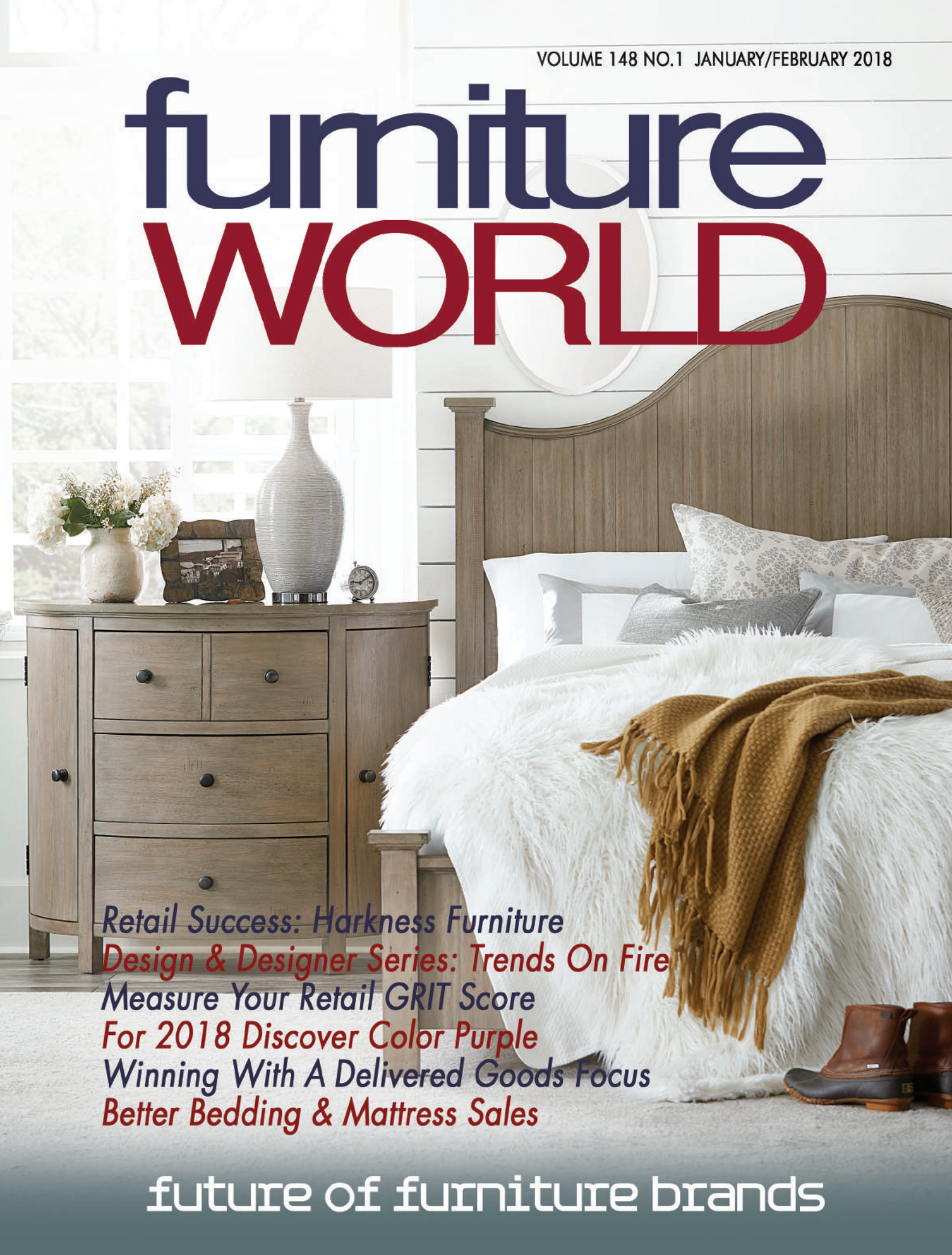


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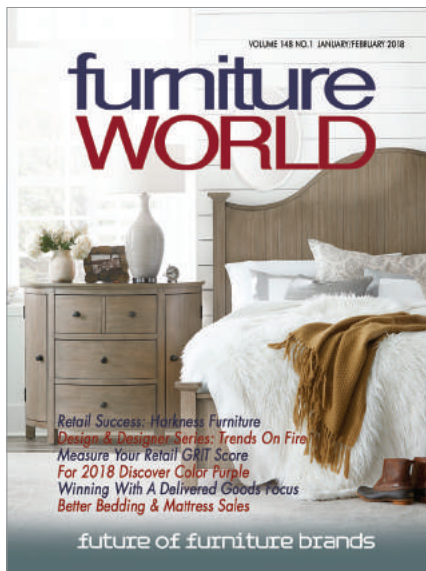
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FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE

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COVER: Pictured is a selection from the Hideaway collection from Legends Furniture that includes bedroom, dining, entertainment and occasional furniture. Featuring refined rustic planking, subtly distressed on an Orchard Grey finish, this feature-rich collection makes a relaxing statement that says, "It's me time". See more about Legends on page 26 in this issue, or visit <https://www.legendsfurniture.com>.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Workplace Harassment... What Can Be Done?

For this first issue of 2018, Furniture World's Retail Editor Janet Holt-Johnstone suggested that I write about, "Something happy, up-beat, optimistic." Instead, I decided to go in another direction.

I'm confident that many of you have given some recent thought to updating your workplace harassment policies and education.

Some states mandate that companies of a certain size do classroom or other "effective" training. But, even if your company is subject to such a mandate, the question becomes, is effective education even possible?

Having strong, clear policies and procedures in place and letting supervisors and line employees know about them, can be effective in protecting your company from liability, and provide some cover from PR disasters. That's the good news.

The bad news is, a two-hour seminar is unlikely to change employees' undesirable behaviors. A recent article in "Scientific American" reported, "Training about sexual harassment often is also geared to increase employees' attitudes about the seriousness of harassment... Unfortunately, research does not support these effects. Neither students nor working adults showed any change after training, in their personal attitudes about harassment or in their perceptions of organizational tolerance for it."

It seems that corporations have a stronger track record of encouraging bad behavior than discouraging it. Punishment is not wholly effective in changing behaviors, because thoughts and feelings leading to inappropriate behavior are not typically under conscious control noted an article on this topic in "Psychology Today".

So, if personal attitudes are so hard to change, what can be done? Here are some suggestions:

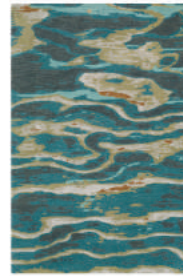
- Address your organization's cultural environment.
- Make sure everyone knows that top management takes this issue very seriously.
- Set clear objectives so employees know what you expect.
- Encourage employees to "own" the process.
- Encourage dialogue.

Please let me know your thoughts, policies, success or failures with regard to this issue. As always, your comments will be appreciated!

Regards,

Russell Bienenstock
Editorial Director/CEO
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POINT-COUNTERPOINT

Do Industry brands matter anymore? Why it's the ELEPHANT in the room.

by Bill Napier & Ed Tashjian

Bill says, "We're not driving your father's Oldsmobile, so stop looking for spare parts!" Ed says, "Unless you are a discerning bull or a protective rancher, all cows tend to look alike!"

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

Point: Bill Napier

It's easy to understand why super-regionals like Bob's and Art Van are investing so much to grow. They see a market void that can and needs to be filled. I blame a lot of that void on our manufacturers for not stepping up with excellent marketing to help their retail customers educate and engage consumers.

First, The Bad News: This is just the beginning. Armed with wallets burgeoning with cash from industry outsiders, these retailers will continue to grow their footprints. Along the way, they will look for ways to decrease product costs and raise margins, and they'll do it by sourcing their own products! That cannot be good news for their present

suppliers or for those retailers who compete with them.

Next, More Bad News: We are a \$100BN+ category that is still somewhat trapped in a 70's, 80's and 90's marketing paradigm when business always seemed to be good. There were a few very powerful brands back then, brands people recognized and sought out. Not so much anymore because today, brands have promoted themselves into anonymity, by doing nothing!

When I joined the industry, as an "outsider", I was told that the function of an experienced marketing person like myself was to focus on furniture shows.

OK, I got that, but when I questioned what my role should be after each market, I didn't get an answer. That was probably because no one ever really had put much thought into that. The goal of getting placements and market penetration at the furniture markets made total sense, but then what? What about helping those retailers who purchased products at market increase their own, as well as the manufacturer's sales

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"Big, super-regionals

will source direct, effectively cutting out manufacturing brands. And if you're selling on Amazon, you're paying 15+ percent anyway!" - Bill Napier

velocity? Apparently our industry's business plan was based on hope! Now, after all these years, we still go to market, and spend a ton of money promoting our brands to get placements, a good and necessary process. Many brands do an incredible job toward that end. Then, after the markets we all go home and abandon all the marketing of those brands until the next furniture show.

I can't understand why a manufacturing brand would not arm their retail customers with sales and marketing materials that define their mission, vision, product attributes and more, to position and differentiate their products from the commoditization of everything in this industry. By commoditization, I mean that the primary brand platform out there is SALE with some differentiation by using the words Anniversary, Warehouse, Liquidation, Labor Day, etc., before the word SALE. The result is that industry brands and their products have become largely undifferentiated in the minds of consumers. And, industry manufacturers have allowed this to happen by not promoting their brand equity.

ers can level the playing field is by using technology, but most ignore it. I've worked with many technology companies specializing in augmented reality, artificial Intelligence, visual search, live video chat, in-store analytics, in-store heat mapping and more. The common reaction our industry has to these technologies is to say there is no interest, it's too expensive, or respond with a "deer in the headlights" scenario. My response, "You're not driving your father's Oldsmobile anymore, so stop looking for spare parts!"

There is a lack of brand presence on the Internet as well, with only a handful of great furniture manufacturer's websites. Most of them are geared towards furniture wholesale buyers. They ignore the more than 60 percent of consumers that search for brand information online. Whenever I buy something new, I always check the manufacturer, customer reviews and more before I buy. I bet you do, too. Herein lies the manufacturer's chance to BE A BRAND. Instead of being basic, why not try inspiring? When they enter your website ask them:

- How can we inspire you today?
- What rooms do you want to decorate today?
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Furniture manufacturing brands missed the Internet revolution and are ignoring its impact even today. They sat back and said selling online would never work because people must see, touch, and experience their products in stores. Enter Amazon, Wayfair, Overstock, and others and for many years, they still turned a blind-eye, and many still do, even though online sales of furniture increase by double digits

every year and many predict by 2020, it will account for just about all furniture sold.

According to Business Insider, "Overall, the furniture retail category, which includes home goods, is one of the fastest-growing segments in e-commerce at the moment. BI Intelligence estimates that Americans will spend \$38 billion buying furniture online in 2016..."

Imagine what it will be in 2020? BI predicts 32 percent of all furniture sales will be done online, and other research shows that prediction is real, too. So much for the touchy feely excuse, huh?

Brands waste money on room scene product photography, producing catalogs and other antiquated marketing materials instead of standardizing their products so retailers can push out those products on their websites. They don't invest in product content, in product videos, and I guarantee they won't invest in augmented reality imagery either. Why do I say this? It's because I've lived it. For years I worked to get manufacturing brands to standardize their data. Most manufacturers didn't have

a clue why this was needed, and worse, where they could find the data to do this. One major brand told me they kept their product data in PowerPoint and updated it from there. OMG!

I know what many were thinking. They didn't, and still don't want to show all their great products because the competition might see it and knock it off. Get over it! They acted like they had never heard of Google search or Google images. Just enter an SKU number in search and/or upload an image to Google images and find, "The emperor has no clothes". Everything and everybody is transparent on the Internet, take advantage of it, don't hide from it.

Bad News Again!: So, what is the state of marketing in this industry?

- Many manufacturers don't have a formal marketing department, and if they do, the people are generally not consumer marketers. They usually came up through the ranks and are focused on furniture shows, not marketing.
- Most manufacturers don't invest

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"I blame a lot of that void

on our manufacturers for not stepping up to help their retail customers educate and engage consumers with their marketing." - Bill Napier

in selling tools, both for their website and their salespeople. Few have available POS that shows different fabric and wood colors available. Where are the product videos that romance and show all the attributes, product functions and more?

- Many manufacturers don't train their sales reps to understand consumer demographics or how they can and should help retailers understand trends, so they can sell more. Stop with showing the pictures and order taking already! That can all be automated online.

OK, enough lecturing, let's discuss the main subject, Your Brand.

Connecting Consumers With Your Brand

1. Whether you are a retail brand or a manufacturing brand this is the first and most important idea for you to consider. Instead of making your brand about YOU, make it about THEM, your consumer. Inspire, educate and motivate them.

2. Research and embrace how consumers interact with search, with social platforms, and the in-store experience. You'll quickly realize they are very visual

first, content/conversation inspired second, idea focused third, and concerned with functionality fourth. All these four elements are wrapped up into the complete value equation. Help them! Did you know that HOME is the #1 searched term on Pinterest?

3. Inspire people on your website. Take a lesson from Duncan Hines' corporate website www.duncanhines.com. They don't talk much about the company. Instead they ask, "What would you like to bake today?" The website inspires visitors to think differently about baking with THEIR products. Imagine if your website invited potential customers to experience what you have to offer by asking, "What room would you like to create/design/accessorize today?"

4. If it's a budget issue, consider reading the article at www.napiermkt.com titled, "Don't Be Fooled - The Real Cost of Hiring An Employee Vs. A Consultant/Agency. You will be shocked when you see this in-depth comparison.

Blasphemy

E-Commerce & Brands: Notes eMarketer (<https://www.emarketer.com>), "Retail ecommerce sales of furniture and home furnishings will grow 16.4 percent in 2017 to

reach \$35.95 billion, and will total \$62.36 billion by 2021."

Yep, many manufacturing brands will need to sell direct to consumers at MSRP or at a reasonable retail gross margin. If they don't, they will lose big because, those big super-regionals will source direct, effectively cutting out manufacturing brands. And if you're selling on Amazon, you're paying 15+ percent anyway!

So, not to offend their good retail customers, manufacturing brands will also need to offer consumers in-store pickup/delivery based on their retailer customers' zip-codes. This way retailers stay involved and profit from the sale, plus have the opportunity to develop consumer relationships and up-sell. Think

"If you are not demonstrably different and better to a specific target, and you cannot explain your superiority, you are not a marketer, but rather a commodities trader." - Ed Tashjian

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the way Amazon does with their 15 percent transaction fee. To the retailer that's found money.

If the consumer chooses to have products shipped direct, without a retailer's involvement, the retailer should get a percentage of the sale anyway. Again, think Amazon's fee.

Bill's Conclusion

With all that has been said, do manufacturing brands even matter in the furniture category?

My guess is probably not, and with what I witness daily, it may never matter unless they decide to

change from being irrelevant to relevant. They are commoditized for now, but will possibly be extinct tomorrow, joining with all the other manufacturers, retailers, and jobs we've lost, which I personally do NOT want to happen.

So, if you are reading this and represent a manufacturing brand, ask yourself this question: Why have you given up on the consumer after the investments you've made bringing products to market and getting that retail placement?

Like my Grandfather always said, "You'll never learn younger", and we're a very old industry!

Counterpoint: Ed Tashjian

For many of the reasons that Bill discusses in his rant, branding in the home furnishings industry is not only critical; it is essential if manufacturers have any hope of competing in the next decade. We have many of the same observations, but draw different conclusions.

A Herd of Cows: Let's stop for a minute and think about what branding is, and its origins. Branding was developed for livestock to be able to tell them apart. It showed ownership of an undifferentiated commodity. I share Bill's conclusion that most furniture manufacturers' products are mostly undifferentiated, with websites and advertising that also tend to look nearly identical. Put your hand over the logo from any furniture advertising or website,

"Take a lesson from the Duncan Hines corporate website. They don't talk much about the company. Instead they ask, "What would you like to bake today?" - Bill Napier



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"The goal of branding

is not increasing brand awareness, but rather relevance and resonance to a specific segment with specific needs and wants that is sizable, reachable and accessible." - Ed Tashjian

and try to tell them apart. Couple that with the fact that all beds and dining tables conform to specific standards, the designs are often copied from one another, and that the average size of an image on most furniture websites are about two inches wide. What you will realize is that they look no different than a herd of cows! Those of us who visit dozens of showrooms each market lament that by the end of the week, it all tends to look the same. Furniture is fungible. Unless you are a discerning bull or a protective rancher, all cows tend to look-alike. Branding was intended to claim property, to show ownership and keep less reputable ranchers from rustling heifers.

The essence of marketing is differentiation. Your brand stands for how you are different and better. If you are not demonstrably different and better to a specific target, and you cannot explain your superiority, you are not a marketer, but rather a commodities trader. It can be done. What is more fungible than coffee or sneakers? And yet somehow Starbucks and Nike have developed great brands. You can too.

Let's look at a few of the reasons why furniture companies have not effectively branded, and discuss the

implications in the future.

Disintermediation: There is a long chain between manufacturer and the end consumer. This chain has been lengthened through sourcing. At each stage of production through delivery, there are a variety of middlemen that each try to capture value. Because of the competitive nature of furniture, low barriers to entry and oversupply, many intermediaries are sharing a slim margin. It's a problem. Successful brands cannot be built without gross margins.

Slim Margins: Slim margins mean small or non-existent funds for consumer brand building. It is no secret that it is difficult to make money in the furniture industry. Whenever supply outweighs demand, competitive pressure forces pricing down. The next time you read a magazine or watch television and view a commercial that you have seen many times, ask yourself what the gross margins are on the product. In every case, they will be very generous. (This is one of the rare times I can use the word "every" and still be right.) Furniture is a durable and not a consumable. Consumer advertising is worth the investment for brands that can generate profits from con-

sumers who purchase frequently over their lifetimes. That's why it pays for toothpaste, deodorant and laundry detergent to advertise. Unfortunately, the time between furniture purchases is far longer, and less predictable.

Retailer As The Brand: When a consumer buys a tube of Crest toothpaste, they consider Crest to be brand, and not the store where they purchased it. The same is true of durables like refrigerators and appliances. In our industry, retailers have become the primary brand, with some exceptions. Verticals like Ethan Allen, Restoration Hardware, Ashley, La-Z-Boy, Bassett and Sleep Number have significant brand identification. There are also a few furniture manufacturers that have some brand equity left over from

"Branding was developed for livestock to be able to tell them apart.

It showed ownership of an undifferentiated commodity." - Ed Tashjian



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"When a consumer buys a tube of Crest toothpaste, they consider Crest to be a brand. In our industry retailers have become the primary brand."

- Ed Tashjian

previous advertising, but that is fading with time.

