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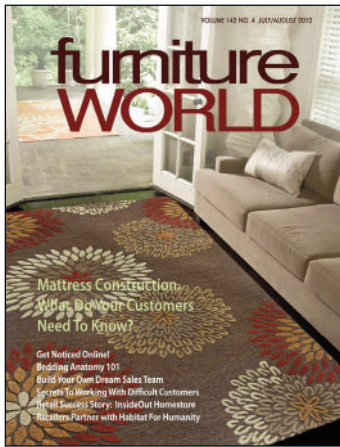
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CONTENTS

FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE

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Cover: Featured on this month's cover is the Kyoto Design from the Travers Collection from Jaipur Rugs. Jaipur provides thoughtfully crafted lifestyle-driven products that are beautiful, comfortable and socially responsible. These Rugs feature spirited designs hand-tufted in 100% wool that explore motifs from the vibrantly diverse cultures of the world. For More information on collections from Jaipur Rugs, see page 49 in this issue, or visit www.jaipur rugs.com

Finance



08 The Lost Secrets Of Scientific Selling - Part 2

In Part One of this series we learned the secrets of identifying difficult customers. Now we will examine the lost art of mastering our relationships with them. learning how to develop productive and mutually beneficial relationships with the toughest and most elusive personality types.

Marketing



20 The Merits of "Show & Tell"

Sales personnel who fail to explain industry terminology and the unique features that benefit the potential buyer, frequently fall back on price and discounts to close the sale.

22 From Trash To Treasure

Habitat ReStore and Louisville area furniture stores Haverty's and Ashley Furniture Homestores create a win-win-win for the retailers, customers and the community by encouraging furniture donations and pick up.

Operations



32 Best Selling Design

Editors' picks of best selling furniture and accessory designs.

38 Bedding Anatomy 101

The past seven installments in this series on selling better bedding presented tools and techniques the best retail furniture stores use to price, promote and present mattresses, pillows, mattress protectors and foundations. This time, we start an exploration of mattress components and construction with when, why and how to bring up components and construction.

Sales Education



54 Building Your Dream Team - Part 1

This is the first in a series of articles you can use to build a Dream Team from the ground up. This time you will get an overview of the three skills your team has to master to excel at home furnishings sales.

Retail Stories



64 Get Noticed Online

In a cluttered online world, attending to the basics of good website design and marketing can make a huge difference to your furniture business. Covered are practical tips and techniques.

72 Retail Success Stories - Part 14

Design oriented Insideout Homestore, has fun while expanding its business with a new store theme, social networking initiatives and selling condo packages.

Member BPA
Association of
Business Publishers
 Furniture World Magazine
 1333A North Ave. #437
 New Rochelle, NY 10804
 Tel: 914-235-3095

FURNITURE WORLD: (ISSN0738-890X) - Published every other month by Towse Publishing Co., 1333-A North Avenue, #437 New Rochelle, NY 10804. Subscription: \$19 per year; \$39.00 for 3 years, \$29 Canada, \$4/copy; Foreign \$89; (USD only). Periodical postage paid at New Rochelle, NY and additional mailing offices. US POSTMASTER: Send address changes to Furniture World, PO Box 16044, St. Louis, MO 63105. Publications Mail Agreement Number 41659018. Return undeliverable Canadian addresses to: PO Box 875, STN A, Windsor ON N9A 6P2. Copyright 2012 Towse Publishing Company, all rights reserved. Reproduction in whole or in part is strictly prohibited.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Selling mattresses is about to get more adversarial.

If you sell Mattresses, it's worth taking a look at "Mattresses: Comfort doesn't have to cost you big bucks" from the August 2012 issue of 'Consumer Reports'. It's based on a survey of 17,500 subscribers who were asked about their experiences with mattress retailers and brands.

The article posits that mattress retailers purposely make the shopping process confusing, and advises consumers to only buy at a deep discount, or after negotiating to avoid getting ripped off. It tells them to comfort test the cheapest mattresses first and, to keep their old boxspring if it isn't broken. It also states that buying a more expensive set doesn't correlate strongly with getting a 'better' mattress.

It is easy to refute the study's short-term focus and facile conclusions, but doing this with your customer will take a bit of skill. It's hard to argue a point with someone who has been told that you can't be trusted. The article sends a message that will likely make the process of helping your customers to find the right mattress more adversarial.

On the bright side, you now have an opportunity to review your sales approach to identify ways to build trust by helping sales associates to communicate truthful and convincing replies to implied needs masked as customer objections.

Toward this end, I hope that you will check out the seventh part of our series, "Better Bedding and Mattress Sales" in this issue. In it you will find helpful survey research from GoodBed.com, as well as practical sales tips and techniques that will help you to frame and role-play your responses.

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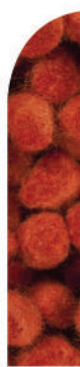
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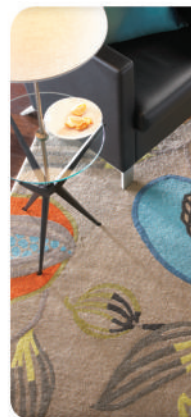
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THE LOST SECRETS OF SCIENTIFIC SELLING

Part 2: The secrets of handling difficult customers.

by Larry Mullins

In Part One of this series we learned the secrets of identifying difficult customers. Now we will examine the lost art of mastering our relationships with them, learning how to develop productive and mutually beneficial relationships with the toughest and most elusive personality types.

