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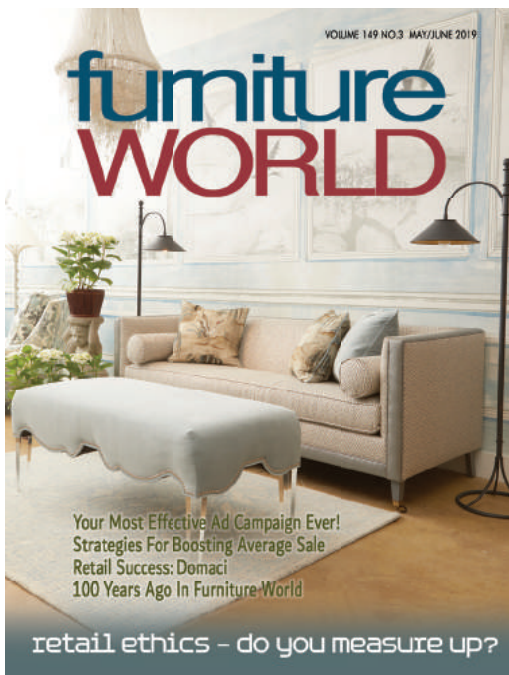
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FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE • FOUNDED 1870

COVER: Pictured is the Cosmos Sofa by Norwalk Furniture. Merging the design highway between contemporary and traditional, this sofa's refined scaling makes it a perfect fit for many rooms. It features narrow track arms, contemporary bench-style cushion and two cylindrical bolster pillows. For more information visit <http://www.norwalkfurniture.com>.

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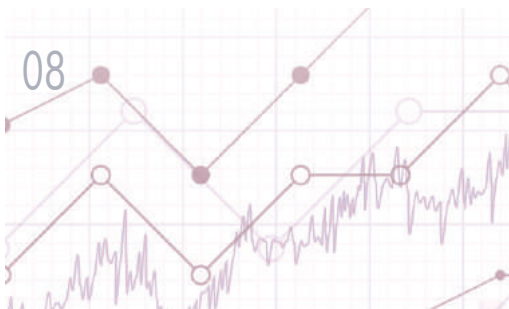
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Member BPA

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Thinking About Retail Ethics

When Furniture World's editorial contributor and bedding expert David Benbow submitted an article on retail ethics for this edition, he chose to present his view in a simple, useful, straightforward manner. As he puts it, "Without going into the weeds about ethical philosophy".

My slightly more weedy view is that the ethical behavior of retail business tends to lay out on a bell curve type distribution. Positioned as outliers on the forward side of the curve are those who not only keep their promises, but also care about and act to improve the environment, the dignity of their customers, of their communities and suppliers. On the opposite side of the mean, are those who don't think much about these details beyond their public relations value.

The majority, however, fall somewhere in the middle ground of doing business which involves navigating a tangle of sometimes conflicting responsibilities to family/shareholders, communities, employees, vendors, customers, the bottom line, and the planet.

Bruce Weinstein, a Forbes Contributor wrote a nice little commentary on ethics based on his reading of a book by Tom L. Beauchamp and James F. Childress titled, "Principles of Biomedical Ethics". Bruce identified the following five ethical principles which can be considered by retailers who are interested in edging closer towards an ethical ideal.

Do No Harm • Make Things Better
Respect Others • Be Fair • Care

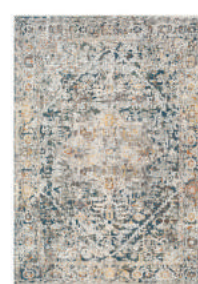
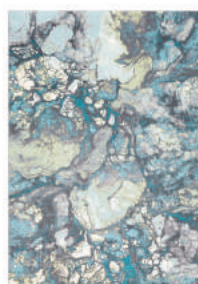
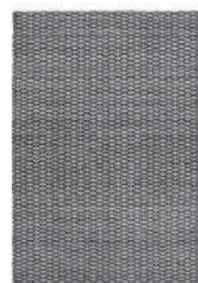
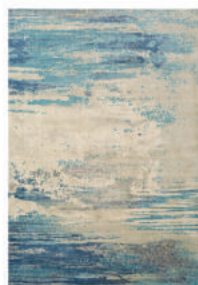
I don't see how any retailer can go wrong by keeping these principles in mind.

Finally, FW is working on a follow-up article on this topic. If you've observed tangled ethics among furnishings retailers, suppliers, employees or consumers, or, if you've struggled on the horns of a furniture related ethical dilemma and feel like sharing, please send me an email, which will be kept in strict confidence.

Regards,

Russell Bienenstock
Editorial Director/CEO
russ@furninfo.com

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AVERAGE SALE

THE NORTH STAR OF RETAILING

by David McMahon

How one retailer grew sales volume by creating a strategy and a company-wide laser-focus based on average sale improvement.

The number of customer interactions, the conversion rate of those interactions and average sale size are the three components of the “Sales Equation”. It’s the most important sales metric for home furnishings retailers.

Wouldn't it be awesome if furniture retailers could simultaneously improve all three components without adding additional marketing or salary expenses? A massive windfall would result from generating more traffic, converting more customers to sales, and getting bigger sales.

The problem with improving all three at the same time is that the more things you ask your people to improve upon, the less important each one of those things becomes to them. Put another way, if everything is equally important, than nothing is important. This makes significant improvement less likely.

Instead, it is better to focus on one item at a time, making it a guiding light not dissimilar to the North Star. Before modern navigation systems, mariners used

Polaris, the north star, as a guide. That is exactly what focusing on one thing is intended to do, get you to your desired destination faster. Don't get distracted by chasing all the other “stars” in the sky.

I recently visited a furniture retailer we will call XYZ Furniture operating six separate storefronts. Customer traffic seemed pretty decent in most of the locations, and less so in others. When asked how the management team knew this, their answer was not so clear. It was obvious that the store needed to install more precise systems to measure traffic. But even so, they seemed to have a pretty good feel for the numbers.

The challenge for this retailer was to develop a strategy to grow sales volume. My suggestion was to make Average Sale their “North Star” metric. To execute this strategy, the following four actions were considered.

- Focus on the improvement of just the “North Star” metric.

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NORTH STAR STRATEGY

- Set goals.
- Execute actions.
- Reward team and individual performance, and provide support for poor performers.

Coincidentally, these actions would have been similar had the chosen "North Star" metric been traffic or conversion improvement instead of average sale.

#1. Focus on one "North Star" Metric: XYZ

Furniture had been keeping a scorecard list of 10 different weighted metrics combined to rank store and salesperson performance. It was useful, but its complexity made it hard to keep track of all the calculations and

the various strategies for improving each metric while, at the same time, keeping customers happy. Buried in amongst all the stats was the most important measurable and controllable metric: Average Sale. It was decided that the store would keep their existing scorecard for management purposes, but not share it with front-line employees. The idea was to focus salesperson attention on the Average Sale metric to improve total sales volume.

The management team agreed to focus on improving Average Sale for at least six months. This was important, since both time and attention to the "North Star" metric was required, without distraction, to fuel significant

improvement.

#2. Set Goals: The next step was to pin down the expected average sale target. The current average sale for the company was \$1500, with two stores above average, one average, and two below average. The top 20 percent of other similar stores nationwide was between \$1600 and \$1800. With this information, it was clear that XYZ Furniture had the ability to do better. Individual salespeople at XYZ were performing at top levels already, so parts of their team obviously had some great skills. Based on this thinking, the new minimum standard set for the company was \$1700. All stores

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"The current average sale for the company was \$1500, with two stores above average, one average, and two below average."

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"The best salespeople

tend not to get off topic or distracted. They have deep product knowledge and have 'go to' items proven to effectively solve shoppers' furnishings challenges."

and employees would be expected to work toward growing their average ticket size while preserving margins.

If customer traffic and close rate remained the same, this \$200 improvement from \$1500 to \$1700 average sale would result in millions of extra sales dollars.

#3. Execute Actions: Now that the strategic initiative, commitment and goals were set, the "meat" of the plan, execution, was outlined. Below is a summary of the actions XYZ Furniture decided to execute.

Score in the Forefront

To keep the focus on the "North Star", metric reports would now feature bold and large, average sale numbers against goal for the entire company, for each store, and by each salesperson. Reports would also feature in a smaller font, traffic, close rate and margin numbers. Then, total sales, again would be listed in bold. This would be done every day for month-to-date. XYZ would report all the above metrics for the previous 120 days, every day!

Staffing Numbers

One might question how the proper number of salespeople could affect the average sale calculation. After all, people are not part of the equation, $\text{Average Sales} = \text{Sales Volume} / \text{Number of Tickets}$. There is, however, a hidden element. Some salespeople need to spend more time with customers than others to deliver the highest sales ticket. If they feel rushed, average sale will suffer. So, every business must determine how many salespeople are needed to handle average customer traffic. In this instance, the business felt that one salesperson for every 140 customers per month was optimal. Additional people were hired to reach this staffing level for each store.

Refine and Simplify

A selling system defines a set of actions salespeople must go through to best serve their customers. These systems are typically segmented into major steps such as: Greeting, Understanding, Solving, Finalizing, and Follow-up. Every home furnishing business must define the sales steps

that work best for their particular business model. Weak systems produce weak results. Complex and cumbersome systems are hard to follow. Systems that are not revisited, practiced and updated, become stale and eventually ineffective. For all these reasons, retailer XYZ found it necessary to redefine their systems in concise, easy to follow steps for each of their four major product categories; furniture, mattresses, appliances and electronics. Tactics were included to improve average sale.