Marketing Talent: The furniture industry attracts and keeps weak marketing talent. Frankly, most marketing jobs in the furniture industry are small "m" marketing services jobs. The primary responsibilities are photography, cataloging and maintaining a website. There is little strategy, branding or innovation, the kinds of things that excite true marketers. Typically, there is a vice president of sales and marketing in most manufacturing companies, suggesting that furniture manufacturers can't tell the difference! And, there is little upward mobility. When is the last time you heard of the marketing guy being elevated to become the president of a furniture company?

Relevance & Resonance: First and foremost, what brands represent

must be unique. Manufacturing brands must stand for something more meaningful than the platitudes and pieties of quality construction. Marketing isn't complicated. It's about segmentation, targeting and positioning. In other words, brands can't be everything to everyone. Good marketers must pick a segment and create a product and an experience strategy to meet their customers' needs better than anyone else. Then, they must demonstrate how they are different and better at every touch point by comparing their products to something consumers already know. The goal of branding is not increasing brand awareness, but rather relevance and resonance to a specific segment with specific needs and wants that is sizable, reachable and accessible. Brand awareness does not matter if you have a flawed business model. You must be able to communicate how you are different and better.

Ironically, furniture may be the cheapest category in which to brand. People who are interested in the home are already segmented by the magazines to which they choose to subscribe. Furniture manufacturers pay about half the going rate in these publications because the magazines are

so hungry for indigenous advertising. With an advertising budget of \$5 million, a manufacturing brand could own a category. I can't think of any industry as large as ours where this is true.

"Manufacturers can either choose to sell directly and manage logistics of delivery, or they can work together with retailers to sell through their brands in the marketplace." - Ed Tashjian



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"Typically, there is

a vice president of sales and marketing in most manufacturing companies, suggesting that manufacturers can't tell the difference!"

Ed's Solution

In the coming decades, manufacturers have two choices, both of which require branding. They can either choose to sell directly and manage delivery logistics, or they can work together with retailers to sell through their brands in the marketplace. The first option is somewhat risky. Currently, about 11 percent of furniture is sold through e-commerce, and it tends to be lower priced items. To compete requires a dedicated differentiation strategy, innovation, a different kind of packaging and an acceptable return policy for both parties. This channel will continue to grow and peak at 25-30 percent when hybrids make e-commerce

irrelevant. And, selling the same branded product through e-commerce alienates retailers.

The more obvious choice is to work with retailers rather than to compete against them. Rather than dumping furniture on their doorstep and leaving the selling up to them, manufacturers need a thoughtful strategy for selling the product through to the consumer. Today, most manufacturing marketing efforts focus on the High Point and Las Vegas Markets. These are important, but it shouldn't end there. A true marketing-focused company would start with the end consumer and work backward. They would collaborate with retailers to make the whole furniture buying experience more emotion-

ally satisfying because branding transcends a product-only relationship.

About Ed Tashjian: *Tashjian Marketing provides senior marketing leadership to the Home Furnishings Industry. It specializes in business analytics and in helping its clients to segment the market, define and communicate a sustainable differentiated value proposition. Get more information at www.Tashjianmarketing.com or call (828) 855-0100.*

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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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Nancy Fire

DESIGN & DESIGNER

by Melody Doering & Russell Bienenstock

Product designer and trend expert Nancy Fire talks with Furniture World Magazine about consumer, color and style trends that will impact furniture retailing in 2018.

Furniture World recently spoke with entrepreneur, designer, speaker, blogger, Nancy Fire about her work and what she sees trending in retail and design. Nancy and her husband Neil Breslau founded Design Works International, a lifestyle brand studio located in New York City. She is its Creative Director. They also launched CreativeCorporate™, to guide product development for clients. Nancy says the company is the perfect combination of art and business. Besides being an in-demand speaker in the design industry, her lively blog, color, chaos, and creativity, allows readers to glimpse some of the inspirations for Nancy's designs, gained through her extensive travels. Nancy is also design director of HGTV HOME, a branch of HGTV, and creative and design director of Kelly Ripa Home.

in a creative field. I had done a lot of photography, ceramics, print making – I love art and design – but I didn't know if I could make a living as an artist. After graduation, this was 1983, I worked in photography for a subsidiary of the ad agency BBDO. Almost four years later, I realized that the job really wasn't for me. I just did not feel creative enough.

"It happened that I met a guy downtown who was opening a fashion business, a design studio. During the course of about six years, we took the company from three people to 60. It was a great opportunity for me to enjoy my creative side.

"There came a time for me to create a path for myself – to start a business. With my husband, who was on Wall Street at the time, we created Design Works International."

Getting Started

Furniture World asked Nancy about how she came to originate Design Works International.

"I started my creative education at SUNY OSWEGO earning a BFA in Design. As much as I loved fine art, I needed to find a paying job

Creative Ventures

Fast-forward 30 years. "Although we started out as more of a fashion studio working in the garment center, we've become more of an interior studio working for many home-related companies. My forte

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"It's about being social,
having dinner parties, gathering and creating
experiences. Furnishings retailers who don't
address this, and other macro trends, are truly going
to have a hard time."

- Nancy Fire



is understanding macro trends, what's actually happening in the world. Since both of my parents had been in retail, I learned to recognize trends and the importance of getting in and out of products at the right time. I'm a design expert for many companies, ranging from GAF, a roofing company, to burton + BURTON, and, of course, I am the design director for HGTV and HGTV HOME, which reaches a broad demographic.

"Design Works International is a creative think tank that employs more than 20 in-house designers. We also have another company, Design2Print, that prints digitally on fabric. We work with famous runway fashion designers, and on the Marie Antoinette exhibit that is in the permanent collection at the Metropolitan Museum of Art. We are truly diversified. My 83-year-old mother still asks me what we do – honestly it just changes daily."

Plotting Trends

"We live in a fast-changing world. This change is not only being caused by millennials; older generations are also looking at the world differently, and are buy-

ing differently. It is important for marketers and producers to understand what's the right path and the wrong path. Our expertise in art and design, and knowledge of the industry helps companies make sound marketing choices.

"My assistants and I create color stories, trend ideas, trend boards, and style guides to help clients gain perspective on the market today. We don't just analyze trends, and create a general trend book for the season that gets sold to many companies. We are different. We're very specific. We target our clients for who they are.

"For example, as the design director for HGTV, I might come up with five major trends each year that filter through HGTV HOME. We then create videos around those trends, as well as special color cards. On the furniture side, we work with HGTV HOME Design Studios at Bassett to guide creation of furniture that will be right for HGTV HOME. HGTV HOME design studios are exclusive to Bassett and are in all their stores and galleries. It's a custom program where consumers work with designers to tailor their interiors to their needs. The design center is really this creative bank of interior design at a more

commercial style and sensibility."

Addressing Consumer Wants

We asked Nancy to explain her targeted process.

"In our business, the marketing perspective is important; the design perspective is important; and, especially now, the philosophy of how life should be lived is important because design has become personalized. Everyone is a designer, thank you HGTV!

"HGTV has allowed today's consumers to understand that they can be the arbiters of style.

"People are spending more money on their homes than on their fashion because they're proud of their homes; they're proud to have friends and family over. It's about being social, having dinner parties, gathering and creating experiences.

"Home furnishing retailers who don't address this and other macro trends, are truly going to have a hard time.

"Customers also want to know what they are buying, and why. They want to hear a story about the kind of cushion they're sitting on. Is it an eco-cushion? Is it stuffed



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DESIGNER **NANCY FIRE**

with down? They are conscious and conscientious consumers, with a world-wide perspective. This is another element that retailers ignore at their own peril.

"My design work is also guided by a lot of street style, what people are wearing and why they're wearing it. Wherever I am, whatever city or country I'm in, I live in stores, looking for the hip retailers. I speak to shop owners to find out what's selling and why."

Changing Ideas

"Furniture buyers have changed and so must furniture retailing. We have to abide by new rules and understand that our customers' life choices are important.

"The furnishings world has gotten more casual. That doesn't mean that people are going out and only buying thrift-store pieces. Millennials want to be able to mix

and match pieces that are new and old.

"The retailers that are doing it the right way are busy. Retailers, like Bon Marché in Paris, have a great way of mixing and matching. In both their fashion and home stores, they will bring in reclaimed items and mix them with new items. It's like high and low. It's a different way of thinking. People aren't buying everything from one store, they're picking and choosing. The best retailers are collaborating, creating looks and selections their customers find interesting.

"I think Anthropologie is a perfect example. Their home line in London is incredibly crazy and beautiful – well thought out. Unfortunately, I see more of that kind of creativity

happening overseas."

Staying Au Courant

We asked Nancy how retailers can stay current with the latest trends if they are not able to travel to all the shows or explore major European cities and stores.

"While there are a lot of design assets on the Internet, furniture retailers really need to have someone who has the time and talent to take that information and bring back what is appropriate for them. Without that, retailers are going to miss important links.

"It is worth looking at website sites like Refinery 29, Pop Sugar, Apartment Therapy, hgtv.com and



Custom headboards, ottomans, chairs and sofas products developed by Nancy Fire for HGTV Home and Bassett for 2017. The products incorporate trends she identified during her overseas travels. Custom upholstery gives the consumer many creative choices to choose from when working with Bassett interior designers.



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Design Milk. There is an endless supply of free information out there, and help from companies that can guide retailers in the right direction.

"Years ago, everything was price-driven. Today, however, design is at the forefront of retail. Retailers need to demand from their manufacturers something that is different. They need to ask, 'How are you going to show that you really believe in your product?' As a retailer, I would want manufacturers to tell me what I should have and why I should have it.

"There is a disconnect between the ability of manufacturers to relate to what retailers need and are demanding. The good news is that I see a lot of retailers changing their corporate sensibility. They are bringing in smart people to make

sure that they are on the same page with their suppliers by improving communication."

Long-Term Outlook

Furniture World asked Nancy about retail opportunities over the next five to 10 years.

"Retail is getting smarter with real estate by planning better and picking locations that are best for their product. There's an opportunity for many retailers to re-evaluate, to put the right stores in the right places.

"People want experiences; they are aspirational. There's an opportunity for more furniture retailers to make their stores into destinations. Just look at what Jordan's does. There are so many opportunities for telling a story, for targeting and

reinvention.

"There is also the adaptation of technologies, such as virtual reality. Going forward, stores won't need to have as much retail space because most of what they will be selling will be online. Clever use of retail space will allow a smaller portion of product to be shown in-store. Consumers will get a welcoming in-store experience by taking up the invitation from retailers to meet and

"There is a disconnect between the ability of manufacturers to relate to what retailers need and are demanding."



Pictured below are Nancy Fire and Neil Breslau (Nancy's husband and business partner) at the New York City offices of Design Works International.

At left on Nancy and Neil's NYC terrace is Nancy's Studio NYC Design fabric "Current" from her licensed line of over-the-counter fabrics manufactured by PK Lifestyles. Mixing substrates, especially in tabletop settings, glass, brass, ceramic, black matte metal and wood is trendy. The bench cushions are from her Studio NYC Design Collection, "Riverbed" in Midnight color-way.

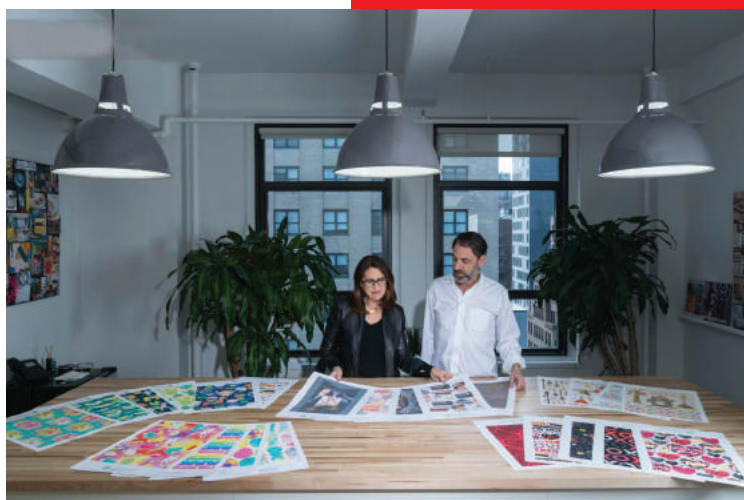


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MOOD BOARDS



Developed by Design Works International, these mood boards were developed for HGTV's 2017 season. Each trend represents a lifestyle that is specific to color, texture and style.

Far left: **Terra-Cottage** redefines global style with handcrafted, artisan techniques, woven textures, pottery and ceramics, embroidery, embossed leather, painted wood, natural fibers and dyes. Also, finishes in rich sunbaked earth tones, clay, wood, straw, stone, felt, linen, wool, leather, organic textures and imperfections, wood grain, and stone veining.

Near left: **Color Form** is a meld of contrasting elements: natural + man-made, playful + sophisticated, hard + soft, classic + modern. It embraces the unexpected with saturated pastels and tonal neons, mixed finishes, resin, lacquer, plastic, clay and rubber.

greet, to find out about the retailer, and to be introduced to the brand, all of which complements the digital sales experience.

"Although online will be a bigger part of retail in the future, I do believe that people will still want to go into a brick-and-mortar to touch and feel. I think it's the retailer who sets the mood for the consumer going forward.

"On one hand, we see many stores that do not personalize the

experience for their customers. Then there are stores like Anthropologie who do a much better job because they have a specific target market. I truly believe that one of the best opportunities for retailers to free-think how they're going to become a destination is to focus on personalization."

Creating The Story

We questioned if the retail starting point would be to define what the customer experience is, rather than why they are in business.

"Absolutely. So many retailers are lost in a mindset of trying to be all things to all people, or are trying to focus on a specific target demographic without considering how the world is thinking today. These stores won't be able to generate enough interest to become shopping destinations. What's needed is something interesting,

something new, something that provides a learning opportunity to make customers feel better about themselves. Without that, retail can appear unreliable or promotional. People are curious: they want their curiosity to lead them to a place that's pleasing, a place where they will want to buy.

"Creating that place means that retailers need to present a lifestyle story. One retailer that always does a good job in this regard is Target. They've been able to capture the essence of affordable products at a particular moment in time. They provide inspiration for those on a budget who know what they like, but do not want to shop at a store they can't afford, where they might feel uncomfortable. The same message is attractive to savvy shoppers who want a good price."

TRENDS: Coziness

Furniture World asked Nancy for

"Creating mood boards like these set the tone for your in-store displays. They are a lot like personalized Pinterest boards."

"Consumers crave visuals

that spark interior ideas for color, texture and style. Mood boards help them identify with the type of style they would like to emulate in their own homes."

information on trends.

"People want their homes to be cozy. The trend of hygge (hoo-guh) captures this idea. It's a Danish term, whose English equivalent is coziness. If you look at hygge, where the trend is coming from, it is about nesting; it is about being cozy; it's about loving your home environment.

"It is a designer sensibility that's definitely filtering down through the mainstream. I am noticing a lot of furniture is becoming softer, a little bit more rounded. It's a cozy style that people are looking for in their homes at all price points. That

also means we are seeing many more cozy fabrics with a lot more texture."

TRENDS: Texture

"It's really nice to see texture coming back in creative ways. At the recent High Point Market in October, there were a lot of wood accents mixed with other substrates. For instance, wood with textured wood; wood with ceramic; and, wood with different types of fabric in interplay. We saw people mixing substrates – it's not matchy-matchy anymore. There is colored wood,

painted wood, a lot of texture, and a lot of detailing to make furniture look a little bit more one-of-a-kind, without looking at all do-it-yourself.

"These designs have an artisan feel at a commercial level. More creativity is creeping into furniture design today. There is more upholstered detailing and innovation in fabric constructions."

TRENDS: Color

"In terms of color for 2018, Pantone picked Ultra Violet, which I love. Sherwin Williams has named Oceanside, which is a beautiful

Near right: **Cast Shadows** was inspired by nature. Themes include sunlight, branches, ice and marble. For this trend, soft color meets strong forms, architectural and structural. Barely-there tinted neutrals plus natural colors and finishes predominate. There's movement, and color, honed marble, raw wood, concrete, linen, cast iron and matte ceramics. Design elements include leaves, petals, butterflies, iron framework lace, laser-cuts, and open iron work.

Far right: **Heirloom** is timeworn but timeless with a theme of old is new again in classic motifs such as damask, moiré, floral, and imperfect finishes. Featured are, rust and oxidation, surface abrasion, patchwork repair, luxurious materials, marble, crystal, lacquer, brass, copper, silver, pewter, and rich but timeworn tones.



"The Hygge trend it is about nesting; it is about being cozy; it's about loving your home environment."

teal that we saw all over Paris, both in retail stores and painted on walls. We are also seeing some warm colors: terra cottas and reds are coming back.

"So, the takeaway is, people are accepting color at retail. People are accepting texture at retail. People are accepting the mixing of substrates at retail. People are accepting the mixing of metal finishes throughout the home. We're even seeing people mixing metals within one area, like in the kitchen. The rules have changed a bit."

TRENDS: Inside Out

"The indoors is going out and the outdoors are coming in. It's a definite trend in what people are buying today. That's why melamine's doing so well. The patterns on the melamine have become fun and innovative – they look almost like ceramics. It's hard to tell the difference.

"We are seeing products being used both indoors and out: indoor and outdoor fabric; ottomans and pillows. People are looking to expand their living spaces. Their houses might be smaller,



their apartments might be tinier, but they love outdoor spaces. This expansion makes their homes seem bigger. I'm a fan of indoor/outdoor, and also of the high-end eco-look that doesn't say 'peace, love, and granola.' Sustainable is a trend as well, as long as it has the right design quality. Sustainable, eco-fabrics, re-purposed, recycled or reclaimed wood – all are great as long as there's a real marketing story, and a truthful one, too."

Implementing TRENDS

"Here is my philosophy: if a retailer removes two beige items from the floor, it allows the addition of two more colorful items. Customers will gravitate to products that are different, more colorful, and, interesting. One big reason why retail traffic is down is that everything

Image above is from retailer homenature with three stores in the NY Metro area. The store is known for honest design, natural materials and fair trade pricing. Their style truly defines the "hygge lifestyle" while treating the earth with respect by utilizing natural materials.

looks the same. Therefore, consumers are looking for products and ideas in places they normally wouldn't. It's not personal – it's not that they don't like brick-and-mortar retailers anymore. They still want to visit stores, but if mom 'n' pop looks dated, guess what? They won't be going back to their tried-and-true if it is letting them down.

"There are furniture shoppers, many younger people, who don't have a clue about good design.