First, recall the four personality types introduced in the May/June issue of Furniture World. If you missed this article, it is available in the marketing article archives section on the furninfo.com website.

the sales process as a duel between him and the salesperson. He is closed-minded and aggressive. His essential needs are for esteem and independence. He is an unwilling and suspicious listener. What techniques can we use to establish a productive relationship with this personality?

THE REAL HARRY HAIGHT. THE MAN NO ONE KNOWS

In reality, Harry is not so tough as he would like you to think. He is a deeply troubled man, sincere when he says he sees the world as a dangerous place. He believes that people are as hostile toward him as he is to them, but he "knows" that most people are afraid to show their fangs. Harry encounters few people as assertive and fearless as he appears to be, so he presumes that most of the world is easy to bully, if he shows them who is boss.

Harry Haight is like a man on a log roll; he keeps running faster and faster, the log keeps spinning faster and faster, and he has to keep going or he'll fall into the water. He has no choice, because the water is full of sharks just waiting for him to slip. He cannot admit, even to himself, the dread and emptiness he feels deep within. One thing is for sure, Harry never really laughs at himself. If there is a single sign of a man in serious trouble, it is one who no longer can laugh at his own foibles.

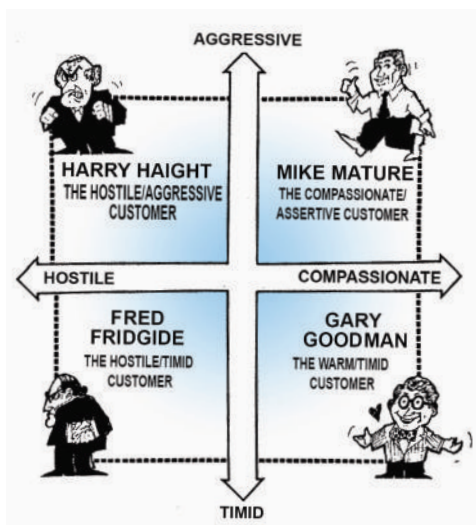
8 POSITIVE TACTICS FOR HANDLING HARRY HAIGHT

Tactic #1: keep cool and never, never let Harry provoke or intimidate you into an argument. Never be defensive.

- Harry Haight is in his area of expertise when he argues ... and he is very effective at it. Further, he can be arbitrary and unreasonable if he has half an excuse.

Tactic #2: Listen! Listen! Listen! Actively listen to what Harry says and how he is saying it.

- Active listening is tremendously effective in dealing with Harry Haight. His ego loves it. Actually it is a rare experience for Harry to have someone REALLY listen to him; most people are too intimidated to ACTIVELY listen to him. Active listening shows that you RESPECT Harry's ideas, and he needs this badly. Listen WITHOUT COMMENT and remember you are not necessarily agreeing with him. Here are several tactical rules for active listening, most of which were developed by Dr. Carl Rodgers:
- Ask occasional questions during pauses. Probe with questions to determine what Harry is trying to communicate. Convey that you understand and accept Harry's feelings, though not necessarily that you agree with them.



Let's examine them, beginning with the most difficult customer of all, Harry Haight, the Hostile/Aggressive personality. The first step in understanding Harry, is to find out what motivates him. Harry Haight looks at



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"Harry Haight is a man on a log roll, running faster and faster to keep from failing. Active listening is tremendously effective in dealing with Harry Haight. His ego loves it."

- Don't let wild, irrelevant remarks go by. Show you are listening by calmly probing Harry's irrational and tangential asides with questions.
- Never interrupt or comment while Harry is in high gear. LISTEN! If he says something wrong, eventually ask for clarification. WHEN he gives clarification, simply KNIT YOUR BROW in deep concern and imply by your manner that you are intently concentrating on his statements.
- At appropriate lulls, summarize for Harry. Show you understand and have listened carefully by saying, "I believe I see what you mean. You are saying that... (repeat his comments)... Is that correct?"
- When and if Harry slows down and appears to be receptive, make your own comments honestly and frankly. You want to move Harry into a constructive problem-solving mode. Don't ramble or beat around the bush. State your point of view. Then SHUT UP. Let Harry speak next. NEVER speak before he does. It shows uncertainty, and the first person who speaks loses.
- If Harry's comment upon your position is evasive, you are perfectly correct if you ask him to summarize what you just said. Of course you must do this carefully, something like this: "Mr. Haight, I guess I failed to make my statement clear. What do you think I was trying to say?"

#3: Tactics to use against Harry's temper tantrum.

If Harry has a temper tantrum, some special techniques are needed. Use all of the above active listening

techniques, plus a few of these emergency tactics. REMEMBER that Harry WANTS to blow up. LET HIM. Help him—encourage him! That's right! After his first wave of anger, ask for more!

"I understand why you're angry! What else happened when they delivered your recliner?" "Could you tell me any more about it?" "They did? Wow, no wonder you are angry!" The idea is to use the old complaint department trick: TALK HIM TIRED. If he starts to run down, encourage him to keep going.

- Stare at Harry's mouth. This works like magic. Listen attentively, but stare at his mouth if he gets especially abusive.
- Use the "Columbo" technique. When Harry has made an unfair and violent attack on you, you may handle it this way, provided you have the facts:

You look defeated. Then at the last moment you pause. "Mr. Haight," you say, looking confused, "there is just one thing I don't understand." You will be surprised about how gently he will reply, something like: "Yes, what is it?"

"Well sir, you say we overcharged you for your recliner. But, I could not find a lower price for this recliner anywhere. I know that there is something I may have missed, but maybe you could explain to me where you saw it at a lower price?" Harry will probably bluster a bit, but if you have your facts right, he will respect you for standing up to him, even in this indirect way. Also, you did it in a manner that he could not take as a

threat.

