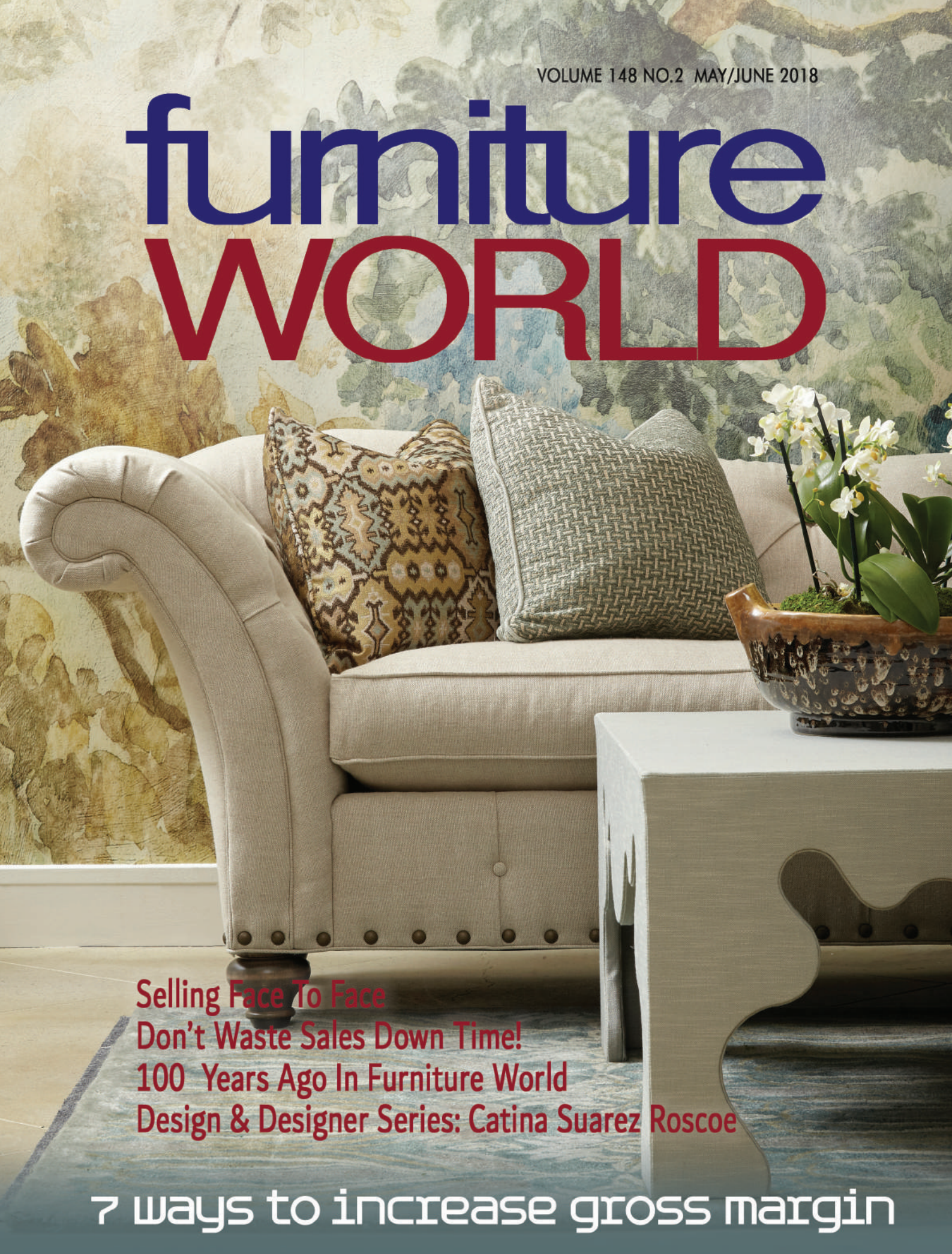


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furniture WORLD



Selling Face To Face
Don't Waste Sales Down Time!
100 Years Ago In Furniture World
Design & Designer Series: Catina Suarez Roscoe

7 ways to increase gross margin

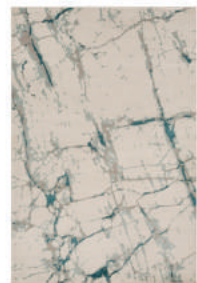
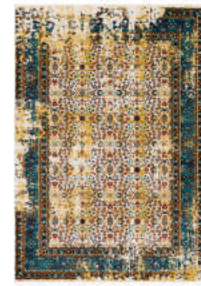


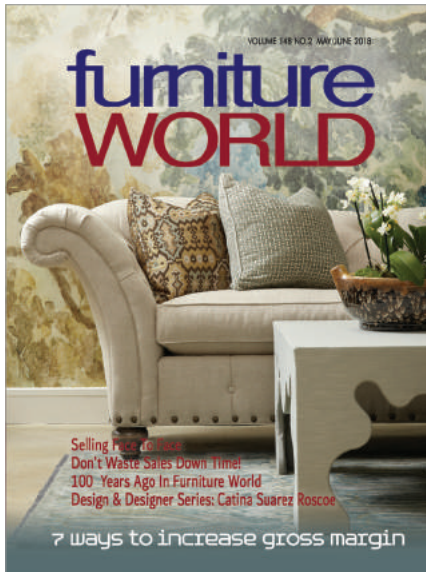
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Every Shopper
A Knocker!

100 years ago the word "knocker" was common furniture industry parlance (often used in Furniture World Magazine) to mean a wholesale sales rep or manufacturer's rep. More broadly, according to the Oxford English Dictionary, the word described, "Going from door to door canvassing, buying, or selling."

While working on the 100 Years Ago article in this issue, I was reminded that every sale starts with a knock and, we are all – every salesperson, brand and shopper – a knocker!

"Knock, knock. Who's there?
Boo. Boo who? Don't Cry!"

For kids, Knock, knock is a set-up for a punch-line, but a knock at your physical or virtual door should be a prelude to conversation. For brands and RSAs, therefore, knowing the answer to every "Who's there" question is serious business.

Twenty years ago in Furniture World, my friend Peter Marino answered the "Who's there?" question pretty well. He suggested that we need to be wary of reducing the answer to a punch line. "Nothing is more important than what the situation calls for," he wrote. "In terms more meaningful to those in sales, nothing is more important than what a given customer finds important at a given time."

I think Peter might humor me if I suggested that to the Knock knock. Who's there? sequence be added, "Who do you need me to be?" Then listen before answering their question with products, services, information, compassion and integrity.

"Knock, knock. Who's there? Adore.
Adore who? A-door is between us. Open up!"

Best wishes for a wonderful summer!

Russell Bienenstock
Editorial Director/CEO
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GROSS MARGIN 7 WAYS

by David McMahon

"There are two kinds of retailers: those folks who work to figure how to charge more, and companies that work to figure how to charge less." -Jeff Bezos

I recently read that Jeff Bezos of Amazon once said, "There are two kinds of retailers: those folks who work to figure how to charge more, and companies that work to figure how to charge less, and we are going to be the second." I encourage most of you to act like the first retailer that Bezos mentioned rather than racing for the bottom where few profit dollars remain. Here I will discuss some field-proven ways to maximize your Realized Gross Margin. The concept of Realized Gross Margin was introduced in the March/April 2018 issue. If you missed it, visit <http://www.furninfo.com/Authors/List> and scroll down to David McMahon.

Coincidentally, Amazon just recently increased its Amazon Prime prices by 20 percent for over 100 million subscribers. That equals two billion dollars in additional margin annually. I believe that Amazon is sending the message, "Where you give value, get your margin!"

Gross Realized Margin is the better way to track topline business performance to better

understand where your margins come from. Using Realized Gross Margin, a company gets a truer picture of where they stand after sales transactions occur. With this information, managers can make faster, better decisions and capture extra profit.

The equations that apply to calculating Realized Gross Margin are:

- $\text{Sales of Retail Goods} + \text{Sales of Protection} = \text{Total Sales}$
- $\text{Total Sales} - \text{Total Cost of Goods Sold} = \text{Gross Operating Margin}$
- $\text{Gross Operating Margin} + \text{Vendor Discounts Earned} - \text{Credit Card Fees} - \text{Finance Company Fees} = \text{Realized Gross Margin}$

Ways To Maximize Realized Gross Margin

1. Grow Protection Sales: Protection is the highest margin product that most furniture businesses sell. Increasing the proportion of protection to total sales

EXECUTIVE CONTACTS

Editorial Director, CEO

Russell Bienenstock (russ@furninfo.com)

Publisher

Barton Bienenstock (barton@furninfo.com)

Advertising Sales Director

Gary Siegel (sales@furninfo.com)

Advertising Sales Manager

Mark Testa (sales@furninfo.com)

Advertising Account Executive India

Amarjeet Singh (sales@furninfo.com)

Art/ Design Editor

Barbara Bienenstock (barbara@furninfo.com)

Retail Feature Editor

Janet Holt-Johnstone (janet@furninfo.com)

Special Projects Editor

Melody Doering (melody@furninfo.com)

Digital Projects Editor

Nic Ledoux (nic@furninfo.com)

Comptroller

Connie Tejada (fwcomptroller@furninfo.com)

IT Manager

Armanda Turney (armanda@furninfo.com)

Circulation Manager

Rich Jarrett (rich@furninfo.com)

CONTRIBUTING EDITORS

David Benbow - Bedding & Mattress Sales

Dan Bolger - Warehousing/ Trucking

Joe Capillo - Sales Management

Jeff Giagnocavo - Retail Systems

Gordon Hecht - Retail Observer

Rene Johnston-Gingrich - Design Education

Amitesh Singha - Technology

David McMahon - Operations & Finance

Larry Mullins - Development/ Advertising

Peter Schlosser - Furniture Repair



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can have significant impact. To do so you need to focus on these major elements:

Belief. Organizations that succeed, do so because they believe. Belief, starts at the top with company leaders. If you truly believe in the value protection provides to your customers, and would buy it yourself, then you have what it takes to achieve high margins through protection sales. If you do not, it is probably better to look at other ways to maximize margin.

Communication. Protection does not sell itself. Training people how to best communicate the value of protection is essential. The discussion should be interwoven throughout the purchasing cycle (your selling system). If your sales people take the time to find out how their customers plan to use purchased products, the odds of adding on protection are greatly increased. Think: Lifestyle Selling.

Incentives. Businesses that have the right people working for them in the right roles, do what they are incentivized to do. If you want your people to sell more protection, develop a performance plan with this objective in mind. The old standard of paying a flat 20 percent on protection is dead for most of my clients. There are more innovative methods now in use.

Review: Inspect what you Expect. Do it often. Do it as a team.

2. Put more resources in the Top Turning Items. Resources at your disposal to increase Realized Gross Margin by selling more of your top selling items are:

Human Resources. Your best sellers produce most of your gross margin dollars. So, insist that your buyers and merchandisers put most of their effort into maintaining these items.

- Ensure top items are nailed-down in the showroom.
- Give them good position digitally.
- Display them impeccably.
- Price them correctly.

Perform detailed price reviews and make routine adjustments. The real high margin game is won by looking at the details of your business in a dynamic way. It is, therefore, worth a large proportion of your people's time.

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Belief, starts at the top with company leaders."

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"When you get

a blend of product at different landed costs available to sell,
you minimize average costs, thus maximizing realized gross margin."

Capital Resources: Invest more dollars in areas of your line-up that are performing well. That means:

- *Back-up best selling frames that sell as shown.*
- *Expand additional frames for vendors that produce well.*
- *Expand top categories.*
- *Grow high turning price-points.*

Of course, you cannot continually grow inventory, so do so only when slow turning slots are sold.

