioneered by Art Riggs, Ph.D., our institute director, and his team. And now we are looking to the future. The near future. With a goal of curing type 1 diabetes in six years. We aim to do that thanks to a transformative gift from the Wanek family and the generosity of countless others. The Wanek Family Project for Type 1 Diabetes at City of Hope: committed to finding a cure for type 1 diabetes. To learn more about our groundbreaking work in diabetes, visit CityofHope.org/t1d



"Facebook is quicksand that has been willing to offer free and reduced charges for years, but is now looking to charge top dollar."

Via Your Store

If you are like every other furniture and bedding retailer, most of your shoppers do not make a purchase on their first visit. If you want to encourage them to visit again and maybe purchase, you need to collect their emails. Without this piece of contact information the likelihood of a repeat visit is slim to none. Consider asking for emails using these tools in your store.

When you give a quote or price: If your staff is well trained and knowledgeable, it is likely that shoppers visiting your store learn something of value on their journey to purchase. Shoppers and customers who've had a good experience in your store are often glad to reciprocate by giving their contact information... if asked. Insist that your sales associates ask for full name, address, phone and email in that order, because you will collect more emails.

At point of purchase: Your single

biggest opportunity to collect an email address is when a customer makes a purchase. There are many benefits your customers can receive from giving their email. They can be made aware of future offers, special events, trend information and more, now that you have an established business relationship.

To wrap up, here are two more very effective places where you can collect emails from potential customers to advance the sale.

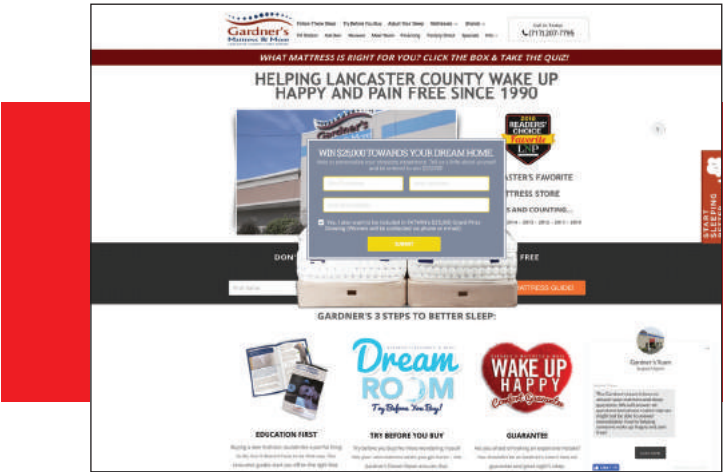
In your advertising. Often you have limited space in your advertising messages. Expand your messages by directing readers to a specific page on your website where you can offer to email them information about additional savings or bonuses based on the content or subject of the advertisement.

At home shows or events: When you exhibit at a home show or external event, offer shoppers the opportunity to enter a contest to win something of value in a contest by completing a simple entry form.

Conclusion

Great marketers maintain a well-organized and properly engaged customer email list. This list is the foundation on which you can rest easy in the knowledge that no matter what any advertiser or vendor does, or may change with or without notice, you are secure that you will not sink in the quicksand of higher costs, loss of control and lower response rates.

About Jeff Giagnocavo: Jeff Giagnocavo is co-owner of Gardner's Mattress & More and the co-creator of Mattress Retailer Weekly. Mattress Retailer Weekly is shared with subscribers every week so retailers can get a supply of customer acquisition ideas, stay ahead of the competition and increase sales tickets. Get your FREE subscription by visiting www.MattressRetailerWeekly.com or text MRW to 484-303-4300. Questions about this article or mattress retailing in general can be directed to Jeff at JeffG@furninfo.com.



Retailer Gardner's Mattress & More offers six different opportunities for prospective customers who visit www.GardnersMattressAndMore.com to leave their email addresses. When first visiting the website, they see a pop up window that asks them to leave first name, last name and email address to be included in a Grand Prize drawing for \$25,000. The actual home page image on the Gardner's Mattress & More website has the background darkened to allow the offer to stand out.

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CAN BE CUSTOMER SERVICE SPARKLE

by Gordon Hecht

Five steps to help your people develop better phone skills and get rid of phone system features that annoy your customers.

I can think of a thousand other things I'd rather do than call Customer Service! For me it ranks somewhere between pre-need funeral planning and a root canal. In typical twenty-first century dutiful customer fashion, I always try to find the answer to my question on a company's website FAQs, or through common questions found on Amazon or other third party sites. But once in a while I have to do the dread dial into the abyss known as Customer Service.