Product Presentations

There are many reasons why salespeople achieve a range of average sale and close rates, however, the best salespeople tend not to get off topic or distracted. They have deep product knowledge and have "go to" items proven to effectively solve shoppers' furnishings challenges. This approach is common in mattress sales with either a test bed or bed mapping system. Top salespeople cut through the clutter, maintain focus, begin, and then go through the selection process more effectively. With this

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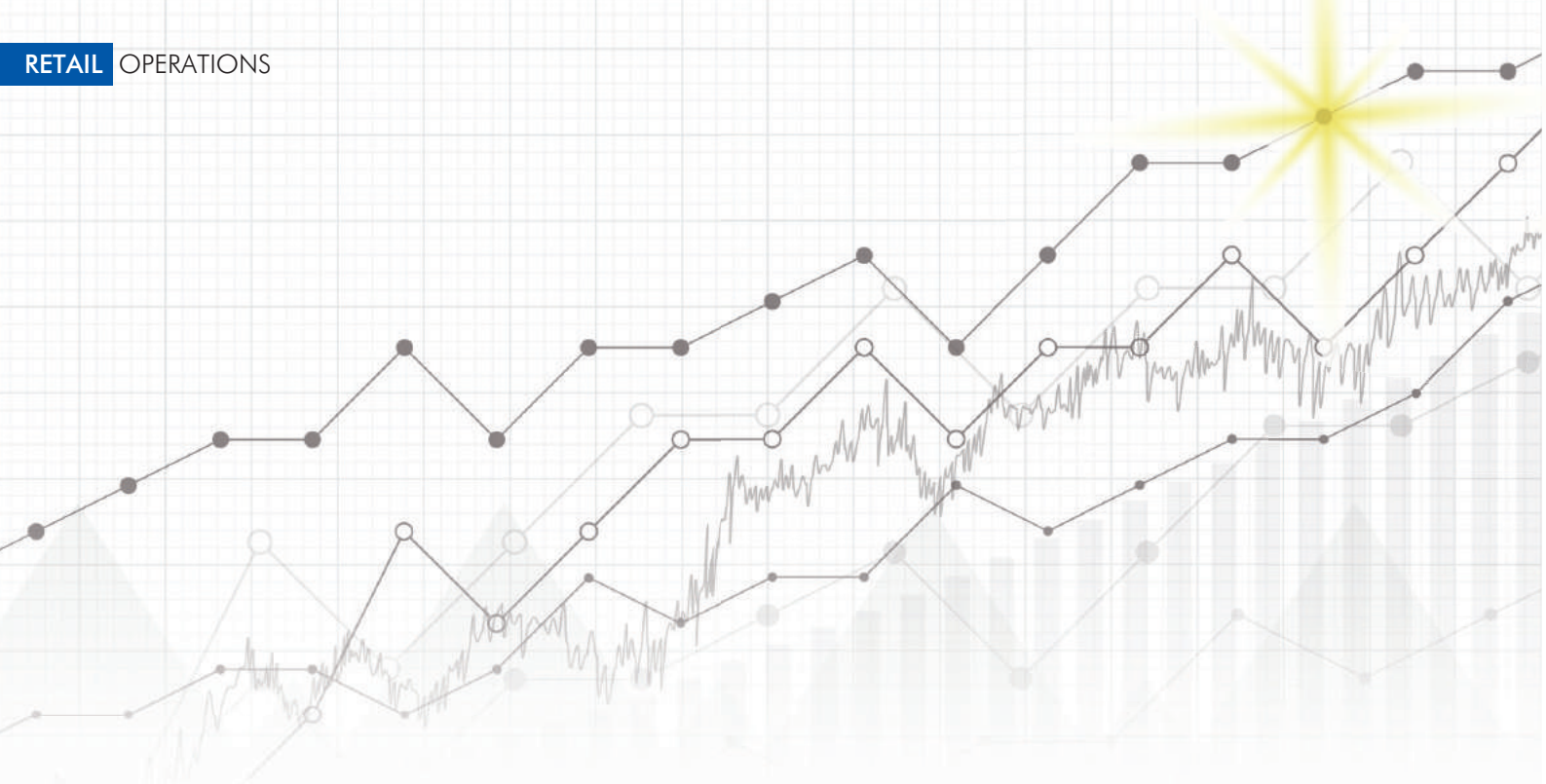
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in mind, certain of XYZ Furniture's SKUs were designated "test items". For example, salespeople were instructed to direct shoppers looking to purchase a sectional to a specific sectional ("test item") that had been well reviewed and that everyone on the team knew how to impeccably present. From there confidence was built.

Monthly Payment Customers

Industry-wide, furnishings customers who use third party financing produce significantly higher average tickets. Overall, the higher the percentage of customer financing, the more merchandise will be sold. Yes, there is a cost, however, I would argue that any financing terms except maybe for over 48 months, are worth the cost. Ask yourself, Would you rather have a \$3000 sale at 45 percent realized margin or a \$1000 sale at 50 percent realized margin, or maybe no sale at all? The answer is obvious. If you are still concerned about the cost of giving up margin, consider

having a higher regular price that includes long-term financing and a discount available to customers who pay with their credit card.

In this case, XYZ Furniture decided to focus on increasing the percent of total sales financed. They required their salespeople to ask customers this simple question, "Our customers generally choose to buy in two ways, either with low monthly payments, or by getting points from using their credit card. What is your preference?" If the customer shows interest in making monthly payments, the salesperson gets them approved immediately so their budget can be determined prior to merchandise selection.

Focus on Protection Sales

The highest margin item that most retailers sell is product protection. Let's make something clear here, aside from electronics and appliances, this is not an extended warranty. It is protection that offers peace of mind to customers worried about their

furnishings getting soiled or damaged due to entertaining, pets, kids, etc. XYZ Furniture company was pretty good with protection sales, however, they were pricing it too low compared to other retailers. Once their pricing was re-aligned – presto – higher average ticket and higher sales! A whole separate toolbox to increase protection volume will be presented in a future article. For now, just know this. It can

"Would you rather have a \$3000 sale at 45 percent realized margin or a \$1000 sale at 50 percent realized margin, or maybe no sale at all?"

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NORTH STAR METRIC

add six percent or more to total furniture and bedding volume for retailers that do a good job of communicating its value.

Accessories BOGO

There are two types of home furnishings stores, those that sell a lot of accessories, rugs, lighting, and those that hardly sell any. If you decide you want to be in the game, there are two primary strategies. The first is to have your designer accessorize displays in the customer's home after the merchandise is delivered. The

second is to be really heavy in the category selection-wise, in the showroom, and treat your accessory merchandising and selling strategy similar to your bigger ticket items. I really don't expect all furniture stores to be great at selling accessories. However, just about any retailer that has weak accessory sales can profit from a "Qualified BOGO" strategy. It works by telling shoppers, during the course of the furniture selection process, that today with the purchase of any "set" they will qualify for half-off all accessories, lighting and rugs. And, if they are interested in doing the whole room, they should consider accessories in the process of choosing their room package. This tactic, requires building proper margin into the regular prices.

More Return Customers

Return customers, lifetime customers, your loyal followers, all produce higher average sales and greater lifetime value. You get these golden customers by providing a top-of-the-line shopping experience, product value, and post-sale follow up and service. It therefore makes sense

to implement a formal follow-up system to continuously grow the number of loyal followers, right? This topic warrants an article in itself, but here I'll mention briefly the points of follow-up that this company committed to doing:

- *Thank customers for the visit before they exit the store.*
- *Thank them for their purchase and any next steps such as delivery within one day of their purchase.*
- *Send a vendor acknowledgment.*
- *Perform delivery scheduling.*
- *Send a post-delivery thank you and collect survey information.*
- *Make a one-year after purchase follow-up call.*

#4. Rewards and Support: Another of my clients came up with a fun tactic to promote protection sales. They awarded a big WWE-type Champion Wrestling Belt to top performers.

So, at XYZ Furniture it was decided to add a twist, applying that same tactic to promote average sale focus and growth. The company purchased a champion

"I really don't expect all furniture stores to be great at selling accessories. However, just about any retailer that has weak accessory sales can profit from a 'Qualified BOGO' strategy."

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NORTH STAR STRATEGY

wrestling-type belt online. Then, every month the store sales team with the highest average sale was recognized. The team member with the highest average sale was photographed holding the trophy surrounded by the rest the team. The picture was sent to the other stores, building healthy competition and fun.

An extra pay for performance bonus for average sale was added to reward the top three salespeople in the entire company, provided their volume and margin goals were also met.

XYZ Furniture also changed the way their up system worked. Instead of running a rotation based on when a salesperson showed up to work, the company re-ordered its up system based on the prior 120 day average sale ranking for those with above-goal volume. The top hitter gets to bat first, and this honor is top-of-mind for everyone else on the team, every day. They become hyper-aware.

Finally, there will always be people who under-perform. And sometimes, those under-performers are top salespeople. When

these folks hit a rough patch, a huge amount of earning potential is lost. For this reason, XYZ Furniture started a "Saturday School" program. Anyone that produced lower than standard performance month-to-date, had to show up 30 minutes early on Saturdays to practice role playing techniques that would lead to a higher average tickets.

On the subject of rewards and consequences, it is important to keep things fun, tied to income and serious. It's counterproductive to just hand over dollars to your best performers, and threaten low performing team members. Embrace a fun team approach to skill development and encourage people who can thrive within that type of atmosphere.

Conclusion

In summary, with improving average sale or whatever metric you decide to improve, make it your focus, make your strategy, be specific about actions, reward and make it fun. You will have a much better chance of moving the needle on your overall sales vol-

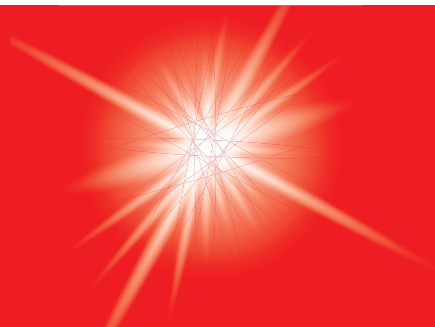
ume than if you tried to improve everything at the same time.

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"The company purchased a champion wrestling-type belt online.