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"Oceanside", a beautiful teal from Sherwin-Williams (left) was trending in Paris this past year. The middle picture, (Paris Maris Quarter) taken at the LE BHV department store. Trending teal and Oceanside storage accessories gave a vibrant and updated look on the retail floor. Far right from the same shopping trip (Latin Quarter) showcased a teal and black fabric pillow, on-trend, all fun upbeat colors.

They know they want it, but they don't know where to go to get design advice. There is nobody they feel they can trust. This group presents another opportunity for furniture retailers, because once you break through, get that story across to them, they will become customers for life.

"Years ago, my grandparents and great-grandparents on Manhattan's Lower East Side, were their customers' tried-and-true retailer. Their customers believed in the promise of their brand. Today, people don't believe in brands as much, so it is a

harder job for retailers to convince people why they should be a destination. A lot of that is marketing.

"Broadcast marketing platforms like HGTV are great ways to market products, but if these are unaffordable platforms for some retailers, they can advertise through digital marketing with Instagram or Facebook. With some creative marketing, a new hip look, and all of a sudden, a company that looked old can be new again."

Versatility

We wanted to know Nancy's thoughts about the importance of function.

"Function is important, and it's all about duality. What does your product do that someone else's doesn't? Do you have an ottoman that opens up as storage? Customers don't want to buy too much, but they want to buy what's right for them – and it's often not a price-driven decision. So, show that storage ottoman in five different vignettes, with four different stories that highlight its versatility. People will get the idea that there is

an opportunity to buy the ottoman today, live with it, and know that it will adapt and change for future needs.

"The retailer who shows a confusing sea of beige or black leather will only frustrate customers. Retailers should have vignettes that tell a story, and that story can be versatile. For instance: a shopper who likes both retro and vintage can buy a piece from here and from there. That customer is no longer looking to buy a serious five-piece set that can't be mixed and matched. What retailers can do is mix and match those sets so shoppers know that they don't have to buy five matching pieces. They can buy three from here and two from there in a way that looks great. Or buy three main pieces and choose from 15 accent pieces. The point is, five different shoppers can come in and buy the same concept, but each of their rooms will be customized because they won't buy the same exact pieces.

"When I was younger, technology was the future – it was like the Jetsons. The smart home is here, but people don't want it in their face. We are seeing a trend for

**"Retailers like Bon
Marché in Paris have
a great way of mixing
and matching.**

**Anthropologie's home
line in London is
incredibly crazy and
beautiful."**



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interior design to meet with technology in a way that it is available, but camouflaged."

Building Retail Traffic

We asked Nancy to expand on the idea of transformative home furnishings design leadership.

"In New York, when I walk down Columbus Avenue, or I'm in the Village, and I see so many retailers closed, my heart sinks. We have to wake up. Stores that didn't change 10 years ago are suffering because now, in order to survive, they have to make big changes in a short amount of time. How do you turn a big ship quickly?

"If I owned a furniture store or company, I would engage with my sales associates because they represent my brand. There are a lot of old-timers around, who are knowledgeable about their products but not sure how to bridge the gap when it comes to selling to a new generation.

"That doesn't mean most stores need to change 180 degrees, but they do need to do something to help new customers come to them, show them an opportunity – and for most retailers that opportunity is thinking about lifestyle.

"Retailers have to decide what that lifestyle is, and who is coming to them to find it.

"That lifestyle is often a blend:

maybe beach with a touch of urban; or urban with a touch of vintage to create a realistic lifestyle. Most people don't live in a Victorian house or dress in Victorian clothing! The world is changing and retail lifestyle presentations need to change as well. Success will come by helping customers make the right choices and make customers the arbiters of style.

"People who interact with customers must understand, be able to dramatize, and be a part of the lifestyle they are selling. It is not just throwing pieces down on the floor anymore; it's about decorating to

the hilt and creating lifestyles based on an understanding of who would live in that room.

"Finally, home furnishings retailers should pay attention to what's happening in the food industry. Fashion, home, and wellness are all connected. Wellness is strongly connected with food, which is connected with being social – gathering around a table. Larger social gatherings require bigger tables or flexible ways to increase available seating. Here is an opportunity for retailers to create interesting stories by using the intersection of fashion, furnishings, and food."

Below, color is important to include in all rooms of the home. The bedding is from Paris department store LE BHV, moderate priced, catering to more a more commercial customer. The tabletop image is from one of Nancy's favorite stores in Paris, Merci, a high-end concept store designers from all over the globe visit. The relationship of these two stores showcasing similar color in the same season is a sign that trend is truly a driver in all price categories.





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retail GRIT

THE POWER OF PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE

by Larry Mullins

This article will explain what grit is, why it matters and, most of all, how you can create a retail culture of grit.

Every year there are a few hundred furniture store start-ups.

Who will make it in brick and mortar retail furniture sales and who will fail? What's certain is that those furniture store owners who have created a culture of GRIT within their organizations will have a much better chance.

This article will explain what grit is, why it matters, and perhaps, most of all, how you can create a culture of grit, a resilient culture of grit, built of passion and perseverance in your stores.

A GRIT Success Story

Dan Erickson began his remarkable career as a delivery helper for Whitaker Furniture in the small city of North Platte, Nebraska. Later, Dan was promoted to warehouse foreman, then became a sales consultant. He eventually moved up to sales manager and then became the store's general manager. Dan Erickson persevered until he became co-owner of Whitaker Furniture in 1985. The store was re-named Erickson's Furniture, eventually expanding to

65,000 square feet of showroom space. Dan and his wife, Jeannie, recently sold their store to Bruce Furniture and retired after 32 years of serving North Platte.

I interviewed Dan Erickson after Michael Bruce, the new owner, had achieved a million dollars in volume in a six week retirement selloff. Dan said: "I wanted to sell our store to a company that would honor our values and faithfully serve the North Platte community. I also wanted someone who would retain our professional and dedicated staff. Michael Bruce exceeded my expectations and kept his promises."

What is the secret of Dan's successful career? "First of all," he explained, "I treated everyone kindly, generously and fairly. Employees, vendors, and customers. I had a smile and a warm greeting for everyone, starting with the cleaning lady. Next, I never walked by something that was wrong. If the windows were dirty, I would be the one to take responsibility and clean them. It really pays to render more service and better service than you are paid to render." It should be noted that James Whitaker appre-

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GRIT

ciated young Dan Erickson's work ethic and rewarded him with more and more responsibility. Dan's "old fashioned" philosophy is discussed in the book, "Think and Grow Rich" by Napoleon Hill. One of Hill's key adages, "Develop the habit of doing more than you are paid for."

Angela Duckworth Power and Perseverance

In 2016, Angela Duckworth wrote a very popular and worthwhile book titled, "GRIT: The Power of Passion and Perseverance". Duckworth posed these questions:

- *Who are the people at the top of your field?*
- *What are they like?*
- *What do you think makes them special?*

She doesn't mince words. Those who succeeded possessed a unique combination of passion and perseverance. "In a word, they had grit." Beyond that, regardless of their position or department, they created their own culture of grit. For

example, it would have been virtually impossible to work next to Dan Erickson and not be inspired by his passion and perseverance.

Duckworth developed what she called a "Grit Scale" (See the exhibits on page 41 and 45). Its purpose is to measure the extent individuals approach life's challenges with grit. It proved to be a reliable predictor of which West Point candidates would make it and which would wash out. It wasn't a candidate's IQ quotient, not their SAT scores, not their leadership experience, not their athletic ability. What matters is their grit. Duckworth's Grit Scale worked well for West Point candidates, but what about other disciplines? Sales for example. Next Duckworth examined sales, which she described as a profession "in which daily, if not hourly, rejection is par for the course." Og Mandino once described sales as a discipline "laden with opportunity but fraught with heartbreak and despair." Angela selected a timeshare company in which she interviewed hundreds of salespersons. Six months later she returned and learned that 55 percent of the people she had

first interviewed were no longer there. Her Grit Scale successfully predicted who would stay and who would go. In addition, the other tests for sales candidates commonly used to measure personality, like extroversion, emotional stability, and conscientiousness were not as effective as Duckworth's Grit Scale in predicting sales winners and losers.

The Chicago school system contacted Duckworth. They were very interested in identifying which students were most likely to earn their high school diplomas. She tested several thousand juniors. A year

"Og Mandino once described sales as a discipline 'laden with opportunity but fraught with heartbreak and despair'."



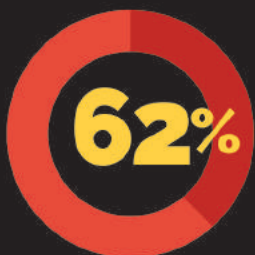
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retail GRIT

later 12 percent of these students failed to graduate. The students who graduated on schedule were decidedly grittier. Moreover, the Grit Scale was a more reliable predictor of graduation than any other factor including how conscientious they were about their studies, and even how safe they felt at school.

The Green Berets and Grit

Next Duckworth established a partnership with the Army Special Operations Forces, AKA the Green Berets. These are the Army's best trained warriors, and they are assigned the most dangerous and daunting tasks. Duckworth entered the picture after candidates had endured nine weeks of boot camp, four weeks of advanced infantry training, three weeks of airborne school, and four weeks of land navigation training. Duckworth emphasizes that all of these preliminary trainings are brutally difficult, and at every stage there are men who do not make it through. However, she notes that the Special Forces Selection Course is even harder. It is the point at which the Army decides who will and who

will not enter the final stages of Green Beret training. Just getting to this selection is quite an accomplishment. Yet, 42 percent of the candidates Duckworth studied voluntarily withdrew from the program at this point. What distinguished the successful candidates? Their grit score.

How to Create a Culture of Grit

If you are not happy with your grit score, you will be pleased to learn you can improve it. Grit can, and does, change. The secret is wrapped up in clarifying your goals, and aligning them towards a single passion of supreme importance. Duckworth devotes an interesting chapter to parenting to encourage grit in children. For the balance of this article we will focus upon Duckworth's four major components of grit: Interest, Practice, Purpose, and Hope. Duckworth's four principles can be compared to Will Roger's legendary three elements of success:

- "Know what you are doing."
- "Love what you are doing."

- "Believe in what you are doing. Yes, it's just that simple."

Regarding the last bullet point, "Believe in what you are doing," Cavett Robert had this to say: "People are persuaded more by the depth of your conviction than by the height of your logic—more by your own enthusiasm than any proof you can offer... If we could choose but one lantern to guide our footsteps over the perilous quicksands of the future it should be the guiding light of dedication."

INTEREST and Your Passion

It takes Grit to discover your passion.

Most people fail at this. In a worldwide survey of 141 nations Gallop learned that only 13 percent of adults call themselves "engaged" at work. Yet graduating students commonly hear the advice from commencement speakers: "Life is short. Follow your passion. Do something you love or you will not stick with it." Most of these students would gladly do so if they could define their "passion." Harry Emerson Fosdick, who was the

"Ducksworth's four principles

can be compared to Will Roger's three elements of success: 'Know what you are doing, Love what you are doing and Believe in what you are doing.'"

renowned minister of New York’s Riverside Church for decades, noted that it was rare when a man or woman “turns the corner of a street and turns into a new idea. That is certainly the greatest hour of many a youth’s life, especially if, as the youth faces that idea or

cause, there rises in him the invincible conviction that he belongs to it.”
If you would like to follow your passion, but have not yet found one, you must begin at the beginning: discovery. Mine was art. When I was very young I scribbled

"Other tests were not as effective as Duckworth’s Grit Scale in predicting sales winners and losers."

Grit Scale

	Not at all like me	Not much like me	Somewhat like me	Mostly like me	Very much like me
1. New ideas and projects sometimes distract me from previous ones.	5	4	3	2	1
2. Setbacks don't discourage me. I don't give up easily.	1	2	3	4	5
3. I often set a goal but later choose to pursue a different one.	5	4	3	2	1
4. I am a hard worker.	1	2	3	4	5
5. I have difficulty maintaining my focus on projects that take more than a few months to complete.	5	4	3	2	1
6. I finish whatever I begin.	1	2	3	4	5
7. My interests change from year to year.	5	4	3	2	1
8. I am diligent. I never give up.	1	2	3	4	5
9. I have been obsessed with a certain idea or project for a short time but later lost interest.	5	4	3	2	1
10. I have overcome setbacks to conquer an important challenge.	1	2	3	4	5

At left is a version of the Grid Scale Duckworth developed for her study at West Point and other studies described in her book.

Read each sentence, and on the right check off the box that makes sense. Don't over-think the questions. Just ask yourself how you compare to "most people." To calculate your Grit score, add up all the points for the boxes you checked and divide by ten.

You can use the chart on page 46 to see how your score compares to a large sample of American adults.

Source: "GRIT" by Angela Duckworth, pages 54-56.



THE POWER OF PASSION AND PERSEVERANCE

endlessly. I began to draw seriously. Then, inexplicably, I did not draw again until my early twenties. In the meantime I worked in a brick yard, a lumber yard, a supply house, and finally for the telephone company. In my mid-twenties I returned to art, eventually finding a job at a very low salary and began a new adventure. Eventually, my dream of becoming a commercial artist was realized. I learned how ads work, and the art of effective advertising. Numerous management jobs followed, and 30 years ago I founded my own company, UltraSales.

I am telling you all this because I want you to understand that discovering your passion may be a challenging task, a torturous, indi-

rect journey, requiring more than a little grit. Duckworth suggests you ask yourself a few simple questions. "What do I like to think about? Where does my mind wander? What do I really care about? What matters most to me? How do I enjoy spending my time? And, in contrast, what do I find absolutely unbearable? If you find it hard to answer these questions, try thinking

"The flip side of learned helplessness is learned optimism. Optimists have a growth mindset, born of Grit that leads them to optimistic ways of explaining adversity."

Measure Your Grit Score

**For example, if you scored 4.1, you are grittier than about 70% of the adults in Duckworth's sample.*

Keep in mind that your grit score is a reflection of how you see yourself right now. How you see yourself at this point in your life might be different from how gritty you were when you were younger. If you take the Grit Scale again later, you might get a different score.

Duckworth's thesis is that grit scores can improve.

Source: "GRIT" by Angela Duckworth, pages 54-56.

back to your teen years, the stage of life at which vocational interests commonly sprout."

PRACTICE and Your Passion

Nothing happens until something is sold. For that reason in this article I will emphasize grit and its relationship to selling. Unfortunately, with the exception of role-playing exercises, most selling practice must be done in real time on the sales floor. To avoid wasting an "up," we suggest two solutions. Either have an experienced salesperson accompany a new recruit, or use a strong "turn-over" person to rescue a recruit who gets into trouble.

In addition to those suggestions, read Tom Hopkins, "How to Master the Art of Selling". He covers the sales process in detail, from greeting to closing. There are also hundreds of excellent articles on sales education and sales management on Furniture World's website at www.furninfo.com. If you believe you know all there is to know about selling, consider this observation from philosopher Mortimer Adler: "No one can ever learn too much. No one can ever know or understand all that he is capable of knowing or understanding. No one can ever attain full development of his personality. No one can ever reach by personal growth the full stature of what he is capable. No one can ever exhaust his creative resources, no matter how fortunate

PERCENTILE	GRIT SCORE
10%	2.5
20%	3.0
30%	3.3
40%	3.5
50%	3.8
60%	3.9
70%	4.1
80%	4.3
90%	4.5
95%	4.7
99%	4.9

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"Grit can and does change.

The secret is wrapped up in clarifying your goals, and aligning them towards a single passion of supreme importance."

he is in health and length of life, no matter how much free time he has at his disposal, no matter how prudent he is in limiting the amount of free time he spends in play."

Duckworth emphasizes that grittier people embrace new, unknown challenges without hesitation. They are not intimidated by unfamiliar tasks. Duckworth also notes that grittier people stick to their commitments longer than others. Yet we all know there are a few furniture salespersons who have racked up 20 years of experience and a host of others who have had one year of experience 20 times.

To succeed you must understand the science of Grit:

1. You must have a clearly defined "stretch goal." A stretch goal is one that is beyond your powers at the present time.

2. You must commit to full concentration and effort toward its achievement.

Great performers in every

domain improve with deliberate effort. Behind every effortless performance are hours and hours of challenging, mistake-laden practice. Future great performers are doing things they can't yet do, failing, and learning what to do differently. "This is exactly the way experts practice," writes Duckworth. "You may not make your efforts as ecstatic as Mihaly Csikszentmihalyi's 'Flow', but you may end up saying to yourself and to others: 'That was hard. It was great!'"

PURPOSE and Your Passion

"Interest is one source of passion," says Duckworth. "Purpose: the intention to contribute to the wellbeing of others—is another. The mature passions of gritty people depend on both." As champions of grit mature "the larger meaning and purpose of their work becomes apparent." The nature of their goals is special. Always, and there were no exceptions to this.

When Duckworth probed deeper, the message was the same. "... the long days and evenings of toil, the setbacks and disappointments and struggle, the sacrifice—all this is worth it because, ultimately, their efforts pay dividends to other people."

I know there are those who sniff at the idea that the service motive will eventually transcend the profit motive. But books like "GRIT" achieve pronounced acceptance because service is an idea whose time has come. Both service and profit have deep evolutionary roots. Aristotle noted that there are two paths to happiness: One—a life devoted to pure profit is primitive and vulgar, and the other path toward service he deemed to be noble and pure. Duckworth suggests that while there may be gritty villains in the world, her research reveals there are many more gritty heroes.

There are three essential attitudes to characterize your work.

• **The Job:** "I view my work as a

42,000 SF RETAIL



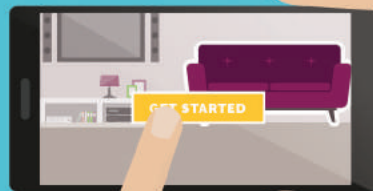
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retail GRIT

necessity of life like breathing or sleeping.”

- **The Career:** “I view my job as a stepping stone to other jobs.”
- **The Calling:** “My work is one of the most important things in my life.”

This final group, the fortunate few, who see their work as a Calling rather than a Job or Career—might reliably say: “My work makes the world a better place.” These people are the most satisfied with their work and their lives overall, according to Duckworth’s research. Members of this “Calling” generally missed at least a third fewer days of work than the other two groups.

Whatever your age, it is never too late to begin cultivating a sense of purpose. Buckminster Fuller established this mantra after years of failure: “The significance of you will forever remain obscure to you, but you may assume that you are fulfilling your significance if you apply yourself to converting all your experience to the highest

advantage of others.” Fuller was absolutely convinced that everything good that happened to him was through his commitment to a greater integrity. “Many times I’ve chickened, and everything inevitably goes wrong. But then, when I return to my commitment, my life suddenly works again. There’s something of the miraculous in that.”

