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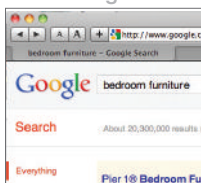
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EDITOR'S CORNER

On Plus Size Furniture...
Seagull Eggs...
Rear View Mirrors...

Furniture World recently received a call from Steven Kurutz, a reporter from the Home section of the New York Times, who, while on a furniture shopping expedition with his grandmother, observed that the upholstered designs on display in NY area stores were too large to fit comfortably in her living space. He asked me if our industry is a bit tone deaf to the scale of furniture that can reasonably fit into Americans' apartments and homes. Alternatively he queried, is there a social-science explanation for this plus-size furniture phenomenon?

I first chose a possible social science explanation, citing research done by the ethologist Conrad Lorenz who found that seagulls, presented with a choice between their own normal sized egg and an obviously fake one many times larger... certainly too large to sit comfortably on... will pick the larger one. This led to other related topics such as: Why is less expensive furniture often much larger in scale than high-end design? Is there an inverse "rear-view-mirror effect" causing furniture displayed in spacious showrooms to appear smaller than in the home? Are large-scale home furnishings a problem for furniture consumers or their heart's desire? How can retail salespeople use the latest room planning technology to make sure that furniture fits?

I would love to plus-size this column, but being out of space, I welcome your thoughts on this topic sent to editor@furninfo.com.

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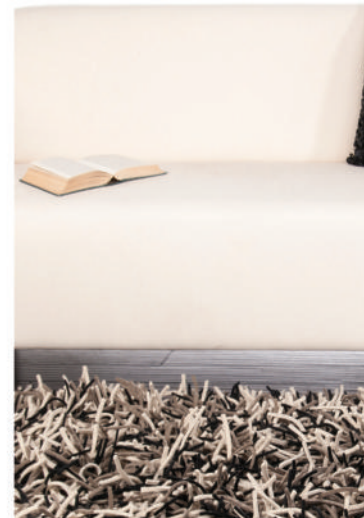
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THINK PROFIT!

An in depth look at how to analyze one of your three critical financial statements: the Profit and Loss

by David McMahon

There is only one way to be successful in business. It's to Profit. There is only one way to build cash in the bank. It's to Profit. And, there is only one way to grow your business. It's to Profit.

Profitability sometimes takes a back seat to sales. It should not. Sales volume is a critical and necessary part of the profit equation, but it is just a part. Cash is only accumulated through the consistent spread that is made after the sale of an asset. That spread, or bottom line, needs to be in the 7%+ area every year to nicely accumulate cash. Profit fuels growth. It is the driver of even higher sales and higher profit

volume levels. This is because growth comes from investing in great people, inventory, facilities, systems, training, and marketing. The least expensive and least risky capital for this growth investment comes from equity in the business. And equity comes from either profit or an investor's pocket. The alternate source of funds for growth is debt. I think you will agree that it is far more enjoyable to use profit to perpetuate business growth, rather than paying off loans.

In the real world of retail, I've seen thousands of financial statements: the great, the so-so, and the abysmal. One commonality is that businesses

always have room for improvement. And also, the smallest improvements can have massive impacts on profitability. This article will cover the basics of how to analyze one of the three critical financial statements: the Profit and Loss (the other two not presented are the Balance Sheet and the Statement of Cash Flow).

CASE STUDY

At left is a sample furniture store P&L. This version of the Profit and Loss statement called a common-sized statement, enables analysis with past periods, with peer companies for performance groups, and with the industry as a whole

COMPANY BACKGROUND

- Family owned and operated.
- Full line furniture, no electronics or appliances.
- One store operation with one detached warehouse.
- Family owns buildings separately and business pays rent.
- 25,000 square foot showroom.
- Eight salespeople, one sales manager.
- Average sale = \$1,350; traffic count for 2011 = 18,519; close rate = 20%.
- \$1,000,000 average inventory at cost.
- Vendor merchandising - mid to upper.
- Special order percentage = 50%.
- Budgeted sales 2011: \$5.26 Million.

ANALYSIS & RATIOS

- 1 Sales to plan? $95\% = (\$5.26M / \$5M)$. Sales fell short of budget by

Profit and Loss for 2011 - Year End Data

	Dec. 31	% of Sales	
1 2 3 4 Sales	\$5,000,000	100.00%	
Cost of Goods Sold	\$2,800,000	56.00%	5
Gross Margin	\$2,200,000	44.00%	
Operating Expenses			
Administration	\$510,000	10.20%	
Occupancy	\$400,000	8.00%	6
Advertising/Marketing	\$350,000	7.00%	7
Selling	\$435,000	8.70%	
Service	\$50,000	1.00%	8
Warehouse	\$155,000	3.71%	
Delivery	\$88,000	1.76%	9
Finance	\$95,000	1.90%	
Other Operating	\$15,000	.30%	
Total Operating Expenses	\$2,098,000	41.96%	
EBIT (Earnings Before Interest & Taxes)	\$102,000	2.04%	10
Interest Expense	\$25,000	.50%	
EBT (Earnings Before Taxes)	\$77,000	1.54%	
Taxes	\$25,000	.50%	11
Net Income (Earnings After Tax)	\$52,000	1.04%	

"Businesses always have room for improvement. And also, the smallest improvements can have massive impacts on profitability."

\$260,000. This company needs to look for specific reasons why this occurred. Was the plan too ambitious? Were there operational factors? What can be done differently for 2012.

2 Sales per square foot? $\$200 = (\$5M/25,000)$. This is a very average number. Many special order type operations selling medium to high end merchandise have results in the \$400 plus range. This company needs to investigate merchandising mix, traffic counts, and the effectiveness of its sales force.

3 Number of customers per salesperson per monthly average? $193 = (18,519/12/8)$. This number indicates that the business is understaffed and can make improvements in sales management. Special order type operations that focus on sketching, room planning, and home design operate in the area of 100-140. This alone could be what caused sales to underperform to plan.

4 Inventory to sales? $20\% = (\$1M/\$5M)$. This business is on the verge of being over-inventoried. Efficient operations will typically hold an average inventory of 15% of sales. That accounts for \$250,000 less in stagnant asset purchases. Inefficiency also contributes to lower sales numbers and a higher expense structure. This company should implement better inventory management systems. Examples are open to buy purchasing systems, merchandising systems, and mark down systems.

5 Gross margin is 44% of sales. This company is outright throwing away 3-6 percentage points. This

could be rectified through a variety of methods which may include: special order pricing guidelines; better and more creative price pointing; a quicker turning mark down system; variable commissions on gross margin; improving warranty, fabric protection, and mattress pad conversions; more appropriate cost multipliers on vendors and categories; package and group pricing.

Underperforming margins are the

easiest problem to fix unless the operation is extremely over inventoried (25% Inventory/Sales).

6 The occupancy and advertising expense combined percent of sales? $15\% = (8\%+7\%)$. Look at these two figures together because higher occupancy cost correlates positively with high traffic locations that require less advertising expense. Conversely, a destination location requires a greater advertising expense to pull people in.

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"At 44% gross margin, this leaves only 2.04% in profitability before interest expense and taxes. That's not much to work with."

Whatever the situation, the combination of the two can never go above 15% of sales. That usually indicates that a retail operation is not viable unless gross margins are 55%. This operation is on the cusp. Details of the rent paid to the owners and marketing expenses need to be evaluated if this current sales level continues.

7 Are proper selling incentives and pay for performance programs in place? Almost 9% of sales is okay if the business is hitting sales targets and producing a healthy bottom line. This business is not. The company should consider putting a program in place that leads to higher margins and a faster turning inventory.

8 Service percent of sales? 1%. This

seems at least half a point high. Are vendor credits getting processed? Perhaps there are excess damages because of higher inventory levels or some other operational issue. They should investigate.

9 Delivery percent of sales? 1.76%. It's a good policy to offset delivery charges against delivery expenses. If this is being done, then the charges will sometimes cover the expenses. There may be opportunity of up to 1.5% in the delivery department through either charging proper setup and delivery fees or utilizing delivery staff and resources better.

10 Total operating costs as percent of sales? 41.96%. At 44% gross margin,

this leaves only 2.04% in profitability before interest expense and taxes. That's not much to work with. 37% is an EBIT (earnings before interest and taxes) that operations should strive to achieve.

11 Earnings before taxes (EBT)? 1.54%. As far as the industry is concerned, this is low to low-average profitability. Growth will be difficult at this level as there is only \$52,000 in cash that is generated from operations that will go into equity for the year after taxes are paid. Consistently operating at this level can cause liquidity issues in the short term and solvency issues in the long run if there is ever a sudden down turn.

The numbers used in this article are similar to a real furniture operation. In the past year I've seen businesses like this that have improved to a double digit bottom line before taxes.

You might ask, "So, what would happen to the bottom line of this company if the right improvements were made?"

Great question! First, they need to be 100% committed and invest in the proper help. They could then improve their selling system to reach their sales target, take inventory management actions to get gross margin to 47%, and make slight adjustments to their merchandising, service, and delivery departments. Doing this would produce an Earnings Before Taxes of over 13%, or more than \$700,000. The after tax net income would be close to 9%, or over \$460,000! That's why it is worth it to "Think Profit!"

David McMahon is a Management Consultant with PROFITsystems and a Member of the Institute of Management Accountants. If you would like him to do a similar analysis on your financial statements so you can increase profits, you can contact him at davidm@profitsystems.com.



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Your Price Is Too High!

by Ray Morefield, Common Goals

With the current economy, many retail stores are emphasizing discounts rather than promoting quality & service.

Sales personnel frequently find that their customers suggest, "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH."

How do we cope with that comment? How do we overcome that objection? What is the most successful response to the objection: "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH?"

Frequently, consumers offer a price objection even though they have not made a comparative analysis, and their reference to price may be directed to their personal financial condition rather than the value of the product being considered.

An error salespeople often make is to immediately begin to answer before they know the basis for a customer's objection.

It is important that you ask the customer the reason they made the statement, "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH," before you begin to defend your price. It may well be that your price is justifiable and a good value.

"Too often we begin to answer before we know the basis for a customer's objection."

QUESTION THEIR REASONS

Two questions you may wish to consider to assist you in discovering why the customer offered the price objection are:

Why would you suggest that our prices are too high? Allow them to tell you why they said what they did. It may be a typical objection to encourage you to lower your price. In truth and in fact, they may not have done enough shopping to know true quality and value.

Compared to what? When a customer suggests: "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH," ask the question: "Compared to what?"

Encourage the customer to explain how much they know about other brands or products that would allow them to arrive at the belief that your product is overpriced. Only then can you review features and benefits to make a comparative analysis.

Without "in-depth knowledge," the customer may not be able to understand the difference between:

- The general quality of the other furniture versus your better goods.
- The quality of competitive brands.
- The added value that your organization brings to the equation.

WHAT ABOUT FINANCING?

The customer may suggest "YOUR

PRICE IS TOO HIGH," and rather than referencing your price and product, they may be commenting on their personal financial condition.

If personal finances factor into the decision...

- Consider terms. Are you permitted to offer 90 days same as cash?
- Consider an "easy-pay-plan." If you extend or accept credit, discuss monthly payments. Break down payments into the lowest common denominator.

REVIEW THE BENEFITS

If the customer suggests: "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH" because they are comparing domestically made products with imported goods...

- If your store carries domestically made goods, promote the "Stars & Stripes." Today many consumers are favorably inclined to buy "American made" goods with "green concepts."
- Review your warranty. Plus, if you carry furniture that uses superior construction methods and materials that can be easily repaired should the necessity arise, tell your customers about that as well.
- Review construction. Compare your solid wood and quality veneers to particle board and MFD construction.
- Analyze the type of woods used.

"Ensure you have reviewed all features & benefits before you make price the final discussion in you presentation."

Many imported woods do not compare to American Hardwoods.

Properly reviewed, many consumers will find that your prices are more than fair.

When customers suggest: "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH," make sure that you have reviewed all features and benefits before you make price the final discussion in your presentation.

Every customer offers different

challenges, however, planning in advance how to respond to the most frequent objection "YOUR PRICE IS TOO HIGH" will prepare you for the objection in a manner that will significantly assist you in closing the sale & increasing profits.

DON'T GIVE UP

Don't give in and don't give up. Do give a 100% effort. You will be richly

rewarded both personally and also professionally.

Ray Morefield has been affiliated with leading corporations in the housewares, hardware and coatings industries. He has also served other industries in an advisory capacity through his company Common Goals, Inc. Questions on any management topic, or comments on this article can be sent to him by emailing editor@furninfo.com.

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SLEEP ESSENTIALS

Retail guide to selling pillows and mattress protectors.

by Russell Bienenstock

Let's face it. Most consumers don't walk into your store to buy a pillow, a topper, mattress protector or sheets. They ask to test your mattresses or perhaps see the \$599 advertised special. And most retail CSA's are glad to oblige, happy to bring them to the bedding department and perhaps close a sale if the customer finds something agreeable. And by the way, it's pretty easy to get customers to add an inexpensive mattress protector so the warranty /comfort guarantee isn't voided. But is that good enough in today's tough retail environment? The experts Furniture World interviewed for this article say, definitely not!

In the first three installments of this "Selling Better Bedding" series that began with the April/May 2011 issue, Furniture World presented sales tools and merchandising techniques that the most successful bedding retailers use to make sure that their customers get the best mattress and the most comfortable night's sleep they can afford.

This time, we will begin to present ways to increase average tickets by working with customers to add items such as pillows, toppers, mattress protectors, sheets and foundations. The importance of paying attention to this

aspect of your business cannot be overstated. That's because retailers that fail to focus on these products, cede sales to big box stores and specialty web retailers. From a customer service standpoint, they also shortchange customers by not giving them the information and high quality products they deserve.

Ten years ago there wasn't as much interest in investing sales time and floor space in these add ons. "There were objections to adding these products when business was good, but they are listening now," observes Ralph Rossdeutscher, President of Natura, the maker of natural mattresses and top of bed products. "It's a different selling process now. Retailers are more open to selling additional top of bed products because many stores aren't making the money they need to in this economic environment and they have to maximize sales for every customer that comes through the door. Those stores that sell less expensive mattresses, either need more people buying to make the same profit, or they have to do better with each customer."