Every month the store sales team with the highest average sale was recognized."

"On the subject of rewards and consequences, it is important to keep things fun, tied to income and serious."



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DOMACI

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

Bethlehem
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wonderland
for eclectically
minded, environ-
mentally moti-
vated consumers
and perceptive
designers.

Domaci means home in Czech. Warren and Derrick Clark (the Czech Connection) and their partner, Rebecca Addington, target the creation of the perfect ambiance for their clients and friends, so they can love where they live and find their own perfect "Domaci".

A wonderland for eclectically minded, environmentally motivated consumers and perceptive designers, the Domaci showroom's welcome includes almost every kind of home furnishings imaginable. Visualize upholstered and top grain leather furniture, reclaimed wood tables and bookcases, cowhide and natural fiber rugs and iron-forged media cabinets. There's a custom live-edge program that invites browsers to select from headboards, dining/coffee and side tables that are "uniquely you". There are crank tables handcrafted from reclaimed teak and recycled iron from India. The vast spectrum swings from clocks, local artisan pieces, soy candles, wooden nickels, unique glass bottles, antique cameras and that ancient typewriter their customers have always been eager to find!

Domaci is a destination in its own right. You'll find it on East Third Street just off Main Street in legendary Bethlehem, Pennsylvania, one of the nation's "top 100 best places to live".

Once a center for shipbuilding and renowned since the mid 1800s as America's largest steel producer, the city's cultural and historic heritage also includes its interesting choice as the safe storage place for George Washington's personal effects.

There are three institutions of higher learning at Bethlehem and, since 1937, during the Great Depression, the town has adopted the designation of America's "Christmas City". A nice blending of the potpourri of credits is the huge steel star, the Bethlehem Star, perched on top of South Mountain. To round out Bethlehem's credits, it is the home of the prestigious annual Bach Festival.

Getting Started

Could the partners have found a better place for Domaci? "We moved to Bethlehem in 2014,



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Left to right, Warren and Derrick Clark and their partner, Rebecca Addington. Domaci is located in Bethlehem's up-and-coming SouthSide Arts District.

(Domaci photos by Andrew Tomasino.)



"We launched our Domaci website in the fall of 2015, followed by a pop-up shop in nearby Easton, Pennsylvania. Shortly after that, we opened our first brick and mortar location."

knowing that the area was ripe for the kind of business we wanted to start. The right demographics were there, and there was really no one else doing what we want-

ed to do.

"Both Derrick and I separately got our starts in retail while in college," Warren told us. "I wasn't immediately drawn to design and home furnishings but became interested in décor and really honed my skills while working for the Bombay Company for over seven years. I was a District Manager for them when they filed for bankruptcy in 2007.

"It was my work with them that took me to Texas where I met Derrick. We were actually neighbors living in the same apartment complex. We have been together since 2005, married in 2012.

"We have very similar tastes in design and décor, even gifting each other with the exact same items one Christmas! Owning our own business had always been at the back of both our minds. And that dream continued to

grow once we started planning it together.

"We launched our Domaci website in the fall of 2015, followed by a pop-up shop in nearby Easton, Pennsylvania. Shortly after that, we opened our first brick and mortar location in the spring of 2015 on Bethlehem's historic Main Street.

"Rebecca joined us during our first year. She came in as a customer during one of our first weekends, and we were immediately attracted to her energy and enthusiasm. We learned that she worked at the Pottery Barn in nearby Allentown, and proceeded to recruit her when we were ready to bring on our first hire.

"She has been instrumental in helping to grow our design services and our customers absolutely love her. Rebecca became a partner in the business in 2018.

"Also in 2018, we relocated

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"It was crucial we provide both a great in-store environment and experience that customers would talk about with their friends and family after they left the shop."

from our original shop on Main Street to a larger location nearly three times the size in Bethlehem's up-and-coming SouthSide Arts District. And we will be opening a second location this fall in downtown Lancaster, PA."

During the first heady months of the virtual store in 2015, owners Warren and Derrick filled orders from inventory they kept in their garage, ordering larger items on demand. "Word of mouth" worked for them then. And it still does. "Some of our best customers have been referrals. We have a limited advertising budget. Even more so when we first started!"

When "bricks and mortar" became an actuality, they knew that it "was crucial we provide

both a great in-store environment and experience that customers would talk about with their friends and family after they left the shop. We also rely heavily on social media for promotion and we love it when we notice people 'tagging' someone else in a post to make sure they see it."

Sustainable Retailing

It's not a surprise that the partners' philosophy extends to the great wide world of sustainability, a movement that is exponentially gaining impetus, credibility and broad recognition. Susan Inglis, Executive Director of the Sustainable Furnishings Council,

"Met Warren through Home Trends and Design, a founding member of SFC. He and Derrick took our GREENleaders' class as they were preparing to open the store.

"Our program 'Sustainable Saturdays', is a unique program SFC offers to members to support sustainable events in their communities. Regular events help get the message out. We are happy to use all of the tools we offer including SFC's brochures and electronic files. More information about these can be found at <https://sustainablefurnishings.org>.

"Warren, Derrick and Rebecca are brilliant! They are bringing a great design sense and an



Artist's rendering of Domaci's second location, opening this fall in downtown Lancaster, PA.



WHAT'S IT MADE OF?

Join the **SUSTAINABLE FURNISHINGS COUNCIL** for education, information, resources, guidance. Shop SFC members for products and services.



Deforestation is a problem around the world. Look for:

- Wood certified by a reputable organization like FSC
- Solid North American hardwoods
- Reclaimed and recycled materials
- Plantation-grown wood, such as Mango
- Fast-growing alternatives like Bamboo



Finishes can off gas toxins called VOC's. Look for:

- Water-based lacquers, not acetone
- Natural finishes like waxes and natural oils
- Certified No or Low VOC



Textile production is chemical intensive. Look for:

- Certified organics, especially for cotton
- Other natural fibers such as wool, linen, hemp that require less water in production
- Recycled content, especially in synthetics
- No FR chemicals, fluorinated stain treatments, anti-microbials, or PVC



Leather production uses land, transport, and chemicals. Look for:

- Vegetable-Tanned
- Non-toxic dyes
- US or EU leather production and manufacture
- Genuine leather rather than PVC substitute



Foam and wraps are usually petroleum-based. Look for:

- Natural latex from rubberwood trees
- Bio hybrids that mix soy and petrol
- Down, kapok or other natural wraps
- Spun wraps from recycled bottles
- No FR chemicals added



Life Cycle Assessment tracks the environmental impact of a product, from extraction of raw materials through processing, manufacturing and transportation. LCA also measures impact during use, reuse and recycling of the product until it returns to the earth as nutrients or toxins.



sustainable
FURNISHINGS COUNCIL
sustainablefurnishings.org

"The SFC has been vital.

Thanks to them and to the education they provide, we know exactly what to look for when sourcing sustainable furnishings."

empowering attitude to their region, and the result will be many happy homes, I am sure. It is significant that they have a commitment to best practices to sustainability. The home will only be happy in the long run if it sustains a healthy future. Working with Domaci will ensure that."

To the partners, engagement in the enjoyment and promotion of everything vintage has heightened their awareness of sustainable furnishings. "It's only going to grow. While some of the younger generation may not be focused on furniture that lasts forever, they

are still concerned about where it's coming from and what it's made of, and that factory workers are treated fairly and that no harmful chemicals are being used in the manufacturing process.

"The SFC has been vital." Warren continued. "Thanks to them and to the education they provide, we know exactly what to look for when sourcing sustainable furnishings. They've helped us find vendors to shop from as well as the right questions to ask when we're meeting with a potential new vendor.

"Most customers are definitely

willing to pay more for furniture they expect to have a longer life span and that won't end up in the landfill in a couple of years. But if you are asking if they are willing to pay more just because an item is responsibly sourced and produced, then probably not the majority."

The challenges involved in keeping sustainable furnishings affordable? "Our biggest challenge in that aspect comes down to transportation costs. Which would be a factor even if we weren't sourcing sustainable goods. The goods themselves are



Domaci's great mix of style and sustainability.



"We've had calligraphy workshops, maker's marts, a pop-up flower shop... even a guest speaker on the history of brewing in Bethlehem for 'Lehigh Valley Beer Week'. We try to keep it fun and entertaining."

our customers' homes is sometimes a deterrent. Our primary vendors are over 1500 miles from Bethlehem, so freight is always a concern. We work with a number of local vendors whenever we can, but that's not always a possibility."

They also, "Recycle all paper waste and cardboard packaging. We reuse other packing materials like bubble wrap and packing peanuts whenever possible. Additionally, we attempt to be as 'paperless' as possible with most files kept electronically. We also use LED track lighting."

Customer Engagement

usually truly affordable, but the expense of getting them from the vendor to our showroom and/or

Said Warren, "The modern consumer does a lot of research before making a major purchase

such as larger furniture pieces, so it would be perfectly natural for them to look around at other, more well-known stores and websites before visiting us. They are just exploring all of their options.

"Engagement really starts when they enter the shop. We have to create an environment that is eye-catching, interesting and that feels like a mini adventure. We believe everyone should be greeted within a minute of entering the shop. Even if they're just there to browse, we let them know we're available if they need us for anything.

"If a customer lingers in the store for awhile and seems to be taking interest in certain items, we'll engage in a little 'tough talking'... meaning we'll talk about the piece they're touching or looking at. This is especially

DOMACI MEANS HOME

true if they're looking at one of our items with an interesting history or sustainability story. An example, 'Did you know that table is made from a recycled foundry mold from Bethlehem Steel?' or, 'Did you know that the finish on this table is water-based, and that you don't need to use coasters to protect it from moisture rings?' Those sorts of things. Beyond that, we try to keep them engaged when they're outside the shop with interesting and relevant social media posts.

"And we regularly update the shop's layout, doing three to four major floor moves a year along with additional 'tweaks' so the shop is different just about every time someone comes in. This prompts them to stay longer and explore.