3. Minimize Product Costs: The best retail operators continually work to bring their prod-

"Understand all elements and charges including on-premise swiping, online transactions, COD charging, security, credit vs. debit card options, all fees and possible circumstantial hold-backs."

uct-related costs down. I'll mention three components here:

Market Sourcing: At wholesale markets, seek product that is not shopped online and/or that you can get exclusivity in your region. If you are a volume player in your area, arrive early to lock-in deals prior to your competitors.

Also, shop with retail price points in mind. Do not search for products based on cost. Go to market prepared with a shopping list that includes category, vendor, style, retail price, lead-time, terms, and required landed cost. When you browse the showrooms, avoid talking or looking at the cost. When you see a piece you think you can sell for your targeted price point, only then ask about the landed cost. If the terms, lead-times, and minimums meet your requirements, you might have a winner.

Weigh Mixed Container Costs: If containers are do-able for your for your operation, seek container preferred pricing on your top sellers. Try to mix the containers with as many different items as possible. In this way, you hedge your bet. When you get a blend of product at different landed costs available to sell, you minimize average costs, thus maximizing realized gross margin.

Freight: Freight is a big part of cost of goods. Know the difference between PO, raw cost and landed costs. Make this a part of the purchasing decision. Shop carrier options annually. Price to cover maximum freight charges.

4. Minimize Protection Costs: Businesses often leave money on the table in how they price protection. I am a believer in pricing in ranges depending on the amount of the total sale before protection is added. Protection should be priced at a dollar amount that corresponds to the high end of each range, at 10 percent. For example, if one of your ranges is \$1,000 to \$1,999, then your protection could cost \$199. In this way, you get greater than 10 percent protection to product on most sales with protection. Protection margins should be around 80 percent if you are using a typical third-party service. If you are using a hybrid-type of self-insuring, then higher margins are possible.

5. Work To Get More Vendor Discounts And Rebates: Vendor rebates and terms credits can add two percent or greater in realized gross margin. Consider joining an industry buying group to take advantage of volume negotiated discounts.

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to sales volume while producing above average net income, your net free cash flow will allow you to take advantage of payment terms discounts. In turn, this will further add to overall profitability.

6. Minimize Credit Card Fees: Many operators do nothing about this cost. Merchant fees are just a necessary part of doing business, right? They are a convenience for the customer and the business. However, it is important that you have agreements that makes sense. Shop your service at least every couple of years. Understand all the elements and charges such as on-premise swiping, online transactions, COD charging, security, credit vs debit card options, all fees and possible circumstantial hold-backs.

"If the availability of 12-month financing a portion of the purchase is communicated properly during the buying process, **some higher income customers will choose to add-on extra items.**"

7. Minimize Finance Fees: Third party financing fees will depend on your business model. Some retail operations incur almost zero fees while others may have an expense ratio of over six percent of total sales volume. I believe that there is an opportunity here for everyone, with respect to maximizing realized gross margin dollars.

Those businesses that never use financing because their customers are generally "well-to-do" and their product is "high-end", are missing some sales. Customers who finance have higher average tickets. That is a proven fact! People with high-paying jobs are not always cash flush. If the availability of 12-month financing a portion of the purchase is communicated properly during the buying process, some customers will choose to add-on extra items now rather than waiting, or they will choose an upgrade. If incremental improvement in average sale is important to you, consider this fact.

For other business that regularly use third party financing, there are a variety of ways to use it more effectively to increase realized margin. You can advertise your long-term options, but encourage only terms that are necessary for each specific customer. Thirty-six months may work just fine! Other ideas include using monthly pay-

ments as a negotiating tool rather than price. Tag pricing to reflect financing, and require protection purchases to match the terms of the sale.

What Is This All Worth?

Does 10 percent of sales volume sound like it is worth the trouble? Or speaking annual pre-tax cash flow, does \$100,000 per million dollars in sales sound like it is worth it? That is the difference in realized gross margin for a low performing operation and one that's high performing. High performing retailers have more cash resources left over after sales transactions to fund their business operations for further growth. I encourage you, whatever your realized gross margin, to track this metric closely and incorporate some of the seven methods in this article to improve it. Amazon obviously thinks it is worth it!

About David McMahon: David McMahon, CSCP, CMA, EA is VP of consulting and performance group at PROFITsystems, a HighJump Company. David directs 5 performance groups, the Kaizen, Visionary, Gladiator, TopLine Sales Managers, and the LEAN Ops group as well as multiple consulting projects. He can be reached at david.mcmahon@highjump.com.

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WELCOME AMISH FURNITURE

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

Minnesota based Welcome Amish Furniture, is both a name and a greeting to 60,000 square feet of Amish designs!

The Wiley Family of Albertville, Minnesota, both live and share their philosophy each and every day.

"Our Mission is to provide high quality products that beautify clients' homes and enhance their lives with heirloom quality furniture that meets the customized needs of our current and future customers."

Welcome Amish Furniture was founded more than 30 years ago in the town of Crystal in Hennepin County, just a few miles away from its present location. Well, that's not entirely correct. At least, that's not the original name. Said Wes Wiley, "It became the name of our store when we moved to Albertville. Originally, back in Crystal, our store was located on Welcome Avenue. When we started carrying primarily Amish-crafted furniture we decided to change our name to 'Welcome Amish Furniture'. It has always been a funny first introduction to our first-time customers. 'Welcome to Welcome'. It has a funny ring to it and usually breaks

the ice with our customers!"

The Wileys made their appearance in the business when Ray Wiley joined the staff as a salesman after he had spent several productive years managing and opening stores for a large retail chain.

After 11 years of steady growth, the founders felt that the time had come for them to retire. So they sold their full-line furniture business to Ray and his brother, Wes.

Wes was a CPA who had his own financial consulting business until the year 2000. When the brothers made the decision to take over Welcome Furniture, he left his consulting practice.

Ray and Wes's father had been

"We're happy to see this category growing. It seems that quality is becoming higher value to consumers in our area."

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a Prairie Minister who preached throughout the small towns of the Upper Midwest for the majority of the brothers' lives. There was no previous family history with retail or merchandising, they are pioneers.

The family "grew up in the northern suburbs (of Minneapolis) since 1969," next generation Kaila Wiley told us. "Ray currently lives 20 minutes east of our store and Wes about seven miles northeast.

"I didn't officially join the team

"The store is the best part of the attraction – we have our 60,000 square feet and most people can't find a store that shows as much as we do, all Amish made."

until 2013. My brother, Luke, has spent more time working for Welcome Furniture than I have, many summers riding in the delivery truck and helping with the manual labor during high school and beyond. Now he manages our entire warehouse, customer relations and delivery service.

"On the other hand, I grew up in the store, occasionally following my mother, Patti, who orders and merchandises Smith Brothers."

In 1998, five years after Ray and Wes bought Welcome, they added Smith Brothers of Berne to their supplier list. Smith's values and integrity are legendary in the home furnishings industry, their maxim, "Quality doesn't go out of style!"

Said Ray, "Quality has always been an important aspect of our business model. It really set the tone for the following years of our transformation into higher quality furniture."

Two years later, 2000, another

critical point at the official turn of the century, Welcome began to show Amish built furniture. "Our introduction (to Amish furniture) was small and was introduced to us by a man we originally met at the Smith Brothers' exclusive line showing.

"We encountered this man again at a furniture showing at the IMS (International Market Square) building in Minneapolis.

"At that point in time, we had 9,000 square feet of showroom space at our Crystal location."

Just two years later, an exciting opportunity appeared on the Wiley's horizon. "We moved to Albertville, in neighboring Wright County."

It was a huge increase in showroom space, from their original 9,000 square feet to 60,000 square feet, just full of potential. "The price was right, the community was growing and it was pre-recession. All the signs pointed to a successful growing area



Seated (left to right): Wes Wiley and Ray Wiley (Owners). Standing: Ryan Carlson (Sales), Patti Wiley (Ray's Wife, Administrator, Buyer), Thomas Korf (Sales), Rick Kleist (Sales for 10+ years), Kaila Wiley (Sales Manager), Luke Wiley (Warehouse Manager).



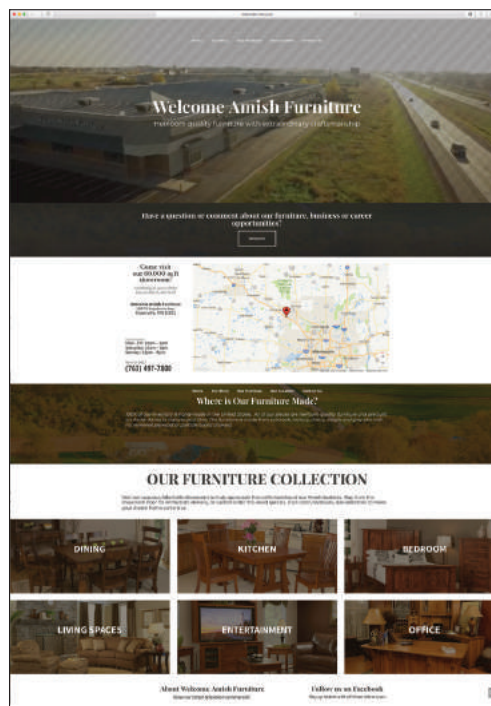
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OUTDOOR



Pictured are Welcome Amish Furniture's 60,000 square foot retail operation, plus the welcomefurniture.com website homepage. The website gets straight to the point touting American Made, "Heirloom quality furniture with extraordinary craftsmanship." Prospective customers are told that everything in the store is available for immediate delivery, without middleman markups. Financing and custom options (size, wood, stain color, hardware and other features) are also available.



with growing families that would see value in the store that we wanted to grow!"

(Welcome is also close to Albertville Premium Outlets, a large outlet center mall in the Minneapolis-St. Paul metropolitan area. And there lies another story. More about that later.)

"The type of real heirloom quality we have throughout our store caters to both young and old." (And all the demographics in between!) "We truly see people

from all age groups."

As a store displaying exclusively Amish Furniture, Welcome Amish Furniture stopped attending local furniture shows and only attends the Northern Indiana Woodcrafters Association Expo held in March.

"In the transition from the old store to the new store, we've seen a larger customer base from a much higher income level than what we're used to. The most exciting thing of all is to see second generations of customers from the past furnishing their homes."

In Welcome Amish Furniture's website customers read about the store's, "Handcrafted Indiana Amish Furniture and much more." We asked Kaila to tell us about the "much more". She said, "The 'much more' isn't a tangible item. It's our service; it's the family friendly experience with family based values. We work hard to

train our staff to be knowledgeable in our furniture, but our priority is to hire good hearted people who work hard. The store is the best part of the attraction, we have our 60,000 square feet and most people can't find a store that shows as much as we do, all Amish made."

Welcome's website also very interestingly defines the unique and extraordinary Amish Craftsmanship. A few high points:

"Amish craftsmen use traditional heritage methods for construction, meaning their products are durable, hand-crafted and feature impressive attention to detail. Amish built furniture does not contain any toxic chemicals that typical factory produced furniture does. You can expect 100 percent wood construction, instead of particle board, which ensures each piece will last a lifetime."

For tables, "Mortise and Tenon construction adds strength to

"In Welcome Amish Furniture's website you will read, 'Handcrafted Indiana Amish Furniture and much more.'"