And even for stores that have done a good job of selling premium mattresses at higher price points, there is no good reason to let customers walk out

without presenting a complete sleep solution.

BIG SALES OPPORTUNITY

There is a huge opportunity for furniture and mattress specialty stores that have knowledgeable salespeople and a smartly merchandised selection of top of bed products. Mass merchants simply do not offer the level of assistance that your customers need to put together a package of products that will give them peace of mind and a better night's sleep. Your customers cannot test out a pillow, a topper or get anyone to explain the features, advantages or benefits of mattress accessories at big box stores. Plus, by offering a complete sleep solution you can save your customers time and trouble, a huge benefit you and your salespeople can feel good about.

Retail customers who upgrade from full to queen, or queen to king already know that they need new sheets, and perhaps a new mattress pad. They may plan to make a quick trip to Walmart, Kohls,



"Retailers that fail to focus on these products, cede sales to big box stores and specialty web retailers. They also shortchange customers by not giving them the information and high quality products they deserve."

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"We know from a recent study that 60 percent of consumers within two to three weeks of buying a new mattress end up purchasing new pillows, a mattress protector, sheets and other top of bed items." - Sean Bergman, Fabrictech

Target, or Bed Bath and Beyond after buying a mattress. Some plan to use the old top of bed items they have at home on their new mattress, and others haven't given the subject much thought.

"I don't think that most consumers have figured it out," says Kurt Ling, CEO of Pure LatexBLISS, a company that makes latex mattresses, customFIT pillowtops, toppers and pillows. "They are not thinking that, 'first I am going to buy a mattress, and then go to this retailer and that retailer to buy a pillow, mattress protector, topper or sheets.' So there is a real opportunity for mattress retailers who do a good job of selling these extra products to take business away from the Kohls and Costco's of the world."

But the fact is, that even with some training, many salespeople just don't know how to effectively introduce and close on these products. They may feel that there just doesn't seem to be a proper time to introduce these items without rushing or distracting customers from their mattress purchase, and they don't want to seem overly pushy.

"The mattress industry" says Michael Wright, Senior Territory Sales Trainer for Leggett & Platt, Inc., "sometimes has a stereotype of being a little pushy and customers have their guard up.

Mattresses are sometimes a product that they price shop competitively for, so consumer's main focus is getting a good mattress deal. Most stores really want to satisfy the customer with a mattress first, so these add on sales become a secondary consideration. That's why our industry needs to change this customer's mindset so that they begin to think of sleep as not just a function of the quality of the mattress, but also in terms of a combination of a lot of different products --one big package that includes all the value components of a healthy night's sleep."

Sean Bergman, VP Sales and Marketing for Fabrictech, the manufacturer of health-focused mattress and pillow protectors, told Furniture World that, "in order to effectively sell pillows, mattress protectors, sheets and foundations, these items need to be seen by retailers as sleep essentials and not accessories. In fact, the term accessories is a bad word for me. I believe that our products are essential items to enhance the sleep environment. And that's a mentality that retailers have to adopt if they want to increase business substantially without having one more customer walk in their door.

"We know from a recent study that 60 percent of consumers within two to three weeks of buying a new mattress end up purchasing new pillows, a mattress protector, sheets and other top of bed items. It's just natural for them to want to start with a cleaner, healthier environment. CSA's can encourage them by showing them the way, with the technology that we have today, to keep that environment clean for years to come."

"We've found that about 28 percent of customers, when they buy a new mattress, also end buying a whole bunch of new stuff that day," adds Pure LatexBLISS' Kurt Ling. "Once they've purchased the mattress, this group is going to buy a pillow and a new set of sheets somewhere. That's just what they do anyway. They would never dream of putting old stuff on their new

bed."

But where should you start? Some of the industry experts Furniture World interviewed for this article advocate getting down to the business of showing products quickly. Others suggest taking time to get information from customers about their needs and the quality of their sleep.

PILLOW TALK

Whether time is invested in speaking about health and wellness first, or if customers are brought directly to top of bed products, our experts are in general agreement that the best time to introduce customers to a pillow is before mattress testing begins.

"If you wait until the end", warns Pure Latex BLISS' Kurt Ling, "you have three or four extra things to sell them which can get overwhelming for the customer. It's like buying a new car, sitting down at the credit manager's desk as he or she tries to sell you 17 accessories and upgrades in a row. Some retailers emphasize the creation of a sleep sanctuary all at once. We've learned exactly the opposite because to the consumer, that can feel like the retailer is trying to sell them \$1,500 worth of stuff after they've just spent \$1,000 or more on a mattress. We totally believe that there is an appropriate time to introduce each element in the sale.

"We found out that the best performers have a method. They don't just throw all these products up against the wall. They introduce the pillow, topper and mattress protector at the right times. And their success is independent of the price point of the bed, and the income of the customer. They realize that if they show each of these things every single time, X-number of people will consistently buy. And this is true for retail furniture stores as well as sleep shops.

"We always suggest that retailers start with the premise that they are going to fit their customers for a pillow first, because the pillow customers choose makes a big difference in the

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SLEEP ESSENTIALS: PILLOWS

mattress that they select. Most people haven't thought about that, and one of the ways that retailers can drastically reduce mattress returns is to have customers select a pillow before they try out the first mattress."

Kurt makes an important point, because not only does using a pillow help customers to avoid choosing the wrong mattress, it also helps their delivered mattress feel the same as the one they tested in your store. Using a testing pillow may, therefore, result in fewer product returns.

All of our experts noted, that not only is it worthwhile to suggest that customers choose a pillow at the start of the sales process, it is very easy to get them to pick one up and carry it around.

"You really just need to ask them for permission to fit them for a pillow," continues Kurt Ling. "It's true that consumers may not be thinking about buying pillows when they enter your store, but if you let them know that a pillow and mattress go together, then most people will give you permission, even if they've never bought a pillow and mattress together before.

"Whether they will buy or not is a whole different story, but they will give

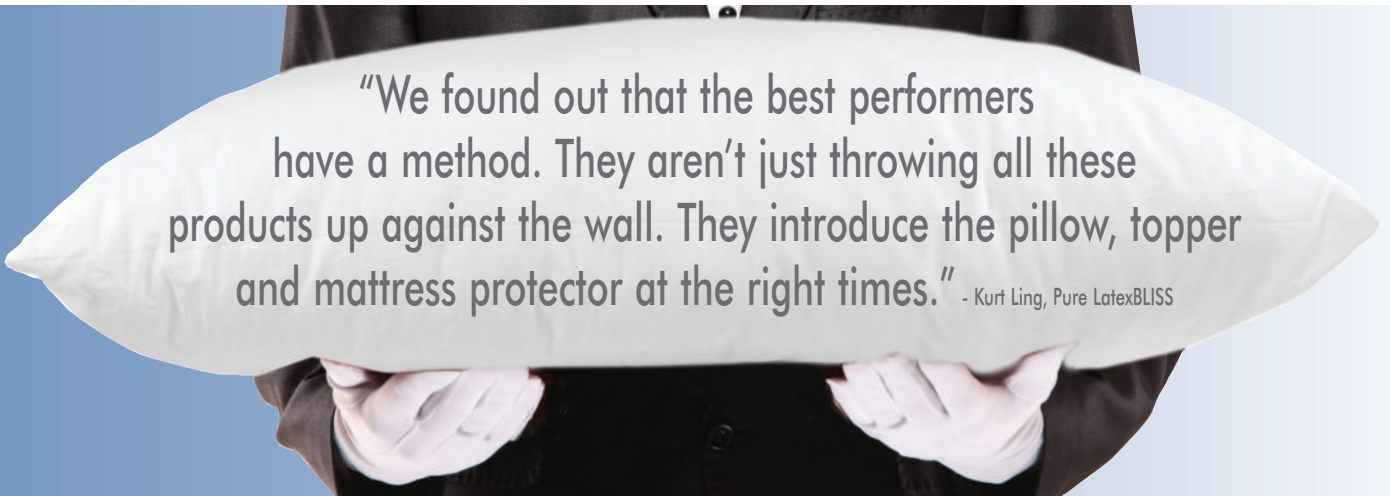
you permission to give them a pillow to carry around from bed to bed."

"The first thing we do," agrees Leggett & Platt's Michael Wright, "is to have the customer select a pillow. It's all about a good night's sleep. One way to language this is to say, 'Before we start looking at the beds today, let's go and get a pillow, something that you might want to be sleeping on, or something similar to what you are sleeping on at home right now, and we are going to take that to every bed so you can really get a good idea of how each mattress is going to feel in your home. A pillow is the bed for the head. Over 25% of your body is going to be touching that pillow, so it's really important to get a good one when we are testing out mattresses.' You might also say, 'you probably haven't thought a lot about your pillow in a while. A lot has changed. You will probably be able to get a better night's sleep with a new pillow.' It's the salesperson's job to not just sell something, but improve the quality of their customer's sleep. And if they can convey that message, customers purchase.

"So first you get them to touch the pillows and get them to pick one that might be right. You want them to think of your store as a laboratory, where the

mattresses change, but the other variables are kept constant. Have a selection of pillows out, and let them pick and feel the one they like. Then offer them a personal pillowcase that goes right over the top. When customers touch something and try it out, they are more likely to buy it. And right away, they know that your store has emphasized the importance of the pillow by taking this extra step to introduce it. And that's something that other salespeople in most other stores aren't doing. It's just one more way to personalize the experience customers have in your store."

Michael's brief mention in the previous paragraph about a "personal pillowcase" is not one that should be overlooked. Although it is true that not every customer will wonder how many other heads have touched the same pillow they are using, many will. So why not take away this potential worry? Why allow even passing images of poor sanitation to distract customers? By having a supply of freshly washed or disposable pillowcases handy, and making a show of putting on a fresh case, you let customers know that you care about their concerns, and their health. "Sealy's research shows that a significant percentage of consumers,



"We found out that the best performers have a method. They aren't just throwing all these products up against the wall. They introduce the pillow, topper and mattress protector at the right times." - Kurt Ling, Pure LatexBLISS

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"You might say, 'let's try this pillow on all the beds you are going to try today.' Have a selection of pillows out and let them pick and feel the one they like." - Michael Wright, Leggett & Platt

particularly women, are uncomfortable with putting their heads on an in-store pillow while testing floor models," confirms Jodi Allen, Chief Marketing Officer at Sealy. "We addressed this hygiene concern by offering pillow protectors. The more we can create a positive, inviting shopping atmosphere and speak to consumers in relatable language, the more likely they will take the time to find the mattress that truly fits their comfort preferences and needs. This leads to both higher satisfaction and bigger ticket sales."

"So the salesperson gives them a nice pillow," continues Michael Wright, "and isn't trying to close the pillow sale yet, he or she is just giving the customer tools needed to pick out the right mattress. They are recreating the sleep experience, and in so doing, indirectly selling the pillow."

"What customers don't know at this point, is that after they pick out a mattress, the salesperson will bring them back to talk about all the other things that will help them get a good night's sleep. After you've sold a mattress, you don't want to tank a mattress sale by pushing too many additional products. What you need to do is introduce customers to products in a pleasing and organized way so that they will want to buy -- not have to buy."

Kurt Ling suggests a slightly different approach. "Because there is such a broad assortment of pillows today," he says, "Most people have a pillow that is worn out, and even though they've probably replaced their pillow since they purchased their last mattress, they really don't know what's available. If you tell them what is available, it's amazing how many people will ask to be shown. If the customer is using a pillow that is 5 to 10 years old, she probably doesn't have a \$199 contour pillow. So if salespeople only try to

replace what customers have, they will tend to undersell. But if they tell their customers what's available in the market today, and let them choose by saying, 'We offer these, what are you interested in?' it's interesting to see how many people will take the time to compare. And then it's a conversation on the customer's terms, instead of just trying to sell them something new."

"And even if they are buying a mattress for a guest bedroom and you take the time to show them a pillow that they fall in love with, they are going to buy that pillow for their master bedroom."

DISPLAY PILLOWS

Our experts suggest that display pillows carrying manufacturers' and retailer's branding be removed before mattresses are tested.

"We've gotten a lot of retailers to take the bolster pads off of their mattresses," reports Natura's Ralph Rossdeutscher. "There are still some retailers that resist, but it doesn't make any sense to have them on there because it messes up the feel of the mattress. Customers need a proper pillow to take along and try out the different mattresses."

Michael Wright agrees. "There are point-of-sale bolsters on mattress displays designed to look aesthetically pleasing," he says, "and they work for the design of the stores and reflect the branding of the lines stores carry. Stores are selling mattress first and pillows as an add-on, so we don't want to complicate that, but it is important to pull off the display pillow to allow customers to experience maximum comfort. Even if I were the mattress manufacturer, I would want customers to test out my mattresses with a nice pillow because the experience is better."

"Sales associates just need to always

keep a step ahead. When moving a customer from one mattress to another, they might say something like, 'Hey, this mattress is a little soft for you, so let's take you over to this mattress that is a little bit firmer.' Then the salesperson just pulls off the display pillow on the firmer bed so that the customer can use the pillow they are carrying along with them."

PILLOW SELECTION

"There are some stores that carry 40 pillows and in my mind that complicates it for the store, the salesperson and the customer, says Ralph Rossdeutscher. "We encourage retailers to initially provide four different pillow feels, and explain each of them. Typically the consumer will be drawn to one of them. They can then offer a few different pillows having a similar feel to the customer's initial choice, but at different price points, thicknesses and materials. Customers may not have an opinion about the kind of mattress they want to buy, but they definitely have an opinion about pillows. A lot of stores fit customers by asking them if they are back, side or stomach sleepers. I disagree with this approach. Our research shows that the pillows that people actually choose for comfort doesn't correlate well with pillows that are chosen for them based on how they characterize themselves as being stomach, side or back sleepers. It is much more important to have them choose a pillow that they love, which will allow them to have a great night's sleep. It can't be reduced to a simple formula."

Michael Wright told Furniture World that, "retailers should offer a traditional pillow, a latex pillow and maybe a synthetic. They should have a broad selection. The secret is to not overload the consumer when they come in to look for a mattress with too many

“People do ask for a free pillow and there are three categories of responses. There are retailers that are more than happy to give away pillows to get the sale...” - Kurt Ling, Pure LatexBLISS

choices and too many pillows. I call it a pillow pause.