Best & Worst

Despite what you may think, hotels and airlines are not that bad. I can normally connect with a live human being in about two to three steps. Medium size retailers are usually okay too. It's generally easy to get a clerk or sales person who can answer my question. It may seem counter intuitive, but the companies who are supposed to be communications experts seem to be the worst at communicating!

That would be Cable and Cell Phone Companies.

I know this seems like it might be the beginning of a rant, but please bear with me. Imagine my dismay this past week when I needed to contact my cell phone company with a simple question about a service option.

Talking To A Computer

I checked their website first, and

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8.5" x 11"	\$32 ea.	\$32 ea.	\$29 ea.	\$28 ea.	\$27 ea.

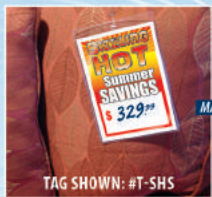
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"Top class organizations

have greeting scripts and train their people to use them. They also listen in to conversations to make sure the scripts are used."

there was a vague answer, similar to my prom date's answer from long ago, no real commitment, not a yes, not a no. Perhaps waiting for a better offer! I thought I was on my way when I saw that they had an easy three-digit number to dial for customer service. After I dialed it, I was pleased to know that they recognized my number. The sweet computer generated voice even gave me a two minute and fifteen second rundown on the amount of my present bill, when they received my last payment, how much data I used, and how many times I ordered Chinese Food for delivery. (Press #1 for Kung Pao Tofu, press #2 to make it extra spicy.) All good to know, but not what I was after. Since this was not my first rodeo, I informed Miss Computer that I wanted "Representative". She quickly responded that it seemed that I wanted a representative, and that most answers could be found on their website, and then repeated my billing info along with a review of orders to Pizza King.

Miss Computer and I tangled for a half-dozen rounds; me repeating REPRESENTATIVE and she stirring up memories of bills long ago paid. I am not sure if my mobile company measures how many rounds or how many decibels, but I must have reached that limit when they (finally) switched me over to Wilfreda.

Wilfreda Picks Up

You might think that you'd have to feel sorry for poor Wilfreda, as she was about to feel the wrath of my frustration. However, Wilfreda, started the conversation by introducing herself and asking, "How can I make your day SPARKLE." We Buckeyes of Ohio rarely have a day that SPARKLES, and it brought a smile to my face and instantly changed my disposition. She asked my name. I typically spell my last name, because of the way it sounds. Wilfreda noted that it was misspelled in their system and fixed it on the spot. After I told her what I needed, she assured me that we could fix it on this call-TODAY!

We started by her asking me to find an application on my phone. At first I could not find it, and apologized for the extended time. She responded, "My job is to serve you, and I will wait for you." After I found the application, she told me what to change. She needed to do a few things on her end, and asked if I was OK with waiting. How could I say no? Whatever needed to be downloaded was downloading, and instead of hold music, Wilfreda asked me about my summer vacation plans. When I told her where we were going, she remarked that she would also like to go there someday, and that I probably felt very lucky and fortu-

nate to travel. In the conversation she also told me where she was based (the Philippines) and that I should plan a trip there someday.

In no time (or what seemed like no time-compared to endless hold music droning of 101 Strings plays Led Zeppelin) the problem was resolved and we said goodbye. Within moments I received a text from Wilfreda thanking me for my business and wishes that all problems were resolved.

Phone Tips For Your Stores

Chances are good that customers who call your store as well as prospective buyers don't have to wrestle with endless prompts to get to a real person. And you probably don't outsource your call center to people 10,000 miles from your store, but chances are you can benefit from the following seven points that include service that Wilfreda provided so expertly.

1. Phone answering is both art and science.

You probably invested hours in training your sales and delivery teams, but likely missed the chapter on phone etiquette. Top class organizations have greeting scripts and train their people to use them. They also listen in on employees' conversations to make sure the scripts are being used. Imagine

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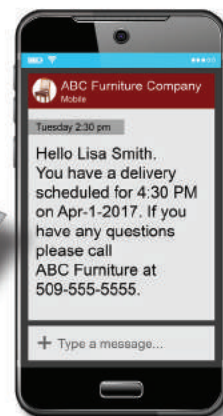
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answering EVERY call with "Thank you for calling My Store - How can we make your day SPARKLE?"