"Additionally, we host events in

the shop to keep things engaging, fun and entertaining. We've had calligraphy workshops, maker's marts, a pop-up flower shop and more. We even had a guest speaker who spoke about the history of brewing in Bethlehem for 'Lehigh Valley Beer Week'. As we grow our design services, we would like to incorporate some in-house workshops to the mix as well."

Target Demographics

"I wouldn't say we have a 'target' consumer. Our demographics are truly all over the place. Bethlehem is a college town that is also a bedroom community for Philadelphia and New York City. And we have a large population of retirees. So, we try to have a little something for everyone. Our

"Our look and style are probably most popular with Millennials, but our regular customer base really does run the gamut."

look and style are probably most popular with Millennials, but our regular customer base really does run the gamut. Most customers come in first for great design and quality furnishings. While we do have a handful of customers coming in specifically because of the sustainable pieces, I think most of our customers just end



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	48"	3/4
	48" x 80"	48 XL
	54" x 80"	54 XL

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Domaci's well designed website (domacihome.com) contains a wealth of information on products and services that puts this retailer on a level playing field with industry giants. It also features an excellent e-commerce platform.

"People don't like to be put in boxes and labeled as belonging to one particular style. So we're going to see vintage pieces mixed with shiny and new items. Industrial elements mixed with more glam finishes."

up seeing that as a bonus. It helps them feel better about making a purchase that they probably would have made anyway."

Trends

Domaci's diverse inventory includes the best and brightest of design trends, judiciously chosen for interest, appeal and longevity. Warren said that "In addition to regularly attending the major furniture markets in High Point and Las Vegas, and keeping an eye on industry publications, we also keep a close eye on the social media accounts of retailers in other areas of the country who inspire us and tend to have a similar design aesthetic. More than once we've reached out to a fellow retailer to compliment them on something in their shop and ask them if they could share their source with us. As for the future, I think we're going to see eclectic style continue to grow. People don't like to be put in boxes and labeled as belonging to one

particular style. So we're going to see vintage pieces mixed with shiny and new items. Industrial elements mixed with more glam finishes."

Design Services

Domaci reaches out to "Actually partner with the design community and make referrals whenever we have someone approach us with a project that is beyond our scope. We have a great partnership with a local designer whose primary focus is kitchens and bathrooms... not rooms we really focus on. We have sent her a number of referrals for customers who approach us about redoing those rooms. In turn, she has referred customers to us who are looking to update rooms she doesn't focus on, like living rooms, dining rooms and bedrooms. In fact, one of our best customers last year came from this partnership. Since we offer our own design services, some in the design community might see us as a competitor, but we do



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Domaci displays a huge number of product categories including furniture, decor +more, rugs, lighting, gifts and a number of services including real estate, in-home design and a wedding gift registry.



offer a 'to the trade' program for any who might be interested."

Domaci's "In-home consults are a vital part of our Studio D design services. Not only are we able to go in and take important measurements, but we're also able to get a feel for the entire space and how our customers actually 'live' in that environment."

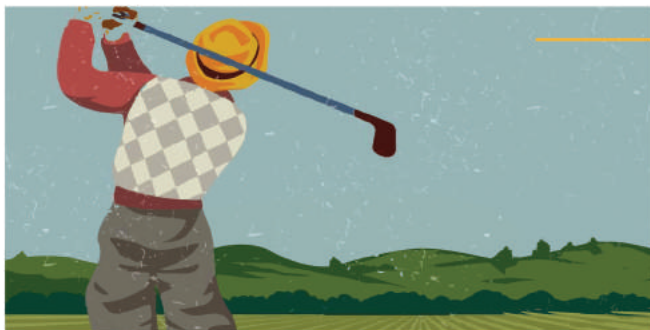
The partners are constantly looking for ways to add excitement to their retail mix. "For us, in-store events are one of the best ways to create and maintain excitement. I already men-

tioned our guest speaker during beer week. We also had a 'Back to the '90s' party one evening awhile back. We served Zima (Jolly Ranchers optional), had a specially curated '90s music playlist and invited a local vintage clothing store to have a pop-up shop in our space that night with a focus on '90s fashions. It was a fun evening for sure.

"And an on-line experience... we had a customer from out of state who was looking to purchase some Bethlehem-related items for her mother who was

from the area. One of the items she wanted was out of stock, and

"We do three to four major floor moves a year along with additional 'tweaks' so the shop is different just about every time someone comes in."



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"We've recently added real estate services to our offerings. So now we can help you furnish AND find your home!"



With a huge array of diverse product choices, adequate time is spent with new employees to make sure they understand Domaci's policies, procedures, customer service philosophy and product knowledge.

we weren't sure if it would be available again before Christmas. But we promised we'd keep her up-to-date if so. It just so happened that we did get that item back more quickly than planned (thanks to a great vendor partner!), so we were able to get it to her mom in time for Christmas. Our customer was absolutely thrilled."

Staffing

When an addition to Domaci's staff is needed, "We base our choice, first and foremost, on personality. Is this person someone we genuinely enjoy talking to? Do they maintain good eye contact? Would I see myself shopping from them personally? Experience is great, but all of the technical stuff can be taught. I've often heard it said that potential employees never get better than their interview, so if we aren't truly 'wowed' by them at that stage in the hiring process, we're probably going to pass.

"We do provide in-store training. We're still a small operation, so we don't have a formal training program just yet. But adequate time is spent with any new employee to make sure they understand policies, procedures, our customer service philosophy, product knowledge and more. "We are working on a more formal training program as we grow, so hopefully that will be some-

thing that comes to fruition before the year's end.

"Currently all employees are paid hourly with commission. There are occasional bonuses. We don't currently offer health care, but that's a goal as we grow."

Customer Services

Domaci has a grand maxim that really covers all aspects of customer service, "Under promise and over deliver!" And that being said, they "Try to keep it as personable and informal as possible. We don't take ourselves too seriously. We have formed friendships outside the shop with several of our customers. Just be real and genuine. And always 'under promise and over deliver'!

Giving Back

"Derrick is a member of Bethlehem's Historic and Architectural Review Board. We're



We founded Domaci

with the mission of bringing sustainably-sourced furniture that's built to last to the Lehigh Valley and beyond. We add in a carefully-curated selection of one-of-a-kind vintage home goods and unique home accessories to help you complete the look and create the home of your dreams.

Derrick & Warren

[CLICK TO LEARN MORE]

both active participants in our downtown association and we're very active supporters and participants in our retail neighborhood association.

"Additionally, we have regular 'give-back' events where a portion of our proceeds from the day or evening will be given to a local charity or organization. Right now we are actually wrapping up a book drive to celebrate 'Read Across America' and help 'Cops 'n Kids' make their 'March for the Millionth' goal to donate one million books to children across the Lehigh Valley. Customers who donate a book (or books) get a discount at Domaci."

Events & More Services

Some other marketing treasures were found on Domaci's lively and colorful website. Under the website heading "domaci happenings", there is an invitation to meet with local real estate experts to get tips on shopping for a new home, plus offering information for those looking to sell. Also, an offer for shoppers to join them for "Live music beginning at 7 p.m. and FREE BEER while you shop!"

Could you resist?!

Warren's latest news? "We've recently added real estate services to our offerings. Both Derrick and Rebecca are now licensed

realtors! "So now we can help our customers furnish AND find a home!"

"I've often heard it said that potential employees never get better than their interview, so if we aren't truly 'wowed' by them at that stage in the hiring process, we're probably going to pass."

RETAIL ETHICS

by David Benbow

Most mature, adults would say that they intuitively know right from wrong. If it is that easy, then why don't all retail players act ethically all the time?

The idea of retail ethics occasionally pops into my head when I read an ad that unfairly maligns competitors or when I see an online review of a retailer that consumers have branded as unethical. Also, when I pick up any metropolitan newspaper, and see ads touting "everything 50 percent off!", I get to thinking about transgressions of an ethical code retailers should observe and live by.

What Are Retail Ethics?

Wikipedia gives a rather ponderous definition of "ethics" as follows. "Ethics or moral philosophy is a branch of philosophy that involves systematizing, defending, and recommending concepts of right and wrong conduct." Expanding this definition, retail ethical behavior might be defined as, determining and pursuing right or correct behavior in a retail operation versus pursuing wrong or evil behavior in the same enterprise.

Obviously, the definitions given above are not a very helpful guide to modeling ethical behavior.

Most mature, adult observers, would say that they intuitively know right from wrong. If it is that easy, then why don't all retail players act ethically all the time?

Here is my guess. Aside from basic human foibles such as vanity and greed, the temptation to work around the edges of ethical behavior is driven by the problem of capitalism. Every retail enterprise has competition. You can talk all you want about "cooperation" between different stores offering similar products and how they should all get along. But, we all know that this rarely, if ever, happens in the real world. For many, it is dog eat dog at retail.

Ethical Capitalism

Businesses in the United States have flourished in a culture that champions the idea of free enterprise, which is the hallmark of our commercial culture. It means anybody, anywhere, and at any time can open and operate pretty much any business he or she wants; take any associated personal or financial risk, and rise or fall solely on merit and initiative.

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(within the legal framework of our society). Our free enterprise system also depends on a large, strong middle class, from which both customers and entrepreneurs spring.

This culture naturally breeds competition, often unfettered and ruthless.

In this competitive environment, ethically-minded people recognize the necessity of having a complimentary code of ethics that defines proper and fair conduct. In our industry this would take the form of a code of ethics for operating a retail business in an environment rife with competition.

Let's digress for a moment and consider an alternative, government controlled system, where free enterprise supposedly does not exist. Would the retail code of ethics be the same as in a capital-

ist state? Probably not. In the days of centrally planned, non-privatized societies, retail business often went underground or devolved to use barter. My point is that ethical business practices are affected by the systems under which they operate, and are not a standard code of accepted behavior in every culture.