“Our pillows are merchandised by the way customers talk about the way they sleep, which is as a back, side or stomach sleeper. Consumers don’t say that they had a wonderful night’s sleep on their memory foam pillow or a wonderful night’s sleep on their triple chamber down pillow. They say, ‘I sleep on my side, and I have a crink in my neck.’ Their choice can be narrowed down by asking the customer, ‘What kind of a sleeper are you? How does this feel?’ Then let them choose, put the pillowcase on it and then go look at some mattresses.”

CLOSING THE PILLOW SALE

Many retailers end up giving away pillows. It’s a way for them to throw in a little extra value, or to provide some consolation to customers who are disappointed that they can’t extract a discount on the mattress they’ve chosen. Some customers also remember that they received a free pillow the last time they purchased a mattress, and see no harm in asking for one again.

Commenting on this practice, Pure Latex BLISS’ Kurt Ling explains that, “We think that the worst thing that a retailer can do is give away something after the customer has given clear body language that they are going to

buy. All the salesperson needs to do is watch the body language of the person they just helped to select a pillow, and carry it around the store. If the customer holds it by the top, it basically means that they don’t care about the pillow and have agreed to carry it because the salesperson asked them to. If they carry it like a baby or hug it, it’s a clear signal that they are actually going to buy.

“This is a behavior that retail sales people who are good at selling accessories have observed. We, therefore, always ask our retailers to teach salespeople how to watch for this nonverbal cue, because that will tell you whether

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Sleep Country USA store left shows interior shows POS pillows that carry the store branding "Why buy a mattress anywhere else?" Also City Furniture, Naples, FL sleep department showing manufacturer's branding.



they care, whether they want you to give it to them or whether they will pay for it. And if the CSA sees a pillow hugger, someone who is carrying the pillow like they care, we suggest using an assumptive close with that customer. Smile at the customer and say, 'And we assume that you want the pillow.'

"People do ask for a free pillow and there are three categories of responses retailers give. There are retailers that are more than happy to give away pillows to get the sale. Others say 'no' due to a management policy. The third category of response is to offer customers a basic pillow that might cost \$39 for free, but if they are carrying around a \$99 test pillow, then the store can give them a \$39 credit against the premium pillow. This is satisfying for the customer and a win for the retailer."

And what can you do if they don't buy a mattress or want to look further? Michael Wright advises retailers to not give up on the pillow sale. "So, we've indirectly introduced them to a pillow," he says, "and if they say that they are going to look somewhere else for a mattress, you can tell them, 'hey, did you like that pillow? Do you want to sleep on that pillow tonight? Go ahead, and we can ring that up. And you can come back with your husband tomorrow. We can get him a pillow and maybe look together for a mattress.' We can actually leave them with an add on without selling a mattress."

MATTRESS PROTECTORS

Many customers can be persuaded to purchase a mattress protector at the end of the sales process if the salesperson says something like, "to avoid voiding your warranty, you will need to put your mattress in a mattress protector. We have one that costs \$49 and one that costs \$99. The \$99 one gives a higher level of protection." At this point, the consumer may be thinking, "I can probably buy one cheaper down the street at that big box store," or "this is just another way to get \$100 bucks from me by threatening to take away my warranty; something I deserve to have after paying \$1,500 for this mattress." This last minute offer can, therefore, be something that has the potential to negatively affect the customer's perception of the salesperson and the store.

Fortunately there is a lot more that you can do throughout the sales process to let customers know why purchasing better mattress protection from you provides benefits they will want to take advantage of.

TIMING

Just as there is agreement that the pillow should be introduced before customers comfort test your mattresses, there is also a consensus among the experts interviewed for this article that timing the introduction of mattress protection is important.

Leggett & Platt's Michael Wright suggests that, "After the pillow, you pick a mattress. Then you want to go into the good, better and best foundation options -- frames, recessed legs, better steel, better warranties, better decorative stuff. After that, you want to talk about a mattress protector. We suggest that the things you talk about first are the items your customer has to have. They have to have a frame. They have to have a mattress protector and then after that, it's time to introduce sheets, and then close on that pillow you previously introduced them to."

Fabrictech's Vice President of Sales & Marketing Sean Bergman stresses the importance of collecting specific information early in the customer/salesperson interaction. "In the qualifying phase of the sale," he says, "you need to ask your customer, 'do you have any allergies or asthma that I should be aware of?' If it's for a kid's bed, ask if their children have any allergies or asthma."

Furthermore, Bergman told Furniture World that collecting this information can help the salesperson in the mattress testing phase to introduce customers, when appropriate, to high value mattresses that contain materials such as latex and memory foam that, over time, collect fewer allergens. "But on top of that," he says, "you can tell them, 'at the end we are going to provide you with a completely allergen and dust mite proof barrier for your

SLEEP ESSENTIALS: MATTRESS PROTECTORS

mattress and your pillow that's going to completely seal off those allergens."

Jared Bell, Protect-A-Bed's Sales Director thinks that retailers can benefit from introducing mattress protection products early in the sales sequence. He says, "The best retailers and sales associates build mattress protection into the mattress sales process. We suggest that they have a mattress protection display rack visible in the store and also spread the product throughout the showroom, placing the packaging, for example, on bedside tables. At that point, some customers will see it, be interested, pick it up, and start a conversation with sales associates, by asking, 'what is this?'

"Then, once the mattress selection

process has started, as they walk through the showroom, the salesperson might ask them an open ended question to start them thinking about mattress protection, such as, 'while I understand that you are here to purchase a mattress today, have you ever thought about how you might protect that investment by purchasing mattress protection?'

"Mattress protection is still relatively new in the US, so a lot of customers don't know that a mattress really does need protection. Also, many customers don't think about their mattress as an expensive piece of furniture, so, salespeople can make this point right from the get go, by saying, 'look, you are going to spend \$2,000 for a new mattress, let's talk about investing maybe

"We suggest that they say, 'it seems like we've found the right mattress for you, what we would like to do now is to show you your three options. "

- Sean Bergman, Fabrictech

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SLEEP ESSENTIALS: MATTRESS PROTECTORS

BENEFITS OF MATTRESS PROTECTION

Major benefits of mattress protectors include:

Protection From Spills & Stains: “A mattress protector protects your mattress from you,” Leggett & Platt’s Michael Wright told Furniture World. “What I mean is that people leak every night. That seems pretty gross, but our customer’s bodies do lose water throughout the night. Water gets into the mattress causing its comfort layers to change over time and wear faster.”

Warranty: “Sales associates should bring up the warranty on the mattress protector to close the sale, notes Protect-A-Bed’s Jared Bell.” Many mattress warranties require that a mattress protector be used, but in addition to that, mattress protectors carry their own warranties. “In most cases,” continues Bell, “the mattress protectors that customers end up buying from a big box retailer have a very limited warranty, and they usually don’t warranty the mattress at all. Purchasing a protector that will warranty the mattress in case anything does get through and soil it, and will also last a long time are important considerations for customers to be aware of.” To make the benefit more tangible, he offers this observation. “The mattress protector protects the mattresses’ comfort layers by stopping the moisture from going in and destroying it. So it is really protecting the customer’s investment rather than protecting a warranty per se.”

Sean Bergman believes that although the warranty is important, that a focus on health and wellness should be paramount. “Sales associates,” he explains, “should do their best to sell the stain warranty by saying, ‘Yes, protecting your mattress is easy, we will give you a guarantee against stains and soil, no problem, but what we really do is focus on making a cleaner, healthier sleep environment for you.’”

Protection From Allergens: “People don’t realize that allergens and dust mites found in and around their sleep system are the leading cause of allergy and asthma attacks at night,” Fabrictech’s Sean Bergman told Furniture World. “Over 50 million Americans in the United States suffer from allergies and allergy induced asthma. When a customer that has allergies and asthma, hears that, they perk up and they say, ‘yeah why? what does that have to do with buying a mattress?’ This serves to change the conversation between the retailer and the end consumer from just mattress protection, which is the easiest thing that we do, to health and wellness protection which is the real issue.”

Bed Bug Barrier: Most customers will never see a bed bug and are at low risk for having an infestation. Living in a big city apartment can increase the chances of infestation as can overseas travel and frequent hotel stays. Jared Bell says that, “if you have an active bedbug infestation, a total encasement

will prevent bedbugs from getting out of your mattress, If you don’t have an active infestation, it will prevent bedbugs from getting into your mattress, but the number one feature of bedbug prevention with mattress encasements is that they are all stark white. The first sign of a bedbug infestation is fecal blood spotting on the mattress and today’s mattresses are so elaborate in terms of design, ticking and piping that it is very easy to miss a little blood spot that a bedbug might leave behind. So if your customer has a nice white encasement exterior on their mattress, all of a sudden that little blood spot becomes more noticeable so they can be more proactive in fighting an infestation.”

“Here’s the issue with bedbugs,” adds Sean Bergman. “People don’t realize that if they have bedbugs living in their mattress, or have bedbugs outside of their mattress and don’t want them to get in, they can’t ever take off the total encasement. That’s because if they take it off to wash it, there can be an infestation. We suggest that retailers advise customers to put a total encasement on their mattress and never take it off again. Then, if the customer also purchases a five-sided protector that is dust mite proof, allergen proof and moisture proof, on the top and sides, it can be placed like a fitted sheet over the total encasement. When the customer is ready to launder, they just take off their five sided, wash it, then put it back on and never have to worry about an infestation getting in or out.”

“Yes, protecting your mattress is easy, we will give you a guarantee against stains and soil, no problem, but what we really do is focus on making a cleaner, healthier sleep environment for you.” - Sean Bergman, Fabrictech





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THE CLOSE

Bergman also advises that, "When the customer starts giving buying signs while they are on a mattress, it's time for the sales associate to transition to the actual close. We recommend an assumptive close, so when the customer is still on the mattress and we feel that they've found the right one, we suggest that they say, 'it seems like we've found the right mattress for you. What we would like to do now is to show you your three options of health, allergen and stain protection. You have three options to choose from.' Now if you notice, we didn't say, 'do you want,' or 'do you need,' or 'would you like to see' a mattress protector?' That will never work. Then they can add, 'of the three options that I've shown you, which one would you like to complete your sleep system?' Then, after the customer chooses, say, 'well that's great. Why don't you follow me up to the counter.' This approach gives retail salespeople the tools to get cus-

"When management doesn't provide those numbers, it sends the message that this aspect of the business isn't important. Then, if it's allowed, salespeople may use mattress protectors as a give away to sell the mattress." - Jared Bell, Protect-A-Bed

tomers away from thinking about mattress protectors as accessories and starts them thinking, 'I need something like this.' When they start to feel this way, and understand the value of not just protecting the mattress, but also protecting their sleep environment, then the retailer has changed the conversation from just mattress protection to one about health and wellness protection."

Also with regard to transitioning to the close, Jared Bell recommends that, "After the customer solidifies their mattress decision, the salesperson might say, 'Earlier I showed you some mattress protectors that you might be interested in to help protect the investment that you are putting down on your mattress. Let me talk about this more.'" He also observes that, "The best retailers take a good, better, best approach to offering mattress protection. And that they start with their best first, and then, if necessary, work their way down in terms of features and price."

PROTECTING CUSTOMERS

When customers get home, chances are that they will rip open the protector packaging and throw it away with the care instructions. Then just before they put it on the mattress they may realize that they bought something they know relatively little about. Will it fit so loosely that it wrinkles on the top? Does it feel like vinyl or cotton? If it is a total encasement they bought to keep bedbugs out, what will happen if they remove the cover to wash it? Will it be sturdy enough to resist tearing when they put it on a heavy, bulky mattress? Will it limit the temperature sensing properties of memory foam? Will it change the feel of the mattress? Can it be machine washed and dried without affecting its properties and the warranty? Should it be washed on cold or hot settings? Will they still need to put their old, fitted cotton pad over the mattress protector? Did they make a big mistake buying this thing?

It is, therefore, important that sales-



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"The products that they buy from a furniture or mattress retailer, won't radiate heat, and don't change the feel of the mattress. There are reasons why cheap protectors sell for \$30 for a queen size. - Jared Bell, Protect-A-Bed

people address at least some of these concerns. And this shouldn't take too long, "CSA's are walking a fine line. They don't want to inundate customers with too much information," says Sean Berman, "but they do want to give customers what they need to know. A mattress protector pitch should take four to five minutes tops."

Care Instructions: "The most important reason," Jared Bell says, "why warranties get rejected is that customers don't know the washing instructions. So at very least, sales associates should let customers know if using bleach or drying on a hot setting will compromise the protector."

Plus, It is also a good idea to explain that if they have questions about the warranty or care, that they can find information on the manufacturer's website or by checking information included in the packaging. "A tip that a

salesperson told me years ago," Sean Bergman told Furniture World, is to tell the customer to save the warranty and care instructions, by putting packaging in between the mattress and the boxspring. I always thought that was a great tip."

Mattress Pads: "Mattress pads are a personal preference," says Jared Bell. "But in this day and age they are really unnecessary. People often use a mattress pad because it was something their parents did."

"Also, Fabrictech's Sean Bergman notes, "when a customer buys a new mattress, they are buying the comfort. Materials added on top can alter the comfort that they enjoyed in the store. That's why a really good mattress protector is so useful because it doesn't alter the true comfort of the mattress. Today mattresses incorporate better materials that give customers the pres-

sure release they need. Anything that adds thickness just shouldn't be used."

Size: Mattress protectors need to fit properly," says Bergman. "It is important that it not alter the comfort or feel of the mattress, be it made of memory foam or latex or whatever. Protectors should not bunch or be too thick. And that insures that the protector is virtually not even detectable; just like a fitted sheet. Customers don't even know it is there."

Mattress depth is an important consideration to consider. "A number of mattress encasement providers offer several depths for their encasements to fit 9" to 22" inch mattresses," adds Bell, "so salespeople need to make sure that customers are purchasing the correct depth."