WELCOME AMISH FURNITURE

each design while preserving fine detail. High quality gear slides provide ease in opening and closing. Wood slides are designed for easy operation and are built for superior support. Table tops are made of one inch solid wood, fitted with solid steam-bent skirts. Craftsmen use specially designed sanding equipment and create solid hardwood, fully extendable drawers. As each table is unique, it is branded and numbered with its own serial number for future reference. Leaves are cut to fit each table precisely and receive the table's serial number along with its numeric order for installation. Leg connections are reinforced by a v-grooved corner block assembly with a two-bolt attachment."

The description of the intricate manufacture of spindle and mission chairs is well worth reading,

as is the bolt system rather than hook on rails used in the crafting of beds.

One hundred percent of Welcome's inventory is "hand-made in the United States, built on Amish farms in Indiana and Ohio. And it's made from solid American hardwoods like solid oak, hickory, cherry, maple, grey elm, walnut, rustic cherry, rustic hickory and rustic quarter-sawn oak with no veneered plywood or particle board allowed."

Kaila added, "We have the benefit of showing hundreds of different woods with varying stains on all of our categories of furniture. This helps customers to visualize what their final product will look like without any surprises."

And, there is a huge range of styles within Amish creativity's reach including Mission, Craftsman, Queen Anne, Shaker

and contemporary designs.

Furniture World asked about staffing. "Typically we go through 'MinnesotaJobs.com', an online job search system. We have a small staff of six salespeople, three in administration and three warehouse crew members. We haven't had to hire too much in the last few years as our employee turn-over rate is pretty low for

"One hundred percent of Welcome's inventory is handmade in the United States, built on Amish farms in Indiana and Ohio."





the retail industry.

"For our sales team, we pay 100 percent commission with incentivized bonuses. We also offer health and dental benefits for full-time employees, and recently we were able to add a 401K for all of our employees.

"And we do have in-store training for our sales staff. We schedule these meetings once a month unless something significant occurs, i.e. show floor moves, stain adjustments, new pieces. I see my sales team regularly and can manage to assess, touch-base on product and communicate most information throughout the week.

"Luke handles all of our customer relations past the point of

sale. Like our handcrafted furniture, the customer's needs are just as individualized.

"We have a two-man delivery crew that services 120 miles surrounding our store. We have been successful using an independent delivery service that covers our needs nationwide."

In marketing outreach, Welcome has used "mailers in the past, and billboards. We're currently showing a few ads on TV and have taken to the radio with a local celebrity. We seem to be having great success with our marketing team from the St. Paul Agency as we make our way through the age of social media!

"Our website has been developed and maintained by our

Left to Right are Luke Wiley who oversees customer relations past the point of sale. He is pictured with the two-man delivery crew, John Engebretsen and Mike Engebretsen, brothers who have been part of the Welcome team for 20-plus years.

agency, too, and they've done a great job."

Wes added, "Half our budget is digital. Google and Facebook also have a large impact on how we communicate with our customers and increase our referral rate.

"And at this point in time we have no plans to sell on the Internet."

Community outreach is both sensitive and meaningful. Said Kaila, "In the past year we have donated two kids' table sets to Crescent Cove, a no-cost respite and hospice home for kids with support services provided to children and young adults with a shortened life span, and to their families. This home was brought to our attention by a longtime

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NIWA Furniture Expo: Over 90 Amish furniture and specialty builders make up the membership of this association. The next Northern Indiana Woodcrafters Association show will be held in March 2019. For more information about this show visit www.indianawoodcrafters.com or call 877-402-9090.

Ohio Hardwood Furniture Market: The Ohio Hardwood Furniture Market (OHFM) located in Ohio's Amish Country hosts spring and fall shows that boast a substantial selection of hardwood furniture builders. The next show will take place in September 2018. For more information visit their website at www.ohiohardwoodfurnituremarket.com or call 877.643.8824.

All American Furniture Expo: This show features quality solid wood and upholstered American-made furniture from a variety of manufacturers including Amish craftsmen. The next All American Furniture Expo will take place in August 2018. For more information visit www.allamericanfurniture@comcast.net or call 717-393-6466.

customer whose daughter works at the facility. It is our great pleasure to help these families feel perhaps a little more comfortable."

There are only three such homes in the United States, many more internationally. For additional information check their website, <https://crescentcove.org/whoweare/our-mission/>.

The Wiley family's vision of the decades to come, "The future of Welcome Amish Furniture is growing and changing with the times. We've got a solid sales and warehouse crew to build on the foundation we've created over the last years.

"We're happy to see this category growing. It seems that quality is becoming higher value to consumers in our area.

"The future is a challenge for brick and mortar stores as the online retailers grow. However, the niche Ray and Wes have

Photo compliments of All American Furniture Expo.



Photo: Northern Indiana Woodcrafters Association



created is pretty secure," Kaila assured us.

The Wileys welcome challenges of all sorts --- and with a smile! Kaila told us, "In Albertville, our store has always been difficult to find. Although we are located directly next to the Albertville Outlet Mall!

"Unfortunately," (or fortunately!) "we were unsuccessful in connecting the parking lots for easier access. This forces our customers to drive past the outlet mall and then take a small back road behind the mall. It's our private one-half mile driveway since, at this point, we have no other neighbors on this road. Typically,

our first-time customers are happy to have found us by the time they make it through the front door!

"It is a blessing in disguise as the people who do find us are determined and have their hearts set on finding the biggest Amish-only store in the area!

"Of course," she added, "most GPS systems do find us pretty easily!"

Go visit when next you are in Minnesota! Without doubt, you'll receive a very warm Welcome!

"In Albertville, our store has always been difficult to find. Typically, our first-time customers are happy to have found us by the time they make it through the front door!"



Photo: Northern Indiana Woodcrafters Association



Photos above compliments of Ohio Hardwood Furniture Market

DOWN TIME

DON'T WASTE IT!

by David Benbow

If you are a retail owner or manager you probably don't have a lot of down time. What about your retail sales associates?

Do your retail sales associates ever have down time? If they are like most RSAs, the answer is yes, and it probably drives you and them crazy. What do I mean by "down time?"

- *They are in the store.*
- *There are no customers on the floor.*
- *No sales meetings are happening.*
- *No rearranging of pillows is in progress.*
- *No re-tagging of merchandise is being forced upon them.*
- *No other retail housekeeping is interfering with their free time.*

In other words, they have nothing to do. You suspect this dreaded (or occasionally welcome) time on their hands has great value. But, it's valuable only if you have programs in place to help them use it efficiently and intelligently.

RSAs who use this time for social media to follow up with customers and prospective cus-

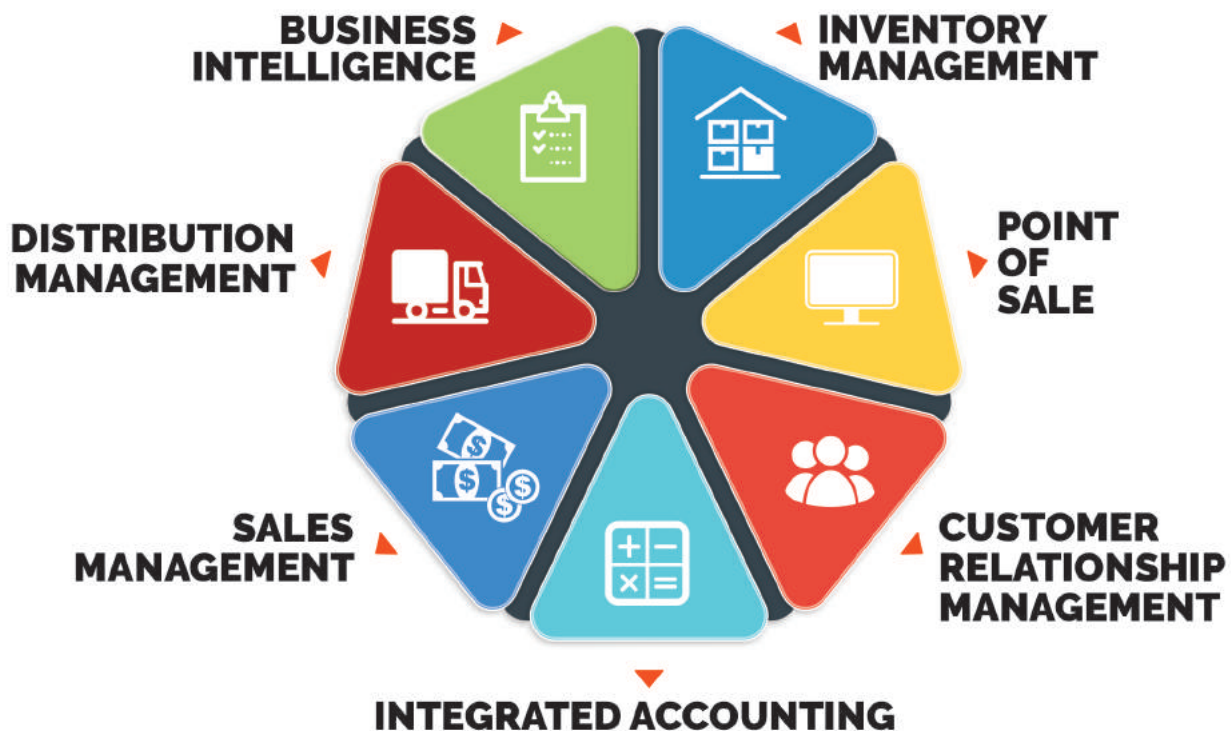
tomers in a highly focused way deserve a round of applause. But, be honest, how often do they do something useful during their down time? I'm not knocking smart phones; I'm just suggesting they can use it for something besides posting how much they are now savoring their Vente Caramel Macchiato!

Follow Up – Old Customers & New Prospects

There is an entire article on Follow Up in the March/April 2018 issue of Furniture World (www.furninfo.com/Authors/David%20Benbow/37), so I'm not going to spend too much time discussing it here. Following up is probably the best use of an RSAs (free) time. But, after follow up is done, and they still have extra time, there are a host of other useful activities they can do to boost their ability to make sales and more money.

In the following paragraphs, I will try to bring some of these to your attention.

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Sales Education

Down time, or free time, is a great time to continue sales training. Let me say this. Nobody, and I mean nobody, is the perfect retail sales associate. Anybody and everybody needs to study and practice to enhance sales skills and maintain the skills they already have. Without practice and continual analysis of sales techniques, skills will erode. RSAs will find themselves omitting steps or questions that were once part of their repertoire last year or last month. When they study the principles of their profession, which is retail sales, even if they are old pros, they will sharpen and hone their skills even more. Down time at the store is the perfect time for this self-review, analysis and

further study.

Where does one find sales material to read, watch and review? We'll mention some here, but there are many more. Let's start with print material.

Print Material

Books: Although there are literally thousands of books in print covering every facet of sales, there aren't very many dealing with furniture retail sales. Listed in the following paragraph are books with which I am personally familiar. Reading and re-reading these books over and over will help advance any sales career. You'll probably find, as I have, something new and helpful each time you read them.

- *How to Win the Battle for Mattress Sales, the Bed Seller's Manual.* My book, of course, is, modestly, first on the list. The web-site address to order is in the biographical information at the end of this article. I've been told by bedding sales associates that it's an excellent use of their down time.

- *Selling Retail* by John F. Lawhon. This book, by the late John F. Lawhon, is revered for its focused advice about selling furniture at retail. It is a big book, well organized and easy to read. It defines ideas and concepts, such as his Five Groups of Knowledge and the Steps of the Sale better than any other book I've read. I cite his work frequently in my book and



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"Reading and re-reading these books over and over will help advance any sales career."