Tactic #4: Question! Question!

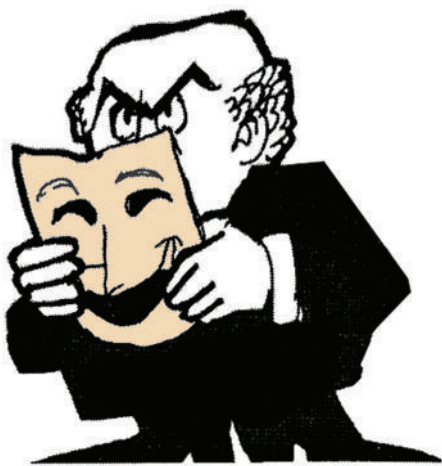
- Probing is a common technique for salespersons. Remember, probing is always effective and valuable. Probe Harry's statements; ask for additional information. Show you are listening and want to know more.

Tactic #5: Have the facts! Know the facts!

- Nothing succeeds with Harry like knowing what you are talking about. And, nothing will bring out his fangs



"Use the 'Columbo' technique. When Harry has made an unfair and violent attack on you, you may handle it this way, provided you have the facts..."



"When Harry is manipulating someone, he deliberately uses what is called a MASK TACTIC. Nothing succeeds with Harry like knowing what you are talking about. And nothing will bring out his fangs faster than an unsupported and unwarranted assertion."

faster than an unsupported and unwarranted assertion. Any statement you make must be supported by cold, hard facts. Harry is very suspicious of unsupported, empty claims, since he himself is so often guilty of making them. Don't ever attempt to use the same tactics with him! Harry loves charts, pictures, graphs and similar data... the more the better. Be sure, though, that they are accurate and significant!

Tactic #6: Be firm. Don't capitulate! Harry hates quitters!

- Harry cannot stand weak, passive people. He respects confidence and strength. Once in a while say: "In my opinion" or, "In my judgment." Your use of the word "my" (or "I") shows confidence. Hang in there, quietly, and patiently. Stick to your guns.

Tactic #7: how to handle sarcasm.

- Harry will often attack strong people in a different way, with little nasty barbs, especially around an audience. Most often these remarks are

made in a "kidding" way, but Harry is not kidding. Harry usually does this needling at a time when it seems socially inappropriate for you to respond. This type of aggression is effective only if the victim is intimidated by the presence of other people by social convention. If you are on the receiving end of this type of aggression you will likely have the impulse to smile and shrug off the remark. Avoid the desire to go along with the interaction in a passive way, avoid the "peace at any price" temptation. You must challenge such snipes or you will be the victim over and over again. You must let Harry know that you have coldly noted his aggression.

This is difficult, because you cannot put Harry in the position of being challenged in front of others. On the other hand, you must interrupt the interaction. There are two relatively safe ways to do this. One is to simply probe his casual remark with cool curiosity. This is effective if you have strong data to refute his state-

ment. Your probe might go: "I don't understand why you said THAT, Mr. Haight. Are you kidding?" Don't be afraid to challenge a totally false and unfair barb with factual data. Do it once or twice and Harry will avoid testing you again.

If Harry's remark is simply some kind of a nasty, unanswerable snide, you still must react, and not by smiling and shrugging it off. DON'T SMILE if you think the remark is uncalled for. The only effective alternative is to use the cold pause and the iceberg stare. Simply stop and stare frankly at Harry (instead of staring at your feet). Then, purposefully break off the stare and perform some physical act. Move some object with authority, crisply organize your papers, or some other positive, confident action. It doesn't matter if the action has specific meaning, simply that it is performed with an air of confidence. These three actions, the cold pause, the bold stare and the confident action should effectively break the interaction.

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"Fred is a "hanger-on" who only wants to survive. Slow down! You need to move almost in slow motion or you will cause Fred to withdraw."

THE MASKS OF HARRY HAIGHT

Harry is actually a con man at heart. He can be as charming and sweet as anyone when he needs to be. When Harry must use manipulative tactics, he does so with great gusto. When Harry is manipulating someone, he deliberately uses what is called a MASK TACTIC. He usually acts the role of the good guy, Mike Mature or Gary Goodman. Beware of mask tactics.

Our next difficult customer is Fred Fridgide. Fred is a Hostile/Timid personality, and has a similar world view as Harry Haight, but he is very different in how he attempts to cope. Very different tactics are required when dealing with him.

THE REAL FRED FRIDGIDE

Fred Fridgide is a man who is afraid. He sees the world much as Harry Haight sees it. Fred would agree with Harry that people are dangerous and self-serving. He is as hostile toward the world around him as Harry Haight is to his world. The difference is that Fred has a very negative self-image. He is not assertive and courageous the way Harry is. He is, in fact, timid. He seeks order, security, predictability, and sameness.

Yet, even though Fred is timid, he is not helpless. His passiveness is obvious, but he bitterly resents anyone who takes advantage of him. Fred broods and plans revenge against anyone who would exploit him. Fred is a dead-end, the original loser. You could contrast Fred's situation with Harry's in this manner: Harry Haight is

a man on a log roll, running faster and faster to keep from falling... while Fred is holding on to his log and trying to keep it from moving! Each man sees the "waters" around him as dangerous and shark-infested, yet each takes a different attitude. Harry is a fighter and he refuses to show any fear; Fred is a "hanger-on" who only wants to survive.