A Very Short History of Ethics

So, where did the idea of business or retail ethics get started?

The late Professor Robert Lopez made the following observation concerning the origin of fair dealing in the Middle Ages. In his book "The Birth of Europe." He noted that during this time, trade guilds took measures "to guarantee quality and limit price." He also observed that these rules "sprang less from a regard for honesty than the fear of antagonizing difficult customers."

A contrasting view is that most people have an innate sense of fair play as embodied in "The Golden Rule" that suggests we should treat others as we would want to be treated. It's an idea that probably goes back farther than human memory.

**"So, which is correct?
Are business ethics born
more often out of
self-interest and fear
of being swamped by
the competition, a desire
to do what's right, or
a bit of both?"**

So, which is correct? Are business ethics born more often out of self-interest and fear of being swamped by the competition, a desire to do what's right, or a bit of both?

Laws Enforcing Ethics

Our legal system is active and occasionally even aggressive in policing good business behavior. For the most part, laws have been passed to protect consumers, employees, the environment



RETAIL ETHICS

and the broader society for good reasons.

When unfettered by rules, it doesn't take long for big dogs to devour smaller dogs. Laws have, therefore, been implemented to stifle unfair business practices from creating monopolies or commercial oligarchies. While we certainly have our share of multi-billion dollar conglomerates, the vast majority of business concerns are still smaller and family operated.

There are many federal, state and local laws against unfair, deceptive and fraudulent business practices, but there aren't laws for everything. That is probably a good thing. At some point, the role of ethics in business has to find a place.

To Whom Are Retailers Responsible?

Each of us bears a responsibility for not only following laws, but

also an ethical responsibility to our fellow citizens, especially in areas where the law is not clearly defined. This is especially true for retailers, who depend on the public trust for their livelihoods. These responsibilities include moral behavior toward:

- *Shoppers and customers.*
- *Employees and contractors.*
- *Vendors, including furnishings manufacturers and their suppliers.*



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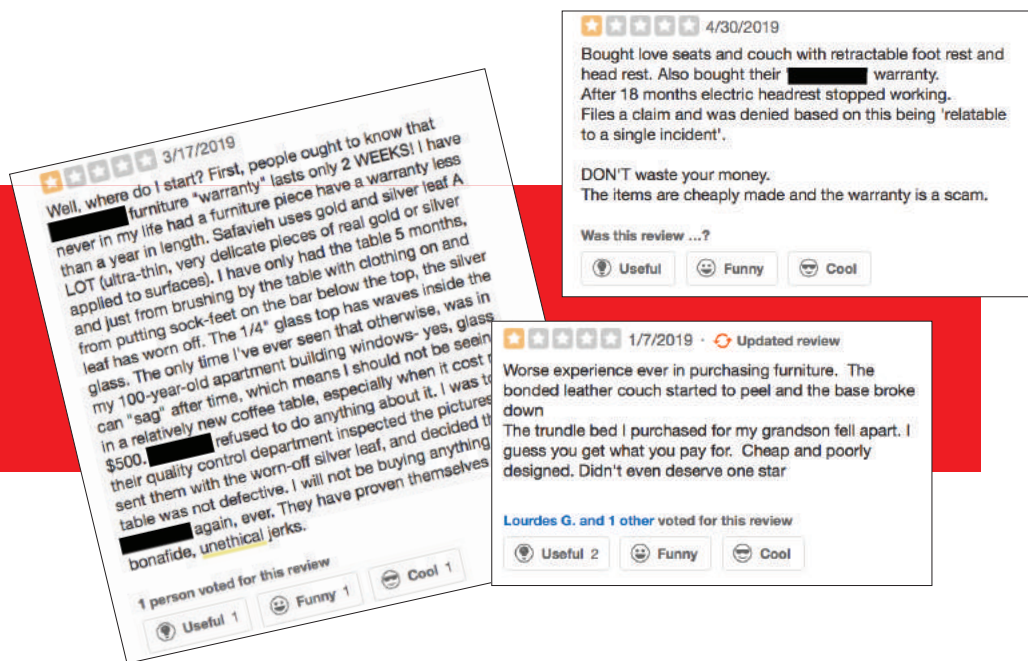
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Poor online reviews like the ones above from customers claim that they've been the victims of unethical treatment. These can damage reputations and dissuade customers from shopping. Shoppers may also equate poor service with an unethical corporate culture.

- Society, and the communities in which they operate.

Without going into the weeds about ethical philosophy, the province of weighty, unreadable university text books, let us talk about some specific issues of ethical behavior.

What Do Retailers Owe Their Customers?

Certainly, customers should be treated fairly. But, what is fair? For example, Is it unethical or unfair to set a price too high? My guess is that any price that is out of line with the "current market"

will be quickly exposed, and need to be adjusted lower if the seller wants to remain in business. Every retailer must decide pricing levels that make sense for their specific operation. In my opinion, setting an unusually high, out-of-market-range price is probably unwise, but not unethical.

So, what do retailers owe to their customers?

1. The first retail responsibility is to simply live up to the promises made to customers. Some promise same-day delivery. Some promise "always in stock". Not every retailer has the same bundle of promises. But, whatever the promise, ethics dictate that those promises must be kept. It isn't illegal to promise same day delivery, and then deliver three weeks later. It may not even be unethical, it may just be carelessness, but it is bad behavior that will ultimately cost you.

"Each of us bears a responsibility for not only following laws, but also an ethical responsibility to our fellow citizens, especially in areas where the law is not clearly defined."

2. The second responsibility of a furniture or bedding retailer is to be truthful in advertising, promotion and sales presentations. Since every customer expects honesty from the stores he or she buys from, it's an implied promise every retailer makes to every customer.

What Retailers Owe Their Employees

In our society, workers/employees have freedom of action. No one is bound to a job. Employees may decide to stay employed or leave. They are free to act in their best interests.

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1. Again, I think it is fairly simple. Retailers owe their employees what they have promised. Many retail employees work on commission. The distribution of commissions earned is controlled by the employer. Some stores share commission between employees, some have other, more exotic commission structures. The ethics violations come when an employer cheats the employee out of their commission. This kind of illegality is

very difficult to nail down. But, it is definitely unethical because it violates the promise to the employee of correct payment.

2. Does the employer owe good working conditions? Good pay? Humane treatment? Complimentary parking? Retirement benefits? Free lunch? While these may be good ideas, the failure of an employer to offer some of these benefits, in my opinion, may be a poor and

unwise choice, but not necessarily an unethical one. Just like a retailer's responsibility to the customer, it is the ethical responsibility of the employer to live up to promises made to employees. If workers were promised free lunches, they should get free lunches. Anything short of that is unethical. If an employee feels treated unethically or illegally, he or she has the remedy of quitting, filing suit and or airing his or her complaints online.

What Retailers Owe the Legal System

When we say "legal system" we also mean the various gov-

2.0 **Unethical place to work.** – January 26, 2019
SALES AND DESIGN (Former Employee) –
★★★★★
[REDACTED] Furniture is a non productive, unethical place to work. I do not appreciate the poor way that our customers are serviced. They are not told the truth about when the merchandise will arrive.
Was this review helpful?

Consider the consequences, in this time of social media, of having company ethics challenged by present or past employees. Right or wrong, these posts can affect the quality of new hires and how potential customers view your stores.

1.0 **Beware of unethical behavior** – July 30, 2017
Sales Representative (Former Employee) –
★★★★★
I had been treated poorly for both making it into the top sales group, my religious beliefs, and physically threatened to the point of a judge granting me a protection order. Please beware. They do not like whistle blowers. **If you don't care about your mental health then go work for [REDACTED].** The only thing good I can say is that if you're great at sales then you will make a ton of money.

3.0 **Great Furniture/ Unethical Management** – June 24, 2018
Interior Design Sales Consultant (Former Employee) – Huntington Beach, CA –
★★★★★
Great Furniture but management was unethical! The manager offered just a couple of the design sales consultants referrals and kept them from there other design consultants. The situation obviously got worse as soon as I left the position other designers followed as well. Hopefully, the manager has been replaced and the culture of this store has changed as they have wonderful furniture and it could be a wonderful place to work.

"Does an employer owe

good working conditions? Good pay? Humane treatment? Complimentary parking? Retirement benefits? Free lunch?."

ernments; local, state and federal, that oversee all retailers and citizens. It is in this relationship where ethics and law pretty much go hand in hand. It is probably unethical to disobey the law. It is definitely illegal.

Every retailer must be aware of the obligations and implied promises that are owed to all government entities. And, there are quite a few of them, some of which can be pretty obscure. The fact of their opacity and obscurity will not be considered an escape from governmental punishment, if violated. "Ignorance of the law is no excuse;" a statement that I think I heard in the first grade.

Let's Test Some Examples

Early in this article, I cited a couple of examples of likely unethical behaviors.

We'll start with the TV promotions of some of the "Bed in A Box" companies. I won't comment on the quality of their products. My beef is the way they treat brick and mortar establishments. I've seen ads that suggest conventional retailers are unfairly overcharging for their products.

They are misleading. Any retailer can beat their prices, and some are now starting to figure that out.

These ads violate the implied promise of honesty to their customers. They are lying about much of their competition to gain advantage.

Next, let's talk about the old, traditional newspaper and TV ads that loudly proclaim; "Everything is on sale at HALF OFF!" Nobody sells at half off, even when going out of business. When they say "half off" they mean half off of the old four times cost equals the furniture store regular price. Taking half off of that price gets it back down to the "tagged price." Again, this is a violation of the implied promise of honesty to customers. How do they keep getting away with it? In some states, the law has recognized this grievance and has remedied it by government statute.

Sadly, that is when the government has to intervene. When unethical, dishonest behavior becomes so extreme, they have to pass a law to control it.

And, there are many more ethical issues furnishings retail-

ers face. I've known many that have strong and conflicting views about the ethics surrounding the presentation of different types of financing and protection plans.