"And finally," he says, "The inexpensive mattress protectors customers often buy at Kohls or Target are often



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| <input type="checkbox"/> Losing key people | <input type="checkbox"/> Business is stressful and affecting your personal life |
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"The Service person who schedules a mattress delivery can remind customers that this is the perfect time for them to add a mattress protector to protect their new purchase, and delivery drivers can have protectors as stock items on their trucks." - Shana Rochelau, Guard-Master

vinyl based, loud and crinkly. They offer basic waterproof protection, but can be hot to sleep on. The products that they buy from a furniture or mattress retailer are going to be cotton or polyester based, won't radiate heat or change the feel of the mattress. There are reasons why cheap protectors sell for \$30 for a queen size. They are cheap, poorly made and will probably need to be replaced often, so customers are better off spending a bit more."

MANAGE THE PROCESS

Furniture World was also told that to ensure retail success, it is vitally important to have store management involved in setting up a program, creating incentives for sales associates, and monitoring it's progress.

Fabrictech's Sean Bergman told us, "I always tell our retailers to WIIFM their CSA's. Sales associates need to know "What's In It For Me." If retailers don't provide incentives for them to learn why health and wellness protectors are so important to them, they are going to have a hard time. Retailers can do this with a spiff program or by building in a good commission. If sales associates earn 15 or 20 bucks for a 5 sided or total encasement mattress protector, less on cotton terry, they will focus on selling them as sleep essentials and on learning the step-up story to sell more 5 sided and total encasement protectors. Bergman also stressed the importance of working to build a coordinated sales strategy between retailer and manufacturer so that, "retailers and the manufacturer speak the same language and tell the same story."

"One of the key elements to having

a successful mattress protection program," Jared Bell said with regard to management involvement, "is to manage the process. It is important to set targets each month for selling mattress protection and the effort should be pushed down from the CEO, all the way to the sales associates on the floor. Salespeople should be presented with a target mattress protection attachment rate and profitability dollars they have to reach. When management doesn't provide those numbers to sales associates, it sends the message that this aspect of the business really isn't important to them. Then, if it's allowed, salespeople may use mattress protectors as a closing technique -- as a give away to sell the mattress. Some retailers haven't yet realized that mattress protection is a viable and profitable category for them, but the second management gets involved setting sales goals and targets, that's when sales take off.

AFTER THE SALE

The final word comes from Shana Rocheleau, Marketing Director of Guard-Master, a company that manufactures performance bedding essentials. She advises Furniture World readers to, "Remember that selling accessories shouldn't stop in the bedding department. Regardless of what approach retailers use with guests in their stores, they may not close every bedding essential sale, every time. So, it is important that every employee has the opportunity to help the business to be more successful, and build consumer loyalty. The Service person who schedules a mattress delivery can remind customers that this is the perfect time for them to add a mattress protector to protect their new pur-

chase. Delivery drivers can have protectors as stock items on their trucks to make the same suggestion, if they see a need, when in customers' homes."

POWER FOUNDATIONS

The number of manufacturers selling power foundations has increased dramatically in the past two years. The category has made the quantum leap from being marketed to an older, infirm population to a luxury product that adds substantially to the comfort and functionality of the mattress.

Power foundations are big-ticket items, and like a pillow or mattress protector, most customers don't consider purchasing one before they are introduced to their features and benefits in a store.

Sales associates, can support the sale of more power foundations by:

- *Using appropriate qualifying techniques to collect information from customers early in the sales process.*
- *Knowing what to say to get customers to demo and become excited about the purchase of a power foundation.*
- *Learning techniques to make sure that customers seamlessly choose a compatible mattress.*
- *Closing effectively.*
- *Following up with customers who have an interest, but aren't ready to buy a power foundation for their new mattress right away.*

In the March/April edition of Furniture World, this series will continue with a look at these and other techniques for presenting power foundations and better stationary bed frames.



Life

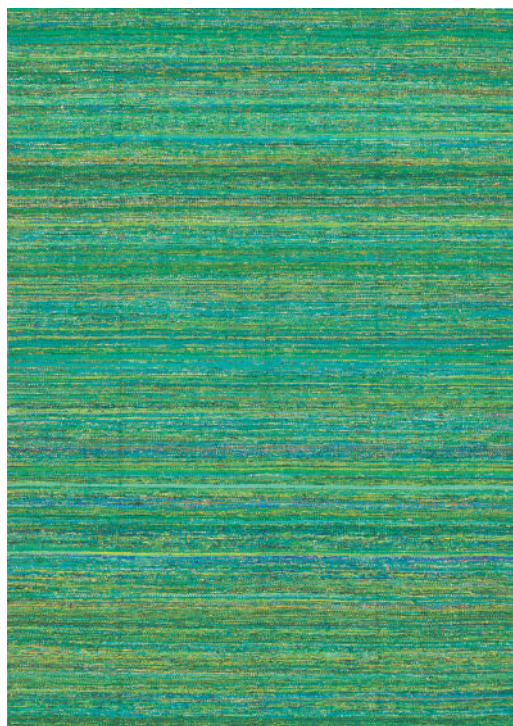
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BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Loloi

The Resama Collection features flat-woven Dhurrie designs that are integrated with vintage silk saris within the weave. Each unique piece features an array of vibrant colors, sure to brighten any room.

Contact information on index page 72.

H•Home

From the Portfolio collection, this unusual dining group is made in America of high quality materials. H•Home produces a variety of furniture products, some delivered in one or two days. Contact information on index page 72.



Wallbeds

This innovative bedroom group, with queen size bed that pulls down, is perfect for den, guest room or studio apartment. Many configurations and finishes are available.

Contact information on index page 72.

Human Touch

The ZeroG 2.0 Immersion Seating massage chair has been carefully engineered to support the body at every position and de-load the spine and alleviate vertebral and disc pain in a gravity neutral-posture. Physicians recommend gravity-neutral posture as the healthiest way to sit.

Contact information on index page 72.



Omnia

Santa Barbara is available in full and top grain Leathers. Features include hardwood frames and down seats. Shown in Stardust Mineral. Made in USA.

Contact information on index page 72.



Country View Furniture

The Wentworth dining collection is offered with multiple size and leaf options. Chairs are exclusively designed for ultimate dining comfort. The china gallery is an attractive and trendy piece and for a more traditional appeal, a stunning and functional buffet and sideboard are available.

Contact information on index page 72.



BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Shaw Living

Plainview, Sandstorm, from the Newport Collection is machine woven in the U.S.A. of 100% olefin that is durable, fade resistant, and offers easy care and cleaning. Rugs are available in sizes ranging from 1'11" x 3' 2" to 9'2" x 12' 11".

Contact information on index page 72.



Hickory At Home

The Care 6 Adjustable Motion Power Base is a modern modular (cushion/comfort) deck designed to enhance the sleep experience. It improves mattress performance, adjusts to every shape and size, positions to personal comfort and support preference. Other features include therapeutic dual body massage, steel leg supports with locking rolling casters, optional adjustable headboard, foot lowering function for true lounge positioning & relaxation, and headrest adjustment.

Contact information on index page 72.

Elran

The Kiara Collection features a slim styled track arm and chaise seating. A matching loveseat is also available as are numerous options such as power recline, lift chair, console, dual rocker recliners for loveseat, middle console for loveseat and a middle drawer on the sofa. Other custom features available.

Contact information on index page 72.



Dutailier

Designed with classy curves, this upholstered chair has the gliding and locking mechanism to satisfy any need. Available in three optional wood finishes and multiple fabrics.

Contact information on index page 72.



Decor-Rest

This contemporary sofa features semi-attached back cushions, detailed welting and button tufted accent cushions. Offers looks, maximum comfort and makes a fashion statement for the urban home setting.

Contact information on index page 72



Zuo

With clean lines and sleek chrome, the Singular series features 100% chrome frame wrapped in a plush leatherette available in three colors: black, white and terracotta.

Contact information on index page 72.



BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Rizzy Home

From the Colours Collection, this contemporary rug is hand-tufted with New Zealand Wool blended yarn. Suggested Retail Price for a 5'x8' is \$499.

Contact information on index page 72.



Jaunty

Vogue Aqua is from the Trio Collection. This handsome rug is hand tufted in China and is priced at \$229 for a 5'x7'.

Contact information on index page 72.



Surya

Zuna is made in India of 100% New Zealand Wool and is hand tufted. Suggested Retail for 5'x8' is \$530.

Contact information on index page 72.

Linon

This hand tufted rug is made in China and is from the Trio Collection. A 5'x7' is msrp \$229.

Contact information on index page 72.





Feizy

Cherished designs from ages past come alive in the Namche Collection. The casual feel of hand knotted designs are revitalized in premium hand-spun wool.

Contact information on index page 72.

Jaipur

The Blue Collection is hand-tufted in India of wool and art silk accents. The is hand-tufted into over-scaled florals, organics and geometrics. SRP 5'x8' \$440.

Contact information on index page 72.



Capel

Graphic floral designs and bold colors have made the Bloom collection an instant customer favorite. Normal and high twist Argentinean and Indian wool yarns combined with supple viscose create an added level of texture. Made in India. A 5'x8' rug may retail for \$599.

Contact information on index page 72.



The Rug Market

Fogli, in gray and ruby, is hand tufted of wool and art silk. Suggested retail 5' x 8" is \$799.

Contact information on index page 72.

TIME FOR LED'S?

Today we can give a direct answer to the \$64 question, "Are solid state lighting systems ready?"

by Monte Lee

One of my favorite store designers called seeking advice on converting to LED track lighting. She said she read my article in Furniture World Magazine titled, "Path To Sustainable Retail Lighting. LEDs & More" from the September/October 2009 issue (<http://bitly.com/teRcnV>), but she couldn't tell if I recommended LEDs.

LEDs have come a long way and my view today is more positive than when in 2009 that article noted that, "If you are using a 50PAR30 on your sales floor, you might be very satisfied with the new product." (My personal view is a 50PAR30 gen-

erates about 2/3 of the minimum light required to meet the visual requirement for accent lighting.)

Today the direct answer to the \$64 question, "Are solid state lighting systems ready?" is still, "Sometimes." I want to give you an idea of where we are with LED lighting and the three questions you need to answer before you move to LED.

LED EVOLUTION

The evolution in the marketplace of solid state LED replacement bulbs is following the price/ performance curve of LCD and plasma screen TVs. If you were an early adopter of flat screen technology, you probably paid \$1,800 to \$2,400 for a smaller screen than in the internet capable LCD set I recently purchased for \$500. We have more light, better light at a lower cost in today's LED product than we did just one year ago.

CONCEPTS

The key concepts to understand when evaluating lighting of any sort are power, lumens, CCT, and CRI. Power is basically "watts in" and lumens are a basic measure of light output. Our major lighting efficiency goal is to get the most light per watt of electric power. For retail operations there are other goals as well such as, minimal heat generation and no ultraviolet light. Ultraviolet light wilts vegetables and fades upholstery. You probably already know that halogen display lighting generates 10% light and 90% heat with each watt of input.


Other important definitions include:

Correlated Color Temperature: CCT is measured on the Kelvin scale. Noonday sun is around 5000 degrees Kelvin (K) while incandescent light is typically 2700K. Color temperature is based on heating iron (or a filament) so fluorescents, LED and other lighting technologies without filaments have to be "correlated" to that standard. LEDs at 2700K will be similar to incandescent but not identical. Incandescent bulbs get warmer (lower K, more red) and produce less light when they are dimmed. LEDs do not change color when dimmed. Dimmable LEDs give less light of the same color when dimmed. Another LED fact is that higher temperature LEDs (4100K) produce more light per watt than warmer LEDs.

Color Rendering Index: CRI measured on a scale of 1-100 is also based on incandescent lighting. It is important to keep in mind that you can only compare CRI for lights of the same color temperature. Colors under a 2700K source will look different from colors under a 4100K source. It is fair to compare the color rendering of a 2700K LED to a halogen bulb. We did that comparison at the last High Point Furniture Market and 100% of the furniture retailers who participated, preferred the "look" of the LED.

LED GENERATIONS

The first generation LED is similar to a 45 watt, PAR38 halogen. By 2010 the second generation was roughly equal to a 60 watt PAR38. That gener-



"The evolution in the marketplace of solid state LED replacement bulbs is following the price/ performance curve of LCD and plasma screen TVs."



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Comparing Generations of PAR38 LEDs

Generation	Power	Beam	Lumens	CBCP	CRI
First	16	22	600	2800	80
Second	17	22	880	3500	85
Third*	18	25	1050	4100	85

* Available in 2700K March 2012



ation is much better, but not on par with the visual standard for most furniture stores which is the 60 watt PAR38 infrared halogen which, because of a special coating, generates 1120 lumens and 5100 CBCP. The third generation is pretty close to meeting that standard and well worth a look.

The chart above adds a couple of new terms to our lighting vocabulary. CBCP stands for "center beam candle power" which is a more useful measure of light output for display lighting than lumens. CBCP gives us an idea of how much light we can put on a target. If the beam angle is smaller the CBCP increases. In the third generation both CBCP and beam angle increases which means a significant increase in output. These third generation LED's will add "pop" to displays.

As we move forward with LED we

see increased power but we also see increased lumens per watt. The 60-watt halogen infrared generates about 19 lumens per watt compared to first generation LEDs that get 37 lumens per watt. Generation three produces an estimated 58 lumens per watt. The output process depends on the performance of the LED, the electronic driver and the lens. The other major factor is the ability to dissipate heat generated by the electronics. Fins on the lamp body help that.

SHOULD YOU SWITCH TO LEDS?

When the third generation LED is available in 2700K we will be able to light any retail furniture display and achieve excellent results. That is my conclusion, but you need to answer three questions to make any lighting

system a good business decision.

1. Does it meet my visual requirement?
2. Does it fit my financial plan?
3. What do I know about the manufacturer?

Meeting the visual requirement in furniture means being able to provide product accent or highlighting. Fluorescent lighting can't do that, but halogen and LED PAR lamps can. I always recommend getting 12 bulbs and setting displays in your store. Let your eyes make the judgement. In most cases the answer is, "Yes, LED meets the visual requirement." Occasionally the answer is "Not in my store." and I can accept that. The "No" usually comes from high-end stores with design services. Interestingly one customer who said "No" preferred the look of LED in the comparison test at High Point.