"Without practice,
and continual analysis of sales techniques, skills will erode.
RSAs will find themselves omitting steps."

articles. Unfortunately, I don't agree with all of his comments on mattress sales, specifically where he suggests the RSA should convince the customer that a firm bed is better, even if the customer does not like the feel of the bed.

- *The Selling Bible* by John F. Lawhon. This book is more about the selling profession than

it is about retail sales. It uses the old IBM training method of "repeat everything three times, maybe then they'll get it."

I've only read this book once. Once was enough for me. However, there may be those on your sales team who find this stimulating reading. Either of Mr. Lawhon's books can be ordered on Amazon.

- *Spring Training* by Gerry Morris. Gerry is an old friend who has actually been in the bedding business longer than I have. Gerry's book is not only informative, it's fun to read. It's strong on certain psychological aspects of the sale, specifically converting the customer's "needs" into "desires."

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"RSAs who use this time

for social media follow up with customers and prospective customers in a highly focused way deserve a round of applause. But, be honest, how often do they do something useful during their down time?"

By Gerry Morris. This book is a collection of many of the articles Gerry has written for a host of home furnishings publications.

- *Mattress Matters!* By Gerry Morris. This new book, a collection of his Sleep Savvy articles, has recently come out. I don't have a copy, but since I read all his Sleep Savvy articles, perhaps, in a way, I've read the book. All of Gerry Morris's books can be ordered on Amazon or on his website: www.sellmorebeds.com.

- *The Golden Rules of Selling Bedding* by Peter Marino. Each of the books of Dr. Marino, a former RSA, consultant and professor of Greek and Latin, contain potent ideas for approaching sales and selling techniques. I cite him frequently in my articles and my book.

- *Winning Bragging Rights* by Peter Marino. One of these Marino books was probably the first book ever written specifically on how to sell bedding. I'm not sure which came first, but both should be essential reading for any would-be professional bedding RSA. Marino's books can still be ordered by contacting Furniture World at

sales@furninfo.com.

- *Money in the Mattress* by Steven King. There are some useful ideas contained within. Available on Amazon.

The above-mentioned books deal primarily with retail and mattress sales, but I have found some interesting and exciting ideas in other sales training books, in everything from insurance to fertilizer sales.

Periodicals: *I realize that I run the risk of promoting competitive magazines, but each of the following periodicals will, periodically, publish an article that contains interesting sales and marketing ideas. Reading these publications can help keep sales associates abreast of industry information. And, every professional RSA should be found with a wealth of industry information.*

- *Furniture World*. The oldest continuously published trade publication in North America also has a sharp focus on sales and management education. In existence for almost 150 years, Furniture World is a bi-monthly seminar on any and all subjects pertaining to the home furnishings business. It should be

read cover to cover by all furniture professionals. If you aren't already a subscriber, become one.

- *Furniture Today*. A weekly news magazine that does a great job informing its readers of the latest happenings in the home furnishings business. I occasionally find basic sales training material printed here, but this is mostly a news publication.

- *Sleep Savvy*. Published by ISPA, there are ten issues per year. It has some useful training material (Gerry Morris's articles), and most features are interviews, store profiles and furniture news.

- *Consumer Reports*. We are seeing their mattress ratings a lot

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DOWN TIME

DON'T WASTE IT!



more often than we used to. Every bedding specialist should read the bedding articles and keep copies on hand. These articles are not written by bedding professionals, therefore some of the conclusions drawn from their tests are questionable at best. I know that I, and others, often disagree with their observations and opinions. They are supposed to be objective, but I sometimes wonder. All that being said, however, many customers read and believe this magazine. Don't let your strong opinion, even if it is correct, kill a chance for a sale.

- *Retailer Now*. This is a publication of the Home Furnishings Association, who we will mention in the Professional Organizations section. There's a lot of useful information, including articles on basic sales training, in most issues.

- *Home Furnishings Business*. This publication is similar in format to *Retailer Now*, which is news and business information. There are occasional articles on basic sales training.

There are a lot of other publications in print that are specifically about selling. Google "printed

periodicals about sales and marketing" and I'm sure you'll get a lot of hits.

Video: Not everybody likes to read. If reading bores some of your salespeople, you will find a great many sales videos available on the internet - for starters, Google "videos on how to sell retail." Quite a few YouTube videos will come up. Most of them are really advertisements to sell training programs, but even if you don't want to pay for anything, you can still get several minutes of good ideas from the presentation video. In fact, I just watched one and got a new idea for handling those folks who are "just looking." And, it didn't cost me anything.

If a training program looks like it will help you increase your sales, then buy it if you can justify the price. One extra sale from what you learn might just pay for the whole program.

Role Playing

I, personally, despise "role playing" as a sales training method. But, don't let my prejudice influence you. I am told that role playing can be very helpful when done properly.

The whole point of role playing is to anticipate certain sales situations and practice how to handle them. It helps to have at least one partner so that you have someone to interact with, just as you would with a customer. One judge or monitor might be handy to evaluate performance. But, don't invite a crowd. You may wonder why I don't like role playing. The role plays I've experienced were always done as part of a sales meeting, where an audience of some dozen or more onlookers watched and snickered waiting for some hapless RSA to make a fool out of him or herself. The monitor of the role play, naturally,

"Most RSAs have a lot of questions about how to handle certain situations. A round table discussion is a great way to bring up and examine fresh ideas."

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"Where does one find sales material to read, watch and review?"

We'll mention some here, but there are many more. Let's start with print material."

can be seen as a sadistic sales manager who wants to look clever in front of all the other RSAs. Of course, if the sales meeting is long enough, every fish gets his turn in the barrel (except for the evil sales manager). This is not the right way to do role playing as sales training!

One advantage of role playing is that, even though the situations are artificial, they mimic real situations. Reading and watching videos are passive activities. They allow RSAs with time on their hands to stop, think and reflect on ideas as they go along. Role playing is more active, requiring quick decisions and quick responses to customer objections. Any real analysis or afterthought must take place after the sales collision is over.

Since this is a general discussion of the many ways to utilize down time, I won't get into much more detail on the importance of role playing. Correct and effective use

of role playing as a sales training device is almost an art form, and needs much more discussion than a couple of paragraphs. Again, consult your smart phone for much more information.

Group Discussions

Group discussion of sales ideas is a good use of down time. Most RSAs have a lot of questions about how to handle certain situations. It is often hard to find specific answers in sales books, and especially in videos. A round table discussion is a great way to bring up and examine fresh ideas on how to handle old problems.

More About The Business

Many RSAs, particularly beginners, suffer from a serious lack of perspective about the furniture and mattress industry. I have found that the RSA with an exhaustive command of industry information is more likely to impress a customer as an expert (Provided the RSA doesn't overdo it). And, an expert is what most people are looking for when making an important purchase decision on a large, expensive home furnishings item.

So, how do we learn about the mattress and furniture industry, quickly?

Here is a list of some important industry web-sites with an emphasis on bedding. This is a partial

list, but it is a good start.

Professional Organizations

- *American Academy of Sleep Medicine (AASM)* From their website, "the only professional society dedicated exclusively to the medical sub specialty of sleep medicine... sets standards and promotes excellence in sleep medicine health care, education, and research." Their membership is primarily health-care professionals such as doctors, nurses, scientists and others in the field. The information may be too technical for most RSAs. Their web address is www.aasmnet.org.
- *American Home Furnishings Alliance (AHFA)*. The membership of this organization is primarily home furnishings manufacturers and executives. They lobby for better governmental access and relations within the furniture industry.
- *Better Sleep Council (BSC)*. A nonprofit organization, the Better Sleep Council is the consumer education arm of the ISPA (International Sleep Products Association). Per its website, it is "devoted to educating the general public about the importance of sleep to good health..." Even though this organization was developed to help consumers with mattress purchase decisions, it can also be helpful as a basic training tool for RSAs. Their website is <http://>

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"The role plays I've experienced were always done as part of a sales meeting, where an audience waited for some hapless RSA to make a fool out of him or herself."

www.sleepproducts.org.

- **Consumer Product Safety Commission.** From their website, "CPSC is charged with protecting the public from unreasonable risks of injury or death associated with the use of the thousands of types of consumer products under the agency's jurisdiction." The CPSC now claims, as of this writing, the nation suffers over \$1 trillion losses annually from consumer product accidents and incidents. That's a lot of money! Home furnishings are included in these "consumer products."

- **International Sleep Products Association (ISPA).** ISPA is a non-profit organization. Members include mattress manufacturers and suppliers. They sponsor the Better Sleep Council.

- **National Sleep Foundation (NSF).** They offer information about various sleep disorders. They sponsor Sleep.org, which discusses different ways to improve sleep.

- **Home Furnishings Association (HFA).** This is the retailer's organization. They publish *Retailer Now* magazine and have numerous programs for furniture retailers. Get more information on HFA programs at

<https://myhfa.org>.

- **Sleep Products Safety Council (SPSC).** This is the safety division of ISPA. Its mission is "devoted to advancing the safety of sleep products. Topics include mattress odors, disposal of old mattresses, bunk bed safety, bedroom air quality and several others."

My descriptions of these organizations has been brief and cursory. The information that is contained in their websites is anything but. Each site contains virtually encyclopedic information on almost every subject that concerns the home furnishings industry. The only subject they don't cover well is sales training.

Explore The "Five Groups"

How familiar are your RSAs with your store? Sure, they know their way to the break room, the restroom, and the back door. But, do they know everything about your store's products, policies, advertising, inventory finance plans and competition?

Unless they are intimately familiar with each of these subjects, I'd like to suggest that you encourage them to use their free time to learn more about the Five Groups of Knowledge.

Summary

Of course, RSAs can do what they want with their down time. I understand that the job of retail sales is stressful. Taking time to relax between ups and sudden rushes is important. But, time once spent, cannot be recovered. Time management is critical to success in any endeavor, even relaxing and playing. All the subjects we discussed are important. They don't have to take it home with them but I've been in retail a long time and know that there is enough slack time on the sales floor to get a PhD in retail sales, if you work on it.

About David Benbow: David is the author of, *"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 online 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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DESIGN & DESIGNER

CATINA SUAREZ ROSCOE

by Melody Doering

Furniture designer and ASFD president discusses women in our industry and the value of leaving open avenues for creativity in product design & retail displays.

Furniture World spoke with Catina Suarez Roscoe, of Greensboro, NC, for this installment of Design & Designer. Originally from Havana, Cuba, Catina, who came to the US as a child, displays her Latin heritage in her life and work. Both a freelance furniture designer and founder of Catina Unlimited Design, Inc., she is inspired by form, color, composition and pattern from the world around her. Catina earned a Fine Arts Degree from the University of North Carolina in Greensboro.

Throughout her career, Catina has successfully collaborated with leading industry manufacturers including Harden Furniture, Borkholder Furniture, Haverty's, American Drew, Kincaid Furniture, Hooker Furniture, Pennsylvania House, Magnussen Home, Lane, and others. Her studio is a repeat finalist and winner of the Pinnacle Award. In addition to her design work, Catina is president of the American Society of Furniture Designers (ASFD).

Re-imagining ASFD

Furniture World asked Catina about her tenure as President and involvement with the ASFD.

"ASFD is an important organization that was in the shadows of our industry, existing as more of a social group than having obvious benefits for professional furniture designers. I served on the board many years ago, then returned to the organization and was elected President. I am passionate about its potential to advocate for and support both original design and designers. Unfortunately, design creativity has not always been equally valued in the furniture business. At ASFD we are working to change that perception. The furniture industry needs to come together and collectively support the value of great design. In addition, we need to inspire and support furnishings designers so that their role in the industry can be counted, recognized, and valued.