2. People call your stores with problems and questions every day.

They want resolution of their issues

"Never end the day without touching base with your caller. People appreciate a quick 'I just wanted you to know we are still working on this call.'"

in just one phone call. Therefore, empower every associate who answers the phone to resolve issues and supply answers to questions on the first go-around.

3. Not everything can be resolved quickly.

Whether it's checking inventory, contacting a delivery driver, or fixing a warranty issue, sometimes a second call is necessary. No matter what follow-up needs to be done, never let a business day end without touching base with your caller. People appreciate a quick "I just wanted you to know we are still working on this" call.

4. Do more than what is required.

Wilfreda noticed my name was spelled wrong in her system. That means every bill, email, and direct mail piece also had my name

spelled wrong. Everybody likes their name spelled right. Just simply checking that, along with address and email can make you an unsung hero.

5. Hold music or beeps can be annoying!

Check what your callers are hearing. Dial your own store and ask to be put on hold. Get out that fancy smart-phone and press the timer application. Let it run 90 seconds. If it seems like the longest minute and a half of your lifetime, imagine how your paying customers feel!

6. It is always the (BLANK) season!

It's always some sort of season; vacation season, back to school season, or holiday season. Wilfreda changed my mindset from disgruntled caller to calm conversant by asking about my summer

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"Empower every associate

who answers the phone to resolve issues and supply answers to questions on the first go-around."

plans. The Number One subject that people like to talk about is... THEMSELVES. Showing your interest in their plans and dreams can be a game changer. You might have noticed that Wilfreda did not "One Up" me either. She mentioned how she always wanted to go where I was going, and did not say "it's too hot there", or "I'd rather go to Hawaii."

7. A follow up text is an extra treat.

With so many callers using mobile

phones, you have a great shot at returning a text to that phone. A simple "Thank you for calling" or "Thanks for making my day sparkle" serves as an electronic Thank You card, takes 10 seconds to send, and will build a crowd of raving fans for your business.

Overall I was satisfied with my cell phone company, now I am a fan. I like the price, equipment and applications. I won't ever call them "APPS". That's so I won't get them confused with the real "APPS" like egg rolls, wontons, garlic knots, or

bruschetta.

About Gordon Hecht: Gordon Hecht is Senior Manager In-Store Concepts for Serta Simmons Bedding Company, introducing and expanding bedding business in conventional and non-traditional venues. He started his 30+ years experience in the Home Furnishings industry in Las Vegas, NV as a delivery helper and driver and later served in sales, retail management and consulting roles. Questions and comments can be directed to him at ghecht@serta.com.

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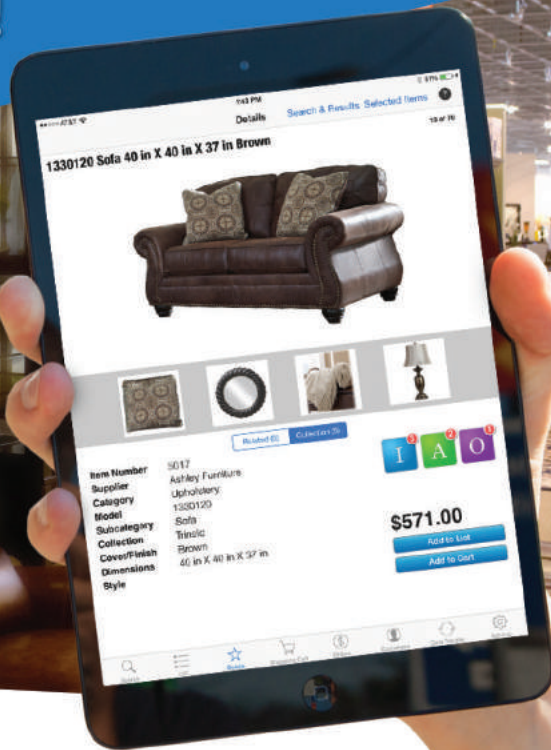
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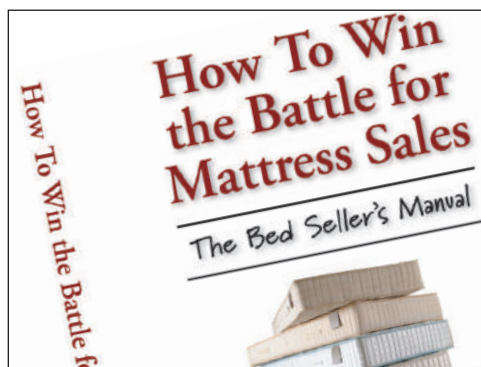
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