Ethics And Your Business

Earlier in this article we asked if business ethics are born more often out of competitive self-interest, a desire to do what's right, or a bit of both?

Whatever the motivations, retailers are wise to consider their ethical responsibilities to customers, employees, family members and their communities.

As well, they must consider the consequences, in this time of social media, of having their ethics challenged in a court of law or the court of public opinion.

In an imperfect, human world, ethical grey areas can and will arise, so it's important for every furniture and bedding retailer to think about their behavior in their businesses, then draw an ethical line in the sand.

Define the explicit and implied promises you choose to make to your customers, employees and communities. Model this behav-

RETAIL ETHICS

ior, then hold everyone in your organization to a high standard.

Fortunately, there are a spectrum of acceptable and business-savvy ethical behaviors furnishings retailers may adopt, thrive, and still sleep well at night.

By the way, if you sell bedding, read my book, "The Bed Seller's Manual, How to Win the Battle for Mattress Sales" you'll have pretty much all the information you need to beat the competition in an ethical manner.

Role Model

Editor's Note: Finally, it seems appropriate to quote from the 64-page code of ethics booklet published by one of the most notoriously unethical companies of our time, Enron. These were excerpted by Michael Miller in his 2012 article in "Columbus Business First".

- **"Respect:** We treat others as we would like to be treated ourselves. Ruthlessness, callousness and arrogance don't belong here."
- **"Integrity:** We work with customers and prospects openly, honestly and sincerely. When we say we will do something,

we will do it."

- **"Communication:** We believe that information is meant to move and that information moves people."
- **"Excellence:** We are satisfied with nothing less than the very best. We will continue to raise the bar for everyone."
- **"Compensation:** "We believe in offering our employees fair compensation through wages and other benefits."
- **"Consequences:** "We have all worked hard over the years to establish our reputation for integrity and ethical conduct... We cannot afford to have it damaged."

About David Benbow: A twenty-three year veteran of the mattress and bedding industry and owner of Mattress Retail Training Company offering retailers retail guidance from small store management to training retail sales associates. His years of hands-on experience as a retail sales associate, store manager, sales manager/trainer and store owner in six different metropolitan areas qualifies him as an expert in selling bedding.

David is the author of the recently published book, "How to

Win the Battle for Mattress Sales, the Bed Seller's Manual", a complete, text book for mattress and bedding retail sales associates, beginner and experienced professional alike. The book can be purchased on-line at <http://www.bedsellersmanual.com> or www.mattressretailtraining.com. He offers hands-on training classes for retailers on a variety of subjects and online classes that can be downloaded from the websites mentioned above. He can be contacted via e-mail at dave@bedsellersmanual.com or by phone at 361-648-3775.

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Himolla

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Contact information on page 72.



Null

This console is part of a small scale six piece collection that features two tone finish with planked tops in a warm Pecan finish and slightly rubbed black base. Framed inset drawer fronts with antique brass hardware add dimension and eye appeal.

Contact information on page 72.



Elran

The Audrey collection features modern styling with wide track arms. It has a two-motor design for power recliners with power assisted headrest. Also available with manual recliners, five position ratchet headrest and optional cup holders.

Contact information on page 72.



Twin Star Home

This gate leg drop leaf table is finished on all sides in Riviera Brown with French Country Truffle Top. Works as an entry table or opens to become a small dining table.

Contact information on page 72.



Norwalk

The Venus Swivel Chair offers modern styling with angular forms and exposed wood arms in a walnut finish. Expertly tailored seams cascade vertically down the sides and back of the silhouette, perfectly aligned with the angular dip in each arm.

Contact information on page 72.



Craftmaster

This Chesterfield sofa features tall turned legs and brass nail head trim. A unique assortment of four toss pillows create a custom look. Two lengths available. 99" and 88".

Contact information on page 72

Best Selling DESIGN



Muniz

Striking acrylic sculpture, new from Muniz, showcases an oceanic color theme.

Contact information on page 72.



TOV

The Kelly Floral velvet chair features sumptuous channel tufted upholstery, shapely gold legs and high-density cushions. Available in multiple color options.

Contact information on page 72.



Furniture of America

Low arms that sweep up to the back and dainty nailhead trim around the legs give this sofa collection its stunning look. The throw pillows are a striking counterbalance to the solid blue upholstery.

Contact information on page 72.

Nourison

The Artworks Collection features an array of contemporary rugs with rich abstract colors combined with a thick, soft wool-blend pile.

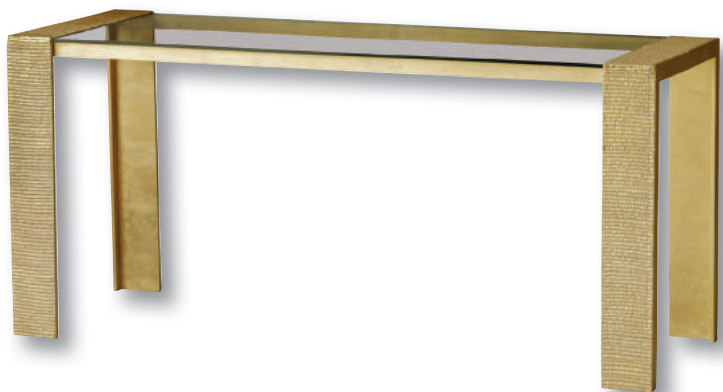
Contact information on page 72.



Alden Parkes

The Tiffany Console Desk has a texture-rich surface design finished in either a subtle gold leaf or a silver leaf. The table-top is tempered, clear glass. Dimensions are 68"W x 24"D x 30"H.

Contact information on page 72.

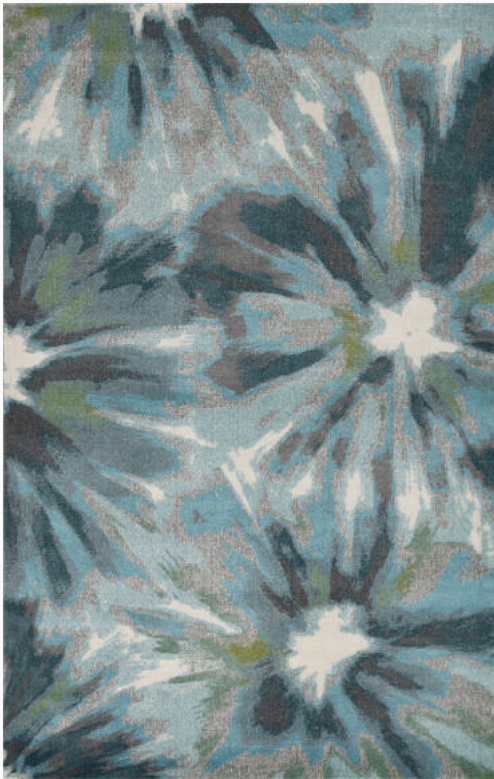


Sealy Sofa Convertibles

The Lindsey Sofa Bed tastefully combines a Sealy Posturepedic mattress within a compact two-seater sofa. This design is ideal for small and cozy living spaces where comfort and practicality are needed. Available with a Full/Queen sofa bed mattress.

Contact information on page 72.

Best Selling
DESIGN



Huntington House

The 7768-50 chair features hand-crafted detail including a rounded back adorned with elegant button tufts leading down to delicate pleated arms and tall tapered legs. Made to order in fabric or leather.

Contact information on page 72.

KAS

"Stella" is machine woven in Turkey of 100 percent polypropylene.

Contact information on page 72.



OW Lee

The Monterra Collection's artisan style craftsmanship can be seen and felt in the hand-hammered details. Back and arm cushions curve for a comfortable indoor feel. Tufts and buttons on the back and arm cushions complete the look of this unique collection.

Contact information on page 72.

Whittier Wood

This versatile table is great for dining, gaming or entertaining. The 38" diameter top can seat four comfortably. Made from sustainable solid American Alder and Black Walnut hardwood

Contact information on page 72.



Jaipur Home

The Fonteyn four door sideboard/cabinet is part of the Contemporary Classical collection featuring tongue and groove joint methods. The "antiqued" glass front doors with brass grid overlays open to reveal an ample shelved interior.

Contact information on page 72.

Omnia

Organically contemporary, the new Allure Chair and Ottoman, shown in sumptuous Nobuk Coffee, are the ultimate in laid-back comfort. Available in multiple skus and sizes to build sofas or sectional configurations. Made in the U.S.A.

Contact information on page 72.



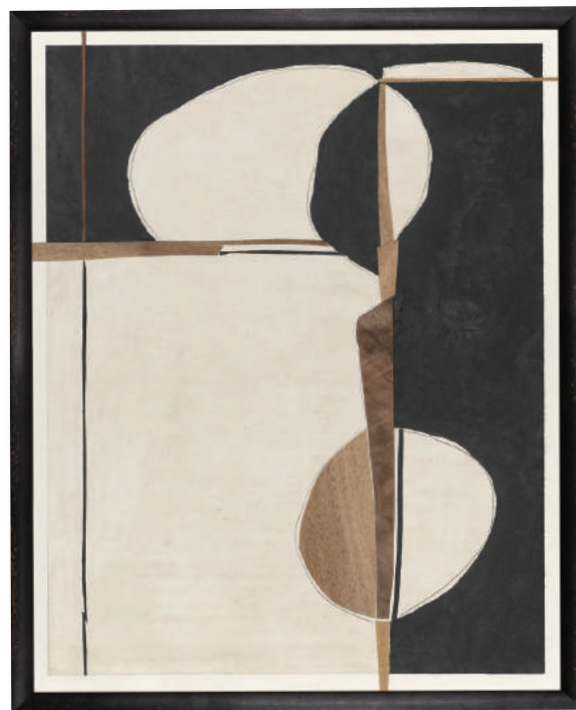
Best Selling DESIGN



A.R.T.