"ASFD is in the process of being re-imagined as a resource for

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networking, mentoring, and promoting creative furniture design. We have a history in this industry of designing and manufacturing knock-offs. That always leads to a less than optimal result – competition among producers to see who can make it cheaper.

"ASFD's Pinnacle Award has become a sought-after industry honor. It's been a big plus for designers and manufacturers. Recently, we've started working with other organizations such as WithIt, the Home Furnishings Association (HFC) and the International Home Furnishings

Representatives Association (IHFRA), to create special events and member benefits across organizational lines.

"Coming up, ASFD is organizing a designer showcase to debut at the 2019 April High Point Market. Furnishings from maker-designers, product developers, and designers who submit a prototype, will be shown in a gallery setting open to Market attendees. The whole idea is to feature and reinforce the impact that design and creativity can bring to our industry to move it forward."

Women In The Industry

Question: How are women represented in ASFD and the industry?

"I am the third woman to hold the ASFD presidency in the history of the organization. As a whole, our industry has become aware that women's perspective is an important part of the furniture design/product development process.

"There are many more talent-

Pictured above is casegoods designer Catina Suarez Roscoe, the current president of the American Society of Furniture Designers along with a digital rendering of stacking chairs she created for the contract market.

ed women involved in product design now – and not just on the soft-goods side, even though that has traditionally been the focus of women in our industry. I'm seeing more women, like myself, working on the case-goods side.

"Even in male-dominated companies, more women are actually designing the products, or are on merchandising teams. While there has been progress recently, there's still a long way to go, especially in the ranks of top management.

"The WithIt organization (www.withit.org) is a tremendous resource for women in all areas of our business, including retailing. Its value in networking, mentoring and elevating the role of

DESIGN & DESIGNER

women in our industry cannot be over-estimated."

A Collaborative Web

Question: *Many designers, design influencers, interior designers and celebrity designers have become influential in the furniture industry. How do they figure into the mix at ASFD?*

"It's an interesting part of the evolution of our industry: we are all cogs in the wheel of furnishing design, production and marketing. It has become a collective process of inspiration and support.

"Celebrity designers, in particular, have raised awareness, brought cachet and passion to our industry. Not all product designers can have, or even want, that kind of attention. Instead, they work behind the scenes drawing the pictures, developing, and engineering the products behind

famous names."

Fine Arts To Furniture Design

Question: *Tell us about the steps to forming your own company.*

"I have a Fine Arts degree in Design with a concentration in sculpture. Right out of school I landed a job doing illustration work for Norman Heckler Associates, a top furniture design studio in High Point, NC. I got an on-the-job education in furniture design and construction through my work with Norman, and later with furniture designer Tom Keller.

"These two men were amazing in terms of their creativity and design work. They became true mentors, spring-boarding me into eventually setting up my own design office in 1995."

Design Influences

Question: *How important is your*

Latin heritage to your design outlook?

"My family came to the U.S. from Cuba in 1960. I grew up in Smyrna, a small town in Georgia. Growing up Cuban, we were very different. My Cuban heritage, music, food, culture, and passion, mixed with a good dose of Americana, evolved into my approach to design. I juxtapose elements of traditional and contemporary, to create a cleaner, fresher variation of the familiar."

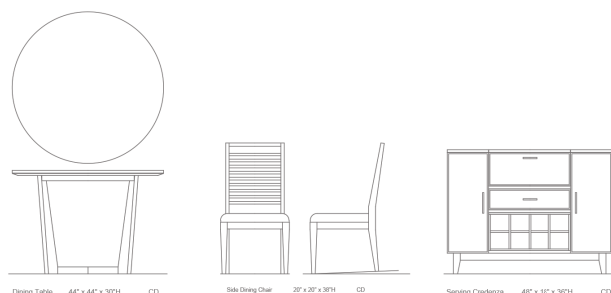
Question: *Do you work differently than other furniture designers?*

Pictured below is the Pinnacle Award presented by ASFD to home furnishings designers in multiple product categories for design excellence. Roscoe's studio is a repeat finalist and winner of the Pinnacle Award.



"Lifestyles are evolving quickly. We're all moving faster, and retailers have to connect and adapt to display unique, creative interpretations of products they show."

DESIGN & DESIGNER



"Although my background is in art, rather than the strictly engineering side, I don't think I work differently. All designers have their own variations. I've had my favorite sketch pad, my favorite pens – other designers have their favorite software! Bottom line, however, I think we all go through similar types of design thinking.

"My approach is to see deeply into life, all the way down to an emotional level. It's a design process that transcends a literal interpretation of a case piece or a chair.

"My preference is to design backwards, first identifying the end consumer and their lifestyle. Whether it's an outdoorsy, adventurous type; a romantic, laven-der-and-lace type; or an urban dweller, it helps to categorize styles of living, and then design

"We have a history in this industry of designing and manufacturing knock-offs. That always leads to the same, less than optimal result."

to those."

Furniture is Fashion

Question: *You've been quoted as saying, "Furniture is fashion," and you have also talked about "Interpretive Design". Are these your by-words?*

"These are phrases I use in design presentations time and time again. 'Furniture is fashion' is just a fun way to remind our industry not to overlook the emotion, the expression, the personality, the identity of a product. Just as individuals have a personal sense of style reflected in how they dress – their likes and dislikes – I think our home environments are the same. Consumers fashion their homes with the same type of personal expression as with their clothes.

"This element of personal expression needs to be considered by manufacturers as part of the product development process, along with other variables. Price is one of the variables that often gets more attention.

"Likewise, retailers should address more than just their customers' basic needs. A customer may come in looking for a functional case piece to hold

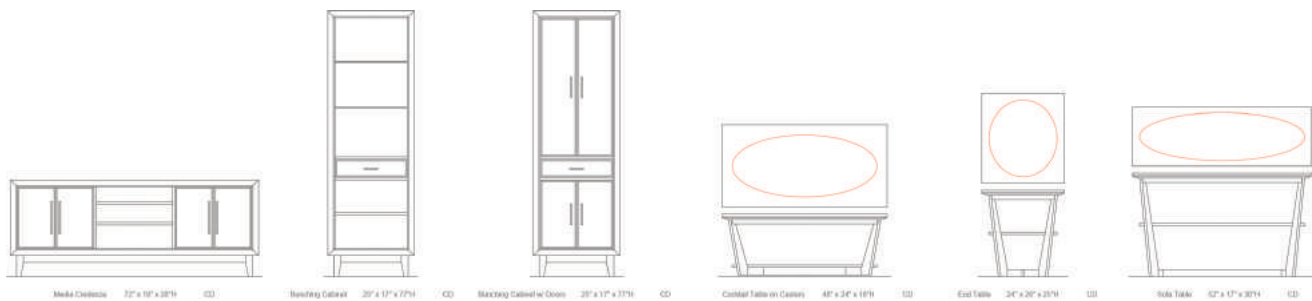
socks, but that doesn't mean that any old case piece will do the job. Lifestyles are becoming more experiential, and the story that retailers tell has to be that as well. Retailers need to look beyond the literal for inspiration."

Interpretive Design

"Interpretive Design is about incorporating essential lines and elements into a design, capturing the vital character of a style without overstatement. There doesn't need to be a lot of extra carving or superfluous elements to convey the essence of a style direction.

"From a retailer's perspective, Interpretive Furniture Design leaves open avenues for creativity in store displays and interior design. Depending on how a design is displayed, the room setting that's created around the furniture becomes interpretive.

"If a given furniture design is placed in an environment with a more traditional setting, a traditional rug, lighting, and accessories, it feels one way. But the exact same design placed in a room with exposed beams, a hair-on-hide rug, and a stacked-stone fireplace will have an entirely different expression. That is the essence of the Interpretive



Design. The interpretation is left up to how each store, or each individual, customizes it to their own sense of style."

Evolving Marketing

"My design work is all about creating a mood, touching the

"Whether it's an outdoorsy, adventurous type; a romantic, lavender-and-lace type; or an urban dweller, it helps to categorize styles of living, and then design to those."

senses, and becoming an expression of life. And when a feeling or mood is created, it must be communicated from a marketing perspective. There is often a disconnection between furniture designs and how they are marketed on retail floors. In many retail displays, furniture just sits there, lifeless and without any expression.

"We are all guilty at times of doing what is comfortable, what's worked before, and what's easy. And then we stop there.

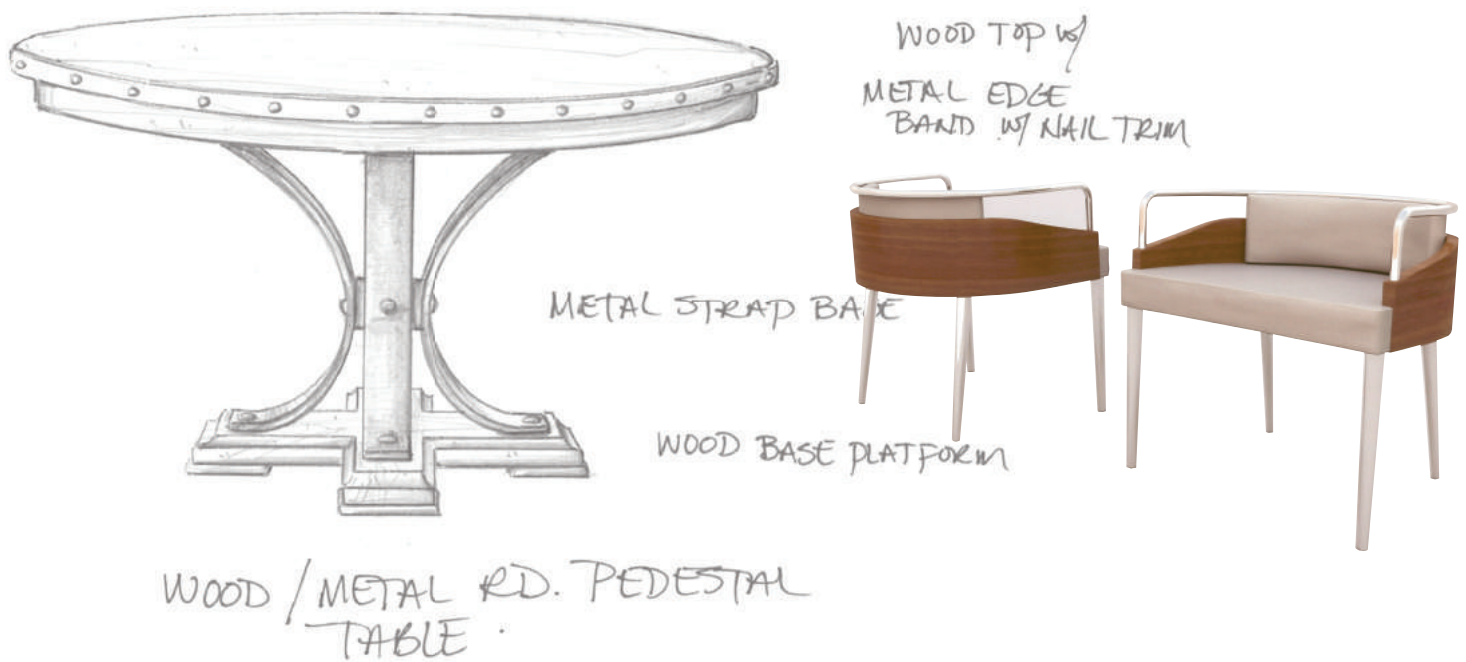
"Lifestyles are evolving quickly – we're all moving faster, and retailers have to connect and

"A customer may come in looking for a functional case piece to hold socks, but that doesn't mean that any old case piece will do the job."

adapt. They need to make an effort to display unique, creative interpretations of the products they show. No longer can retailers just show furniture and expect

Borkholder Aero Dining (top left) was a 2017 Pinnacle finalist. Also pictured (clockwise) are, entertainment center for D'Style, Borkholder's Local Harvest and Madera Bedroom,





people to buy it.