HOPE and Your Passion

What is hope? One kind of hope is a kind of yearning for the universe to make things better. Grit, according to Duckworth, depends upon a different kind of hope. It rests upon our own efforts to make things better. The hope that gritty people have has nothing to do with luck and everything to do with getting up again after you have been knocked down.

Duckworth concluded that it wasn’t suffering that leads to hopelessness. It is suffering that you believe you can’t control. This eventuates in a kind of learned helplessness. Nietzsche once wrote: “That which does not kill me makes me stronger.” (However, Duckworth admits that sometimes it does the opposite.) The question becomes: when does the struggle lead to hope and when does it lead to helplessness? The answer may surprise you. A study by Victor and Mildred Goertzel of 400 famous twentieth-century men and women revealed that a full

75 percent of them—some 300 individuals—had grown up in a family burdened by severe problems such as poverty, abuse, absent parents, alcoholism, or some other misfortune. This was recently reported in an article in the Wall Street Journal under the title, “The Secrets of Resilience”, by Meg Jay.

The flip side of learned helplessness is learned optimism. Optimists have a growth mindset, born of Grit that leads them to optimistic ways of explaining adversity. This inspires perseverance, and encourages them to seek out new challenges. Optimists with grit make great salespeople.

About Larry Mullins: Larry Mullins is Marketing Feature Editor for Furniture World and has 35+ years’ experience on the front lines of furniture marketing. Larry’s mainstream executive experience, his creative work with promotion specialists, and mastery of advertising principles have established him as one of the foremost experts in furniture marketing. His turnkey High-Impact programs produce legendary results for everything from cash raising events to profitable exit strategies. Larry is founder and CEO of UltraSales, Inc. See more articles by Larry at www.furninfo.com or www.ultrasales.com.

Questions or comments on this article? Call Larry at 904.794.9212, or contact him at larry@larrymullins.com.

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COLOR PURPLE

by Dixon Bartlett & Caroline Hipple, Norwalk Furniture

Pantone recently announced its Color of the Year, Ultra Violet. How did this color get chosen and how should you use it in your stores?

The more intentional your use of color, the more energetic and engaging your store will be. Studying the concept, reading what the experts say, and finding resources that are doing exceptional color work are good ways to dive deeper into ways to create more engaging and profitable displays.

Color is a powerful motivating force, especially effective in influencing consumers to react and buy.

The Color Supply Chain

The color supply chain starts with world trends and cultural influences that are captured, digested and translated by color professionals, trend watchers and the most forward-looking designers. Some notable companies that do this are Fashion Snoops, The Trend Curve, WGSN, Pantone, and The Color Marketing Group, to name a few. These services break color down for their manufacturing and retail clients into actionable directions. Manufacturers use this information to create their assortments and

present color and trend points of view to retailers at trade shows. Retailers select from these products and add their own edit. Finally, the products become available to consumers and purchases are made. All along the way, color choices are made. And to the degree that the color choices suit the mood and desires of the consumer, a successful cycle ensues. Nevertheless, the cycle starts again. So ultimately, no matter how much expertise is expended along the color choice process, it is ultimately end consumers who are in charge; as they

"Between the bloggers, the trend and color experts, and the major retailers, your consumer is bombarded with color and trend themes of the moment."

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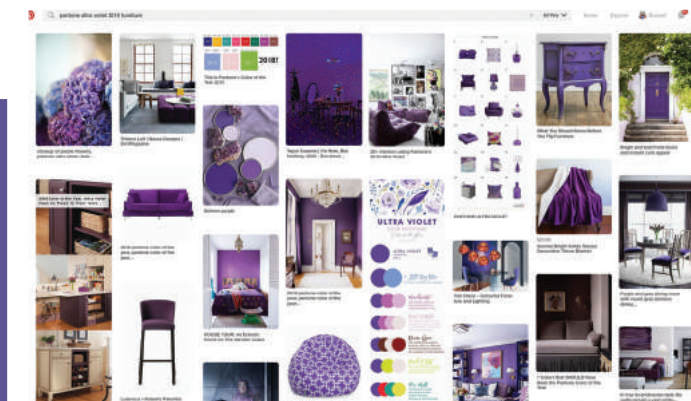
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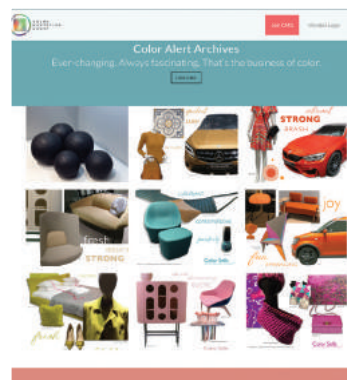
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Pictured is color information available online. Starting at left clockwise; WGSN lifestyle and interiors page, Pinterest search for Ultra Violet, Color Marketing Group's Color Alert Page, and a Pantone 2018 Company C post.



decide on the relevance of a color by voting with their pocketbooks.

The world of color has been studied since the early masters of art and science. Did you know that the color theory we now use was inspired by the scientific work of leading thinkers such as Isaac Newton, Goethe and Rene Descartes? It seems that in the 18th century, philosophers and scientists were using musical theory, psychological theory and early color wheels to describe human tendencies and character. Like Carl Jung much later used temperaments, these thinkers used color preferences to explain behavior and types of people. Today color theory is used in advertising and merchandising to influence and motivate behavior. So, studying the impact of color goes beyond making merchandising choices. It can also be used to affect your own advertising

effectiveness.

Color Trend Services

We were fortunate to have several industry experts to lead us through the field of color and its affects in the home so we don't have to go it alone. Leaders like Leatrice Eiseman who heads up Pantone's color research and forecasts has written dozens of books on the subject of color and how to use it. She just released a new one. Check <http://www.colorexpert.com/books-by-leatrice/> for more information. There are trend forecasting experts that not only describe what is happening now in color and trend, but what is forecast to happen in the next few years. These trend services shop the world to see trade shows, leading manufacturers and retailers to bring back intelligence and insight

for their customers. The information they provide guides manufacturing, buying and merchandising decisions. Standouts in our industry are people like, Michelle Lamb of the Trend Curve, Jaye Anna Mize of Fashion Snoops and the team at WGSN. All three of these companies are at the top of their game and consult with some of the world's leading companies about

"Use one color theme of 3-6 coordinating complimentary colors to carry that theme to each 1500-2000 square feet of your store."

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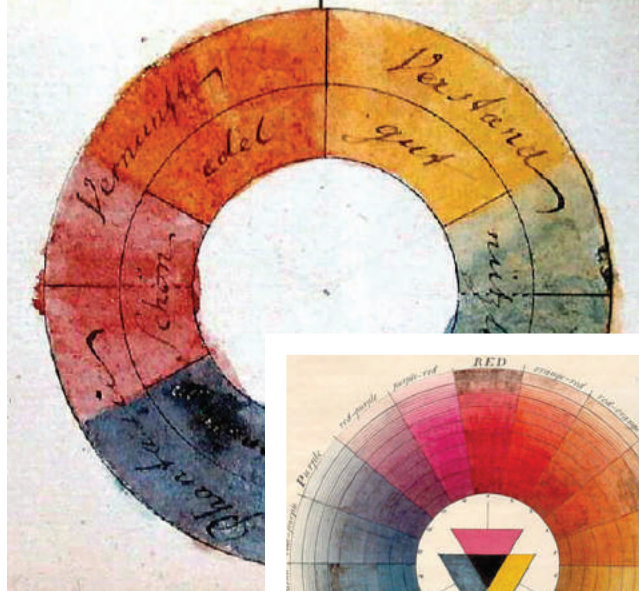
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"Color is a powerful motivating force, especially effective in influencing consumers to react and buy."

In the 18th century, philosophers and scientists used musical theory, psychological theory and early color wheels to describe human tendencies and character. Shown above are color wheels by Newton and Goeth. Color is an important and complex tool, used to hide or attract attention to forms, alter the apparent sizes of rooms and furnishings. People respond both physically and psychologically to color.

color and trend choices. The good news for those of us in the furniture industry is that they are frequent speakers at furniture shows and are generous with their time and knowledge at market events. If you get a chance to subscribe to their services, to follow them or hear them speak, you will not be disappointed. Check your market guides under the speakers and educational sections. You will find great resources there.

The Color Marketing Group is another organization devoted to education and collaboration for color professionals around the world. Their members gather throughout the year in cities such as Shanghai, Montreal, Portland, High Point, Los Angeles, and Cleveland to work towards predicting color palettes that will show up in prod-

ucts like paint, textiles, sofas, lamps, rugs, cars, cabinetry, countertops, flooring, and advertising. Members of this group are professional color specifiers in select industry segments. The output of their extensive work together is a color palette selection by region (Europe, North America, Latin America, and Asia Pacific) around the world. Also in attendance are leading paint companies like Sherwin Williams, Benjamin Moore and color specifying companies like Pantone and NCS. These designers and color specifiers use this work in their own companies to choose colors. This collaborative process is one of the reasons you will see certain colors keep popping up in products... take Millennial Pink for example... it's everywhere! And it started with these folks.

The color predictors start with intense discussion about mood, cultural, political and environmental influences, plus other factors that affect the psyche of consumers. Their results influence the chain of decisions outlined above, by manufacturers, retailers and customers, each with their own points of view and personal preferences.

Meet Ultra Violet

Let's use Pantone's Color of the Year for 2018 as an example to break it down.

Recently, Pantone announced their color of the year for 2018.... Ultra Violet (Pantone #18-3838). As Pantone describes it, "This color is a dramatically provocative and thoughtful shade, which communicates originality, ingenuity and visionary thinking that points us to the future." You've probably already seen lots of press around it and will start to see fabrics

"This collaborative process is one of the reasons you will see certain colors popping up... take Millennial Pink for example... it's everywhere!"

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"Go deep, be bold..."

tell a story. Use color resources available to you. Attend seminars at markets. Follow blogs. Join associations. Subscribe to services."

and accessories showing up in this color during the winter shows. And guess what? So will your consumers. Imagine how powerful it is when your consumer reads about Ultra Violet in blogs and press, then walks in your store and sees that you have offerings that demonstrate your trend knowledge.

A good example of this can be found in a recent Instagram post from Company C, a manufacturer and designer of colorful, handcrafted home furnishings. Company C sells its merchandise at its flagship

store in Concord, New Hampshire, a storefront in Portland, Maine and online. At the most recent fall High Point Market, the company introduced products in purples. Christine Chapin, Co-Founder and Colorful Living Officer at Company C, designs rugs nearly two years ahead of the market. She predicted purple as a trend for some time.

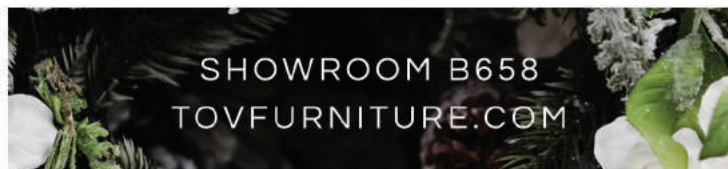
Watch as well, the major lifestyle stores and you will see the process play out. Colors that the trend forecasters predict will seem to quickly appear on their retail

floors. Because large chains invest heavily in inventory, they also invest in trend forecasting, merchandising processes and assortment planning.

This gives them confidence in their purchases and in those color stories. Many furniture retailers can learn some color tips by taking a look at the how major lifestyle stores work with color.

Below, a company C color story incorporating Ultra Violet.





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Beautiful Furnishing for a Beautiful Life

"All of this is visually

communicated by category, by vignette, in a large merchandise planning room. Then as the season unfolds, the sales are also posted in this room."

Retail Trend & Color Process

Most of the large retail chains have an inside or consulting fashion, design or trend director whose job is to work with the buyers of different categories (lighting, rugs, upholstery, case goods, wall art, bedding, etc.) to coordinate their vision and buying plans and pull together the colors and themes for the next retail season.

Planning meetings usually take place ahead of buying trips abroad or to the markets in High Point, Dallas, Atlanta, New York and Las Vegas. They go to market armed with fabrics, Pantone chips, tear

sheets and examples of products that articulate selected themes.

Bringing Color To The Floor

One well-known store group consists of stores that are about 10,000 square feet each. They divide their 40 vignettes into about four color/theme stories. To make color stories come alive, they look for about three to six coordinating colors in each story. Then they head to market. Armed with their swatches and Pantone chips they select product and bring their findings back to the merchandising team to create a buying plan. All of this is visually communicated by category and vignette in a large merchandise planning room. As the season unfolds, sales results are posted in this room so analysis can take place. At the end of the season, one third of the store is rotated out and a new color theme or two are rotated in. Trend, plan, buy, execute, sell, analyze, repeat. But it starts with color!

Among the bloggers, the trend and color experts and major retailers, your consumer is bombarded with color and trend themes of the moment. It would be powerful for your merchandise to speak the same language.

Step-By-Step Retail Color

Designate a permanent merchandise planning space.

- *Create an annual calendar.*
- *Plan your seasons. Use art, lighting, rugs, upholstery, textiles and decorative accessories to carry your color themes.*
- *Use one color theme of three to six coordinating complimentary colors to carry that theme to each 1500-2000 square feet of your store.*
- *Go deep, be bold and tell a story. Use color resources available to you. Attend seminars at markets. Follow blogs. Join associations. Subscribe to services. Follow paint companies like Benjamin Moore and Sherwin Williams who do a nice job of talking color and they, like Pantone, predict their colors of the year. Use vendors that have a color and trend process of their own.*

Listed below are a few of the best resources available in our business to get you started on your color planning journey.

It's fun and profitable to live colorfully. Carpe diem!

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List Of Resources:

Benjamin Moore, Sherwin Williams, Pantone, Color Marketing Association, Leatrice Eiseman's books on color, National Color System, WGSN, Fashion Snoops, The Trend Curve, The Dewey Color System.

About Caroline Hipple: 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 num-

ber 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 combining 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

growth from a few stores to over 230, becoming the 19th largest US furniture retailer.

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.

For more information about the topics in this article, design trends or merchandising ideas, contact Caroline Hipple at chipple@norwalkfurniture.com.

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2017 Furniture Expo Recap

Record participation marked the 2017 Furniture Expo, including significant number of new faces and dealers welcomed to this wonderful annual event.

The MEC (Michiana Event Center) was packed with nearly 100 exhibitors, which showcased the wide-ranging talent that has made the region a hallmark hotspot in

handcraft hardwood and specialty pieces. The time-honored appreciation dinners continued as a popular tradition – and allowed for good fellowship and the exchange of ideas and inspiration among friends.

*Henry, Paul, Perry, Mark,
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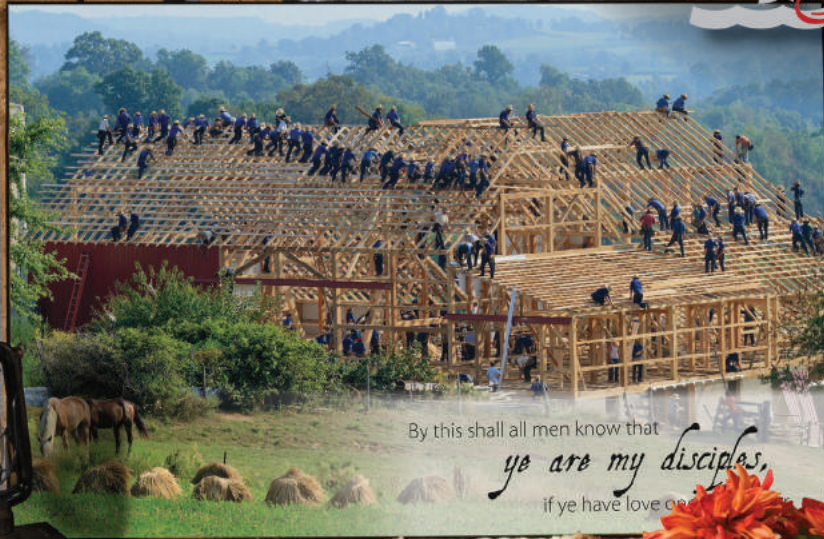


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Our Mission

The Northern Indiana Woodcrafters Association (NIWA) is dedicated to continuous improvement and innovative design in woodcrafting. We provide value to our customers through our honest, personable service and heirloom-quality products. Members are committed to teamwork among themselves and with patrons.

Our Values

- **Creative Craftsmanship:** As builders, we think outside the box about design and insist on top-quality construction.
- **Customer Relationships:** We work to develop and sustain relationships with customers from order to delivery.
- **Shared Beliefs:** As members of the Old Order Amish faith, we are family oriented, trustworthy, compassionate, and supportive of one another and our customers.

Our Story

Northern Indiana is home to one of the largest Old Order Amish settlements in the world. Traditionally, Amish communities have relied on family farms to make a living in a way that is consistent with their values. However, one of the challenges facing the Amish in Northern Indiana has been the expanding Amish population alongside the decreasing amount of available farmland. This has led some Amish to start small businesses and others to seek employment in industry and manufacturing.

Amid this change, furniture building has become a viable option for many Amish men. The steady work ethic of the Old Order Amish fits well with furniture manufacturing, an industry that relies on quality craftsmanship. As these furniture builders become more successful, they create new jobs for other Amish workers, and they grow something—a business—that can be passed on to the next generation.

NIWA was created when regional craftsmen joined together to collaborate in their marketing. As many Amish builders moved into wholesale production, they realized that all would benefit from working together to promote their craft. Formed in 1999, NIWA currently has over 90 members and has established guidelines that define the NIWA brand. Quality is essential; the furniture must be built to last, and no particleboard or chipboard is used, not even for surfaces hidden from view. All furniture is manufactured in the United States, and most builders construct all products regionally.

Each member of the NIWA is actively involved in the association, and most participate in the annual furniture expo, an event that attracts store owners from across the country. The expo is a face-to-face way for builders and buyers to form working relationships that are rooted in mutual respect and a love for heirloom-quality furniture.