SIX POSITIVE TACTICS FOR HANDLING FRED FRIDGIDE

You are dealing with a man who is suspicious, and who needs reassurance. Dealing with Fred requires great patience. Fred will attempt to handle problems by indirectly rejecting them. He avoids, rather than directly challenging them. Fred avoids by procrastinating, by refusing to comment upon a situation, by simply withdrawing and acting indifferent, and by making one objection after another to suggested solutions.

Tactic #1: Project a reassuring, dependable image

- Slow down! You need to move almost in slow motion or you will cause Fred to withdraw.
- Be moderate in your speech. Pitch your voice a tone or two lower and modulate it pleasantly. Use short sentences and moderate words. Never try to impress him with large words and complicated thinking. Project candor and honesty. Know your subject, be confident and pleasant.
- Never act familiar, or too quickly assume Fred has been won over. Do not take Fred's trust for granted; you

must constantly rebuild this relationship.

- Fred hates aggressive people, but he also has a deep distrust of a sugary, goody-goody individual.

Tactic #2: Question! Listen! Consider!

One of the better ways to break the ice with Fred is to use probing questions and masterful pauses.

- When you ask a question, wait patiently for the answer. Sooner or later Fred will speak, and when he does, consider his words carefully.
- When Fred does reply, wait a bit before you answer or make another statement; Fred will distrust you if you too quickly shoot from the hip and reply instantly.

Tactic #3: Pause! Pause! Pause!

- The pause is the most effective weapon in your arsenal for dealing with Fred Fridgide. NEVER talk to fill up the spaces and the gaps in the conversation. These gaps are the parts of a communication situation that Fred likes best!
- If Fred begins a particular behavior to avoid listening to you, like looking out of a window or reading something, simply pause. Wait until he is tracking you again. Remember that Fred does not perform these actions of avoidance to be consciously rude and insensitive. They are simply habits he has developed. They are not directed toward you, but rather at life in general.
- Deep down Fred wants to be led, but he does not want to be taken advantage of.

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"Fred wants you to make decisions for him... but he never wants to be pushed. You must guide him to obvious conclusions and then leave him alone."

tage of. Leading Fred along without seeming to dominate him requires unusual skill. Do not be disturbed if he pauses last several minutes. Wait Fred out. Understanding the power of a pause can greatly improve your skills as a communicator.

Tactic #4: Lead - Take the initiative, but never, never push!

- Fred wants you to make decisions for

him, but he never wants to be pushed. You must guide him to obvious conclusions and then leave him alone. Fred will permit you a degree of latitude if he believes that he can trust you, and that you are dependable and honest.

Tactic #5: Try to get Fred involved.

- This can be accomplished by the process of probing, by asking for his advice and listening carefully. Never be phony with Fred (or anyone else!), but seek to compliment him if you can honestly do so. Seek to establish some common ground for better communication.

Tactic #6: Know the facts, but don't overwhelm Fred!

- Fred hates someone who lords over him. On the other hand, Fred is impressed by someone who has confidence, who knows his subject and can communicate it.
- Use reassuring communication, but never act ingratiating. Fred is often an emotional drag, so try to get "up" for your conversations with him and never let him know he is annoying you or draining your enthusiasm.

DIFFICULT CUSTOMERS

THE MASK TACTICS OF FRED FRIDGIDE

Little need be said about the mask tactics and strategies of Fred Fridgide. Fred almost never uses a mask of any kind. He simply cannot stomach acting the part of Gary Goodman, and he cannot sustain the part of Mike Mature. Once in a while Fred will come on like Harry Haight, but this is a rare situation.


The reason Fred doesn't often attempt to use mask tactics is that he believes people will do what they want to in the end anyway, and they cannot be influenced. So why go through all the work of a mask strategy? Even when Fred does attempt to use a mask, he does so without conviction and is very lackluster about it. He seems to sense that his attempt to influence another is doomed to failure, so why try? When seriously frustrated, Fred acts more and more like Fred, more withdrawn, more hostile, more self-pitying.

Next we have a good guy type of customer, Gary Goodman, the Warm/Timid personality.

GARY GOODMAN. A MAN ADDICTED TO WARMTH

Gary is a man addicted to the approval of others. He has strong security and esteem needs, and the role of leadership is not comfortable for him. Gary's addictions color and influence his buying behavior, even to the point of hurting his buying judgments. The hunger for warmth that Gary feels is real. It is a very powerful drive. When Gary is subjected to disapproval or rejection, it can cause him to be depressed and self-pitying. Gary's basic technique is to win approval by being "nice." He bestows warmth and expects warmth in return. Gary seeks to get his way by manipulating, by killing with kindness.

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"If Gary gets the idea that you are exploiting his immaturity and his passiveness, he will deeply resent it. So don't even permit yourself to think in a manipulative manner."



When Gary is thwarted and slips into a sulking mood, he is actually attempting (in some measure) to "get his way" by making others feel guilty. Meanwhile, critical problems are being ignored, because Gary cannot cope with conflict and negative situations. He tries to mollify and pacify the assertive people around him. Do not underestimate Gary. Like most Warm/Timid individuals, Gary has his own ways of fighting back and getting even. He dislikes and resents being taken advantage of.

FIVE POSITIVE WAYS TO HANDLE GARY GOODMAN

Tactic #1: Probe into Gary's quick and easy agreements.

- Because Gary avoids controversy and likes to please, he often misleads people into thinking that he is in agreement with them, when indeed he is not. Gary will assure you that he understands when he does not, and will seem to agree with a course of action when he has no conviction about it at all. Gary doesn't like to deny anyone anything, so he tends to lead people on. He holds out hope for a sale when there is no prospect of one at all.
- Be cautious with Gary. He will pull the rug out when you least expect it. So be sure to pin him down. Resolutely seek to make him take a position that is clear. Ask questions until he is committed. You may cause some hidden objections to emerge, but this is good. Better to find out what Gary thinks now, before you are out on a limb by yourself.