The Moss Lamp Table brings together metal, glass and carved wood in one graceful design. Curved metal supports hold a ring of carved wood and a tempered glass top joined at the bottom by a smoked glass finial. The wood elements of the table are finished in Mist, a neutral aged gray paint.

Contact information on page 72.



Celadon Art

Designer Gayle Harismowich has combined the Mid-Century vibe of geometric shapes with the contrasted texture of 100 year-old veneer. Framed in a minimalist,, rounded, antiqued black profile. One of two pieces in two sizes.

Contact information on page 72.



Bellini Modern Living

The Zeta, with solid Walnut top is available with anthracite, white or solid Iron base. The top is sleek and polished. The bottom was inspired by both traditional British and contemporary influences. Made in Italy.

Contact information on page 72.



Chromcraft

The new "Kitchen Décor" collection 26" swivel-tilt counter seating offers three buckets. Each is available in black nickel, stainless steel and white finishes. Available in over 70 fabrics.

Contact information on page 72.



Surya

The Glacia table lamp features a marbled natural glass body with a hand wrapped jute accent.

Contact information on page 72.

Dimplex

Classic crown molding and delicate belt line trim wrap the Madison Mantel Electric Fireplace. The 28" firebox with a brick-look surround, enhances the traditional design finished in a complementary Stone Grey.

Contact information on page 72.



MISSING THE MEDIA MARK?

YOUR BEST INSIDE AD CAMPAIGN EVER!

by Gordon Hecht

Even the best retail marketers often miss the mark on the #1 target group that can affect an up or down swing in a home furnishings store business.

Retailers are continually engaged in the search for media choices that will get the highest returns at the lowest cost. Choices include television, print, radio, social media, billboards, truck graphics, email and direct mail... targeting baby boomers, Gen X, millennials, HENRYs, DINKs, soccer moms and more. The choices seem to be increasing exponentially. However, even the savviest retail marketers often miss the mark on the #1 target group that can affect an up or down swing in business. And, finding and reaching them is less complicated than you might think.

A Vitally Important Group

This vitally important group of people you should never forget to target are the folks who show up every day to work at your stores and warehouses. You may refer to them as associates, employees, team-members, or family members. So while you are investing thousands or tens-

of-thousands of dollars in advertising each month, ask yourself what you are doing to communicate with the people who face off with shoppers coming into your store every day. Shoppers need to be sold on your products, and your employees need to be sold on your organization.

The Morning Huddle

Your message to employees can be delivered in many ways. A simple regularly scheduled all-player meeting is an inex-

"If you want to get buy-in from your staff, you need to promote not only WHAT you are changing, but WHY you are changing it!"

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"Every Walmart associate knows that they won't be undersold. Every Jeep salesperson can tell you that they invented the SUV, and every Red Robin server will offer you free refills on french fries."

pensive start. Some store teams meet once a week, others meet monthly, and some hardly ever. For retail and operations, nothing beats a 10 to 15 minute morning huddle to address the issues of the day. Morning huddles can communicate simple stuff, like finance terms, open delivery days, and new merchandise. It's a great

start, but sometimes you need to drive a deeper message.

You probably advertise to let potential customers know that your store is a great place to shop. Well, you also need to spread this message internally. Everyone who works for you needs to be reminded why your business is a great place to SHOP and WORK. If you think this messages is too obvious to talk about, you are wrong. Advertise that message and you'll build loyalty, teamwork, legendary customer service, and SALES.

Get to "Unique"

Why not ask your team "Why should people buy from us?" to create an open dialogue. You'll probably hear answers like "Friendly Knowledgeable Salespeople". "Great Selection", "Low Prices", and "Great Customer Service".

Good answers! They are so good in fact, that every retail store staff in every store in the country gives the same ones. Follow up with "What makes us unique? What do we offer that no other store or outlet can match?" That answer is harder to find, but once you discover and define how it makes your shoppers' lives better, continue to remind (advertise) it to your team until they make it part of every shopper/customer conversation. Every Walmart associate knows that they won't be undersold. Every Jeep salesperson can tell you that they invented the SUV, and every Red Robin server will offer you free refills on french fries. It's advertised every day both INSIDE and OUTSIDE of the store. What do your salespeople know?

Harsh Reality

There is another message you

MOST EFFECTIVE AD CAMPAIGN EVER!

need to advertise to your team. It is the harsh reality of business. The world is not friendly to business. There are taxes, rents, insurance, regulations, and an ever demanding buying public. If that isn't bad enough, businesses also have to turn a profit!

Think about opening part or all of your balance sheet to your employees to help them understand the costs of running a business. Or do the following simple exercise. Start with \$1000 in play money. Use small bills. Let someone be the store owner and you can be "the rest of the world". Give them \$1000 for an imaginary merchandise purchase. Then have them pay you

(the world) for the cost of goods, commission costs, advertising costs, rent/occupancy cost with utilities, vehicle cost, and taxes. Whatever is left is profit. Lastly, take 50 percent of the profit for corporate income tax. If they're lucky they'll have \$5 left!

Advertise The Golden Rule of Operations. It takes \$10 of sales to cover \$1 of operational costs. While salespeople love to offer \$50 or \$100 to solve a customer issue, they may not realize that it will take \$500-\$1000 in retail sales to make up the difference. When you advertise ways that they can reduce errors and/or come up with non-monetary solutions,

your business will reduce costs and ultimately increase customer satisfaction.

"Create your own internal advertising campaign and you'll get buy-in which leads to employee and customer retention, legendary service and profit."

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"While salespeople love

to offer \$50 or \$100 to solve a customer issue they may not realize that it will take \$500-\$1000 in retail sales to make up the difference."

Value of Continuity

You'll never increase sales by running one radio or TV spot. Facebook and other social media sites demand almost daily messaging. It's no different when it comes to advertising to your store and operations teams. You and your leadership need to promote early and often! Say and live the message. The big boys like Pepsi, Chrysler, and Carnival Cruises use celebrities to convey their message. Your organization has some celebs too! They are the top salesperson, the helpful office manager and the caring bookkeeper. Use those company stars to help reinforce your ideas.

Don't forget print ads. Invest in posters and, if you have more than 25 employees, think about a company newsletter.

It's Hard to Change

It's hard to change behavior. People will stay with a bank, cable TV company, or razor blade brand that they hate, just because it is easier not to change. The pace of retail changes has accelerated exponentially, however, some employees will still hang on to their old ways of working. If you want to get buy-in from your staff, you need to promote not only WHAT you are changing, but WHY you are changing

it! Reasons include appealing to a new group of shoppers, being competitive in the marketplace, and simple SURVIVAL.

Repetitive reinforcing advertising has gotten people to buy everything from the "Clapper" to Pet Rock, and our last 10 presidents. Create your own internal advertising campaign and you'll get buy-in which leads to employee and customer retention, legendary service and profit.

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 career in Home Furnishings as a delivery helper and driver, later moving to sales and management.

Gordon has been a store manager, multi-unit Manager and National Director of Sales and has been recognized for outstanding achievement with Ashley Furniture HomeStores, Drexel-Heritage, RB Furniture, Reliable Stores, and Sofa Express. See all of Gordon's articles at www.furninfo.com/Authors/List. Questions and comments can be directed to Gordon Hecht at ghecht@serta.com.

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GROCERY CONVERSION TREND

RIGHT SIZE - RIGHT COST

by Martin Roberts

More retail furniture stores are looking at the advantages of re-purposing grocery stores increasingly on the market at substantially lower cost per square foot.

Over the past 10 years an increasing number of grocery store buildings have been converted to furniture stores. It started as a trickle following the 2007 recession, maybe one or two stores a year for our firm. Today we convert one or two stores a month.

What makes these locations attractive to the furniture industry? First, grocery stores tend to be the right size. They are either in the 30,000 plus square foot range or the 60,000 square foot range. Many of the stores are located in convenient shopping neighborhoods. In some cases representing a friendly place that consumers visited often and loved. Because of changing economics and distribution patterns in the food and grocery industry, many of these stores have fallen on hard times or closed down.

- Highly visible locations
- Ideal size
- Open high ceilings
- 36-48 foot column spacing
- Loading dock facilities at tail-gate level
- Quick access
- Are easy to convert
- Have ample parking

Incentives

Landlords, local authorities and realtors are all keen to help furniture retailers convert these sites to build stronger communities and generate future tax revenues.

Building owners may be under pressure to find new tenants or a new owner, and are often prepared to offer unique incentives. These can take the form of a straight discount on the asking price. We have seen buildings that were listed at nearly \$2 million sold for around \$1 million. This represents a huge savings for furniture retailers looking at the cost of new construction based on \$100 per square foot for 30,000

Benefits

Furniture and home stores see these stores as a great fit for conversion because they have the following characteristics that are an ideal starting point.



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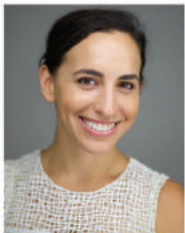
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Before and after exterior images of the 30,000 square foot conversion of a Schutte's Market grocery store to the newest Kloss Furniture location.

square feet. That's three million dollars, not including the cost of the site.

Often a retailer can lock in a low overhead situation and increase long-term profitability versus new construction.

Despite internet competition, brick and mortar is here to stay. Should conditions change, however, appropriate sites have the potential to be profitably converted to condominium or residential developments.

Considerations

Before embarking on a project like this it's important to first secure a detailed evaluation of your regional competition and estimate the potential market share that you are likely to achieve.

This study can be undertaken by a specialty realtor or consultant who fully understands the furniture industry. Once market potential has been established, and the investment to purchase or lease the space has been formulated, a space plan can be drawn up.

Depending on how the contractor is employed to make this conversion, and how much work can be done by the buyer, stores can be converted from between \$15 to \$30 per square foot. This covers new lighting, flooring, partitions, bathrooms, and all other interior preparation before the furniture is brought in.