"Manufacturers and furniture designers work to create settings that connect to the way people are living their lives today. Sales associates can't just say, 'Ain't it pretty. Don't you wanna buy

"Sure, 'It's on sale!' but how is it also creative and relevant? The only way to discover this is to get out of the office, into the world, and observe. See how people are living their lives today, physically, emotionally, and spiritually."

some?' A larger effort has to be made, which includes crafting a visual story around how people live their lives today. We must capture the expression and convey its value.

"Designing furniture is a commercial endeavor, with many inputs going into developing a product. Research, inspiration, and marketing can all come into play to create a look and tell a story."

Creative Environments

"Another important element for retailers is to create an environment that appeals to all of the senses and to how people are living their lives today. This may include a focus on health and wellness, inviting curiosity by sponsoring more special events, such as cooking classes, yoga, meet and greets. Having guest speakers can make the shopping experience more interactive.

"We are not just in the furniture

business, we are in the business of design. Sure, 'It's on sale!' but how is it also creative and relevant? The only way to discover this is to get out of the office, into the world, and observe. See how people are living their lives, physically, emotionally, and spiritually.

"That can be as simple as going to the beach. Traveling to trade shows is essential, but switching attention away from one's phone to nature, or architecture can provide inspiration and allow the creativity to flow."

Sources of Inspiration

Question: Have you used The Bienenstock Furniture Library as a source of inspiration?

"The Furniture Library is amazing. It's director, Karla Webb, is on the board of ASFD. Every designer who comes to High Point should definitely take the time to visit. It's beautiful; it's peaceful; it stimulates creativity. With over

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Pictured (l-r) are the Brynlee Table and Chairs part of Hooker Furniture's Melange Collection and Laurel House Designs.

5,000 volumes, ranging from current materials to those more than 300 years old, the Furniture Library is a place to find the roots of great design, fresh perspective, inspiration, and collaboration with other designers.

"Interpretive Furniture Design leaves open avenues for creativity in store displays and interior design."

"In addition, I recommend that retailers check out some of the great design and lifestyle sites that offer insight into how consumers are living their lives today. Don't just focus on furniture or a literal interpretation of what's happening in the furniture industry. For inspiration, check out lifestyle websites like www.popsugar.com. Look at design-milk.com, which focuses on aspects of design in our lives. It can be slanted and edgy, with a focus on contemporary, but it can also provide fresh perspectives into what's happening inside people's heads and hearts."

The Real Story

"There is more to having a brand story than product and experience. The story has to be authentic, so that consumers can connect personally with it. The story has to convey the brand's value. That includes the meaning of the brand and what it stands for. We used to say, 'you can talk the talk, but you gotta walk the walk.' People today want to know that the companies they deal with live out their values."

"The Furniture Library is a place to find the roots of great design, fresh perspective, inspiration, and collaboration with other designers."

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Best Selling DESIGN



Himolla

The sophisticated Aura features soft, sumptuous fabrics and leathers, integrated footrest and headrest, and has 360° rotation that swivels and adjusts.

Contact information on page 80.



Rizzy Home

From the Watercolors For The Fluid Motion collection designed by Connie Post, this rug mixes warm shades of beige with the popular black. It is a go-anywhere design made of 100 percent tufted wool.

Contact information on page 80

Craftmaster

New options to a widely successful design program include a choice of 800 fabrics and 30 top grain leathers. Fully customizable and American made.

Contact information on page 80.





Dimplex

Shimmering glass tile surfaces of the Crystal Mantel take the clean, shadow-box architecture of this fireplace to another level. Contact information on page 80



Marge Carson

This dramatic and versatile console has an Ash top and base connected by intersecting carved posts covered in linen. Measurements are 74" x 17.5" x 35" H. Contact information on page 80



Nourison

The Lido indoor/outdoor rug makes a statement with stripes in classic shades of navy blue, aqua, and cream. Sturdy yet stylish loop pile construction is easy to care for. Contact information on page 80.

Lazzaro

Simplicity is key with the Wyatt Collection. Smooth leather cushions and frame are only interrupted by top-stitch detailing that highlights the form of each piece. Thick, square wood legs provide the perfect sitting height. Contact information on page 80.



Best Selling DESIGN

Norwalk

The Sadie Chair is mid-scale, characterized by the whimsical use of overscale buttons all along its gently sweeping, low track arms.

Contact information on page 80.



Durham Furniture

The Escarpment is crafted of solid wormy rustic Maple. Additional design details include highly distressed planked tops creating the look of refinished heirloom furniture. The collection is also available in fifty custom finishes, including the new Stone Dust and Desert Sand.

Contact information on page 80.

Furniture Of America

The Tegan sofa set is soothing and brings just the right amount of calming atmosphere to the home with its beige and blue color palette.

Contact information on page 80.





Nouveau Concept

With its mix of concrete and any of twenty two trendy colors, the TV base AV903 will perfectly complement any room.

Contact information on page 80.



Surya

Venezia is machine-made with a vintage mosaic tile pattern in a soft neutral and pastel color palette.

Contact Information on page 144.



Twin Star

The Wright TV Stand with ClassicFlame® Panorama Electric Fireplace is inspired by Frank Lloyd Wright's most famous architecture. This piece is the perfect answer to update today's homes with architecturally inspired design. Supports flat screen TVs up 90 pounds.

Contact Information on page 80.

Klaussner

With practical comfort and aesthetically pleasing design, the Ginger sofa will flatter any space. Features include an abundance of accent pillows and nail head detailing.

Contact information on page 80.



Best Selling DESIGN



Null

Small scale turned leg console is part of the new Accents Program featuring painted finishes and two-tone wood finishes.

Contact information on page 80.



Omnia

The Britannia Chair sits as good as it looks. Shown in Omnia's new Vintage leather available in two color ways. Made in America.

Contact information on page 80



Standard Furniture

With classic elements of arched silhouettes and stepped out molding, the Brussels bedroom has a gracious air that conveys calmness.

Contact information on page 80



Fashion Bed Group

Fashion and functionality are two of the benefits of the Mercier headboard. The khaki fabric and button tufting allows it to blend well with any interior design, and it can expand from a twin size to California king.

Contact information on page 80



Huntington House

The 8013-50 chair showcases a tight, tufted back/seat flanked by tall stylish arms in a lustrous chrome finish, bringing a sleek, modern flair to any space. Handcrafted to order in fabric or leather.

Contact information on page 80.



Capel

Gypsy is a new group of hand tufted, 100 percent wool designs made in India. The group features five patterns, including two florals and two medallions. Five colorways are available. Each pattern features a finishing touch of long, ponytail-style fringe. Sizes include 3'6" x 5'6", 5' x 8', 8' x 10' and 9' x 12'. A 5' x 8' rug may retail for \$449.

Contact information on page 80

Maxwood

The Maxtrix "XL" is available in Twin XL through Queen sizes. Each bed in this solid hardwood collection is equipped with a metal beam tested to withstand over 2000 pounds making it perfect for targeting vacation home owners, urban Millennials and even commercial customers.

Contact information on page 80



TOV

The Chloe sofa is the epitome of modern glamor. A curved silhouette with luxurious grey velvet on a brushed gold base will be sure to dazzle and blend with any decor. Matching pillows included. Suggested retail \$1,299.

Contact information on page 80.



Best Selling DESIGN

Elran

The Mathis collection features modern, contemporary styling, a track arm and lounge seating. This model features an inside pull handle to activate the reclining mechanisms and is also available with power recliners. Also available in this collection is a matching loveseat. Available in a variety of fabrics, leathers and leather/vinyl combinations.

Contact information on page 80.



Legends

Laurel Grove 84" Console is charmingly sophisticated, from a cottage inspired collection offering graceful shapes and turnings with soft, dry finishes and custom antiqued hardware. Contact information on page 80.

Country View Woodworking

This modern four-piece bedroom shows the newest bed in the American Modern Bedroom Collection, featuring a solid wood headboard. This collection is available in over 250 combinations.

Contact information on page 80





A.R.T.

The inviting upholstered barrel seat is wrapped in a shaped wooden back with a lattice overlay. The back, reeded chair rail and fluted legs are finished in Bezel silver finish, glazed and lightly distressed to bring out the warm undertones of the paint. The chair moves easily on casters.

Contact information on page 80.



Kas

Papillon has a combination of a vibrant color palette against trendy transitional styles. Machine woven in Turkey of polypropylene with fringe.

Contact information on page 80

Panama Jack® Outdoor

The Maldives collection combines a distinctive woven pattern with slim and agile lines. It is hand-woven with a unique bronze wicker high density polyethylene fiber over an aluminum tube frame.

Contact information on page 80.



selling ✓ FACE TO FACE

by Gordon Hecht

How to make the job of sales the EASIEST high paying position in your company.

I'm not a Human Resource expert, but if I was ever called upon to write job descriptions for our Retail World, I could wrap up that task in about four minutes. In my retail organization, every individual's position would have the same short paragraph.

UNIVERSAL JOB DESCRIPTION:

"It is required to make a full effort to convert our local population into loyal, happy customers and raving fans. This applies to external and internal customers."

That statement makes it clear what is expected from every member of the organization and removes the excuse of "That's not my job".

Further, I would elaborate the job descriptions for the FUNCTIONS of "Advertising" and "Sales" as follows:

- **THE JOB of Advertising** is to attract shoppers to our store-fronts, including our digital storefront (aka website).
- **THE JOB of Sales** is to convert

those shoppers to customers and raving fans.

Business owners, managers, and even furniture and bedding experts often get advertising and sales confused. Whether they are promoting 60-72 month financing, or a \$799 mattress and adjustable base combo, they are often disappointed when few, if any, shoppers take advantage of those offers. Despite the fact that incoming revenue increased, they opt to change or eliminate offers. We often hear, "Sure, I had a good week, but it wasn't because of financing. Everyone paid cash!"

"Measuring traffic effectiveness is the only way to know what mix works best. Advertising will NOT pre-sell your shoppers."



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Advertising's Job Requirements

There is only one true way to measure how well your advertising is doing its job - and that's footsteps into the store. Formerly known as counting ups, tracking the number of people who come into your store lets you know how effective your advertising invest-

ment is. Every incoming shopper is a paid for - in advance investment. That ROI is something you need to know! The more people that come into your storefront (both brick and click) the better job your advertising investment is doing for you.

Advertising your business today requires a mix of media and it's tricky to know the right mix. It's hard to choose between traditional print, mailers, TV, and radio, or move towards digital and social media. If you want to attract more Gen X and Millennial shoppers, you are wise to invest the greatest amount of your dollars in the latter. More people opt for online research and spend more time with social media than media from the last century. Measuring traffic effectiveness is the only way to know what mix works best. Advertising will NOT pre-sell your shoppers.

The job description for Advertising would be improved with more specificity. Every ad would be required to have a mix of The Four P's (some heavy lifting required)

• **Product:** Include informa-

tion on what you are selling! People today have an advertising attention span of 30 seconds or less. Ads that promote less than three products will fare better than a deluge of items.