Tactic #2: Avoid (yes, avoid) facts!

- Amazingly, when Gary is presented with detail and supporting data about something, he loses interest. Gary wants to know that a proposition is sound; he wants to trust you. He wants to believe in you, to have confidence in you. Unless you are "far-out" as an individual, he will seek to rely on your judgment and avoid the discomfort of making a decision. Give Gary the broad aspects and forget the detailed options. But, you need to live up to the faith that Gary places in you, so base your own decisions on considered data.

Tactic #3: Don't attempt exploitive tactics.

- If Gary gets the idea that you are exploiting his immaturity and his passiveness, he will deeply resent it. So don't even permit yourself to think in a manipulative manner. Be sincere, and understand that Gary has a fine quality (that of sensitiveness) and that this quality extends to consideration of your feelings. Be considerate of his.

Tactic #4: Let Gary have his rope.

- Gary likes to discuss all manner of things and he avoids tough issues. Be patient about this. Be firm, strong and re-focus the conversation upon significant matters, but don't be severe and austere. Permit Gary to re-establish his confidence in your reliability; let him visit with you for a while. After you have established favorable circumstances for communication, then go on with your sales presentation.

Tactic #5: Recognize Gary's needs.

- Gary is constantly trying to prove his worthiness to enjoy esteem and approval. No matter how many times he achieves this proof, he must renew it over and over again. Gary seeks to get warmth by giving it. He also seeks stability, strength and trustworthiness in other people. But Gary does recognize ability and confidence, and he will rely on an honest, optimistic and capable salesperson.

Even the laudable qualities of sensitivity and warmth need to be augmented by assertiveness and practicality, or they will simply be swept aside. Unfortunately, people like Gary, when they are frustrated, often attempt to desensitize themselves rather than simply assert themselves. It is possible, although it is a rare combination, to be both assertive and sensitive. In fact, our final customer, Mike Mature, balances and synthesizes each of these Compassionate/ Assertive qualities.

THE REAL MIKE MATURE

To a greater degree than any other customer we have studied, Mike is what he appears to be. People like Mike are more unique and diverse than immature people. Mike is the balanced, Compassionate/Assertive type of personality.

Mike's flexibility is due to natural or developed affection for people, rather than a deliberate attempt to manipulate or get along. He really likes most people. He has little difficulty adjusting to people's personalities. Mike's encouragement of creativity is rooted in his own confidence, his self-respect,

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"Gary likes to discuss all manner of things and he avoids tough issues. Amazingly, when Gary is presented with detail and supporting data about something, he loses interest."

and his own creative tendencies. He encourages genuine two-way communication during the buying sequence.

FOUR POSITIVE TACTICS FOR MIKE MATURE

Mike is the one kind of customer you can be up-front with; you can be candid and direct with him. Harry has a gigantic ego problem that you must work around. Fred requires great skill in approach and in communications. Gary is difficult to keep focused on the matter at hand. Mike, however, is a

genuine two-way communicator. He will listen as well as talk. The "tactics" that follow are basic suggestions for getting the most from a healthy selling environment.

- **STRIVE** to maintain a relationship of healthy mutual respect.
- **GUIDE** the selling sequence to Mike in terms of mutual enlightened self-interest.
- **BE INNOVATIVE** and bold. Use your creativity. Mike will not be threatened.

- **KNOW YOUR FACTS**, but be considerate as well as assertive. Be ready to revise your presentation in the light of new data.

WHERE TO LEARN MORE ABOUT SCIENTIFIC SELLING

We have barely scratched the surface of a very important process. In my book, "Immature People with Power... How to Handle Them" (available on Amazon or www.LarryMullins.com) you will find additional helpful information. For those who want deeper scientific data, read "Effective Selling Through Psychology ... Dimensional Sales and Sales Management Strategies" by Buzzotta, Lefton and Sherberg.

Larry Mullins is a contributing editor for Furniture World and has 30+ years' experience on the front lines of furniture marketing. This article is based on the book, *IMMATURE PEOPLE WITH POWER... How to Handle Them*. Joe Gerard, the "World's Greatest Salesperson" according to Guinness, said: "If I had read Larry Mullins' book when I started out, I would have reached the top much sooner than I did." Larry's mainstream executive experience, his creative work with promotion specialists, and mastery of advertising principles have established him as one of the foremost experts in furniture marketing. His turnkey High-Impact programs produce legendary results for everything from cash raising events to profitable exit strategies. Larry is founder and CEO of UltraSales, Inc. and can be reached directly at 904.794.9212, or at Larry@LarryMullins.com. See more articles by Larry at www.furninfo.com or www.ultrasales.com.

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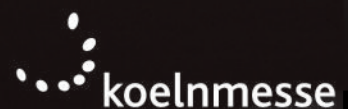
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90 SECONDS TO \$UCCESS SERIES

The Merits Of Show & Tell

by Ray Morefield, Common Goals

Not only do we communicate through words, we reveal our “hidden thoughts” through inadvertent expression such as vocal melody, inflection of voice, body posture and facial expression.

When excitement or anger manifests itself, the flushing of the face frequently occurs. Often when a product pleases the psyche, the pupils of the eye widen without conscious effort.

All of these communicate expressions of pride or pleasure, doubt or fear and factor into the selling situation. Astute sales personnel or students of nature do not fail to capitalize on these expressions as meaningful forms of communication.