DOES IT FIT MY FINANCIAL PLAN?

The second question requires a thoughtful analysis because buying LED lighting for a store is like buying an automobile. It is not unusual for LED lighting to cost \$30,000-\$40,000 or more depending on the size of the store. LEDs will last 10 years in the typical furniture store. Ten years of halogen infrared lamps might cost \$40,500 plus the labor to change them every year. The big savings come from using 70% less elec-

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TIME FOR LEDS?

tricity with LEDs when compared to the 60-watt halogen.

Saving electricity really appeals to utility companies. Rebates for switching from halogen to LED are \$40 per bulb in some areas. Generally that means a 100% return on your investment in less than a year. The store still needs to cover the up-front cost while waiting for the utility to issue the rebate, and that could be a problem. Like the \$40,000 car if you can't afford to buy you can lease. You can also capitalize the lease and take depreciation over the term rather than having a \$40,000 expense in the current year. There are ways to make the investment fit your financial plan.

WHAT DO I KNOW ABOUT THE MANUFACTURER?

LED lighting manufacturers include the major lighting companies, start-up operations with little experience in lighting, and some high tech names we are familiar with in other solid state products. Lighting companies are Philips, SATCO, Sylvania and GE. FEIT and TCP are minor players at this point. New companies include Lighting Science Group and MSI. Toshiba is a familiar high tech name but look for others to join in to supply entire bulbs or component parts.

"The second question requires a thoughtful analysis because buying LED lighting for a store is like buying an automobile."

CREE makes LED chips for several manufacturers and has some products under the CREE label.

The US Department of Energy (DOE) is keeping watch over solid state lighting in an attempt to avoid all the bad things that happened with compact fluorescents. They have established criteria that manufacturers must meet and have certified by independent labs. One criteria is the ENERGY STAR rating and another is Lighting Facts, a label showing for light output, CCT and CRI.

DOE Caliper reports¹ track the progress being made and problems encountered. They find for example that seeing the ENERGY STAR rating on the box or in marketing material may not mean the model number is in the ENERGY STAR listing. The Lighting Facts label has the same problem. DOE reports one product "claims a CRI of 96, but testing reveals a CRI of 82." LED is clearly a case for buyer beware when the product is labeled but DOE also notes in the Round 12 Summary Report² (June 2011) that, "For products that do not carry the Lighting Facts label and/or ENERGY STAR rating, only one-third meet photometric performance expectations, and more than one-half fail to meet manufacturer claims for light output, efficacy, CCT, and/or CRI."

A good rule of thumb is to exercise the same diligence in buying LED lighting as you would with a \$40,000 automobile.

AND THE WINNER IS

Department of Energy challenged the lighting industry to develop an LED replacement for the standard 60 watt incandescent. DOE had strict specifications and performance testing that is worth a look (<http://www.lighting-prize.org/>). The reward was pretty

good as well -- \$10 million in cash, government contracts, and the endorsement of power companies with rebate potential. Philips Lighting North America submitted the only entry in September 2009 and was awarded the prize for meeting all performance criteria in August of 2011.

The Philips product points out something interesting about LEDs. It is hard to make white light from an LED. It is easier to make blue light. The yellow parts of the bulb are actually phosphors that convert blue light from 18 LED chips inside to white light. That proprietary technology is just part of the \$4 billion investment Philips has made in solid state lighting.

ARE SOLID STATE LIGHTING SYSTEMS READY?

There are several reasons that make the answer to that question, "Sometimes." The answer basically depends on whether you like the way merchandise looks in your store.



Philips Lighting North America was awarded a \$10 million Department of Energy prize for meeting all performance criteria for an LED that could serve as a replacement for the 60 Watt incandescent.

Personally I would switch from halogen to LED when the third generation, 2700K bulb is available in 2012. I believe that the lamp will meet the visual requirement and make great financial sense. Be careful where you make your \$40,000 investment. Send me an email for my recommendation.

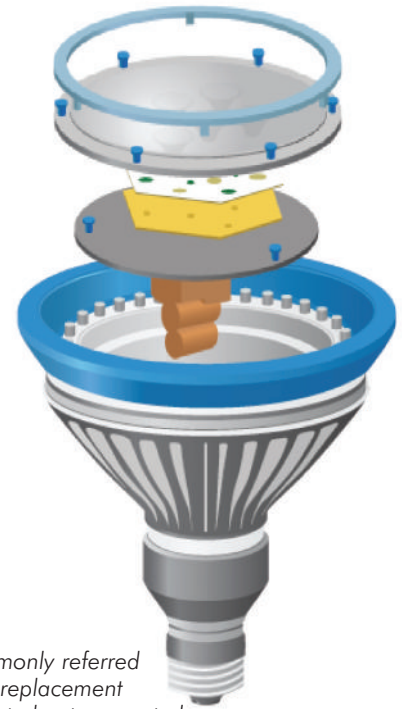
Monte Lee is a Regional Manager for Service Lamp Corporation, a distributor of lighting products such as fixtures, bulbs, plus lighting consulting and design services for retailers. Inquiries on any aspect of furniture store lighting can be sent to Monte care of FURNITURE WORLD at mlee@furninfo.com. See all of Monte

Lee's articles on store lighting posted to the www.furninfo.com website.

References:

1. Caliper reports and Solid State Lighting are discussed at <http://1.usa.gov/vyrCZL>.
2. Round 12 Summary Report (June 2011)—recessed downlight luminaires, track light luminaires, cove lighting luminaires, LED replacements for A-lamps, and LED replacements for linear fluorescent lamps" was used as a source for this article. <http://bitly.com/sSSNyQ>.

A Solid State Light Bulb illustrated at right is commonly referred to as an LED, is a complete system. For screw in replacement LEDs the lamp body acts as a heat sink to dissipate heat generated by the electronic driver. The driver powers LED chips to generate light, which is then directed by the optics. Some LEDs focus light from each chip while others provide one lens to focus light from a number of chips. The single lens appears to be one giant LED chip.



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GOOGLE ADWORDS

Maximize your impact with Google AdWords & Paid Search, the ultimate new media marketing.

by Mike Root

Furniture retailers are familiar with spending money to advertise in newspapers and the yellow pages. An advertising rep takes your ad and your money. But with more and more people getting their information from online resources, advertising online has become critical to retailers' long term survival. Anyone can open a Google AdWords account and start throwing money at the media through a Pay Per Click (PPC) campaign. But if you don't know what you are doing, you will not get an adequate return on your investment.

This column on New Media Marketing contains a special interview with Tim Seward, an expert on PPC, Google AdWords, and everything

involving Paid Search.

Mr. Seward is one of the top authorities in maximizing paid online advertising accounts. In fact, his company ROI Revolutions manages millions of dollars of online advertising spending for companies in 8 countries. His company regularly audits the online advertising accounts of businesses that spend at least \$10,000 a month and some that spend over \$500,000 in online advertising monthly. You may recognize Timothy if you read publications like Internet Retailer or DM News. He agreed to share with Furniture World readers some of the strategies his company uses to make ad dollars spent in online advertising as efficient as possible.

Managing an online advertising budget has many components, so we limited this article to the important topic of how retailers big and small can see improvement in online advertising ROI by optimizing their e-commerce websites. When a retailer runs a PPC campaign, the goal is to drive traffic to an e-commerce "shopping cart" website. Often though, not a lot of thought is given to what prospects see when they get to a retailer's web-

site page. This column will, therefore, focus on how furniture retailers can integrate online advertising campaigns with an e-commerce website for maximum results.

Mike: "Welcome Timothy, let's jump right in. Many furniture retailers know they should be advertising online, but may be intimidated by the process because of the big players who can spend lots of money. What would you tell them?"

Timothy: "It is a brutal fact that every retail industry has three or four top players that dominate their PPC landscape in AdWords. Their ads are always seen while dozens of other businesses are struggling to simply make the minimum first page bid. I tell them you may be fighting the wrong battle. PPC weakness often can't be solved by simply finding better keywords and writing better ads. The biggest battle in PPC – the place you will gain your biggest competitive edge – often has nothing to do with PPC.

"Sure, we're online advertising experts at ROI Revolution, but no

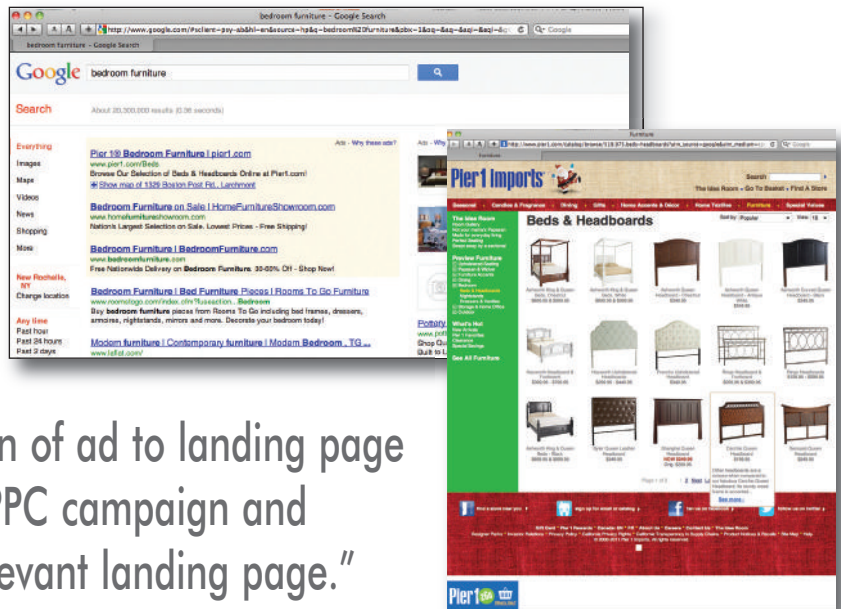


Don't make customers click around.

A Google search for "bedroom furniture" returned a Google AdWords listing for Bassett Furniture. Clicking linked to a general home page (shown at left) that had minimal information on bedroom furniture. In some areas of the USA the Bassett listing referenced the nearest store, but if the purpose of the ad was to drive traffic to the nearest store, it would be a good idea to create a custom landing page that provides easy to follow directions, as well as information pertinent to the "bedroom furniture" search. Think about it this way. If you knew in advance that a customer was coming in to your store to buy bedroom furniture, and you could easily put all your bedroom displays up front so they could see it right away, why wouldn't you?

Another Google search for Bedroom Furniture brings up a Google AdWords listing for Pier1 Imports that links to a Pier1 website landing page specific to bedroom.

When prospects don't need to take extra steps it increases the return on a PPC ad.



"While a one-to-one correlation of ad to landing page may be overkill, every major PPC campaign and keyword theme deserves a relevant landing page."

amount of PPC prowess can overcome the self-sabotage of an underperforming website. In fact, we regularly turn down prospective clients wanting to sign up for our services when we determine they aren't giving adequate focus to their website strategy. In these cases it is nearly impossi-

ble to grow their AdWords account profitably. Over the years we've come up with a checklist of sorts to help us determine if a prospect's website is crippling their opportunity for PPC success."

Mike: "I would think the first thing

someone should do is measure their campaign's effectiveness. How extensive do you think website analytics needs to go?"

Timothy: "To do it right, a retailer needs to record their website conversion data with granular segmentation

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Jodi Mason, Owner Urban Home
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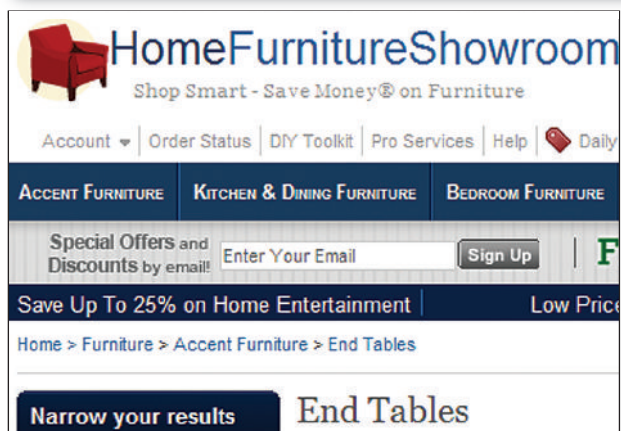
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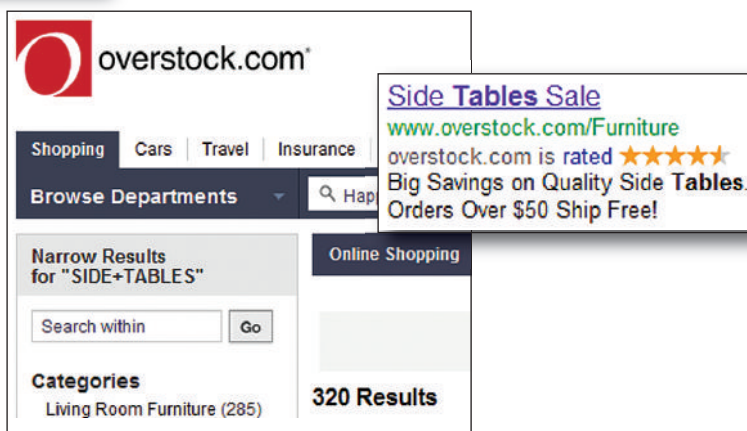
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HomeFurnitureShowroom.com (left) gets it right... a search for "end tables" brings up an ad for "end tables" which takes the visitor to the "end tables" category page of their site.

Overstock.com (below) gets it wrong... a search for "end tables" brings up an ad for "side tables" which takes the visitor to a "side tables" search result page on their site.



by source and cost. It is amazing how many retailers are flying blind with their marketing. With all the precise adjustments necessary in a profitable PPC account, thorough data is imperative. The most successful retailers are tying the gross profit from each subsequent sale back to the original click.

"In addition to a robust web analytics tool such as Google Analytics, you also want to record traffic source information (campaign, keyword, etc.) for each new customer in your CRM system in order to calculate lifetime value by source. You're paying for traffic according to the profit it brings you, so these metrics are crucial, especially if you close the final order in-store or over the telephone."