— Adopted by the NIWA Board, 2016

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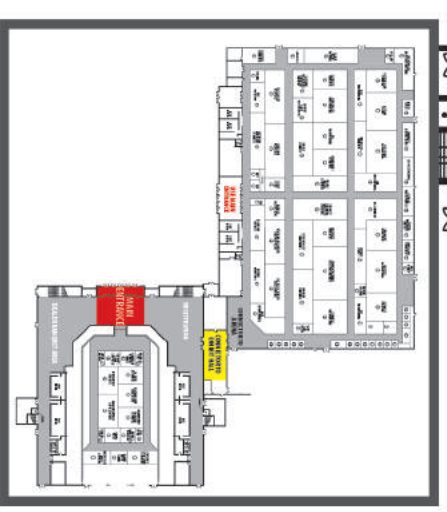
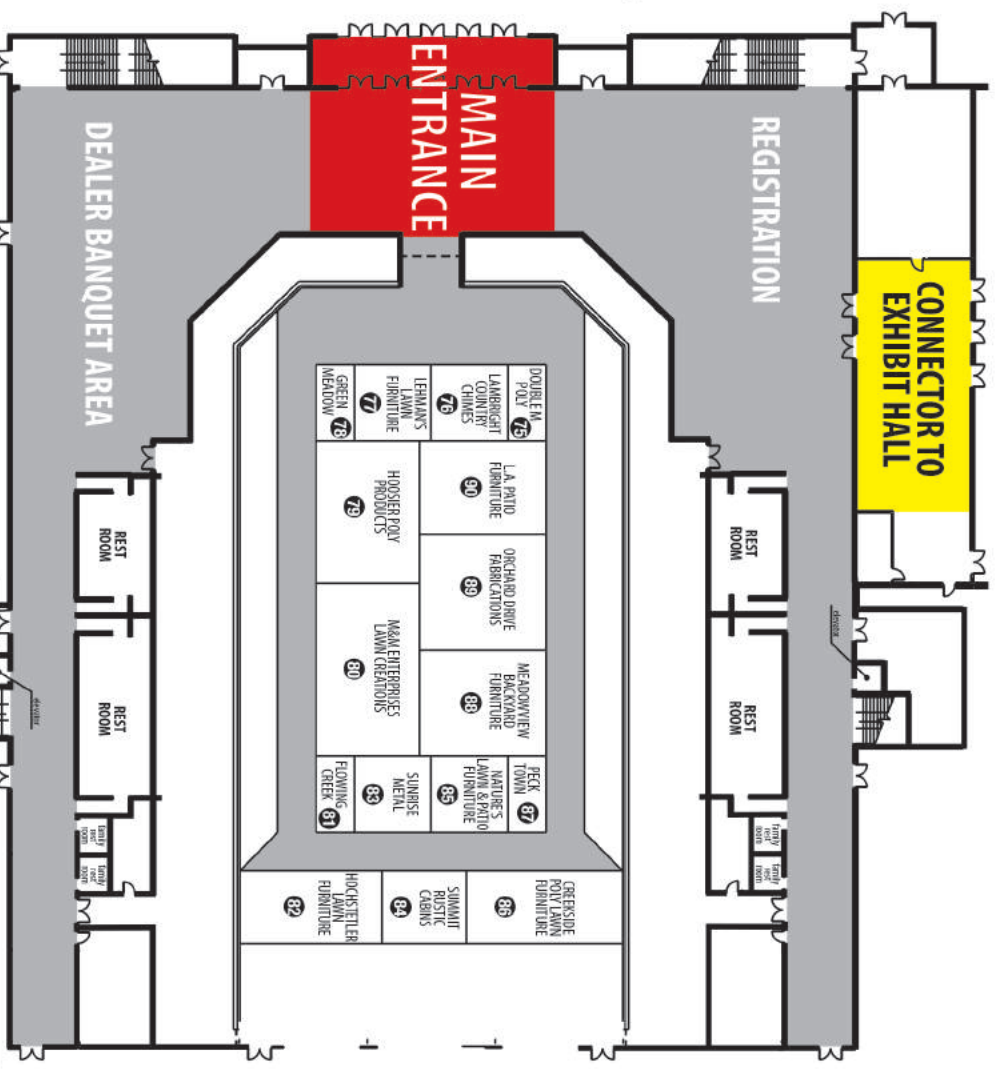
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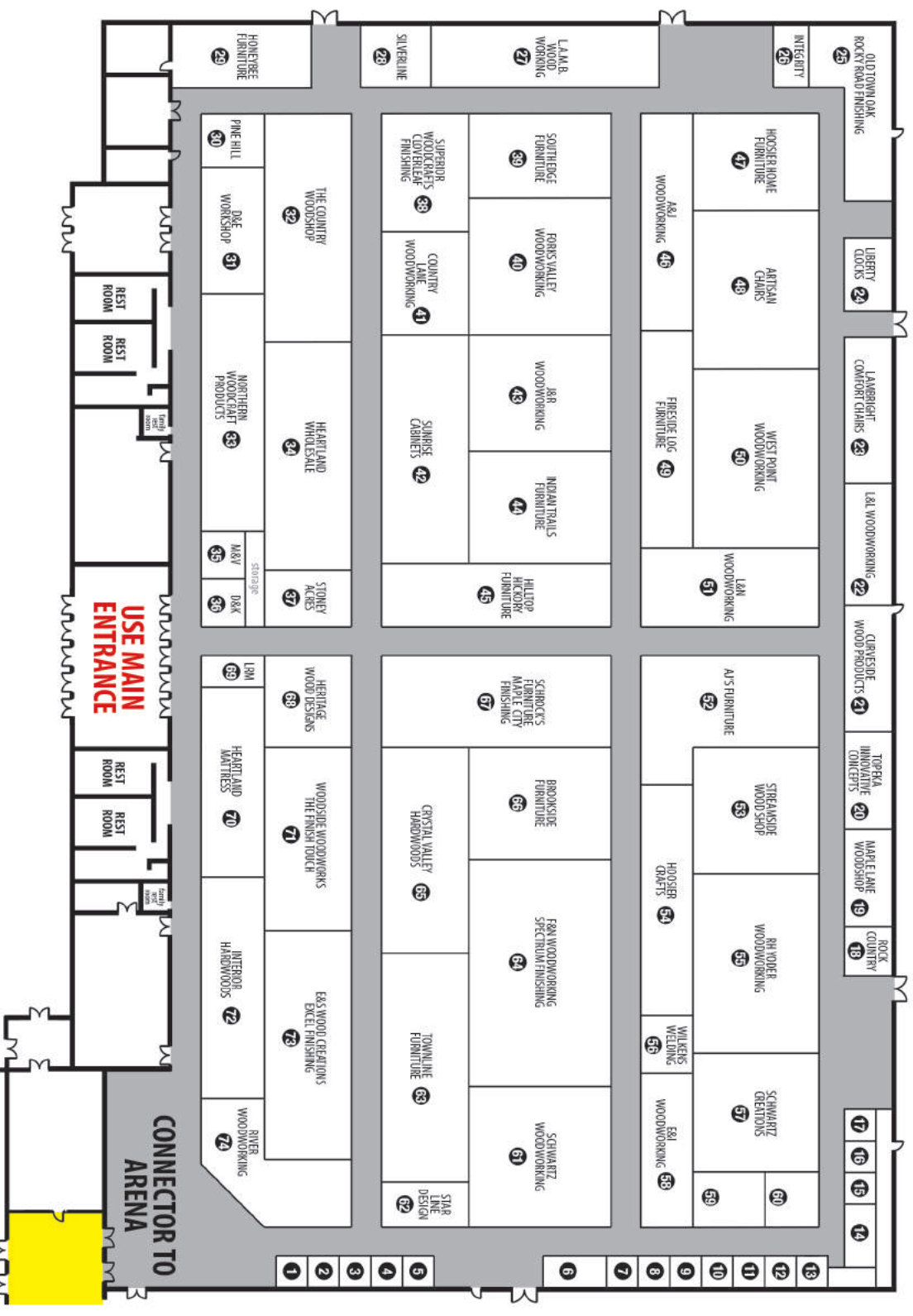
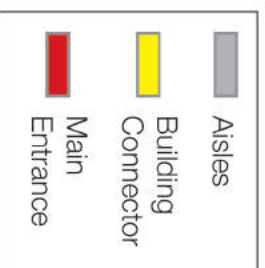


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CLOSING

THE SALE-PART 2

by David Benbow

Here's how to make a great closing argument and avoid the many pitfalls that can result in lost sales and a lost opportunity for your customers.

I read somewhere, years ago, that the worst thing a "closer" can do is "have Dollar Signs in his eyes". Or worse, wear a look of desperation that says, "If I don't get this deal, I'm getting out of sales!"

Now that we've gotten that admonition out of the way, allow me to briefly repeat a few things from previous articles in this series. The Closing step, although usually listed as the final step of the sale, really begins with the Meet and Greet step. What this means is that if the RSA does not get the Greeting, the Qualifying, the Selection, and the Presentation performed correctly, trying to actually close the sale is probably a waste of time.

However, for the sake of brevity and to achieve the objective of this article, we must assume that the would-be customer has been encountered by a competent Retail Sales Associate (RSA) who has performed all previous steps of the sale in a professional manner.

The Closing Argument

The term "closing argument" is usually associated with courtroom

protocol. In a court of law, each lawyer presents his closing argument to the judge and jury AFTER the presentation of evidence. This "closing argument" term is also useful, I think, when describing the conversation between the salesperson and the prospective customer. During, and especially after the first four steps of the sale, the RSA acts as one of the lawyers; with the customer acting as the other lawyer. Remember what lawyers do when they hear what they consider to be an improperly prepared argument. They object.

And, that is what customers do as well. Not only are they the lawyer, they also decide the verdict. Will it be a sale or no sale? Along the way they raise objections to the RSA's statements and persuasions. The customer, then, is judge, jury and the counsel of the opposing viewpoint, which is to reject offers made by the RSA to buy.

One of the problems for RSAs in this drama is to correctly determine exactly WHO is the opposing counsel? He or she must ask, "Am I directing my argument to the correct party who is going to make the final decision (the verdict), or to some meaningless surrogate?"

"One bad answer

can taint an entire sales encounter. That's generally all it takes for an RSA to lose a sale."

Of course, this is something RSAs should have figured out long before closing arguments begin.

Unlike a courtroom proceeding, however, the sales closing argument may be revised and repeated (by the RSA) over and over until the desired verdict is reached. To accomplish that feat, the RSA must answer each objection satisfactorily or the sale will be lost. For more reading material on how to overcome objections, see two articles on this topic at <http://www.furninfo.com/Authors/David%20Benbow/37>.

I'd like, however, to draw the reader's attention to another interesting thought. We have observed (probably from all those TV courtroom shows, from Perry Mason to Judge Judy), that in a courtroom, the jury sits in silence. The lawyer does all the talking. Don't forget, the jury, in a sales encounter as personified by the customer, is

probably not doing much talking, either. The lawyer side is talking, but the jury side of the customer is probably playing it pretty close to the vest. How does the RSA, as the attorney for the prosecution, find out how she is influencing the jury's decision?

That is why it is critical for RSAs to ask questions and to keep asking questions until the final verdict is rendered.

Now, this all sounds rather formal and legalistic, but in real life, it shouldn't be that way.

Honesty And Sincerity

Groucho Marks, or perhaps George Burns may have said about honesty, "If you can fake that, you've got it made." But, the truth is, honesty and sincerity in a Retail Sales Associate is the paint that can cover a thousand

flaws, including inexperience. If you don't know the answer to a customer's questions, tell the customer that you don't know, but that you will be glad to consult an expert and find out. The customer should then perceive that he/she has received an honest answer and can confidently wait for an informed one from some remote guru.

Thorough training and preparation is critical to sales success. Training lends the confidence that RSAs need to give customers honest, well-considered answers to any questions. It also has the added benefit of greatly swelling the customer's opinion of the professionalism and integrity of his attending RSA.

One bad answer can taint an entire sales encounter. That's generally all it takes for an RSA to lose a sale.

The lesson that may be drawn from this discussion is that the RSA must always carefully consider what comes into his head BEFORE it comes out of his mouth.

Know The Competition

John F. Lawhon, in his book *Selling Retail*, stated that the RSA should know his competition as well as he knows his own store.

Why should the RSA know the competition, you might ask? Here's



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"In a perfect world, the customer would realize that better support, comfort and sleep are the best opportunities.

But, it isn't always easy to translate these sleep benefits into an opportunity that the customer cannot pass up."

the reason. Most shoppers compare products and services before they buy. It's pretty hard to make a compelling closing argument for your product if you do not know what the competition is offering. I hate to say this, but there is a lot of misleading information out there. How is the customer, who is not a professional buyer, to know the difference?

We've covered this topic in some detail in the article, "Better Bedding & Mattress Sales: Sizing Up Your Competition" found at <http://www.furninfo.com/Authors/David%20Benbow/37>.

Offer The Customer An Opportunity To Buy

This one statement sums up the very essence of selling and closing, in my opinion. Most purchases in the modern marketplace are purchases of necessity. Items like groceries, gasoline, rent and insurance need to be purchased to function in the modern world. But how often does a prospective buyer get a real OPPORTUNITY?

What is meant by the word opportunity? As usual, the dictionary does not provide a very satisfactory definition when it comes to

the sales cycle.

I think a good definition is something like this. Opportunity is the occurrence of an unusual set of favorable circumstances that offers the purchaser a unique chance to take advantage of those circumstances to improve his life, health and happiness.

What buyer can turn down a genuine opportunity? Opportunity is great, is it not? Who doesn't want an opportunity? Don't you think it is easier to sell a great opportunity than to sell a mattress and box springs?

Now, the question becomes, how does the retail establishment (and the RSA) turn the ordinary sale of a mattress and box springs, (or a dinette set, sofa-love, etc.) into an opportunity for the customer? And, make the customer realize and understand that he or she has been offered a genuine opportunity? If you can figure that out, you have learned the secret to sales, and, maybe to life.

Opportunity Knocks

Presenting a genuine opportunity for each customer starts with the RSA getting an idea of what the customer might recognize as an opportunity. To get this idea, we

ask questions (qualify). Of course, qualifying is an earlier step in the sales process, but as we've discussed before, qualifying never really ends. By the time a perceptive RSA reaches the Closing Argument, he or she should have a pretty good idea of what will motivate the customer. With this idea or set of ideas, a plan can be formulated to present an opportunity the customer will enthusiastically embrace.

In a perfect world, the customer would realize that better support, comfort and sleep are the best opportunities. But, it isn't always easy to translate these obvious sleep benefits into an opportunity that the customer cannot pass up. After all, the other stores in town also offer the same sleep benefits opportunity.

"Honesty and sincerity
in a Retail Sales
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CLOSING

THE SALE-PART 2

The question for each RSA is, "How does my store set itself apart from the other stores who also offer great products?" This brings us to the concept of URGENCY.

Urgency

I have heard it said that urgency

is the very core idea of the mattress business. "Buy it Today, Sleep on it Tonight!!" has been the theme of a thousand and one sales events. Customers browse through furniture aisles for years, over and over again, getting ideas before ever making a decision. They go to the bedding section one time; they

either buy or they don't buy, and they never come back again.

What does this tell us? When a customer enters that zone of no return, the RSA better be ready to close the deal. The bedding department is NOT on the route of the "be-back bus."

Urgency works both ways.

1. It is urgent for the RSA and store to close the mattress deal because the customer probably will not be back, no matter what he tells you.

2. One of the best ways to close the deal is to stimulate the "urgency factor" in the customer's mind.

So, how do we create urgency?

Price And Availability

I've known some great retail sales people in the course of my career. One of the best made the

"When a customer enters that zone of no return, the RSA better be ready to close the deal. **The bedding department is NOT on the route of the "be-back bus."**



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"Don't use

the comfort exchange as a closing argument. This is a really weak technique that should and will come back to haunt you."

following statement after losing a tough deal after a hard closing fight. "It always comes down to price!!"

Now, it doesn't ALWAYS come down to price, but it does often enough that if you ignore price when considering customer opportunity, you may be making a big mistake.

Let me make a disclaimer at this point. We are getting ready to talk about price and negotiating the price. Please don't take anything in this article as a suggestion that any store or RSA should or should not negotiate the price with a customer. Many successful stores have a one-price policy and that is fine. Many stores, however, do employ a flexible-price sales policy. So, whether you "deal" with the customer or not, any discussion of urgency without discussing price flexibility would be omitting the discussion of a practice that is widely used in our industry.

Price

An entire book could be written on this subject, but that will have to come later.

Peter Marino, in his book *The Golden Rules of Selling Bedding*, said, "If all you have going for you is price, there will always be somebody out there who will beat it." And, he's right. But price

is frequently perceived, especially by men buyers, as THE OPPORTUNITY we've been talking about. Some buyers ignore almost every other benefit but the price. They shouldn't do that, but they are the customer, and can do what they want. Most rational customers, with all other factors being held equal (same feel, same manufacturer, same warranty, similar RSA competence, etc.) will make their decision on price. In fact, I would say that price is the single most important element in the final purchasing decision for most buyers, especially when it comes to bedding.

When a store uses price as a closing technique, it must convince the customer that the price offered is better than any other store's, for a comparable product. This is not easy to do, unless the customer has visited several other stores, tested comparable sets, and collected prices on each item.

Some stores offer a "best price guarantee." These offers are usually worded something like this. "If you find a better price on a comparable product anywhere in this town, any time in the next 30 days (or 60 days, or 90 days), just bring in evidence of that price and we will refund the difference to you. That way, you always know you've paid the best price, even after you get it in your home." This has been shown to be an effective

closing statement, if delivered with unfeigned sincerity.

Discounting

Negotiating the price, which almost always means dropping the price, or discounting it, is not an exercise for a neophyte RSA. Effective price negotiating requires experience and skill, because like everything else on the showroom, the price drop has to be SOLD.

Spur of the moment price discounts, coming out of the mouth of an RSA, must be believable. Any price discount should come with a valid reason that the customer can easily understand. Just blurted out with no reason to justify them, price drops make it sound like your prices were too high to start with.

Availability

The availability of a product

"Don't you think it is easier to sell a great opportunity than to sell a mattress and box springs?"



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CLOSING

THE SALE-PART 2

(One of a kind!!!... Only three left in stock!!) is another way of creating urgency. Limited availability coupled with a price discount can be a powerful incentive for a customer to perceive an opportunity that won't ever come again. Of course, this principle of a price discount, limited availability, and limited time is the very essence of the sales event. BIG SALE THIS WEEKEND!! Our entire consumer culture is built around phrases such as, "Big Sale This Weekend Only!" It plants the notion in the buyer's mind that this opportunity will never come around again.

But, what if you are not having a sale? This very same idea can be used to close sales on non-sale days. You don't need a sale if you can, every day, effectively use the same principles that were used when they invented THE SALE.

Lest we forget, the point of a sales event is to drive traffic into the store. A strong sales staff (defined as one which does not fall back on the "adv" items and tries to "step up" customers) will take care of the rest.

The Greeter/Closer Concept

This is a sales practice found frequently on car lots. The less experienced sales person greets the customer, hopefully finds a vehicle they like, does a demo drive, draws up a four-square, and perhaps makes a feeble effort to close the sale. After failing to close the sale, the customer is then turned over (TOed) to a Closer. This closer

is usually a veteran car salesman with all the experience, techniques and patience to get the customer to sign on the bottom line, no matter how long it takes.