Some suggest that less than 10% of communication occurs through the words we use. In many instances words may be a small percentage of inner-personal communication but have a major impact on understanding. For that reason we must weigh our words carefully – it is especially true when we are involved in the process of persuasion.

Current educational process puts great significance on reading, writing and speaking. Yet seldom are we trained to listen, although almost 50% of interactive communications involves listening on our part.

INDUSTRY LANGUAGE

For retail sales associates, active listening necessarily coexists, hand-in-glove with the equally important task of showing and telling about our products. The Oxford English

Dictionary lists 500,000 words. The average person uses less than 200,000 with a degree of regularity. Many words and expressions are specific to certain industries and not well understood by the public.

Physicians use terminologies that are meaningful to the medical community but seldom understood outside their profession. Examples are the term “conjunctivitis” more commonly called “pink eye” or “traumatic malocclusion” meaning a “slight overbite”.

Likewise, professional marketers in the furniture industry use words that may not be understood by the average consumer who is in search of quality.

It’s important to be knowledgeable, but how we share our knowledge to insure that the consumer understands the value of an item is tantamount to successfully closing the sale.

HOW WE ARE PERSUADED

It has been suggested that people are not persuaded by what we say but rather what they understand.

Properly addressed, few if any potential purchasers are offended when you take the time to define characteristics and features that we take for granted.

SHOW & TELL

The simplistic “Show and Tell” concept we are introduced to in kindergarten still has merit in the professional world. The marriage of both

verbalization and visualization strengthens understanding and retention.

You will be 8 times more effective in the selling situation when you use visuals to illustrate your “talking point”. For example:

- We may be schooled in the benefits of catalyzed varnish, but few consumers understand the merit of chemical cross-linking and how it insures the long lasting beauty and protection of a tabletop.
- We may understand that 1½” solid tabletops minimize the potential for warping or splitting but few consumers are aware of that fact until or unless they are advised.
- We may understand the merit of mortise and tenon construction for chairs but few customers understand the manner in which it adds strength to the product.
- We may understand strength of dovetailed drawer construction but few consumers know why it keeps the drawers rigid and square with extensive use.
- We may understand the benefits of full extension, concealed, under-mount, soft close drawers but few consumers experience their benefit until put into use.

So, if you are in doubt about how to present a feature in a way that will be useful to your customer, ask permission, and then Show and Tell.

Robert Cialdini, in his book “The Influence of Persuasion” states that being an “authority” on products or services is meaningful in the act of persuasion. When you speak industry

"The simplistic "Show and Tell" concept we are introduced to in kindergarten still has merit in the professional world."

"lingo" with authority, you command authority.

Sales personnel who fail to explain industry terminology and the unique features that benefit the potential buyer, frequently fall back on price and discounts to close the sale.

Chiseled in stone over a respected Midwestern law school are the words from Alexander Pope's poem An Essay of Criticism: "A little learning is a dangerous thing. Drink deep or taste not the Pierian spring". That

quote is applicable to both the buyer and the seller.

Educating your customers about industry phraseologies in a meaningful manner as a "servant salesperson" leads to being a successful person.

Simplify & clarify. Speak in terms the customer understands. It's an excellent means of separating you, your products and your organization from the competition.

There is a noteworthy statement that is applicable about the rewards

of sharing knowledge. "If you think education is costly, try ignorance". It's as applicable in the showroom as it is in the classroom.

Ray Morefield has been affiliated with leading corporations in the furniture, 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, can be directed to him in care of editor@furninfo.com.

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TRASH TO TREASURE

Habitat ReStore and Louisville Area Furniture Stores
Create 'Win, Win, Win' with Donated Furniture.

As the saying goes, "One man's trash is another man's treasure" and in the world of Habitat for Humanity's ReStore operations, one man's trash can mean a new home for a family. Habitat for Humanity is most known for the more than 500,000 houses that its volunteers have built around the world since 1976. What is not as well-known about the non-profit organization is that it is also in the furniture business through its 825 ReStore retail locations throughout the United States and Canada.

Habitat's ReStore locations are independently owned and operated by the local Habitat for Humanity affiliates. Most stores accept new and gently-used building materials and household goods. Many of the donations

come from the public, however as the three ReStore locations in Louisville, Kentucky are learning, the area's independent and franchised furniture stores are helping them spread the word, and even making valuable donations themselves.

CULTIVATING FURNITURE STORE RELATIONSHIPS

Karen Garriss, Donor Relations Manager for ReStore in Louisville, says that, "We have had a relationship with many of the furniture stores for several years now and many of the calls that I get each week are from people who have been referred to us by one of our furniture store or home design center partners."

Garriss knows almost all of the store

managers at the local furniture stores by name and visits many of them on a monthly basis. "I bring them more brochures about ReStore and remind them of talking points for their customer service representatives on how the Habitat donation program works," says Garriss.

**"Habitat Affiliates
ReStores are always
interested in working on
new, creative and
worthwhile projects."**



Pictured are ReStore materials on Haverty's POS counter top. Also, a donation truck, and donor ambassadors David Aubrey and Derrick Nix.

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

The Louisville Habitat ReStores have a centralized Donation Hotline where pickups for larger pieces of furniture can be scheduled. "If a customer has a sofa they need to get rid of before their new couch is delivered, we encourage them to call Habitat to arrange a donation," explains Heidi Coleman, Customer Service Manager

"Cherry House president and co-owner, Leslie Whitehouse, says that she has been able to directly donate furniture to Habitat ReStore that may have manufacturer defects or scratches and dents caused by shipping."

for KHF Holdings, LLC. KHF Holdings LLC is based in Louisville, Kentucky and is the licensee of five Ashley Furniture HomeStores in Louisville, KY and Indianapolis, IN. "It's definitely a win, win, win for all of us. Our store gains the sale of a new piece of furniture, the customer gets their old piece of furniture picked up at no charge and Habitat for Humanity gets the money from the sale of the piece of used furniture."