Mike: "Retailers should be measuring all their advertising expenditures with this kind of accuracy, but traditional media does not allow such tracking. Accountability is a big benefit of new media marketing such as PPC advertising. What's the next question retailers should be asking of their online advertising campaigns?"

Timothy: "Retailers need to consider how deeply their e-commerce landing pages are optimized for PPC traffic. Even if you don't do e-commerce, the pages the traffic lands on, needs to relate to the content of the PPC ad. While a one-to-one correlation of ad

to landing page may be overkill, every major PPC campaign and keyword theme deserves a relevant landing page. Cold traffic converts better with tightly integrated sequences of keywords, ads, and landing pages. You'll experience greater success when the messaging of each element matches visitor intent.

"This is an absolute must for retailers selling a multitude of products. The good news is that most e-commerce platforms naturally produce adequate PPC landing pages for every product and category. You want to avoid dropping PPC visitors onto a broad category landing page when their initial search query clearly indicated interest in a particular product or brand."

Mike: "What's next in website optimization?"

Timothy: "Every website experiences degrees of success. One strategy that can overcome nearly every other website deficiency is a top-down focus on testing and optimization. Even the lowest performing website can be turned around by simply listening to your visitors and existing customers. There are different ways to approach this – listening to sales/support calls, online survey tools, real-time site feedback widgets, and A/B or multivariate testing of your website. When

you increase your conversion rate, the value of every visitor increases. All things being equal, a higher converting website allows you to pay more for traffic which increases the flow.

"Landing pages and website order forms typically represent the highest leverage points for optimization. Want to gain or maintain a competitive advantage? Listening to your visitors is mandatory. Dramatic gains are common when your PPC campaigns and your website are being optimized through testing."

Mike: "This sounds like a lot of work for retailers. But I guess it is somewhat ridiculous to spend thousands of dollars on advertising and not know if you are doing it right or throwing money out the window. Should a retailer step back and look at the big picture of what they truly want to dominate as far as their PPC advertising is concerned?"

Timothy: "Absolutely. Compared with competitors, your current business model may not support PPC domination. All the landing pages and shopping cart optimizations in the world won't produce the gains required if your customer lifetime value is half that of your competitors. Sometimes you need to step back to ensure your products, offers, and pricing strategies will support aggressive paid search



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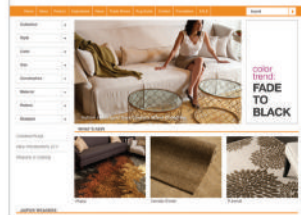


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"Even the lowest performing website can be turned around by simply listening to your visitors and existing customers. "

advertising. Don't be content to optimize copywriting and design details while leaving the bigger elements untested such as product positioning, offer, up sells, and customer follow-up marketing."

Mike: "At the end of the day it all comes down to profitability. I would think that an e-commerce retailer needs to determine if running a PPC or online advertising campaign is a wise investment in advertising dollars."

Timothy: "That's right. Lack of profitability in your current PPC program is often the most telling indicator of an underperforming website. When we take on new online advertising clients, we're almost always able to increase efficiency and profitability while we grow their account. When you can be profitable your account is ripe for marketplace domination with expert PPC account management. All that's required is a mutual focus on optimization. Incidentally, our clients often see this as one of the key benefits to outsourcing their PPC – they're able to redouble their efforts to optimize everything that occurs after the click."

Mike: "If any Furniture World readers are interested in learning more, what resources can you offer them?"

Timothy: "I can suggest two ways that furniture retailers may be able to learn more about this topic. If they go to: www.roirevolution.com/FurnitureWorld, there is a free report there entitled: "5 Questions to Maximize Profitability in High Spending AdWords Accounts". We'll share with you common mistakes companies make in their AdWords campaigns. While you are on the site if your company spends \$10,000 monthly or more for online

advertising, you can also sign up for a free 30 PPC Strategy Session. Just let us know that you read about it in Furniture World Magazine."

Mike: "You also have a very informative blog on your site so the readers should check that out as well. Thank you so much for your time and insight on some of the strategies furniture retailers should consider to run more profitable online advertising campaigns."

Timothy: Thanks Mike. "We like providing information to help people get the most out of their online advertising budgets."

Mike Root is President of Furniture Sales of Mid-America (www.furniture-sales.biz), a furniture wholesale and rep company in the Midwest and Rocky Mountain states. His perspective is one of a third generation furni-

ture guy who has been involved in many aspects of the furniture business including furniture retail, wholesale and rental. Mike has his finger on the pulse of the industry by serving on the Executive Committee of the International Home Furnishings Representative's Association (IHFRA) as well as the CQRID Advisory Board of the Interior Design Society.

Mike has been recognized by the Small Business Administration, the Omaha Chamber of Commerce, and numerous national furniture factories for sales and marketing excellence. Mike helps furniture retailers and factories through his company, Get Customers Right Now build their sales through the use of low cost and no cost direct response marketing strategies including online marketing and social media. If you have questions about this article or other marketing topics, email mroot@furninfo.com or visit www.MikeRoot.com.



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MEDIA MIX MAGIC

Part 4: The media game-changer for independent furniture stores: Leverage.

by Larry Mullins

“OK Mullins,” a large independent furniture store CEO said to me (on the phone after reading the last article in this Furniture World Series), “I am facing 10% advertising budgets from Big Box stores. Every week they jam the newspaper with full color flyers. They run lots of TV and direct mail. They have fancy websites. Yet you tell me I can ‘Leverage’ my own advertising and level the playing field. Is that word ‘Leverage’ just fancy marketing jargon, or does it really mean something? And if it does, how can I make it work for me in the real world?”

“Leverage” is not a flavor of the week marketing term. In ancient

times, Archimedes said: “Give me a long enough lever and a solid enough place to stand, and I could move the world.” I can’t give you an action plan to move the world, but I will describe a few of the rich marketing opportunities for independents that are now lying out there in plain sight. By putting the proven principles of evidence-based advertising to work, you will be able to leverage media in a way that will revitalize your market share like nothing else can.

However, as this CEO began to unfold the market challenges he faced, they indeed seemed formidable. The November/December article he referred to, noted that, “people lost in the wilderness die of shame. They

blame themselves for their predicament, and lament “If only I had done this –or that.” Yet, they fail to do the one thing that could save them, they fail to think. I wrote that many furniture independents feel as though they are lost in the wilderness, and they fail to think. But this CEO brushed aside my allegory. He insisted that he had been thinking. “I lie in bed at night thinking about the situation,” he said. And the more he thought, the more perplexing and challenging the situation seemed. He enumerated for me some of the daunting challenges he faced:

THE BIG BOX CHALLENGE

- Every week two or three Big Boxes



Who Are You?

What Are You Selling?

When Are You Selling?

Where Are You?

How Can I Buy If I Want It?

Why Should I Care?

This fine store barely mentions its name in 800 square inches of expensive advertising space, the store only shows four living rooms, one bedroom, one bunk bed, one dining set, four case pieces and four mattress sets. Q: If none of these offers appeal to me, is anything else on sale? • The ad tells me that stores will close at six on New Year’s Eve and New Year’s Day. Q: When do you open? Then it tells me in very small type that the sale ends on January 2. Q: Why didn’t you tell me up front that this is only a two day sale? • No store locations are mentioned. Q: Are you even in my city? Q: Is there a telephone number I can call? Q: Your website is barely visible. Can I find a telephone number and location information there? • 36 Months special financing sounds interesting. Q: Do you take credit cards? • Q: What’s in it for me? OK, you claim I will save money, but everybody is saying that. Q: Why should I buy from you and not a competitor?

Only current customers who already know the store will likely respond. Ads like this lose market share to more informative, unique, and engaging ads run by smart independents.

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Gene Tunney



Jack Dempsey crushes Jess Willard to win the title

Who's Afraid of the Manassas Mauler?

During the Roaring Twenties, Jack Dempsey was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He, too, was considered virtually invincible. Called the Manassas Mauler after his hometown in Colorado, he fought with ferocious energy, intimidating and defeating all opposition. Along came a challenger named Gene Tunney. How did Tunney conquer his fear and spot a fatal flaw that helped him defeat the Manassas Mauler?

run a full color, multi-page flyer claiming huge price reductions.

- They back this up with a massive TV presence.
- They often run flashy mailers.
- They have big selections, special credit offers, and well-trained, aggressive sales people.
- They are open more hours than he can duplicate.

I must admit that the situation looked pretty hopeless, at least the way he had framed the problem. But, perhaps the circumstances could be reframed in a less menacing way. Were there any advantages he had that the Big Boxes could not duplicate? Were there any vulnerabilities in their mass-produced marketing? [Radio, for example, is hopelessly fragmented in large markets, but is often reasonably effective in more rural areas]. Were there any media he could use that they were ignoring? Was he possibly losing market share because he was being intimidated and was frozen in the headlights? Was he training his customers to ignore him and make the drive to the big city to shop?

When you reframe a problem, sometimes miracles can happen.

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE MANASSAS MAULER?

During the Roaring Twenties, Jack Dempsey was the heavyweight boxing champion of the world. He, too, was considered virtually invincible. Called

the Manassas Mauler after his hometown in Colorado, he fought with ferocious energy, intimidating and defeating all opposition. Along came a challenger named Gene Tunney. Tunney was a scientific boxer who had studied films of Dempsey's fights for years. Tunney determined that Dempsey had a weakness that he believed he could exploit and use to defeat the champion. Dempsey had a devastating left hook. However, Tunney noted that just before Dempsey threw the left hook he lowered his left hand slightly, exposing his own jaw. Tunney became convinced that in that split second of exposure he could throw his own right and beat the champion to the punch. Repeatedly, Tunney visualized the right hand counterpunch in his mind. Finally, Tunney got his opportunity to fight Dempsey and he was positive he could win.

But a month before the fight, he made a serious mistake. He began reading the sports pages of six major newspapers. Almost no one believed Tunney had a chance. All the leading sportswriters picked Dempsey by a knockout.

Pictures began to form in Tunney's imagination—new pictures of defeat. He began to have nightmares. He dreamed he was lying beaten on the canvas with Dempsey poised nearby ready to finish him off if he got up. One night, he awoke and felt his bed shaking. He could not imagine what was happening. Then he realized he himself was shaking in fear. Terror overwhelmed him. Later he told the story of how he dealt with this difficult

situation:

"I couldn't stop trembling. Right there, I had already lost the ring match, which meant everything to me—the championship. I had lost it—unless I could regain it. I got up and took stock of myself. What could I do about the terror? I could guess the cause. I had been thinking about the fight in the wrong way. I had been reading the newspapers, and all they had said was how Tunney would lose. Through the newspapers I was losing the battle in my own mind ... When the nightmares persisted, despite my inner conviction that I knew how to beat Dempsey, and indeed would, I decided to stop reading the sports pages, and did, until after the fight. I simply had to close the doors of my mind to the destructive thoughts and divert my attention to other things."

Tunney's favorite pastime was reading. After training, instead of reading the sports pages, he began to read Shakespeare and his favorite classic literature. Even on the day of the big contest, he read and relaxed. On September 23, 1926, more than 145,000 fans jammed Sesqui centennial Stadium in Philadelphia for the historic event. A calm Gene Tunney awaited the mighty Manassas Mauler. When Dempsey stepped into the ring, Tunney got up from his stool and walked over to greet him. "Hello, champion," he said. Somewhat surprised, Dempsey replied, "Hello, Gene." When the bell rang, however, Dempsey was all business and began stalking the challenger. Shortly into the first round, Dempsey lowered his

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MEDIA MIX MAGIC

left hand in preparation for throwing his deadly hook. Instantly, just as he had mentally rehearsed it, Tunney unleashed a powerful right. The punch landed flush on Dempsey's cheek and jarred him down to his toes. He was stopped in his tracks. Tunney said later that he believed the fight was practically over the second he landed that powerful right hand:

"That blow won the fight. Dempsey was dazed for the rest of the battle, and I was a certainty to outpoint him for the championship. Jack was battered and worn out at the end, and I may have knocked him out if the bout went a few rounds more."

WHO'S AFRAID OF THE BIG BOXES?

The point of this allegory is that, likewise, the independent furniture retailer should reframe the situation in the light of Big Box vulnerabilities and his or her own advantages— not the

conventional assumptions of Big Box invincibility. Then, independents should develop an action plan to resolutely exploit those advantages. Obviously, there is no hope of wiping out Big Box competition. However, there is no excuse for progressively losing market share without taking several action steps that could turn the tide. Consider the hard realities:

1. The full color flyers produced by Big Boxes are look-alike, price-item productions that are produced in haste and virtually devoid of a persuasive story and consumer benefits. A well-designed and crafted flyer or even an ROP ad produced locally can produce much better results. (More and more newspapers are making this flyer service available). See the exhibit for more information about features you can show in your ads that Big Boxes can't, or won't. Also see the Furniture World article "Evidence-Based Advertising" posted to furnin-

fo.com at <http://bitly.com/tkHF8V>.

2. The TV commercials and websites used by Big Boxes lack local color and personality. This is especially true of their websites. Like their print media, they are sterile corporate products and have very little relation to the managers and owners of their local stores. Nearly all Big Box corporate websites have the same look for their landing page. There is usually a tab that says "About Us," with a long and tedious written document that no one reads. There should be a greeting video with the owner speaking directly to the individual prospect. Google loves content and video. Most independents have developed websites by now. But the tragedy is they rarely even look at them, let alone keep them updated and fresh. Make sure you create a personal greeting video and continuously update your content with your latest ads. This service should not be very expensive. One



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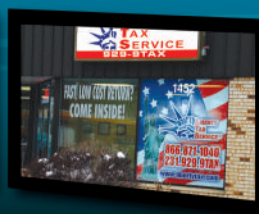
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"EAGLE GROVE"
"EVERYTHING IS ON SALE!"
"UP TO 65% OFF"
"EVERYTHING IS ON SALE!"

IN-STORE WAREHOUSE SELLOFF!

Pay as little as \$10 on the dollar for: Sofas, Recliners, Dining Chairs, Bookshelves, Mattresses, Bed Frames, and much more!

Buy gifts now at these historic reductions! Please ask about our FREE layaway plan!

Pay as little as \$10 on the dollar for: Sofas, Recliners, Dining Chairs, Bookshelves, Mattresses, Bed Frames, and much more!