I have rarely ever seen furniture stores use this sales device, though, mattress chains use the turn-over (TO) to great effect. With this idea, the greeter not only greets, but makes every attempt to close the sale, as long as NO price drop has been made. If the customer is about to leave without a price drop and without buying, the greeter then turns the customer over to another sales person or better still, sales manager, and the person receiving the TO becomes the "higher authority" with power to negotiate the price or any other available closing mechanism.

Malpractices To Avoid

Don't use the "comfort exchange" as a closing argument. This is a really weak technique and it should and will come back to haunt you.

Don't use warranty as a closing argument. Here are a some examples of abuse.

1. Over-promising warranty coverage: "If anything at all goes wrong, even if it's been nine years, eleven months and twenty-nine days (on a ten year warranty), you just bring it back and we'll give you a new one!!"

2. Adding years to your warranty offer: "You say R.O.T. Furniture, down the street, has a

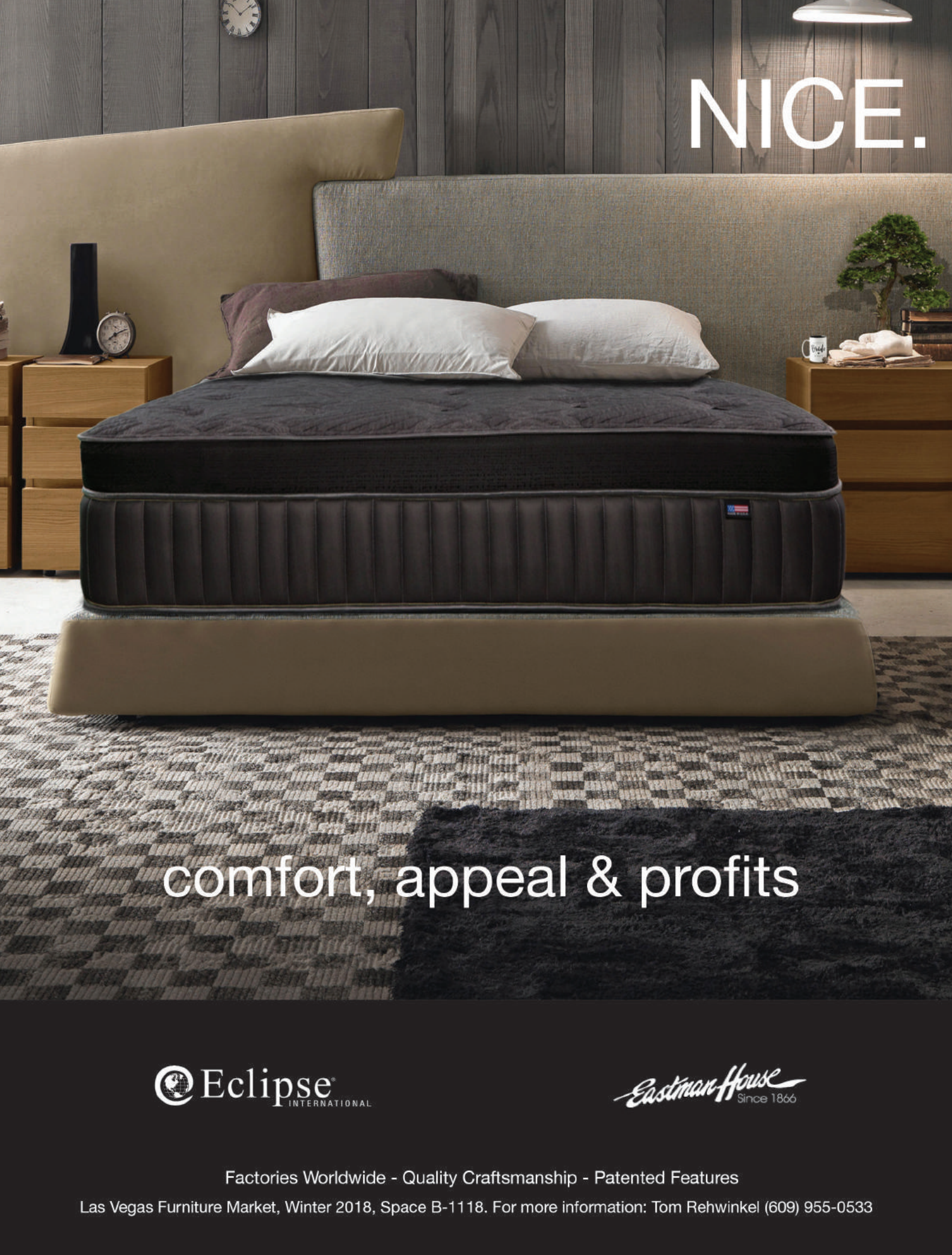
15 year warranty on their mattress? We'll add another five years onto that." Try getting a warranty claim on a 16 year old mattress.

3. Neglecting to mention that a competitor's warranty is prorated: "That Big S brand down the street only has a ten year warranty. Our mattress has a twenty-five year warranty. That means it'll last over twice as long. And, it's three hundred dollars cheaper!!"

Also, don't over-promise by telling customers...

- "You're going to LOVE this mattress!"
- "This mattress will NOT get body impressions."
- "This ten year warranty means your mattress will be just like new ten years from now."
- "Our delivery men will be at your front door tomorrow morn-

"Any price discount should come with a valid reason that the customer can easily understand. Price drops can make it sound like your prices were too high to start with."



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"When a store uses price as a closing technique, it must convince the customer that the price offered is better than any other store's, for a comparable product. This is not easy to do."

ing, nine o'clock sharp."

Trial Closes

A trial close, in my opinion, has a dual purpose. The first purpose is to elicit a response from the customer that will tell the RSA how the sale is progressing. The second purpose, less often considered in sales training, is to spur

the customer into thinking about actually making the purchase. For example:

1. "Will you need your mattress delivered, or do you prefer to pick it up?" This question makes the "assumptive close." A positive response gives more promise of a happy conclusion, and it reminds the customer why he came in to begin with. Strange as it may sound, some customers only become buyers when the salesperson reminds them, in a tactful way, that buying is the whole point of their visit.

2. "Do you like this bed better than any other you've seen so far?" This is a powerful trial close. A positive answer may crystallize in the customer's mind what was only a vague idea before the question was asked. "Yes, as a matter of fact, this is the one I like the best."

missed opportunities? I think most people remember their missed opportunities even more. So, don't let the frustration and regret of an unfulfilled promise haunt your customers. Give them the best opportunities to buy.

About David Benbow: 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.

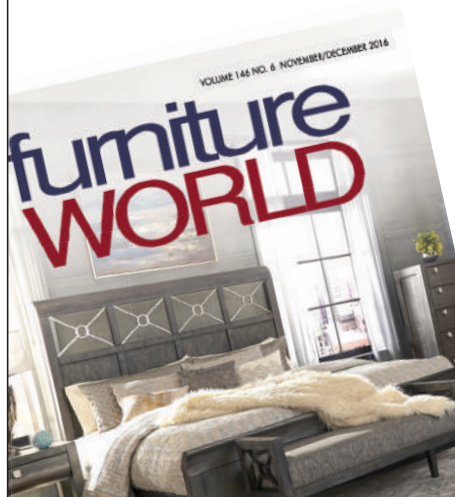
David is the author of the recently published book, "How to Win the Battle for Mattress Sales, the Bed Seller's Manual", a complete, text book for mattress and bedding retail sales associates, beginner and experienced professional alike. The book can be purchased on-line at <http://www.bedsellersmanual.com> 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.

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Summary And Conclusion

When it comes to closing the sale, there is really no end to the discussion. There is much more that could be said, but if you only come away with a single idea from this article, it's the importance of offering customer's an opportunity to buy. Who doesn't love an opportunity? And also regret

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Best Selling DESIGN



Himolla

From a collection of recliner sofas and chairs crafted to wrap users in total comfort. Features power adjustable back, foot and head rests.

Contact information on page 160.



Huntington House

This sleek chair's black metal frame contrasts beautifully with a cushy seat to create a unique combination of comfort and style. Made to order in fabric or leather.

Contact information on page 160.



Standard Furniture

The Hawkins Dining Room features a scrolled metal base and warm walnut finish. The blend of feminine and masculine style elements add a touch of class.

Contact information on page 160.



Twin Star

The International Convertible Media Console with optional electric fireplace in white.

Contact information on page 160.



Surya

Rio, is machine made in 100% polypropylene carved with medium pile. Made in Turkey.

Contact information on page 160.



Fusion

The Mandy table redefines casual dining with bold natural wood and contrasting metallic legs. Oak finish and ivory seats add warmth to its rustic appeal.

Contact information on page 160.

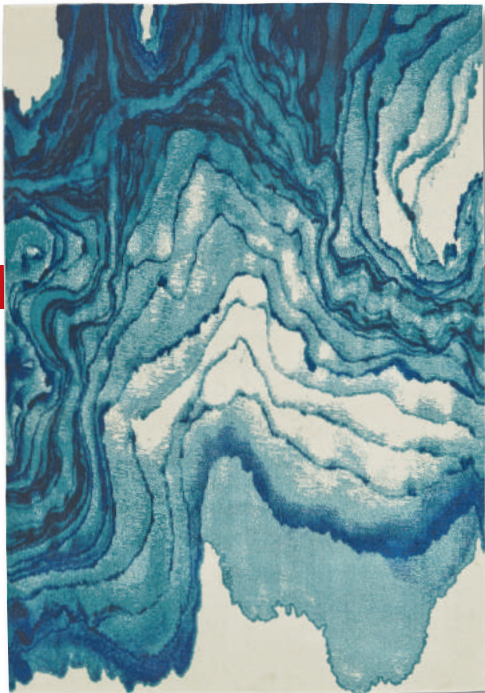
Omnia

Classic yet unconventional, the Monterey sectional provides optimum comfort. It is available in hundreds of top grain leathers, fabrics and various configurations.

Contact information on page 160.



Best Selling DESIGN



Feizy

The Brixton Collection is power loomed in cobalt yellow and green, then balanced with a more neutral gray. The combination of colors is an excellent representation of watercolor effects used throughout the collection.

Contact information on page 160.



Dimplex

Part modern art, part fireplace, the Chase Media Console is an elegant expression of contemporary design. It features High Gloss White finish, distinctive metal frame and geometric cabinet door details.

Contact information on page 160.

Furniture of America

Featuring smooth microfiber, rolled arms and plush pillow backs, the Bonaventura sofa set has a uniquely comfortable look. Matching pillows and ottoman add a chic patterned flair. The matching round swivel chair with casters completes this elegant ensemble.

Contact information on page 160.





Klaussner

Duneside outdoor recliners provide unmatched comfort and durability in any outdoor setting. Available with cordless power or manual.

Contact information on page 160.



Nourison

From the Twilight Collection, brilliant hues of orange and crimson contrast with serene shades of blue and grey resolving into a center of gleaming white. A captivating contemporary rug.

Contact information on page 160.



Chromcraft

The Vintage Collection brings back Mid-Century Modern casual dining design. Features include memory foam seating and classic cast aluminum pedestal and table bases. The tables feature high pressure laminate tops with solid wood edges.

Contact information on page 160.

Norwalk

The classically styled Mansfield Daybed has elegantly shaped headboard and footboard. The convenient twin size bed provides lounging during the day, while at night, a trundle pops-up to form a queen size bed.

Contact information on page 160.



Best Selling DESIGN



Abbyson

The Victoire two door cabinet with espresso wood and silver accents. A beautiful accent for almost any space.

Contact information on page 160.



Null

From the small-scale six-piece 8817 collection, this table combines traditional and coastal-cottage influences in a muted Driftwood finish. Features include framed planked tops, hand padded mineral metal cup drawer pulls and storage built into each piece.

Contact information on page 160.

Agio

The Trenton is an elegant all-weather wicker collection. With a sofa, loveseat and 360° swivel rocker, there's plenty of room for entertaining. Two matching ottomans, slatted coffee and accent tables also feature the handwoven wicker weave and include shelves built in for storage. The weather-resistant, neutral-toned cushions are ultra-soft and comfortable.

Contact information on page 160.





Craftmaster

Wood accent chair from the new Monteverdi collection with Sun-Bleached Cypress finish. This piece has a casual traditional flair with a rustic touch.

Contact information on page 160.



KAS Rugs

Winston, in smoky blues, grays and beiges with a laid-back transitional feel. Machine-woven in Turkey of polypropylene with a 1/2" pile.

Contact information on page 160.

CVW

Highlighting the pure beauty and intricate grain pattern of solid Red Oak, Elm, and Brown Maple, this modern dining room set is shown with 164 stain on Brown Maple and 118 stain on oak.

Contact information on page 160.



Best Selling DESIGN

TOV

The Sal Woven Velvet Chair features an intricate hand woven pattern of plush velvet resting on glamorous gold legs. Available in multiple color options, it retails for about \$599.

Contact information on page 160.



Legends

Crosby Street has asymmetrical details carried out in a rich, "Morning Brew" finish on solid Alder and exotic veneers.

Contact information on page 160.



Fashion Bed Group

The Elsinore upholstered bed is covered in a soft gray fabric to blend well with any room decor. Dark gray piping around the headboard serves as an added complement.

Contact information on page 160.



Muniz

The Eclipse Sculpture features a free-form elongated design of heated and twisted clear acrylic. Shown here in combination with infused red tones mixed with the clear acrylic.

Contact information on page 160.



Jaipur Home

The City Two-Wheeler Bar is part of the Wow collection. Each piece is crafted using reclaimed motorcycles, scooters, jeeps and bicycles, in whole or part as a foundation, enhanced with reclaimed and new timbers, and newly forged metal.

Contact information on page 160.



Capel

Fuego is made of 100% olefin, machine woven in Turkey. This contemporary rug is available in Alonso fire multi, Bruno fog, Canvas red multi, Drake blue slate and Splatter cream multi.

A 5' x 8' may retail for \$249.
Contact information on page 160.

Whittier Wood

Rediscover the McKenzie Bedroom Collection in a new finish, Fieldstone, a warm, translucent gray, which lets the solid American Alder hardwood reveal its' subtlety.

Contact information on page 160.

HARKNESS FURNITURE

Just ask anyone!

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

This Tacoma, Washington based furniture store doesn't worry too much about the competition!

Just ask anyone! If you happen to find yourself in Tacoma, Washington, and you're in search of the Harkness Furniture store, there's no one in the city or environs who can't direct you to their graceful and dynamic arched neon sign, emerald green, red and gold! It's an official local historic landmark. And behind that beckoning and memorable sign, there's a family of friendly people to meet, and about 70,000 square feet of outstanding showroom and warehouse space to explore. That sign is an original architectural element of the business founded in 1920 by David Harkness' grandparents, James and Margaret, after their arrival in Washington State from Scotland.

Named the "City of Destiny" when the area became the western terminus of the Northern Pacific Railroad in the 19th century, Tacoma, the State's largest port, sits on the edge of Puget Sound. It's been described as "the most walkable and picturesque city in the United States". A promising place to settle.

But there were lean days, pre-neon, for James and Margaret. Better, though, than the economic and cultural darkness of the old countries

still in the shadows of WWI and the Russian revolution. Young, energetic, optimistic, the couple learned the rug weaving and cleaning trade and, with their great expectations intact, they opened the South Tacoma Rug Shop in their garage.

Their grandson, David Harkness, now leader of the Clan, told us that James, "Not having a vehicle, would jump on the streetcar traveling up and down the center of South Tacoma to knock on doors to see if residents wanted their rugs cleaned. Or, in a best case scenario, weave them a new one. If cleaning was

"Just last year we remodeled the exterior of the main store, transforming it from a dated 1960s look into a modern, sleek, urban look." -David Harkness



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National Exhibition and Convention Center (Shanghai) in Hongqiao

requested, he would roll up the rag rug, put it on his shoulder, jump back on the street car to clean it in his garage. He would then deliver it back to the customer, reversing the entire process.

"I have their original sales journal from 1920 in my grandmother's own handwriting, showing a \$6.00 sale, \$2.00 per month for three months."

The couple had four children and, during the '30s and '40s, all were part of the store's evolution. "During that time," said Dave, "no fewer than 15 Harkness family members worked at the store. Our

grandfather and one of my uncles passed in the 1940s and my father, Jim, and mother, Dorothy, helped take the store into a variety of other categories, including draperies, wall-to-wall carpeting, custom upholstery, vacuums, appliances, televisions and new and used furniture.

"Mom did all the advertising and Dad the overall management. One by one, they phased out everything except new furniture sales. My brother, Jamie, and myself both came into the store after graduating. My father made sure I had a college degree with accounting and management. He was right on the money with the education needed to help our store flourish."

"The design concept for the mattress portion of the store was based on the lovely natural resources of Washington State. It's a modern, clean, cool spa vibe. -Connie Post

Updated Look

The effervescent Miss Connie Post, CEO of Affordable Design Solutions, arrived on the Harkness' scene a few years ago, "An exciting time for me!", she remembers, her first project to redesign their store's second floor, and, said Dave, "Our original Stratolounger Gallery, complete with a snoring Rip Van Winkle, glass blocks and turquoise and teal neon tubes and all! It was the showcase of our store."

Miss Connie added, "It was a

There is a separate area in the mattress store for luxury products, showcasing Tempur-Pedic. The area is set apart with a rich, luscious wallpaper, cost effective string curtains and chandeliers.



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2500 sq. ft. gallery. I designed an amphitheater with risers, a ramp down the middle with mirrored

walls behind, showcasing 40 to 50 recliners. The mirrors made it look like 100 chairs! And there were also five or six motion sofa sets gathered about.

"We attract employees with generally the same value system as our family and I think they, in turn, offer superior customer service."

-David Harkness

"But smack dab in the middle, sitting on his own riser with five recliners surrounding him, was Rip Van Winkle himself, as Dave said, snoring away, top decibel, in his featured Stratolounger!

"The entry to the gallery had stair-stepped glass blocks with all that glowing neon behind them. It was a very energetic and compelling environment for customers, Rip got lots of laughter and Stratford sold thousands of recliners! It totally 'innovated' the industry and retail

floors across America!"

Mattress Store Remodel

Dave recalled, "We did a complete remodel of our Harkness Mattress Store next door. Plus, Miss Connie allowed us to update and keep our large, much-loved and unforgettable 1950s outdoor neon arrow sign!

"The recently converted mattress store was a 1930s house originally purchased by my parents in 1955. It underwent five separate additions with the final one incorporating the garage as display space. Over the years it was the Harkness Colonial Shoppe, Country Furniture Store, La-Z-Boy Showplace, Ashley 123 and, finally, the Harkness Mattress Store. Connie helped us open up the store, level the floors and redisplay the whole facility. It turned out better than I could have imagined, changing from a chopped-up house to beautiful open displays."