Other stores, such as Haverty's in Louisville find that Habitat's ReStore program is a great option for customers since the national chain's closest inventory warehouse is 150 miles away. "We used to have a warehouse right here in Louisville," explains Don Hall, Branch Manager of Haverty's Louisville Showroom. "However, when we eliminated this warehouse, we had

no place to store our customers' old furniture before we disposed of it. With Habitat, not only are we still able to offer our customers a pick-up option, the slightly used furniture is not being disposed of. It is being reused for a great cause, which we are very proud of."

SCRATCH & DENT FURNITURE DONATIONS

A family-owned furniture retailer that has been in business in Louisville for more than 45 years, is appreciative of Habitat's furniture donation program for a different reason. Cherry House president and co-owner, Leslie Whitehouse, says that she has been able to directly donate furniture to Habitat ReStore that may have manufacturer defects or scratches and dents



Pictured is a donation truck, in front of the Louisville store, and a ReStore interior photo. Also, volunteers and neighbors work on a Habitat house in Louisville KY, a project made possible in part, by donations to ReStore.



"With Habitat, not only are we still able to offer our customers a pick-up option, the slightly used furniture is not being disposed of. It is being reused for a great cause."

-Don Hall, Branch Manager, Haverly's Louisville Showroom.

caused by shipping. "Often, we will receive a full manufacturer's credit for a wooden cabinet that may have a scratch in it or for a leather recliner with a defective mechanism if we show a receipt that we have donated the item," says Whitehouse. "It's great for us because Habitat ReStore brings their truck directly to our warehouse to pick the item up. It saves us a lot of time and really helps our business."

Whitehouse also explains that she likes the reliability of Habitat ReStore donations and the fact that she and her employees know that the items are

going to an organization that is helping people in the community. She says, "it gives us a great deal of pride."

COMMUNITIES FEEL THE RIPPLE EFFECTS

The benefits of Habitat's ReStore program extend even beyond the dollars that are generated from the sale of the gently-used furniture. In Louisville alone, it is estimated that 2,000,000 pounds of usable materials are kept out of the landfill each year through the ReStore program.

ReStore also creates what are called 'sweat equity' opportunities for Habitat partner families who must complete 400 hours before closing on their new home.

"Each Habitat ReStore is an incredibly unique shopping experience," says Drew Meyer, Senior Director of ReStore and Gifts In Kind Support at Habitat's home office in Atlanta, Georgia. "Some of the ReStore locations are in busy suburban shopping centers and others are in warehouses in industrial parks. The most important thing is that the Habitat ReStore oper-





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ReStore business cards on
Ashley furniture counter.



"Habitat for Humanity provides one of the most critical elements to the safety, security and wellbeing of a family... a home."

ations help to provide a unique and sustainable income stream for the important work that each Habitat affiliate does in their city."

GETTING INVOLVED QUESTIONS & ANSWERS

Furniture World asked Drew Meyer, Senior Director of ReStore and Gifts In Kind Support at Habitat For Humanity to answer specific questions about the ReStore program, and to describe how retailers and other industry players can support Habitat For Humanity's good works.

Question: How is the money used, and what programs benefit?

Answer: Money generated from the sale of donated products at our ReStore are used to build homes and hope in the local community. In the last several years we have expanded our services to include rehabbing, painting, landscaping and weatherizing existing homes. We call this work home preservation.

Question: How many ReStores are there in the US and where are they located?


Answer: We have 800 ReStores across the country. Anyone can Google "Habitat for Humanity ReStores" and find the address and phone number of their local store. The ReStore Manager is always eager to work with local businesses to build awareness and hopefully secure donations.

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HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Question: Are there other ways that Furniture World readers can get involved with Habitat For Humanity?

Answer: There are a number of ways retailers and manufacturers can get involved with Habitat. They may choose to financially sponsor the construction of a home and get their associates and business partners involved with volunteering to build the house. A retailer may decide they would like to work with Habitat on a "Cause Marketing Campaign" in which they ask their customers to donate an amount when they purchase a product, and they may choose to match the customer's donation or a part of the purchase

price of the product that is purchased.

Question: What are some of the major reasons why furniture retailers might want to support Habitat For Humanity's community based programs?

Answer: Habitat for Humanity provides one of the most critical elements to the safety, security and wellbeing of a family -- a home. With the help of our donors and volunteers we have the ability to eliminate the cycle of poverty in one generation. This work is accomplished in the communities your readers live and work in around the country.

Question: Retailers often like to

support efforts in their local communities. How can Furniture World retailers find out about, and possibly tie into local initiatives?

Answer: Retailers can get involved locally by contacting local Habitat Affiliates and/or their ReStores. These folks are always interested in working on creative and worthwhile projects.

Question: If a customer calls to have goods picked up, are there minimum standards?

Answer: The fact that ReStores pick up donations is a real advantage for furniture stores. We do have some minimum standards. We do not accept furniture that is worn, stained or has odors.

Question: Is there anything else we missed in this interview?

Answer: The idea of a virtuous circle seems to resonate with donors and customers. When a person, organization or corporations donate products or materials, they keep these items out of the waste stream and landfills. ReStores keep thousands of tons of useable items out of landfills across the country each year. The customer who buys these products gets a real bargain and the funds generated by the sale go right back into changing lives and building hope in the community. What could be better?