• **Place:** It's how they find you. Start with your address, and follow up with a landmark such as a freeway exit, major retailer or restaurant, or locally recognized interest point. Remember to include your website and help your shop-

"No one likes to be 'nickel and dimed' and in our business it's \$50s and \$100s. Include tax, delivery, removal, and any other fees rather than add on at the counter."

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"RSAs fail 60-70 percent

of the time. You wouldn't accept that performance from your delivery team, your tax advisor, or your family doctor!"

per out by making your phone number visible. After a visit to your website they may want to call for more information.

- **Promotion:** The difference between Leap Year and other years, is that on Leap Year mattresses and furniture are on sale 366 days and not just 365! Just having a sale is not enough anymore. Shoppers expect it, because we trained them that way. Ads have to have a unique and HOT promotional message. Sometimes it is price, other

times it's financing. But it can also be Instant Delivery, Sales Tax Discount, Free Gift with Purchase, Package Savings, or Guaranteed Best Price of the Season.

- **Price:** Ultimately shoppers will get out of their recliners and drive to the retailer with the best value for their situation. That does not always mean the lowest price, but PRICE is the final determination of value. "Buy One-Get One FREE!" means nothing until they know what the first item costs.

Showing a mattress online or on Facebook without a price creates a catalog. Catalogs are wish books that sit on a coffee table. Your price completes your call to action.

Salesperson's Job Requirements

When your advertising does its job, it is up to the sales team to do their job, converting shoppers into buyers. Further, we have to understand that advertising is not

"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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"Change your mantra to 'Every time the door swings, make sure the register rings!' and try to sell everyone something, even if it's only \$25-\$50, you will see amazing sales growth."

responsible for selling merchandise. Once advertising does its job of bringing you motivated shoppers, it is up to your sales team to close the sale. Very often shoppers buy something completely different from the advertised item that attracted them to your store.

It's been said that Sales is the hardest high paid profession. Often Retail Sales Associates make more on the sale than anyone else in your company, even the owner! When you consider that (RSA) often earn a base commission of 5-8 percent and bonuses and incentives, they often collect 8-10 percent of the retail price of their sales. When you study the P&L statement of many retail home furnishings companies, it is rare to find them netting out at much more than 3-5 percent.

We charge our RSA teams

with the job of converting store traffic (paid for in advance) into buyers and raving fans. Typical furniture store salespeople close about 22 percent of the shoppers they greet. Mattress stores are shopping destinations, meaning people don't browse, they are on a mission to buy. Sales people in those stores close about 40 percent of all shoppers. (If you think your close rate is much more than that, then invite me to your store one weekend and we will count ups together)!

When you flip those closing rate numbers around, you'll see that RSAs fail 60-78 percent of the time. You wouldn't accept that performance from your delivery team, your accounting and tax advisor, or your family doctor! Chances are good that you probably will never get to 100 percent close rate, but every step taken towards converting shopper to buyers helps your business grow. Do the math; a 2 percent increase in closing rate will make up for a 10 percent drop in traffic. That means in slow times you will survive and in good times your business will flourish!

Here's some more math for you. Many stores measure average sale; that is the total amount of retail sales dollars divided by the number of sales. \$1100-1200 is very typical for furniture stores and mattress stores alike. Most experts believe that the easy way to increase average

sale is to add on one more item to each buyer's shopping cart. That will cause an increase, but you will get a better increase by changing all of those ZERO DOLLAR interactions to collecting some revenue on every sales presentation. Change your mantra to "Every time the door swings, make sure the register rings!" and try to sell everyone something, even if it's only \$25-50, you will see amazing sales growth. This is despite the fact that you will have to explain what ringing the register means to anyone born after 1980!

You don't have to invest in fancy sales seminars or costly tracking equipment or consultants to have an immediate impact on converting shoppers to buyers, and then onto raving fans! I'll share the list below of the most common failures in the sales presentation process. What you do have to do is invest TIME and observe your sales team and then fearlessly coach them to success. If you tune into any professional team sport broadcast, you'll see two fearless coaches who were not afraid to direct people three times their size on how they want the game played. If they can do that, you can too!

Coaching Job Requirements

1. **Start at the FINISH!** One of the most common errors

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- Alex Macias
Vice President
DelSol Furniture

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FACE TO FACE



RSAs make is not asking for the sale. At one point I competitively shopped 42 furniture and mattress shops and was never asked to place an order. One time I even had my AMEX card in my hand in front of the RSA. And it's not just our industry. I recently shopped for appliances and counter-tops, not inexpensive items, and two of the three retailers visited did not invite us to do business at their location. Take time to rehearse some simple phrases with your team like, "From everything you've told me, this seems like the perfect item" or "Luckily we have this in stock, so you can be enjoying it this week" or "Would you prefer cash or charge"? I promise you, if you ask every shopper to place an order today, you will see an immediate increase in sales.

2. Shoppers have multiple home furnishing needs and you need to provide a com-

plete solution. It happens every day! You greet a shopper and they tell you they need something for their home, for instance, a mattress. Since they are not mattress buying experts they may not realize that a mattress is only one part of a complete sleep solution. Always present the Three Ps, Power, Protection, and Pillows. And you already know that most shoppers have multiple MATTRESS needs, so always ask who else in the home needs to upgrade their sleeping comfort! Present the total solution and let the shopper select the items they want. As I learned at a recent convention, it's easier to carry 100 pounds of sand downhill than carry it uphill. It's easier to reduce the number of items in a presentation than to add on more.

3. Speak clearly and respond quickly. Most of the time RSAs are not rushed to present products and solutions.

"The difference between Leap Year and other years, is that on Leap Year mattresses and furniture are on sale 366 days and not just 365! "

We sell BIG TICKET items and your shopper wants to make an informed decision. Take time to ask good discovery questions and take notes on what shoppers tell you. Give them solid options, and always show one DELUXE version. The only time to move quickly is when your shopper asks you for information, especially if it is via text or phone. Respond within the hour or less. In cases where information is delayed (weekend or

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options, and finish with a 'can't walk' offer. Even if you can't close on the main item, try for a smaller accessory to go from ZERO to HERO."

holiday) always give your shopper a time estimate for a response.

4. Carry a BIG Tool Belt. Every RSA is equipped with all kinds of tools to convert shoppers to buyers: In-Stock Merchandise or delayed delivery, Step Ups and Step Downs, Financing options, cash or credit card, Gift with purchase, info on upcoming and past sales, plus a whole internet full of competitor information. Like any craftsman, professional RSAs always have their tools sharpened and fully charged.

5. Quote the all-inclusive price! No one likes to be "nickel and dimed" and in our business it's \$50s and \$100s. Include tax, delivery, removal, and any other fees rather than add on at the counter. Do your shopper a favor and also quote the monthly payment. Many times there is a FREE finance promotion and everybody likes free money.

6. Start BIG but take small. Many RSAs like to play BIG GAME HUNTER. They want to get the elephant or hippo every time. However, some shoppers just want a squirrel, and some of them just want the tail. Arrange your presentation to have Best-Better-Good options, and finish with a "can't walk" offer. Even if you can't close on the main item, try for a smaller accessory to go from ZERO to

HERO. For example, a new pillow will not cure all of a shopper's sleep issues, but it may help them get 15 minutes more sleep-and who doesn't want that?

7. Ask for permission to follow up. Things change in our retail world. The deal you can't make today may be possible tomorrow. Changes in financing promotions and merchandise availability happen all the time. Simply let your shopper know that specials and new merchandise can be right around the corner, and if they will allow you, you can be sure that they know first.

Conclusion

RSAs have many roles in their job descriptions including Product Expert, Finance Expert, Delivery Coordinator, Customer Satisfaction Officer, and even delivery and maintenance crew on occasion. But the most important role (and never a distraction) is the role of directly facing shoppers. The better they are in that role, the more successful your company will be.

Get your advertising investment to pay off well by bringing people to your store and train your sales team to convert and maximize every sales presentation, and the

job of sales becomes the EASIEST high paying position in the company.

About Gordon Hecht: Gordon Hecht is a Senior Manager for Serta Simmons Bedding's Strategic Retail Group comprising over 400 locally owned and operated bedding stores across the country selling Serta Simmons branded and America's Mattress-branded mattresses. He started his 30+ years' experience in the Home Furnishings industry in Las Vegas, NV as a delivery helper and driver, later moving to sales and management.

He has served as with other organizations as Store Manager, Multi-unit manager and National Director of Sales. With his first-hand knowledge of our industry's front line, Gordon has devoted his career to guiding others to exceed their goals. He has been recognized for outstanding sales and management achievement with Ashley Furniture HomeStores, Drexel-Heritage, RB Furniture, Reliable Stores, and Sofa Express. 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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100 Years Ago

FURNITURE WORLD Magazine - Summer 1918

By the summer of 1918, in the midst of World War I, the U.S. government put increasing pressure on furniture manufacturers to "curtail" production to free up resources for the war effort. A downbeat, tired, retail mood was reflected in the pages of Furniture World Magazine.

Furniture Manufacturers Asked To Curtail Production

The members of the trade attended (the conference) with a view to learning something of the attitude of the War Industries Board, and the War Industries Board, in turn, wished to know

from the furniture men just what they could do to help win the war. It was really a meeting called to seek out the best means of cooperation to enable the country to win the war as soon as possible. Everybody is aware of the objections against furniture at a time like the present. The two big objections, from a governmental point of view, is that furniture consumes considerable space in transportation and also a considerable amount of fuel to manufacture.

"The meeting showed that the war industries board has no intention of asking furniture manufacturers to take any more steps at curtailment than are absolutely necessary. How far it will be necessary to go this winter is a prob-

lem. The curtailment of the industry will depend on the general conditions regarding transportation and fuel. If the winter is mild, and there should be no severe shortage of cars or fuel, it is probable that the furniture industry will not feel the hand of restriction to any great extent. On the other hand, a winter as bad as last winter might see a general shut-down for a while.

The most startling statement of the conference was that we must promulgate the doctrine of less business.

New Technology Advance: Photo Furniture Catalogs

The James Bayne Co. is having success artistically, and in

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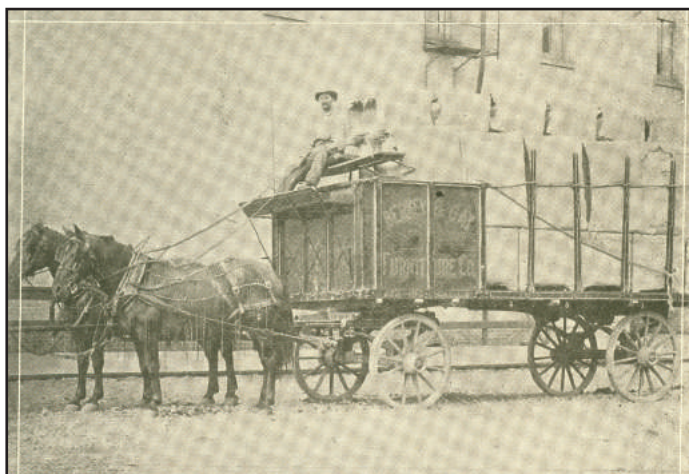
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"The swift and tireless motor truck is coming in and will eventually displace the horse-drawn wagons entirely."

a business way as well, with its comparatively new process of photogravure work for the furniture trade... Photo-engraving is the art of preparing by means of the chemical action of light on certain bodies of an engraved plate for

printing. The art has been highly developed by some workmen, especially in France, being comparable only to the finest work by hand... and seems peculiarly fitted to meet the needs of bedroom and dining room stuff.

Furniture Transport: Motor Trucks Are Coming!