Buy gifts now at these historic reductions! Please ask about our FREE layaway plan!

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The Most Daring Price Reductions in Our 63 Year History End Monday!

IN-STORE WAREHOUSE SELLOFF!

Pay as little as \$10 on the dollar for: Sofas, Recliners, Dining Chairs, Bookshelves, Mattresses, Bed Frames, and much more!

Buy gifts now at these historic reductions! Please ask about our FREE layaway plan!

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Buy gifts now at these historic reductions! Please ask about our FREE layaway plan!

The owner of a small store in Eagle Grove, Iowa, reported that this remarkably successful flyer attracted new customers and market share with effective use of the principles of Evidence-Based Advertising and Leverage: **WHO:** This is much more than simply putting a logo on an advertisement. New prospects actually see photos of the folks doing the sale, plus they learn about their years in business, their special qualifications, etc. The website of the store is clearly featured. **WHAT:** Instead of old fashioned item-price presentations, the prospect sees plenty of photos of a remarkable selection and some dramatic graphics of merchandise. Unique "grab bag" offers hit key price points. Free local delivery and set-up are featured. **WHEN:** Hours and dates are clearly established. **WHERE:** The address is embellished by a locator phrase, and a photo of the store is shown. **HOW:** Credit options are shown, "Layaways" are suggested. **WHY?** "What's in it for me?" The flyer is loaded with benefits. Women do not want a sofa or chair. They want more comfort and beauty for their home. People don't want a new mattress set. They want better, more refreshing sleep, freedom from the pain of morning backache, and health benefits.

belief, which is certainly understandable. Too often, however, Sunday closings are simply a convention or a convenience.) Everyone needs a day off, of course. But, if there is no religious issue about Sunday, why not take off Monday? Why train shoppers to drive to the Big Boxes every Sunday when, for some people, it is the only day the family can shop together? Sunday will usually produce more business per hour than any other day of the week. At the very least, be open at least two evenings a week.

independent I know in Minnesota had a well-scripted video done for his website by the local TV station. It was then professionally edited with additional graphics for a total cost of about \$300. (www.furnitureandmattresses4less.com). Hosting, and posting your ads on your website on a regular basis should be very reasonable in cost. Above all, monitor your website every week, minimum. A powerful website is a selling tool with immense ROI. The website potential is too often misused, underused, and poorly used by independents (and Big Boxes).

3. Mailings need not be fancy and expensive. Kingsley Furniture of Kingsley, Iowa made an appeal to a small rural market that was contained in a simple letter, black with one color. It stood out from the crowd because of its unique simplicity, persuasive copy, and interesting story. The mailing broke sales records. Sheri Smith of Ocala, Florida used a basic postcard to launch a successful G.O.B. event. In both cases the products were custom-designed to their needs by a

mailing service.

4. You won't be able to match the Big Box selection, of course. And, a prospect wants selection when she shops for furniture. Nevertheless, there are three things you can do to offset their advantage. First, show your selection. They won't. Their flyers show individual item-price offers, there is no conceptual presentation of selection. Second, weave benefits into your copy. The Big Boxes use label headlines and provide sterile nuts and bolt descriptions. They generally omit the consumer benefits associated with these product features. Third, remind folks that you are the hometown boy or girl. "We offer hometown service and big city selection."

5. Don't train your customers to shop the big city. People generally buy furniture as couples. They shop together. Many small independents close every weekday night at five or six. Then they are open a limited time on Saturday, and often close on Sunday. (Sometimes a Sunday closing is due to a sincere religious

A CHALLENGING AND EVOLVING INDUSTRY

The retailing of home furnishings has never been easy. Moreover, like every other industry these days, the rate of change is ferocious. And, regardless of our roles, those of us who count our time in the industry in decades rather than in years have never seen more difficult times. First big screen TVs took precedence over furniture, mattresses and new carpet. Then the housing market collapsed and a brutal general recession ensued. Those furniture chains and independents that are still standing can be proud.

Even as things begin to recover, survivors know that they must keep learning and improving to continue to survive. No one has all the answers. Thomas Edison once said: "We don't know one-millionth of one percent about anything." However, the take home message here is that—even in the face of furious change—the principles of selling at retail remain the

same. My first mentor, Clyde Bedell tirelessly insisted on principles that remain forever true: "All good selling is serving. People buy only to get benefits. The prevailing motivation of the prospective customer remains: 'What's in it for me? Why should I buy from you and not your competitor?'" The great home furnishings retailers of the future, large and small, will succeed for the same reasons as those of the past survived and flourished. They will be those who can tirelessly define their answers to these questions and tell about their USP with unique and compelling stories. Having a bedrock of wanted products and impressive core skills are necessary, but not fully adequate elements of success. What

is also needed is the ability to express through media and through your associates how these products and skills can improve and enrich the lives of your customers and their families.

Note: Passages about Gene Tunney and his defeat of Jack Dempsey were taken from *The MetaValues Breakthrough*, by Larry Mullins.

Larry Mullins is a contributing editor for *Furniture World* and has 30+ years of experience on the front lines of furniture marketing. Larry's mainstream executive experience, his creative work with promotion specialists, and mastery of advertising principles have established him as one of the foremost experts in furniture market-

ing. His affordable High-Impact programs produce legendary results for everything from cash raising events to profitable exit strategies. His newest books, *THE METAVALUES BREAKTHROUGH* and *IMMATURE PEOPLE WITH POWER...* How to Handle Them have recently been released by Morgan James Publishing. Joe Girard, "The World's Greatest Salesman" said of this book: "If I had read Larry Mullins' book when I started out, I would have reached the top much sooner than I did." Larry is founder and CEO of UltraSales, Inc. and can be reached directly at 904.794.9212 or at Larry@LarryMullins.com. See more articles by Larry at www.furnitureinfo.com or www.ultrasales.com.

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RETAIL STORIES

Part 11: Retailers share interesting stories of growth, hardship and their strategies for success.

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

There's always something new at the oldest furniture store in Texas!" After 135 years of business, Hermann Furniture has every right to its many claims to fame. From the day in 1876 when Gottlieb Hermann set foot at storied Galveston Island, once the headquarters of pirate Jean Lafitte, he and his descendants have consistently found ways to surprise, delight and reach out helping hands to their fellow Texans.

Perceptive Gottlieb took time to look around and assess potential areas of frontier growth, and he made the excellent decision to target Washington County, the "Birthplace of Texas", where the State's Declaration

of Independence had been signed in 1836. A German immigrant, he carried with him skills learned in the old country, earned his citizenship and began to build his own American dream.

It was an extraordinary period in history, the centennial year of the United States, Thomas Edison's invention of the mimeograph and Alexander Graham Bell's telephone and, famously, one of the nation's most contentious presidential elections to this date. Mark Twain published the classic "Adventures of Tom Sawyer" and, in Montana, Custer fought the Battle of Little Bighorn. What a year!

Washington County's town of

Brenham is the county seat, a halfway point between Houston and Austin, renowned as the heart of the Bluebonnet Region in Central Texas. The Bluebonnet Trails are a reminder of former First Lady Barbara Bush's initiative to "take advantage of and enhance the State's natural beauty". (And Barbara Bush, by the way, was one of Hermann's illustrious customers in her time.)

Back in the good old days, "If the customers didn't come to the store, the store went to them!" Gottlieb or one of his employees would load a wagon, tour the countryside and not return to Brenham until all the items were sold. Within a few years, the first washing



"Gottlieb or one of his employees would load a wagon, tour the countryside and not return to Brenham until all the items were sold."



HERMANN FURNITURE



In 1910 customers and people of the town gathered outside the store watching a speaker.

Delivery wagon complete with mule power from the early days.

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*The inside of
Hermann Furniture in
1918 and today.*



“Old fashioned home town hospitality is offered the moment one walks through any of Hermann’s doors. All visitors are offered complimentary refreshments while they browse and shop.”

machines were invented. They, too, were loaded on the wagon, and were demonstrated by the travelling salesmen in the prospective customers’ homes. “People from miles around would bring their laundry to the demonstration!”

Fourth generation John Hermann and his daughter, fifth generation Jennifer, are steeped in the history and traditions of the Hermann dynasty. “They came to America to find peace and quiet, no national conscription and the opportunity to create a business.”

The original enterprise, G. Hermann Furniture, was located on Brenham’s Main Street, a dirt road then, and right

downtown. An asset, the railroad ran through the town. Amongst other services, as cabinetmakers the Hermanns built caskets. “People were dying to do business with us!” quipped John. The first store “is housed in a structure of fine German architecture and craftsmanship, a treasure of our heritage”. As prosperity grew, Gottlieb offered “modern and fine brands of furniture”, helping to define his rapidly changing frontier community. And the reputation of Hermann’s quality grew.

“Visitors can still see traces of the businesses that occupied the building, the butcher shop, the funeral parlor and even an early Ford Auto Dealership once housed in a portion of the historic building. There are now three connected buildings and one additional structure where the General Store and Crafts Mall are located. The addition also houses the warehouse on the third floor and, at the back, delivery and staging trucks.”

By the late 1800s, times were prosperous in Washington County and, as the area developed, so did Hermann’s. Their reach expanded to seven locations throughout Texas. Gottlieb “remained a fixture in the original store, constantly expanding and improving the quality of the merchandise. He passed the store to his sons, Ernest and Will. A third son,

Arthur George (aka A.G.) opened a store in Yoakum, Texas. And his two sons, Arthur and Alfred, followed family tradition and chose careers in the furniture trade. Arthur joined his father in Yoakum, and Alfred established a store in Gonzales, Texas.”

It was Ernest and Will who steered the Brenham store through the difficult days of the Depression and then World War II. “People had nothing,” John said. “When people needed furniture, you traded it out, they paid what they could. Or we bartered. Customers would offer to work for their purchases, make deliveries for us. At that time we carried carpets and flooring, and they would help us with this area of the business. People just depended upon and looked out for each other. Yes, it was bad, but it was a family time, the warmth of a family working together.”

Ernest had no children and turned to his nephew, Alfred, as his successor. So Alfred became the third generation of Hermanns to head the store’s operation.

In 1974, Alfred died suddenly. His son, John, became the leader of the fourth generation. John acquired the store adjacent to the original building and expanded the business to its present size.

But, says John, it was the addition of his daughter, Jennifer, 15 years ago,

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A photo taken in the 1920s outside Hermann Furniture.

the fifth generation, "whose creative talents have made Hermanns the unique and well-shopped Hermann Furniture that we see today".

Jennifer added, "I began in the store when I was real little, dusting up as high as I could reach, and helping to assemble items in the back. And doing repairs, too. I loved riding on the cargo elevator, and being pushed on the furniture dolly through the store! In school, I was an Arts Major, creative, very interested in design. I've helped Dad to build on our rich history and transform Hermanns into its present conformation".

With Jennifer's influence, the Hermann Furniture Company now consists of five shops "providing a variety of unique items in the home furnishings industry space. As you enter the main building, you'll find a beautiful, two-storey 30,000 square foot showroom, high-lighting new, high quality, traditional home furnishings, accessories and gifts. We have been honored to become a Flexsteel Gallery and also a Kincaid Gallery.

"I observed that customers would come out, walk through the Mall and then leave. It occurred to me that what we needed was more small stuff." -John Hermann

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Interior photos of Hermann Furniture.



“Thousands of fabric selections are on display here to customize shoppers’ upholstery selections, and a designer is on staff to assist them.”

“Then there’s the Floral and Design Center, custom silk floral arrangements and our home decorating services.” Thousands of fabric selections

are on display here to customize shoppers’ upholstery selections, and a designer is on staff to assist them. “Customers are encouraged to take

home samples to view the spaces where the new pieces will be used to ensure fabrics will coordinate and enhance existing colours and lighting. As well, resource catalogues are offered to broaden searches for the perfect piece.” Custom drapery and bedding are a necessary and useful adjunct. Personal in-home consultations are also offered. Jennifer tells us she prefers to “hand-sketch design opportunities, more personal than computer technology”.

Jennifer’s artistic touch has created great interest in the use of floral displays. Hermann’s continues to expand on this new initiative with the addition of Hermann’s Backdoor, added to offer a greater selection of garden and floral design. A compliment to the spirit of the past!

At the Hermann Antique Mall, customers are offered both antique furniture and vintage accessories. Jennifer explained that 40 “different dealers have space in the building, so their offerings are a little bit of everything, very eclectic!” Added John, “In the late ‘80s, early ‘90s, I had extra space and didn’t know what to do with it, so the Antique Mall came into existence. I observed that customers would come out, walk through the Mall and then leave. It occurred to me that what we needed was more small stuff. Customers would have to walk past

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the enticing displays as they entered, and also as they left, an incentive to purchase. It works!"

There is a big, annual Antique Show at Round Top and Warrenton, two nearby towns. The week-long event is "very popular, well-attended. People come from all over the country. And the thousands who visit the Show just naturally spill over to Hermann's!"

The Hermann Craft Mall is a story all by itself. It features a huge variety of handcrafted gifts and artwork, soaps, jewellery and items for children. It's a great attraction for both the local community and the many tourists who come from Houston, Bryan, Austin and out of State to visit this historic enclave and Hermann's in particular. The Mall still boasts the original tin ceiling and wood floors of the old Ford automobile dealership, and the quaint ambience is maintained throughout the Mall. (Jennifer is an enthusiastic craftsperson herself, "I'm really into it!")

A favourite booth within the Craft Mall is a reflection of the far reaching insight of The Art Center, an Active Treatment Workshop and a satellite of Brenham Production Services. The Art Center itself is located on the campus of Brenham State School, a residential facility for people with developmental disabilities. The program features the talent and creativity of the artists who reside at the School, and the arts and crafts they produce working mostly with donated items. The Art Center was originally designed to be a therapeutic part of individual treatment plans, and has morphed into a viable business outlet for those talented artists, endowed with a strong desire to be creative, who are unable to work in mainstream selling because of their physical limitations. The Art Centre is one of the Hermanns many

outreach involvements in the community. (If you are interested in this program, the Hermanns suggest you contact Pam Rhoades, Art Center instructor, 979-836-4511, extension 1570, for more information.)