Connie told us, "The design concept for the mattress portion of the store was based on the lovely natural resources of Washington State. It's a modern, clean, cool spa vibe. The over-sized murals throughout are used in place of manufacturers' posters or logos. And this is done to

The new exterior design incorporates a rich bronze corrugated metal on the upper portion of the building accented with warm stacked stone around the lower portion. The much-loved and unforgettable 1950s outdoor neon arrow sign was updated.

Below, Harkness Furniture before the exterior update.





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"We have committed

10 per cent of our annual net profit to local charities and education, and an equal amount back to our staff in quarterly and annual bonuses."

re-enforce the Harkness brand.

"There is a separate area for luxury products, showcasing Tempur-Pedic. The area is set apart with a rich, luscious wallpaper, cost effective string curtains and chandeliers. And there's also a dedicated area for Furniture First's 'Mattress First' department, showcased with a red circular header and stripes on the wall.

"Beyond the mattress department is the newly designed sleeper department with family oriented lifestyle graphics and blue striped walls. This department leads you to the new youth department in the back portion.

Harkness Exterior

"Just last year we remodeled the exterior of the main store, transforming it from a dated 1960s look into a modern, sleek, urban look. The new design incorporates a rich bronze corrugated metal on the upper portion of the building accented with warm stacked stone around the lower portion. New, sleek bronze light fixtures surround the entire building and there are fresh awnings with a sofa emblem design. The overall new design

concept took what was a lackluster store into a rich updated urban concept that accentuated that original very important neon Harkness sign.

"Dave is justifiably very sentimental about that sign due to its significance in the family history, and he invested significantly in its rehabilitation. And I was all about keeping it," Connie grinned, "due to the fact that it's flat out cool!"

She added, "We did save money, though, by re-roofing the area around the store that showed from the street, leaving the back side the original color. The original roof shingles were the wrong shade to work with new branding. It's all about the details!

"This new brand positioning statement was also used on the freestanding mattress store, located in the parking lot connected to the main building by a painted, lined sidewalk."

Big Fire

The story of any enterprise inevitably ranges from comedy to tragedy, especially when almost a century of history is involved. "It was Christmas, 1992," Dave

recalled. "Tragedy turned into a mixed-blessing as a fire destroyed our entire warehouse just before the holiday. We had other retailers pitch in and help provide us with merchandise to cover our lost sales orders and even a little extra for stock. A mattress manufacturer provided the transportation at no charge to back-haul the goods from furniture dealers all over the Northwest so we could cover our sold and stocked merchandise in time for Christmas."

Company Values

We asked about the Harkness' secrets of success. "Our staff is our secret weapon," Dave said. "We try to treat each and every person as we wish to be treated. In turn, we expect them to pass that along as they interact with our guests. Our mission statement includes our intention to operate our business as a Christian organization. I think this permeates everything we try to do at the store. We try to extend these values to our staff and then to our customers. With all deliveries, by tradition we place an affirming bible passage in a logo'd coffee mug filled with M & Ms. We seem



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"Harkness' advertising is aggressive around the major holidays, and those tend to be our highest volume times of the year."



to attract employees with generally the same value system as our family and I think they, in turn, offer superior customer service in all their interactions with customers. We have a diverse staff, but our common theme centers around mutual respect.

Media & Technology

"We have weekly training/education meetings conducted by either reps or our sales manager. The staff is constantly observed and counseled by our sales manager. We try to get e-mail information from all customers and prospective customers both in-store and

through our website. We are also very active on our Facebook page and have weekly giveaways. There is an up-sheet where the sales staff lists the number of customers, their successes, interests and any other pertinent facts. This information is compared to an internal camera system which is also counted daily. My sales manager oversees this information.

"We've used Myriad Software for many years to get all of our merchandising and management information. I do all the buying for our store, and it is very effective at inventory management and analysis. I base most purchasing and reorder decisions on SKU GMROIs. Our CPA accesses our system remotely to prepare monthly financials."

It's the twenty-first century and

competition abounds, but Dave doesn't "worry too much about competitors. No one can really match the environment we've created. We have a price-match guarantee that provides peace of mind for the customer. If you can verify a lower price under the same sales conditions, we will instantly match it. We have a huge number of loyal return customers, even into second and third generations. A number of comment cards returned to us state that because of our service, pricing and selection, they would not shop

Pictured below are Danny Herbst, Kellen Harkness, Kai'la (their dog), Antonio Wynn (Dave & Cyndi's grandson), Cyndi Harkness, Dave Harkness, Isabel Wynn (Dave and Cyndi's granddaughter), standing behind Kimberly Wynn (Dave and Cyndi's daughter) and Mike Wynn (Kimberly's husband).

"Our staff is our secret weapon. We try to treat each and every person as we wish to be treated. In turn, we expect them to pass that along as they interact with our guests." -David Harkness



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"A large percentage of our advertising budget has been switched to social media in addition to our traditional media selections, newspaper, circulars, television and direct mail. The combination of all these seem to be working well together. Harkness' advertising is aggressive around the major holidays, and those tend to be our highest volume times of the year. The majority of ads are store-wide theme events. We also do mattress only and Ekornes circulars inserted into Sunday newspapers.

Two Buying Groups

"One of the best decisions I ever made was to join a performance group 20 years ago! It was originally through the Shepherd Group, they were then purchased by Impact Consulting. How do you put a value on 15 separate business owners giving frank advice to you with no other motivation than to improve your operation? There has been nothing that has added more to our current success than our participation and input from my performance group.

"In addition, we belong to two

buying groups, Pacific Furniture Dealers and Furniture First. Both have been instrumental in our success. The benefits are both in the sharing of information and the rebates received from collective volume buying. I am the Past President of PFD (twice), and I continue to be on the Board. My father was instrumental in its origination in 1969.

"I was also President of the Western Home Furnishings Association and on the Board of the NAHFA national association. I currently serve on the HFA Board, a merger of the two organizations. We had the honor of being named Western Retailer of the Year in 2000, and National Retailer of the Year in 2014. They were both acknowledgments of multiple Harkness' generations that have given back to our community and the industry. HFA has been a great organization to help us in just that objective, to give back to an indus-

try that has been so good to our business and all the families it has supported over the years."

David does all the buying for the store, "with the help of my sales manager, John, and our son, Kellen, attending the Vegas Market twice each year. We partner with core vendors with whom we have ongoing relationships, planning jointly with their reps to put together a six-month basic stock line-up. Our decorator goes to Vegas once a year to look at current fashions and help plan floor displays. She gets great ideas from Market spaces and then incorporates them into our vignettes. Selective pricing is listed on the Harkness website, but we've struggled with how to implement selling online."

Generational Change

Succession has been and is an important factor for multi-gener-





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HARKNESS FURNITURE

ational, independent businesses, particularly those that have survived and prospered for almost a century. Said David, "Kellen, who formerly had no interest in the furniture store, decided in his Junior year of college to try out the family business. He joined our operation after graduating from Ohio State University with a business degree. I wrote up an internship program and sent him down to a friend's store in Oregon to learn all facets of a retail furniture store operation in a place where he wasn't the 'son of the boss'! This internship lasted eight months and it was a good trade for the education he received. He joined me soon after and then did a similar internship at our store where he again served in all departments. He spent time in various areas of the operation, including years in the office and warehouse.

"After sufficient time, when I knew he was committed, my wife and I started transferring stock to him so he would have a vested interest in

the business. We did a complete estate plan that provided for compensating assets for our daughter who was never in the business. We continue to transition stock on an annual basis, so he continues to share in the success and management of our operation."

Giving Back

A Harkness tradition, "We believe in giving back to our community. As we have been blessed as a business, it is our privilege to bless others. We have committed 10 per cent of our annual net profit to local charities and education, and an equal amount back to our staff in quarterly and annual bonuses.

"We are very involved in Rotary as a conduit to plug our resources directly back into the community. I am the Past President of our local Rotary Club, and host an annual fundraising event at our store. We set up 18 holes of indoor putt-putt golf in our store with charities highlighted at most holes. We host a dinner, bar, live jazz band and

18 fully decorated golf holes. For fundraising, we have sponsorship of the holes, a 'raise the paddle' event, an auction and raffle. Over the past 25 years, a small group of Rotarians have raised over half a million dollars donated to local charities and scholarships. Our little Rotary group has done numerous projects locally and globally.

"I am also on the Board for a local domestic violence shelter, and have been on the Foundation Board for Clover Park Technical College for many years. I'm delighted to give back to the community that has supported Harkness Furniture for almost 100 years!"

A moment of reflection. "I'm probably in a position to retire after starting part-time 50 years ago in the warehouse as a teenager, and full-time 42 years ago. The problem is that I can't think of anything I'd enjoy doing more than what I do! I look forward to going to work each and every day. No two days are alike and I can truly make a difference in the lives of my staff, customers and community. I love the furniture business!"



Harkness Furniture believes in giving back by supporting numerous charities and organizations.

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WRITTEN & DELIVERED SALES

by David McMahon

Here's the true story of a retail furniture operation, performing well in sales, but experiencing sub-par profitability.

Sales were up in 2017 for the retailer we will refer to as XYZ Furniture, compared with 2016, as was its gross margin. On the down side, this retailer had warehouse capacity issues leading to a host of other problems including:

- *Rushed delivery preparation*
- *Slow merchandise transfers*
- *Unorganized locations*
- *Overuse of external storage units*
- *An up-tick in damages*
- *High employee turnover*
- *Increased inventory dollars*

The store's cash position was also not as good as it should have been, given the level of healthy sales and margins.

What Was Going On?

To find out what was going on, we looked at the flow of business over the past 10 months for both written sales and delivered sales. Written shows the current pace

or trend for customer transactions recorded at the point of sale. This measure compared with the previous year was up by 10 percent. Written business, examined month-by-month was found to be pretty consistent.

The problem was that this company never really paid close attention to delivered business. Delivered sales fulfilled via the store's supply chain, was not as consistent as their written business. Delivered sales were down 15 percent from the prior year. And, looking at each month, the through-put of delivered business was not consistent.

Of course there were explanations such as:

- *Customers wouldn't take delivery*
- *Customers were waiting on a house*
- *Vendors had shipped all at once*
- *XYZ Furniture was short staffed in the warehouse*
- *They said they were too busy*

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"In this retail operation

depending on the week, delivered sales could be up or down by upwards of 50 percent."

on the sales floor

The Real Problems

All these explanations were the result of a build-up of inefficiencies and poor process management. So, this was a great opportunity for improvement!

A smoother flowing, consistent, delivered sales pipeline, translates into:

- *Faster inventory turns*
- *Better return on investment*
- *Controlled payroll*
- *Fewer emergencies and a reduction of chaotic activities*
- *Increased customer satisfaction*

- *Happier employees*
- *Higher cash flow and profit realization*

What follows is the general strategy XYZ Furniture followed to achieve the benefits of more consistent delivered sales.

Vendor Strategies

Merchandise gets ordered, it comes in, it goes out. These are the bones of a supply chain. Now, in a perfect world, it would all flow smoothly. Minimum storage and employee time would be needed. Maximum benefit would be achieved. However, with retailers that carry multitudes of erratic

vendors with some custom order, some stocking, some foreign, some domestic, inconsistencies in the supply chain seem to be the norm. As business managers it is our job to understand the flow and seek to make it as consistent as possible – to MINIMIZE the CHAOS.

To do this look at each vendor and its reliability. Determine:

1. Average Order Lead Time to Received Time
2. Range of Deviation from Average Order Lead Time to Received Time
3. Number of Pieces not received as ordered (i.e. damaged, short and over)



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WRITTEN & DELIVERED SALES

A vendor that is reliable versus one that is unreliable with respect to these three points is better for your business even if it takes longer on average to receive the product. This is because EXPECTATIONS can be communicated to the customer at the point of sale with confidence. Most salespeople would much rather say to a customer, "You can order this style with these options, and have it in your home the week of February 1st.", than, "It

usually take 6-8 weeks and someone will call you when it comes in."

Understand that real delivery times to customers' homes are now the standard of retail. This has been championed by retailers like Amazon.

Maintain and source vendors that meet your standards. This will smooth your supply chain with respect to incoming orders and increase both written and delivered business.

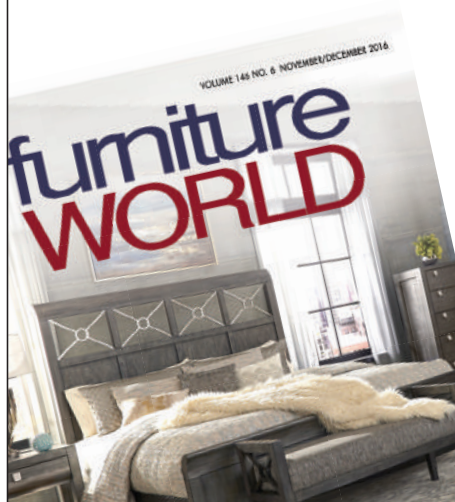
365 days/ (\$3 million/ \$1 million)

This is important because the lower you can get your days to deliver average inventory value number, the faster the supply chain is moving through to customer. The faster the supply chain moves to customers, the faster you earn cash, profits, and satisfy the needs of customers and employees.

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Customer Strategies

Once merchandise arrives in a facility its main purpose is to get it out of the facility as quickly as possible in perfect condition.

This may seem like an obvious statement, right? Then why is it that furniture retailers routinely range from 60 to 250 days to deliver their inventory value? To answer this question, use the following formula:

Days to deliver average inventory value = 365 days in one year/ (Landed Cost of Inventory Sold (Delivered) in one year/ Average Cost of Inventory Carried)

Example, if you have an annual cost of goods sold (delivered) of \$3,000,000 and an average inventory carried of \$1,000,000 you would take 122 days on average to turnover your inventory.

Track To Improve

If you believe getting merchandise moving through your warehouse into your customers homes is important, then track your days to deliver your inventory value. Start by checking this metric once per month and report on it in your operations meetings.

Then, to create continuous improvement, make sure your

"The lower you can get your days to deliver average inventory number, the faster the supply chain is moving through to your customer."

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"The inventory reduction

and quicker realization of revenue and remaining deposits, produced an estimated increase in cash flow of over \$100,000."

entire organization is aware of, and working to lower your days to deliver average inventory number:

- *Salespeople: They produce gross margin dollars that feed the supply chain.*
- *Delivery schedulers: They schedule delivery or pickup dates. Faster and sooner scheduling on written sales lead to a faster throughput to delivered sales.*
- *Merchandisers: The faster new pieces are displayed, the faster you will sell it.*
- *Warehouse people: Quick cross docking systems are a better use of resources.*
- *Delivery resources: Running resources under and overcapacity are both wasteful.*

Set Standards On Delivered Sales

In this retail operation, it was noticed that depending on the week, delivered sales could be up or down by upwards of 50 percent, the result of mismanagement. What happens in these situations is that operations people are taking a break some weeks or catching their breath. Then some weeks they

rush around like chickens with their heads cut off. For some reason the busy delivered weeks seem to occur prior to commissions being paid. Going slow then fast then slow then fast does not produce the best customer experience and workplace environment. Operations that function with "even flow" of work are able to function better – period.

To remedy or avoid these delivered peaks and valleys, set a delivered sales weekly standard. Then, bonus the appropriate parties for keeping this standard true.

Results

Over time, this operation was able to produce a more even written and delivered sales performance. Their days to deliver their average cost dropped by 10 days.

Ten days quicker may not seem like much, however between an inventory reduction and a quicker realization of revenue and remaining deposits, this equated to an increase in annual cash flow of over \$100,000 for this average sized business (5 Million written and delivered sales). Other benefits were realized as well.

1. Sales people were happier because they got paid quick-

er and had fewer service issues.

2. Warehouse people were happier because they could pick and prepare product at a normal pace and were not alternatively bored or overwhelmed.

3. The owner was happier because cash flow improved.

4. Finally, customers were happier because they received their deliveries when expected.

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, is a Certified Management Accountant and is U.S. Dept. of Revenue Licensed. He directs four performance groups – the Kaizen, Visionary, Gladiator and TopLine groups – along with multiple consulting projects.

Offer: For a limited time, David McMahon is offering retailers an Opportunity Analyzer. You can get a customized side-by-side comparison report with all of these metrics along with a useful one-on-one web meeting.

David McMahon can be reached with questions or comments at david.mcmahon@highjump.com.

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TIME TO PARTY ^{✓ like it's} 2023

by Gordon Hecht

It's January!
that means
saying "So
Long" to 2017
and turning the
page to a new
year.

That means it's also time to be making plans for 2023. Don't worry, you're not Rip Van Winkle and you didn't miss the past five years (My prediction is the Browns will win the Super Bowl and the Macarena will make a comeback in 2023).

While RSAs may think a month ahead, and managers may think a year ahead, savvy business people do take time each year to think about where they want to be five years in the future. You may laugh at the idea of a five year plan, but life, especially business life, is a journey. If you don't have a road map to where you are going, you'll never know when you get there.

Most journeys have unexpected detours, roadblocks, traffic jams, and exits. Because most of these are unexpected, you can't plan for them. But you can plan for exits. Many people even call this an exit plan. Ideally, from the day you open your business, or start a new career, you should be looking for the way out. Exit plans include selling a business, passing it on to family members, or even liquidating for cash. Unless you plan to

work until you take that long dirt nap, you will want to know when and how you want to take a final curtain call.

This is not to suggest that you should exit in 2018 or 2023 or any particular point in the future, just that the sooner planning starts, the more time you have to get your house in order.

Like Selling A House

Exiting a business is like selling a house. Realtors will tell you that the more modern, clean, and attractive a house, the quicker it will sell, and sell for more. Think about these ways to add value to your business:

"Exit plans include
selling a business,
passing it on to family
members, or even
liquidating for cash."

Curb Appeal

Does enhancing your store front and signage increase or decrease the value of your business? If you guessed INCREASE, you are right. When it's time to sell, you'll want fresh paint, bright channel letters, and shiny windows --- along with a clean curb.

Your Website

Often called your second storefront, many prospective buyers will

search for and browse through your website first. Will an exciting, informative, interactive and e-commerce ready website increase or decrease the value of your business? Again, INCREASE is the correct answer.

Buyers of businesses in the 21st Century expect sellers to have all the qualities mentioned above, and for the business to have a great record of active digital traffic. Ignore your website and prospective buyers will pass your opportunity by.