The accompanying illustrations give some idea of the evolution that is going on in furniture trucking in the manufacturing circles of this city. In very early days the furniture wagons in use were of a nondescript, miscellaneous sort and then there has gradually evolved the type shown in the first picture, a big, wide wagon on platform springs, the ample floor

body being enclosed around with removable upright standards. These wagons were admirably adapted for handling crated goods of the bulky kind and are still in general use. The swift and tireless motor truck (also pictured above) however is coming in and will eventually displace the horse-drawn wagons entirely.

After the war, and possibly sooner than that, the local furniture manufacturers' association will build a central assembling warehouse for carload shipments... and it is expected in time that most if not all of the furniture originating in Grand Rapids will be transported to this central warehouse by a fleet of motor trucks for shipment to all parts of the world.

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"This dealer did not understand

that a woman needs a little help and encouragement when she goes out of the beaten path to purchase."

Advice For Retailers! Don't Laugh at Women

"If you wish to attract men, make your store a good place for women to trade, as they are the best advertisers, also the greatest 'knockers'* in the world," is the advice of a successful Philadelphia retailer. It has been estimated that over 75 percent of all merchandise sold is either bought by a woman or that a woman controls the purchase. These figures are sufficient evidence of the need of catering to women buyers in all lines.

If your goods are satisfactory, the service you render above the average and other points in keeping, you will find each of your women customers eager and anxious to trade with you and spread the news broadcast that your store

is a good place in which to trade. On the other hand, if your store is not well-kept, clerks not alert and goods not up to standard, every woman in your vicinity will know it and irreparable damage will be done.

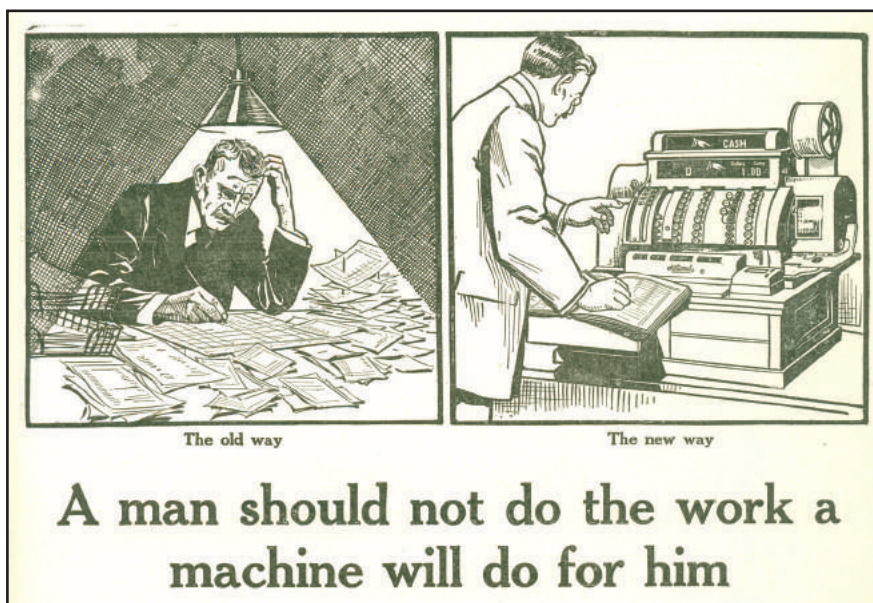
The list of goods women buy in lines outside household goods, apparel and furniture is almost endless, so do not make the fatal mistake of thinking, "What's the use? Women do not buy my line." In these days, when women are fast taking hold of the buying of most all commodities, it will be well to give this subject consideration. For example, a cigar dealer in West Philadelphia has made a special play for women's trade. He has fitted up a counter with pipes, cigars and smoker's articles so a quick selection can be made.

The goods bought are, of course, sent away to men in service. This dealer quickly discovered that if he made it easy for women to buy tobacco at his store he would have a "bulge" on other dealers.

Thus you will find almost any hour of the day or evening, one or two women buying goods that women seldom buy.

Of late, a large maker of paint for household use has advertised how easily a woman can do over her bedroom furniture. A dealer in paints and supplies has tied up the loose ends of this publicity by placing a card in his window, reading, "Ladies, it is very easy for you to make that furniture look like new. Come in and we will mix the paint and help you select proper brushes, also give advice free of charge."

If you attempt to attract women to your store, do not laugh at them, but give each caller every assistance possible. A well-known magazine recently printed an article showing how easily a handy woman could renovate chairs by use of a patented chair seat. The ad was a good one and not a few women called at the dealer's to inquire for the material. Here they were told: "Yes, we carry the seats, but it's a man's job to attach; you could never do it." Thus the result of many dollars' worth of publicity was lost because



More New Technology: Excerpt at left from a National Cash Register Ad in a summer 1918 issue of Furniture World.

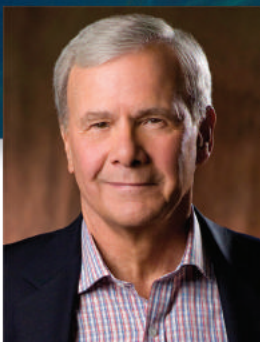


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this dealer did not understand that a woman needs a little help and encouragement when she goes out of the beaten path to purchase.

**A "knocker" was a common term for a sales representative.*

Debt Forgiveness Before Finance Companies (Poem)

Last evening I was talking With a merchant aged and gray, When he told me of a dream he had— I think 'twas Christmas Day.

While snoozing in his office, This vision came to view;

For he saw an angel enter, Dressed

"Dave Cohen, brother of Harry J. Cohen who planned and executed a fraudulent furniture store failure, was arrested in Gettysburg, Pa..."

"The Century line, will not have a dull, uninteresting pattern, nor one that is commonplace."

in garments white and new,

Said the angel: "I'm from heaven; The Lord just sent me down

To bring you up to glory And put on your golden crown.

"You've been a friend to every one, And worked hard night and day; You've supported many thousands And from few received your pay.

"SO we want you up in glory, For you have labored hard, And the good Lord is preparing Your eternal, just reward."

Then the angel and the merchant Started up towards glory's gate, But when passing close to Hades, The angel murmured: "Wait!—

"I've a place I wish to show you; It's the hottest place in Hell, Where the ones who never paid you In torment forever dwell."

And behold the merchant saw there His old patrons by the score, And grabbing up a chair and fan, He wished for nothing more.

He desired to sit and watch them as they'd sizzle, singe and burn; And his eyes would rest on debtors, Whichever way they'd turn.

Said the angel: "Come on, merchant! There are pearly gates to see." But the merchant only muttered, "This is Heaven enough for me."

Cohen Furniture Brothers Arrested For Egg Larceny

Dave Cohen, brother of Harry J. Cohen who planned and executed a fraudulent (furniture store) failure, was arrested in this city (Gettysburg, Pa) last week accused of the larceny of a con-

signment of eggs valued at \$570 and belonging to Albert Hollinger of Adams county, Pa. He was also charged with false pretense concerning the disposal of the eggs. Jacob Cohen, another brother, who was also connected with the Cohen failure, was arrested at the same time on the same charge.

Both Dave and Jacob Cohen were held under \$800 bail each, in the City Hall Police court for a hearing.

Furniture Store Get Kids To Collect Tin For War Effort

A THRIFT STAMP FREE to encourage a lesson in Thrift. Every child that brings in a pound of tinfoil to our store before August 15 will receive a Thrift Stamp free. The tinfoil is to be turned over to the Red Cross (the greatest Mother on earth helping our boys in this great fight for democracy).

Century Furniture's 1918 Grand Rapids Intros.

New furniture in unusual variety, improved in quality and fully up to past seasons in quantity as well, -- this is the story in a nutshell of what the Century furniture Co. will show at the factory during the coming (Grand Rapids) exposition. The Century line will not have a dull, uninteresting pattern, nor one that is commonplace and like what others are making... Originality without vulgarity and refinement without mediocrity -- this may offer some suggestion of the happy course taken between the perils on either hand by this company.

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"An interesting collection of war trophies attracted much attention to the large corner window of the Paine Furniture Co. store."

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The Berdan Furniture Company of Passaic, N. J., carrying a stock of \$50,000.00 was highly pleased with results obtained through Harper's Service, as also were the James Furniture Company,

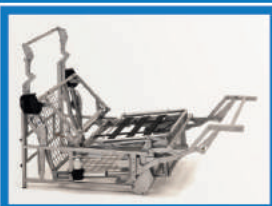
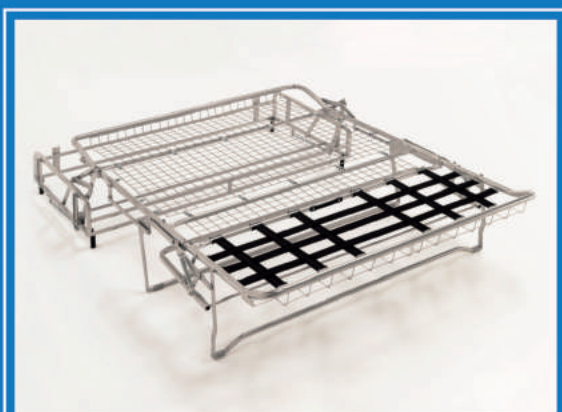
Aurora, Illinois, for whom we sold \$8,500.00 in ten days; size of stock \$30,000.00, and Smith & Son, Muskegon, Mich., for whom we sold \$3,902.00 in two weeks' sale last March, size of stock \$7,000. Also Webbs House Furnishing House, Oshkosh, WIS., who employed the Harper Service twice. Harper's Service IS endorsed by banks, trade journals and many hundreds of merchants throughout the United States. Are you interested? For particulars mention size of stock and object of sale. Auction sales upon request only. - C. N. HARPER & CO., Inc., Chicago, Illinois

War Trophies at Paine's

An interesting collection of war trophies attracted much attention to the large corner window of the Paine Furniture Co. store at Arlington street and St. James avenue. The trophies were loaned to the Paine company by D. W. Griffith, of "Hearts of the World," now showing at the Majestic theatre. The exhibit comprises rifles and equipment, as well as clothing taken from dead Germans...

Note: More history from *Furniture World Magazine* 125, 100, 75 & 50 years ago in upcoming issues.

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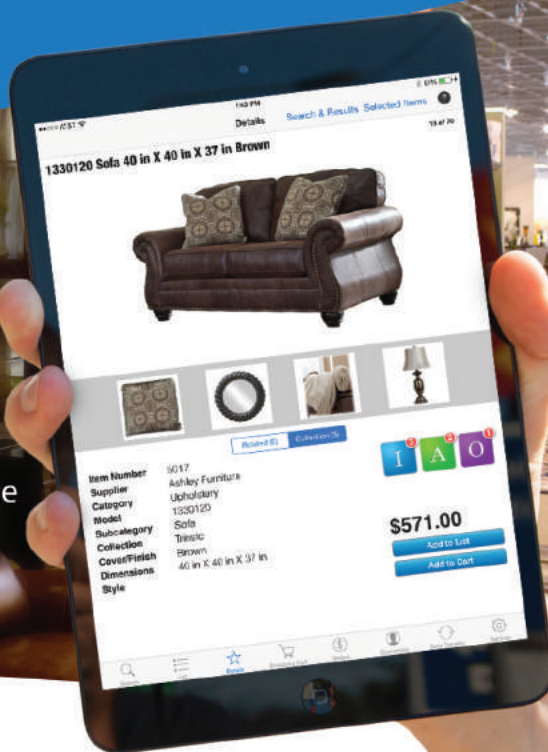
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