Since 1996, the fifth outlet, the Hermann General Store offers an inventory typical of the original concept of the village emporium. Gourmet Texan foodstuffs bearing the Hermann label are plentiful and in demand, "salsas, marinades, candies, pickles, jams, jellies, relishes, sauces, asparagus, several dips – pineapple, pecan, cream cheese". Explore the shelves and displays and you'll find specialty children's clothing, local souvenirs, soaps and lotions, books and custom gifts.

Old fashioned home town hospitality is offered the moment one walks through any of Hermann's doors. All visitors are offered complimentary refreshments while they browse and shop. "It's a warm and welcoming place to spend an afternoon collecting ideas and discovering your design style."

Since Jennifer joined her father full

time, they have introduced a multitude of innovations, including the many workshops staged throughout the year, great "brand" reinforcement and incentive for traffic growth. Topics range from the hanging of art in the home, to floral design, to tablescape, design presentations for special dinners and many other themes. "Six or seven years ago, when the workshops began, our presenter was a former design teacher from a college in Houston; now I do it," said Jennifer, "and I find it gratifying and enjoyable. People are so responsive. I also go out to home and garden clubs to address the members. And we do house tours. And I've opened my own

"Since Jennifer joined her father full time, they have introduced a multitude of innovations, including the many workshops staged throughout the year, great 'brand' reinforcement and incentive for traffic growth."



Pictured is Hermann Furniture's floral and Design Center featuring custom silk floral arrangements, carpet samples and a huge selection of fabrics.



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Pictured above is John Hermann with State School in their booth at the Crafts Mall. Also, a recent photo of John and Jennifer Herman.



home at Halloween and on other occasions; it's a multi-level old English style house. Had lots of traffic!

"In my spare time," Jennifer laughs, "I also design the stores' interiors. And I have a designer with a great background on my team.

"We're delighted that the local school sends their Home Economics students to us for both tours and workshops. They are also very interested in the Crafts Mall."

John and Jennifer's inspiration and ingenuity create special events, some seasonal. Christmas in July involves taking a section of the store, setting up trees, persuading Santa to brave the Texas summer heat and temporarily leave the North Pole to entertain the children, and decorating the area skillfully to "get people in the mood. If they want to change a room around at home before the holiday season in

time to welcome guests, they are able to order early and be sure their new space will be complete. Of course, we mount a simultaneous sale."

At the appropriate time, the Easter Bunny Sale makes its appearance.

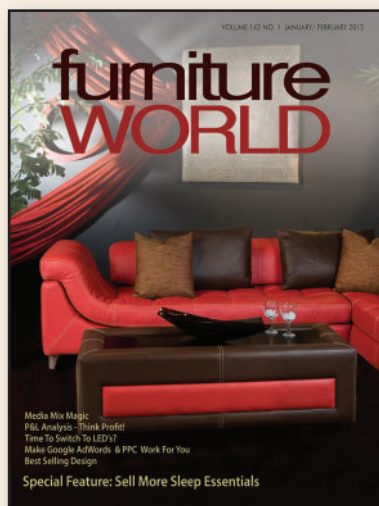
In store, events are created around styling themes. "We've transported customers to the living room of a French Country Cottage. On other occasions, we've featured English Country and, very popular, a Tuscan Ranch look. And quality furniture and accessories are on display to assist shoppers in creating their own style

approaches."

The father/daughter team has developed some unique marketing directions between them. Jennifer's sense of humor provoked her to tell the story of an off-the-wall family marketing approach several decades old. "At my father's house when he was little, they had one of the first televisions in the neighborhood and, of course, you could get one at the store. His Dad would turn the television to the window and people would bring their lawn chairs over and watch television in the yard. This would lead them to come in to the store the next day and purchase their own television!"

John insists that "The turning point in the business's growth was when Jennifer came back in the store. She is Hermann's future. I am guiding and helping her. And she is doing a great job." John leads the business operations and Jennifer's fingers are on the pulse of anything and everything creative.

"We had hard times here locally when the oil industry died; there just was no business. People just didn't buy very much. We now carry such a diversity (of product lines) that if people can't afford a \$2,000 sofa, they can still buy a lamp or other accessories. And we are so well stocked with accessories!"



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HERMANN FURNITURE

"And," said Jennifer, "in keeping with twenty-first century marketing methodology, we're now selling on the Internet. We're doing very well, starting off with the General Store, promoting food products and accessories." (View the merchandise at www.hermannfurniture.com under the General Store button.) "We hope to add furniture and more accessories online in the latter part of 2012."

Last November, the celebrations attendant upon the 135th anniversary were a week long event. "State Representative Lois W. Kolkhorst, Brenham city officials and representatives from the Hermann Furniture Company, gathered for the ribbon-cutting outside the Hermann Furniture building in historic downtown Brenham, Texas." Appetizers and live music were on hand, and there was an open invitation for customers to "stop by, enjoy some wine and cheese, and take advantage of special promotions and daily give-

aways".

Jennifer said, "It is great that Hermanns is recognized as the oldest family owned and operated furniture store in Texas. A lot has changed over the years, but the extraordinary shopping experience we provide for our customers hasn't. 'A good product at a fair price' is our motto. We stand behind our product. We believe in dealing with our customers as if they were part of our own family, a deep-rooted tradition."

Inevitably, with any thriving old family business, there are tales to be told by the fireplace at midnight! One of John's and Jennifer's favorites, concerns spectral Uncle Ernest. "When things go bump in the night, or maybe pieces of furniture move about seemingly by themselves, people have seen an elderly gentleman wearing a hat coming down one of the several staircases in the building. And they always smell cigar smoke! And that's very strange, because we don't permit smoking anywhere in the building." Jennifer laughed, "I can attest that there have been a couple of sightings!"

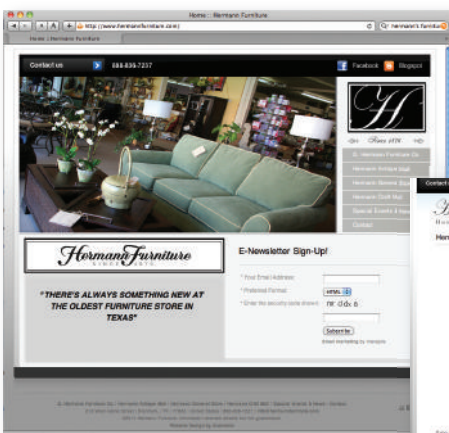
The most recent story doesn't seem to have a ghost involved, but it is a tad strange. Now remember this is a really old building. "Towards the back of the store one day, the floor upstairs dropped about two feet in one area. No one was under it or walking on it above, but it made a really loud noise. And it was pretty weird looking!" Was Uncle Ernest looking for another way down?

Barbara Bush was not the only famous customer. Renowned country music stars Pam Tillis and Doug Supernaw are also Hermann fans.

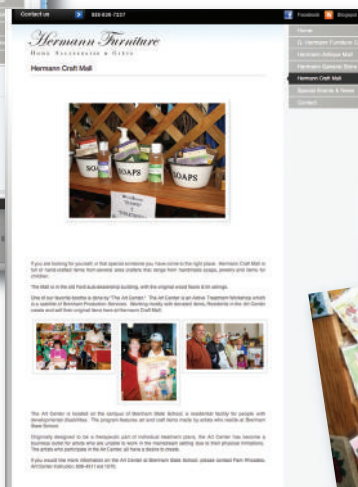
The future? Said Jennifer, "The Hermanns have been willing over the many decades to change with the times, try new things, adapt to the economy and support from our loyal customers. We'll continue our present path, evolving with whatever is in style in our old-fashioned way."

Hermann's website carries the message to customers that "Your home is your story and it should be the best story you've ever told". Sound advice for consumers everywhere.

And, says Jennifer, "We just can't wait to get to work every day!"



Pictured above is the home page of the Hermann Furniture website at www.hermannfurniture.com. The Company has ventured into e-commerce starting with their General Store merchandise.



The Hermann Craft Mall features a huge variety of handcrafted gifts and artwork, soaps, jewellery and items for children, a great attraction for both the local community and the many tourists who come from Huston, Bryan, Austin and out of State. Featured in the Craft Mall is the Art Center that sells crafts items by residents of Brenham State School.



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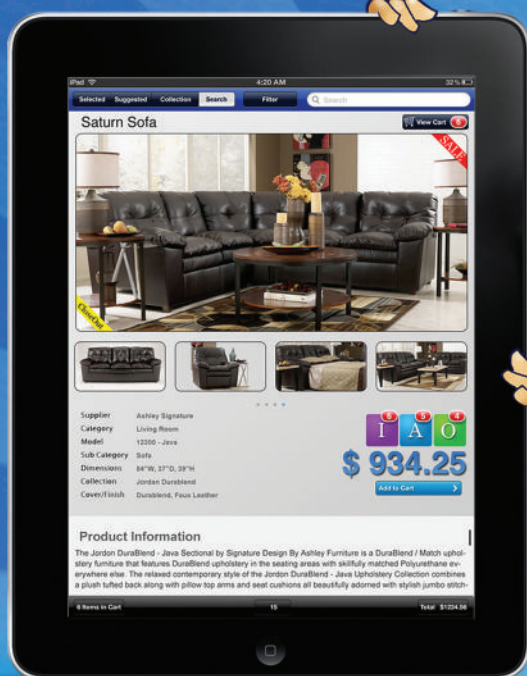
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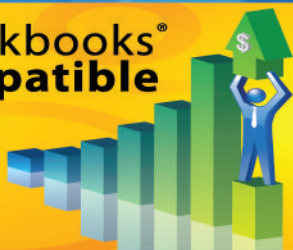
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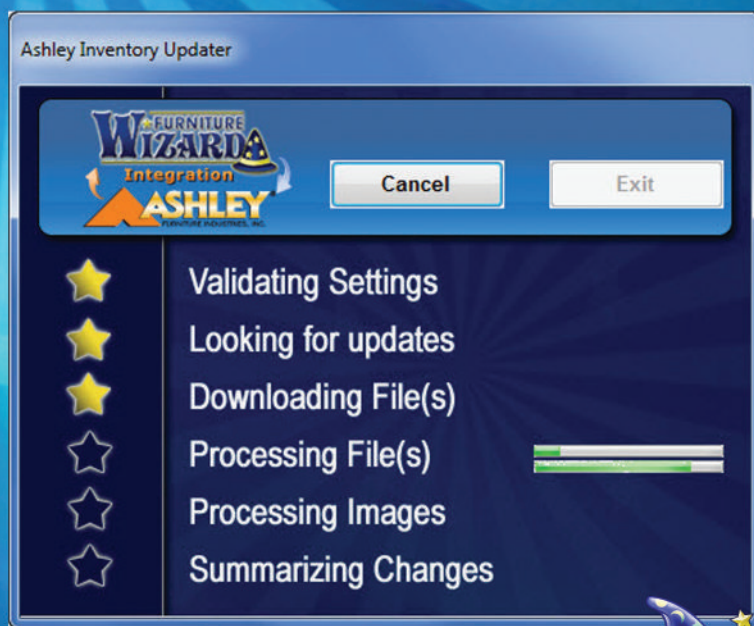
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Capel Rugs	800-382-6574	info@capel.net	39	MicroD	800-964-3876	monanigam@microdinc.com	41
Cliff Show	+86-20-26080427	ciff@fairwindow.com.cn	43	MIFF Furniture Fair	603-9282-2888	info@miff.com.my	61
Cory Home Delivery	201-795-100	patrickcory@corycompanies.com	19	Morry Dicker	1-800-521-9935	mdaassoc@aol.com	63
Country View Woodworking	330-674-1390	rmiller@cwiltd.com	15	Nouveau Concept	800-465-0716	info@nouveauconcept.com	12
Cruise4Two	866-541-8077	shawn@cruise4two.com	59	Ohio Hardwood Furn Mkt	877-643-8824		45
Décor-Rest Furniture	905-856-5956	christina@decor-rest.com	37	Omnia Leather	909-393-4400	anthony@omnialeather.com	1
Diakon	703-530-0677	dgreen@diakonlogistics.com	74	Planned Furniture Promotions	800-472-5242	tliddell@pfpromotions.com	Cover 3
Dutailier Furniture	800-363-9817	davidf@dutailier.com	37	Profit Management Promotions	215-343-8700	roncoop15@yahoo.com	31
Elran	800-361-6546	erica@elran.com	36	PROFITSystems	866-595-9376	info@profitsystems.net	29
Ergomotion	805-979-9400	info@ergomotion.us	33	Service Lamp	800-222-5267	jeana@servicelamp.com	53
Fabrictech	800-758-8563	sbergman07@gmail.com	20-21	Shaw Living	800-282-7429	kim.barta@shawinc.com	36
Feizy Rugs	214-747-6000	emitre@feizy.com	39	Slit Tags	877-235-3095	russ@furninfo.com	67
Flex-A-Bed	800-648-1756	info@flexabed.com	17	Storis	888-478-6747	ccuan@storis.com	13
Furniture Team	717-361-7858	pete@furnitureteam.com	28	Surya	706-625-4823	satya.tiwari@surya.com	6-7, 69
Furniture Wizard	619-482-2613	wizard@furniturewiz.com	72-73	TD Retail Card Services	732-290-0121	parnespr@optonline.com	11
Galt Display Rack	800-461-3892	Jason@galtdisplayrack.com	67	The Rug Market	323-930-0202	marketing@therugmarket.com	39
Genesis Software	509-536-4739	info@genesissadvantage.com	55	Truck Skin	877-866-7546	joe@truckskin.com	57
H•Home	954-258-1783	reed3cs@aol.com	34	UltraSales	303-530-5366	lmullins@ultrasales.com	30
Human Touch	562-606-4822	acorkill@humantouch.com	35	ViewIt Technologies	800-449-9984	info@spaceplanning.com	47
Jaipur Rugs	404-351-2360	Jason.Moody@jaipur rugs.com	49-50	Wallbeds	800-934-6711	wallbeds@surewest.net	65
Jaunty Rugs	800-323-3342	knavid@jauntyinc.com	38	World Market Center	702-599-9621	cdonero@lasvegasmarketcenter.com	Cov 4
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*Thank you very much,
Marvin Sherman, President & Owner*



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