Distressed Inventory

Home Sellers today can enlist

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"Just like improving your home residence. Any investment you make in your business is yours to enjoy right now. So, why wait?"

the services of professional staging companies to make their homes look great. The #1 issue that Stagers run into is too much junk and stuff in houses. Step One for them is to make the owner sell, toss, or store the effluence they have collected in a storage facility. Selling your business means selling all of your inventory based on actual cash value. That means a torn box spring that you paid \$70 for back in 2014 is worth \$10 (or less). All inventory over 360 days old is valued at about half of cost, and damaged, older, and pieces-parts are worth less (or worthless). Will having only a

new, salable, and complete inventory increase or decrease the value of your business? Once more, increase is right. Drain your swamp of old over-parked merchandise and you'll raise cash today, making your business more valuable tomorrow.

Interior Environment

It can all be summed up in one word: WOW! Successful realtors know, when a buyer says wow when they enter a home, they can pull out their offer sheet. When you sell your business it's the same.

If you can get your prospective business buyer to utter that same expression, you are on your way to the exit ramp and the payoff for your hard work. Wow comes from a lot of things. Up-to-date paint and flooring is a start, lighting and fixtures count too. Top it off with a unique shopper experience, meaning making your store a place people want to, instead of have to shop, and any business buyer is sure to be wowed.

Here's the really cool thing about getting ready to exit your business. Just like improving your home residence, any investment you make is yours to enjoy right now, so

"Thanks Larry for Another Fantastic Event!"



MICHAEL BRUCE

This is the second time we have worked with Larry on a retirement sale for a store we purchased, and he was great again. The concept he uses to develop a story thru the marketing and then allows us to conduct the sale with our own people is fantastic and I believe provides for the best results. We were overwhelmed with the amount of business the first week of our event and Larry was able to adjust the marketing and event schedule to continue to maximize the opportunity after we attempted to catch our breath. Thanks Larry for another fantastic event!

Michael Bruce, of Bruce Furniture: Kearney, Hastings, Holdrege, Alliance and North Platte, Nebraska

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why wait until you are ready to cash out to make the investment. Improving the exterior and interior brings you more shoppers and helps convert them to customers. Put together a strong website and an attractive social media campaign and your site may go viral, or at least get people to take you seriously. Clearing out dead inventory gives you immediate cash to invest in all of the above.

"From the day you open your business, or start a new career, **you should be looking for the WAY OUT.**"

If you plan to exit in 10 to 15 or more years, you may not want business buyers in your store now. But you do want home furnishings buyers in your store every day starting now. Improve your store like you want to sell it in 2018 and you'll see more clicks, views, foot traffic, and sales. It may even make you say "WOW"!

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. See all of Gordon's articles on the furninfo.com website at www.furninfo.com/Authors/List. Questions and comments about this article or any other topic can be directed to Gordon at ghecht@serta.com.

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2018
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3 FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS

TO BUILD YOUR BRAND

by Jeff Giagnocavo

Three tools, that used together will amplify your message, capture prospect contact information and supercharge your online advertising spend.

As we begin the New Year it makes sense to focus on three key tools that provide the biggest opportunity for furniture and bedding retailers to succeed on Main Street.

1. Market to your strengths & unique selling position.

Simply put, your marketing messages should be able to answer why your retail operation, out of all other options available to consumers is the best choice.

Remember, your unique selling position or positions, depending on the types of additional services you offer, **MUST** include unique, exclusive to you reasons why consumers you target should buy from you.

As an example, in my stores, our core marketing message and statement is, "At Gardner's we help you wake up happy. Sleep is powerful and a new sleep system from Gardner's helps you to be a better 'you'. Our 7 Step Wake Up Happy Promise is a simple step-by-step process to help you find the perfect mattress and your happiness is guaranteed with our 120 Night Wake Up Happy Comfort

Guarantee. If you're not the best you after sleeping on a Gardner's Mattress & More sleep system we will happily exchange it with absolutely no fee to you."

Check out (on the following page) Gardner's "7 Step Wake Up Happy Promise", a document that not only communicates our unique selling position but also governs our advertising and selling processes.

Now let's suppose you also had a solid marketing message. How is that being amplified by your advertising? Does your advertising support the marketing message you've defined? Or, does it un-glue all the hard work and effort you've invested over the years?

If our advertising only spoke of deep discounts, pictured simple photos of white rectangles and a buy today message, and pay later financing offers, the foundation of our marketing and the reason why we exist in the market place would be completely undone.

Nothing about this style of advertising would support our marketing message. I'm not saying these



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- 2** Have a relaxed and informed CONVERSATION in our lounge with a trained sleep consultant.
- 3** Let you EXPLORE, TRY, and EXPERIENCE the latest and greatest in sleep systems in a NO PRESSURE environment.
- 4** PROMISE WITH A PURPOSE - our DREAM ROOM and WAKE UP HAPPY COMFORT GUARANTEE means you can promise you will wake up happy.
- 5** Earn your TRUST when you invest in a new sleep system.
- 6** Always deliver your mattress with our Gardner's employed PROFESSIONAL delivery and install team.
- 7** Ensure you are 100% SATISFIED - no one night stands we will always call to make sure you are waking up happy.

"We immediately noted a difference in sales approach after walking in the door!" David Ferraro

"What a great buying experience! We LOVE our new mattress and are so glad we went to Gardner's. They say what they'll do and do what they say!" Amy Kirscher

"Our word is our bond. We believe in 'say what you do and then, do as you say.' If there is ever a time while visiting Gardner's, purchasing your mattress or while we are in your home that you feel we have not lived up to any of our promises please call our dedicated direct line which is answered only by Ben or Jeff 717-629-6289 to discuss how we can make it right."

Lancaster's Favorite Mattress Store

"The follow-up from Gardner's since my purchase has also been appreciated. They have sought to see that all my needs have been met. Gardner's will take good care to you!" Karl Kanta

1. Educate you about your new sleep system, read our mattress buying guide.
2. Have a relaxed and informed conversation in our lounge with a trained sleep consultant.
3. Let you explore, try, and experience the latest and greatest in sleep systems in a no pressure environment.
4. Promise with a purpose. Our dream room and wake up happy comfort guarantee means we can promise you will wake up happy.
5. Earn your trust when you invest in a sleep system.
6. Always deliver your mattress with our Gardner's employed professional delivery and install team.
7. Ensure you are 100% satisfied. No one night stands. We will always call to make sure you are waking up happy.

tactics don't work, but this type of advertising (price, product pictures and discounts), would dilute our marketing messages and would actually slow the growth and success of our store. It's possible this is what is happening in your business.

In a market where most everyone's advertising looks more or less the same, featuring price, sales and holiday blow outs, your opportunity for improvement in 2018 is to define your marketing message so it is truly unique to you. Only then can your marketing message truly connect with your customers.

2. Do more with less in your retail operation.

Let's face it, the Internet is here to stay. That said, we should remember that all online commerce right now only represents one in 10 purchases according to the National Federation of Retailers. It would seem as though in our industry some days, this number is closer

to nine in 10! It also seems some days that our showrooms only exist to support online business.

More Offers

I once heard a well-known high-profile marketing consultant say, "the success of your business directly correlates to the number of offers you make in your business."

With that profound statement in mind, how many offers can you truly make to prospects? You might be thinking that the only time you get to make an offer and sell something is when there is a customer in your store, but that is incorrect thinking.

You invest dollars to drive eyeballs to your website. If you don't make offers to those prospective customers who visit your website, automatically using CRM technologies, you are leaving lots of money on the table. These technologies ask for and collect the names and emails of those

"If you don't make offers to those prospective customers who visit your website, automatically using CRM technologies, you are leaving lots of money on the table."

folks who visit your site. From there, those leads need to be followed-up via email to drive them into your store.

Smart retailers are seeing upwards of six percent of visitors being added to their prospect lists via smart website experiences. That's names and emails folks! These same retailers who use the collected names and emails systematically and automatically to generate in-store visits, can generate upwards of 12 percent conver-

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GOAL Your goal for the month of Dec 2017 is \$56,549.99 or \$1,824.19 per day. Your current sales volume through 8 day's is \$4,987.74 or \$623.47 per day.

VOLUME SHOULD BE To be on goal your volume should be \$14,593.55, so you are \$9,605.81 or 65.8% behind Target. If you maintain your current sales, your volume at month end will be \$19,327.49. Which is \$37,222.50 below your goal. The overall store is 14.5% below goal for the month. *(If over goal we give a congratulations note!)*

SPOKEN WITH You have spoken with 26.5 prospective customers and sold 8.5. Your closing ratio is 32.1% which is 1.2 % below the showroom average. Your average sale amount is \$586.79, which is \$744.90 below the showroom average of \$1331.69.

NEED TO TALK WITH If you maintain your current pace with the same closing ratio and average sales amount you will need to talk with a total of 274.0 more customers to attain your goal of \$56,549.99 for the month.

BE-BACKS You had a total of 0 Be-Backs so your Be-Back Ratio (# Be-Backs compared to total Opportunities) is 0.00% which is 1.29% below the store average. Your Be-Back Closing Ratio is 0.0% which is 50.0% below the store average and your Average Sale for Be-Backs is \$0.00 which is 3.6% lower compared to your average sale for all activity.

REVENUE PER GUEST Your Revenue Per Guest (dollar value of each opportunity you meet if you sell them or not) is \$188.22 this is \$255.68 below the company average of \$443.90. In other words; you would have made an extra \$6,775.52 for this period if you reached the store average.

WARRANTY You had a total of 8.5 opportunities of potential warranty units that you could have sold and had 0.5 that were protected. Your closing ratio for Warranty Protection is 5.88%. The overall percentage for the showroom was 40.78%, which means you were 34.9% below the showroom average. Your total warranty sales MTD is \$39.99 which is \$637.67 below the store average, and your Warranty Ratio to total sales is 5.88% which is 34.9% below the average.

ITEMS PER SALE AVERAGES Your average items per sale during this period was 5.06 items per sale. You were 0.3 items or 6.3% above the showroom average of 4.80.

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"If our advertising

only spoke of deep discounts, pictured photos of white rectangles and financing offers, the reason why we exist in the market place would be completely undone."

sion to paid customers. Here's an example of what is possible.

- 5,000 monthly visitors
- 5 percent opt in for email offers
- 250 leads begin receiving offers to visit your store
- 17 of those leads become paying customers each month
- 233 leads remain for ongoing marketing efforts

Now apply this same kind of thinking to those who have visited but have yet to buy. Are you solely eating what you kill today in your stores? Isn't it time to embrace the customer experience and implement steps along their buying journey in which your store sends offers to these prospects to visit your store again and complete their pur-

chase? Another example,

- 500 monthly store visitors
- 30 percent closing rate
- 150 customers
- 350 prospects remain which most stores simply ignore e.g. eat today what we kill today
- 20 percent of those prospects come back to buy again, resulting in 70 new customers
- Raising the effective closing rate to nearly 50 percent

What would these offers and having this kind of impact on your closing ratio do for your business in 2018? Remember as store traffic continues to dwindle year-over-year there will be a point in time in which you simply have no choice

but to adapt and make more offers to potential customers in every way possible.

3. Seek to understand how digital advertising can be a blessing and a curse.

It's true that the ways in which people engage with digital media is different than how they once engaged with traditional offline media.

The very first thing to understand is that digital advertising is not digital marketing. Just like Yellow Book advertising, radio advertising, TV or billboard advertising - digital advertising is exactly that, an advertising medium. The rules HAVE NOT changed simply because the medium has changed. No matter what the gurus, experts and snake oil salespeople tell you,



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3 FUNDAMENTAL TOOLS

it is just advertising! As such, at a minimum, digital advertising should incorporate the following core elements.

- **A compelling attention grabbing headline:** *It should snap the neck and stop readers in their tracks!*
- **An offer:** *Lately, "buy this, get that" offers seem to be working very well. Consider offers like cell phone service, free streaming TV services or free smart home devices with a purchase.*
- **A call to action:** *What's next? Click this, give an email here, call us now!*
- **A deadline:** *If you do not give a deadline, there will be no reason for your prospective customer to respond now.*

Beyond these core elements of effective advertising, when it comes

to understanding digital media you need to be sure the media you are buying is congruent with your goals.

If you have a website set up to collect names and emails, it is perfectly fine to buy digital media that simply drives eyeballs to your website.

But, if you do not have such a website, you are wasting precious ad dollars because eyeballs alone do not pay the bills, at least not

"Consider offers like cell phone service, free streaming TV services or free smart home devices with a purchase."

systematically.

Conclusion

A compelling and unique selling proposition, combined with a lead generating website supported by smart digital advertising are three fundamental retailing tools.

Each can be useful alone, but used together they can create a measurable and profitable path to a successful 2018.

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 you every week so you can get new customers, stay ahead of your competition and increase your sales tickets. Get your FREE subscription by visiting www.MattressRetailerWeekly.com or text MRW to 484-303-4300.

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Service

WHO CARES?

by Peter Schlosser

Most of us retailers say we care about service, but isn't it mostly just for mottos, mailings, mission statements and group hugs?

Service. Who cares? Seriously, who really cares about customer service? Most of us say we do, but we aren't really telling the truth. We try to imagine that we do, though. We create flyers, drop mailings, hang signage, craft company mottos and mission statements, mandate management group-hugs. But if you're not leaving work exhausted every day, then you're lying to yourself.

One of my techs, Mark, recently went out on a service call. Here we call them 911s. This time it was to swap out a headboard leg with pins missing in the rail slot. Easy miss during inspection. The customer got delivery at 1:15pm, and by 2:15pm, she was satisfied.

Big deal, right? Actually, it was. To be in service, you must be able to think many steps ahead, gauge customer reaction, make quick cost-benefit analyses, and be able to muster your troops (or conscripts if you must) to achieve the objective: happy customer. Consider that Mrs. Smith, in this instance, bought a bedroom group. The right headboard leg didn't have rail pins, so it couldn't be fully assembled. Now, here's where you have to have empathy, something the owner of my company talks about

daily: You have to give a damn. Show me you give a damn. If we wait to schedule a visit, it might be a few days until we can get over there and get the leg swapped out. In the meantime, the bed—maybe her bed?—is on the floor. Every time she walks into the room to admire her new furniture, she has to see the bed stacked against the wall. Is it that big a deal to not have use of one's bed? Go sleep on the couch tonight, and tomorrow night, and maybe even the next couple nights, and then answer the question. Of course it is.

So what did it cost me to send someone out? Well, one person at maybe \$12 an hour, and a van. So maybe \$20. A service call at our company involves two people and a van, and an admin to schedule everything, and therefore the call could have cost nearly

"One of my techs, Mark, recently went out on a service call. Here we call them 911s."

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"It's the intangible costs

of poor decision making, procrastination and lack of give-a-damn that tarnish reputations and force ever-higher advertising budgets to replace lost consumers."

\$50. But it's the intangible costs of poor decision making, procrastination and lack of give-a-damn that tarnish reputations and force ever-higher advertising budgets to replace lost consumers.

While Mark was gone I was down to one person inspecting on the line. We do that here: we open, inspect, assemble, deluxe and repair every single piece of furniture—including rails, legs, and parts—before customers see their new purchases. Some places won't open rail boxes, or cut open upholstery... They claim that they don't have enough problems in those niches to warrant the extra man hours required to do the work. I wholeheartedly disagree. Our damages tip slightly more towards casegoods, but we have an entire room devoted to nothing but upholstery. Frame damage is most common, followed

by rub-throughs, tears and rips, mechanisms, and batting problems. Oh—those are problems we find on the dock during opening. If we shipped everything out sight-unseen, the next person to inspect the furniture would be our customer! Unacceptable.

Domestic and international manufacturers have made excellent progress delivering a less-flawed product and, in fact, many higher-end lines arrive in perfect condition, requiring no deluxing at all. So they're doing their job, but maybe the new guy in your warehouse who dropped the 300 lb. dresser on its end this morning crushed the top corner, and "forgot" to tell the floor manager. In my distribution center, we're going to catch that problem; will you?

If you ever get to visit the Ashley distribution center in Romeoville, Illinois, one of the first things that will jump out at you is its cleanliness. Literally, I don't think you could sweep together a nightstand box-full of anything in the whole building. Why? It's a culture. It's a mindset. The people that work there understand that expectation. Customer service has to have the same urgency attached to it: The clock literally is ticking. Every day that passes without Mrs. Smith getting her bed fixed, she grows angrier.

Empathy, proper inspection, and a real sense of urgency—combined with a flexible, agile service

staff and excellent resources to solve problems like spare hardware and a woodshop—can significantly reduce the amount of time a customer has to wait before their problem can be addressed. Your service manager should demand perfection but in a way that encourages, not discourages, staff members to perform. I am not the most understanding when my techs come back from service appointments without signatures because of something that, in my opinion, could have been solved with a little extra effort. In cases like this, you should review the photos, offer possible solutions, and go from there. Service techs should know that your expectations for them are very high. Service managers should set high expectations for themselves as well, lead by example and show drivers and repair techs that they understand the urgency of every service situation. And, they should demonstrate commitment by rolling up their sleeves and helping to get the job done when necessary.

About Peter Schlosser: Peter is a quality control manager living in middle Tennessee. He is a contributing editor to *Furniture World* where he writes about service, repair and back-end operations. See all of his past articles at www.furninfo.com. Questions on any aspect of this article or furniture repair can be directed to Peter at pschlosser@furninfo.com.

"Maybe the new guy in your warehouse who dropped the 300 lb. dresser on its end this morning crushed the top corner, and 'forgot' to tell the floor manager."

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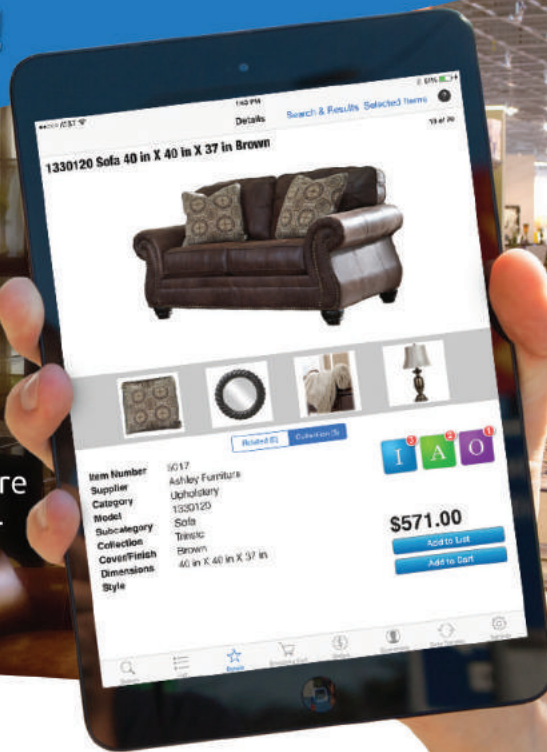
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