Incentives and guarantees for air conditioning, mechanical plans

"Landlords, local authorities and realtors are all keen to help furniture retailers convert these sites to build stronger communities and generate future tax revenues."

and electrical systems should all be part of the negotiation pro-

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"Stores can be converted

from between \$15 to \$30 per square foot."

cess. A rent-free period during construction and other incentives should be explored. A realtor who understands how to negotiate for you and is familiar with the furniture industry will be invaluable throughout the process.

Conversion Steps

New design techniques have made the conversion process for former grocery stores easier and less expensive. The use of CAD plans and Google Earth can save money and time previously required for travel and consulting services.

Drawings: Store drawings sent via e-mail are enough to allow a design team to plan alternate

layouts to consider to convert a grocery store into a viable furniture store.

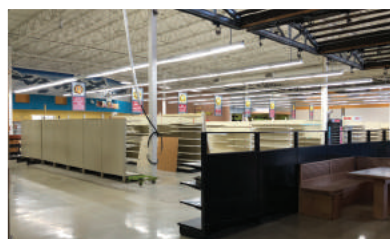
Merchandise Assortment Plan:

A merchandise assortment plan is created to project overall revenue and look at the percentages of square footage assigned to each major subcategory of merchandise. Typically, upholstery including recliners, leather, stationary and motion will represent between 50-55 percent of sales. Mattresses will typically be responsible for between 25-35 percent of sales. Once these two major categories are defined, at least 75 percent of the store can be designed. The rest is easy.

Concept Plan: Now, a concept plan can be developed and dis-

cussed via video conference call to refine the design according to the owners' preferred layout. This in turn will trigger the design of the lighting, floor covering, and major merchandise features together with customer service areas. All this forms the basis of a set of drawings which can be put out to bid and used for managing the construction process including the budget and timing.

Exterior: The exterior can now be developed to tell everyone that a new retail home furnishings store format is available for them to experience. This can be achieved with a combination of new exterior materials and signage. Maximizing the visual impact of the exterior is essential to telegraph that the converted grocery store is an exciting place to visit. This can usually be done economically without changing



Before and after interior images of the 30,000 square foot conversion of a Schutte's Market grocery store to the newest Kloss Furniture location.



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GROCERY CONVERSION TREND

major structural elements. New windows, lighting, and landscaping should combine to create an inviting atmosphere and exceptional curb appeal.

Cost: It is difficult to make generalizations about the cost of a total conversion, but we have seen stores completed for between \$20-\$40 per square foot. This, of course, depends on the degree of alteration, time line and other incentives.

Case Study

A good example of a retailer that undertook this kind of project is Kloss Furniture, a grocery store conversion of about 30 thousand square feet. Before and after photos can be found on pages 62 and 64.

For this renovation, the odd-looking towers with green copper tops in the "before" photo

of Schuette's Market were demolished. The tower at the entrance was replaced with a wooden arch highlighting Kloss Furniture's branding. The building was painted a light color in order to make those previously dark arches look interesting.

The good news on the inside of this grocery store was the nice open ceiling and clean floor area, which are typical of most supermarkets. The ample distance between columns, also made this space easy to convert. Once the metal fixturing was removed, the project was well on its way for a furniture store conversion at the low cost end of the per square foot range mentioned earlier.

There's also a brilliant story about purchasing this property.

The final negotiated price for the former Schuette's Market was less than half of the original asking price. New construction would have cost about 150 dollars per square foot. The total actual investment including purchase price and conversion cost came to roughly a third of that amount. And, the new store was ready for business in about six months.

Conclusion

Many families in the furniture industry are still doing business in their original stores after two, three or more generations. As younger family members enter

these business, perhaps bringing with them relevant work experience from other industries, they are looking to implement new technologies to take these businesses to a new level. This may require re-branding to appeal to the next generation, attract top talent and create operational efficiencies that may not be attainable in their present locations. The grocery store conversion may offer an opportunity to address these challenges.

About Martin Roberts: *Martin Roberts is an internationally known designer and the President of Martin Roberts Design, LLC, an award-winning team of retail consultants, architects, industrial, interior and graphic designers.*

Martin Roberts Design has been a leading influence in guiding the home industry's visual merchandising, branding and re-branding concepts for which their expertise has placed them at the forefront of the retail design industry.

Over the past 50 years Martin has worked worldwide for many of the best-known brands from Cartier to Wal-Mart.

Martin Roberts Design employs an integrated design approach to developing and executing brand-focused retail solutions that meets the needs and goals of the individual client DNA. Questions can be directed to him at martin@mrobertsdesign.com or call 203-548-7880.

"Maximizing the visual impact of the exterior is essential to telegraph that the converted grocery store is an exciting place to visit."

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Furniture Union Agitators Annoy High Point Manufacturers

"The labor trouble at High Point, which tied up industry for six weeks and created an idle army of approximately 4,000 people, ended September 14, when articles of agreement were cited by a committee representing the union and the manufacturers. The articles of agreement provide briefly for the five essential points including admission on the part of manufacturers that union labor has a right to work without discrimination; adoption of the piece work system and compulsory arbitration.

"A statement by High Point Manufacturers reads, "Until 'this affair' the relations existing by and between the employers and the employees here were of such mutual and reciprocal interest and good feeling as to approach a status of positive affection.

"To be sure, the happy and contented employees would not of their own accord do anything to upset those wonderfully harmonious conditions.

"Every citizen of High Point has known for years that the manufacturers of this city have never declined nor refused to deal justly and fairly with their employees and it is just as well known by all that

we have not the slightest intention of changing our attitude in this respect in the least degree in the future.

"Every sane and sensible business man in North Carolina knows that the industrial growth and the fast industrial development of this great commonwealth is being dynamited and shot to pieces by the professional outside mischief-making organizer and radical labor-disturbing agitator."

What Can Make America Great Again?

"When we get back to the practice of giving an honest day's work for an honest day's pay, all such theoretical questions as the high cost of living will automatically disappear," said Charles M. Schwab in a speech before the American Institute of Mining and Metallurgical Workers.

"Great as are the resources of America, and the energy and integrity of our people, there is one problem of our engineering that I term human engineering. Of what value is the skilfully devised machinery, the complex processes, unless manned by people whose heart and soul are in sympathy with work which they are doing, and who have before them the giving of a full day's work for a day's pay?"

Trooper Not Guilty of Killing Furniture Man

"Louis Berger, the furniture dealer, who operates a retail store at 5243 Market Street, was proceeding along the boulevard in his own truck, which was being driven by a chauffeur. It seems that the truck was being driven at a fast rate of speed and after very nearly upsetting a passenger automobile was pursued by the State trooper. The driver of the truck refused to stop and the constable drew his revolver and jumped on the step of the truck. The evidence showed that the chauffeur threatened the trooper with a hatchet and Berger kicked at the hand holding the gun.

"The trooper was thrown from the truck and the gun discharged, the bullet striking the furniture dealer in the arm. The verdict returned by the jury stated that death was due to apoplexy caused by the fright from the wound."



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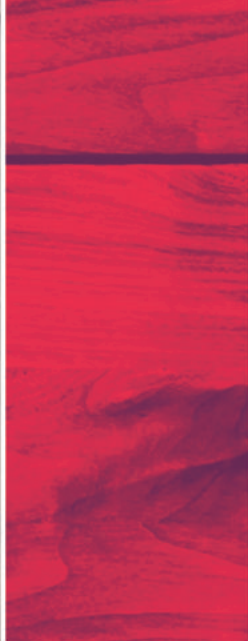
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Alden Parkes	336.884.5020	tara@gefenmarketing.com	49	Las Vegas Market		www.lasvegasmarket.com	45
apricity Outdoor	800-416-3511	alicia@obrienetal.com	11	Mattress Sales Book		http://www.bedsellersmanual.com	57
Bellini Modern Living	905-771-361	hossein@bellinimodernliving.com	52	Muniz	800-525-1580	munizplastics@yahoo.com	48
Bienenstock Furn Library	336-883-4011	info@furniturelibrary.com	9	Norwalk	419-744-3285	sbuckingham@norwalkfurniture.com	Cover 1
Celedon Art	561-517-8237	eric@erichauer.com	52	Nourison	201-368-6900	Giovanni.Marra@nourison.com	17
Chromcraft	909-930-9891	rhalsten@hotmail.com	15	Nouveau Concept	800-465-0716	info@nouveauconcept.com	29
Cliff	+86-20-89128026	ciff@fairwindow.com	31	Null	888-995-0260	nsadowski@nullfurniture.com	46
City of Hope	800-272-2310	www.cityofhope.org	69	Ohio Hardwood Furn. Mkt.	877-643-8824	ohiohardwoodfurnituremarket.com	23
Cory/ JB Hunt	877-288-8341	finalmile@jbhunt.com	19	Omnia Leather	909-393-4400	anthony@omnialeather.com	4-5
Country View Woodworking	330-674-1390	rmiller@cvtltd.com	41	OW Lee	909-947-3771	leisa@owlee.com	50
Dimplex	519-667-7026	marketingonline@dimplex.com	53	Posh + Lavish	855-POSH-LAV	kurt@poshandlavish.com	Back Cover
Elran	800-361-6546	erica@elran.com	46	PROFITsystems	866-325-0015	info@profitsystems.com	13
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Furniture Wizard	619-869-7200	evan@furniturewizard.com	70-71	Surya	706-625-4823	info@surya.com	Inside Front Cover, 1, 6-7
FurnitureMarketOnline	615-533-3928	info@furnituremarketonline.com	721	Sustainable Furn. Council	919-967-1137	sustainablefurniturecouncil@yahoo.com	25
Genesis Software	509-536-4739	crystal@genesisadvantage.com	55	TD Retail Card Services	866-729-7072 ext 3603	TDRCs.com/furnitureworld	21
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Isuzu	866-441-9638	www.izuzucv.com	Inside Back Cover	Twin Star Home	561-665-8105	lcody@twinstarhome.com	47
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