"Retailers can get involved by contacting our local Habitat Affiliates and/or their ReStores."

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"The most important thing is that the Habitat ReStore operations help to provide a unique and sustainable income stream for the important work that each Habitat affiliate does in their city."

- Drew Meyer, Senior Director of ReStore and Gifts In Kind Support

Habitat Staff and Partner Families working on neighborhood beautification project

More Information: To learn how you can get involved with the Habitat for Humanity ReStores, contact Drew Meyer at dmeyer@habitat.org or 404-420-6762.

ABOUT HABITAT FOR HUMANITY

Habitat for Humanity is a non-profit ecumenical Christian housing ministry that builds simple and affordable homes in partnership with those in

need of decent housing. Families purchase the houses at no profit, through interest-free loans. Families also invest hundreds of hours of their own "sweat-equity" labor into their houses. Their monthly mortgage payments help fund the construction of more houses.

The Habitat for Humanity of Metro Louisville affiliate began in 1985. Since then, over 5,000 volunteers have worked alongside families to complete more than 370 Habitat

homes in Louisville, Kentucky. For more information, please visit www.louisvillehabitat.org.

KHF Holdings LLC is based in Louisville, Kentucky and is the licensee of five Ashley Furniture HomeStores in Louisville and Indianapolis. Current locations include Outer Loop/Jefferson-Pavilion, KY; Jeffersontown, KY; Avon, IN; Greenwood, IN; Indianapolis [Castleton], IN; and an Ashley Furniture Distribution Center.

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Only American made solid wood & upholstered furniture will be featured at the 2nd annual All American Furniture Expo on September 6 -7, 2012 in Lancaster, PA. This trade show, solely for wholesale buyers, is held at the Lancaster County Convention Center, 25 S. Queen Street, in the vibrant downtown of this historic city. Hours are 9-5 on the 6th and 9-3 on the 7th.

Just as shoppers today want to know who is raising their food, they also delight in knowing who has put heart and soul into crafting furniture for their homes. When a piece has been manufactured by an American craftsman, shoppers recognize it as heirloom quality, something to pass on from generation to generation. For them a part of America and its folk craft heritage lives on in the furniture pieces that grace their homes.

The expo features many Amish and Mennonite manufacturers from Pennsylvania, Ohio, and Indiana, in addition to American craftsmen from other areas such as California, North Carolina and New York. Over a hundred different USA manufacturers are expected to exhibit in more than 46,000 square feet of trade show floor.

The expo will create a powerful marketplace where buyers interested in American-made furniture can connect with local and national manufacturers. A variety of different hardwoods are featured along with a wide selection of stains and finishes, and options for customizing. Styles range from primitive to transitional, mission to modern, as well as contemporary and urban. At the end of the day buyers will know that they have previewed the best products in the handcrafted furniture industry.

Expo location...

The site of the expo at the Lancaster County Convention Center and integrated Lancaster Marriott Hotel sits in the heart of downtown Lancaster, PA, conveniently located from most metropolitan cities in the Northeast. The facility provides modern amenities and easy parking next door at Penn Square Parking Lot. Lancaster offers visitors reasonably priced goods, services and restaurants and numerous attractions within walking distance – including Central Market, the oldest publicly owned market in the country, and the Fulton Theatre, the nation's oldest continuously operating theater and one of only three theaters named a National Historic Landmark.

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The All American Furniture Expo debuted as a separate trade show in 2011. Since 2002 it had been a part of the spring Keystone Wholesale Show at the York PA Expo Center, which features American home décor and crafts, lawn and garden items, and outdoor structures.

Both shows are presented by Keystone Wholesale Markets.

For more information on Keystone Wholesale Markets, visit www.keystonewholesalemarkets.com.

BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Surya

The Majestic Collection is a magnificent grouping of transitional and contemporary designs machine made in Turkey from 100% olefin. Rugs feature machine carved details that provide each design with amazing and innovative textures. Suggested retail price for 5'3"x7'3" is \$210.

Contact information on index page 82.



Dutailier

This exclusive urban gliding chair is available with upholstered, regular wood or exotic wood side panels. Made in Canada, the chair is offered in a variety of fabric and wood finish selections.

Contact information on index page 82.

Braxton Culler

Transitional and clean-lined, the modern Andrews Sofa from the Libby Langdon Upholstery Collection features comfortable down-blend cushions, a cool, contrast welt and a java wood finish. The Preston Bench, also in a java wood finish, is covered in a fresh geometric print and offers both storage and extra seating options, while the sleek Treadwell Wing Chair provides an updated take on traditional style.

Contact information on index page 82.





Copeland

With its deeply splayed legs, the Astrid Bedroom is an engineering feat that defies expectations. Astrid is crafted in solid Cherry, solid Walnut or solid Maple and made to order in several finish options. Suggested retail for the queen bed is \$1,990.00.

Contact information on index page 82.

Omnia

With end storage and ample seating, the Paladio is functional and Contemporary. Perfect for sports, game gatherings and dinner parties, this group is the perfect canvas for all occasions.

Contact information on index page 82.



Horizon Home

The new Orient Express bedroom with steamer trunk design in 100% genuine leather has bookcase headboard with sliding leather panels for hidden storage. Case drawers feature full extension glides with leather pulls, decorative interior lining, leather bumper guards on all corners, and wooden protective skids with brass nail trim.

Contact information on index page 82.



BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Silverline

The Classic Mission Pool Table has post leg construction and is made of fine North American Quarter Sawn White Oak for a unique grain pattern. Constructed with Old World craftsmanship featuring mortis and tenon joinery. Shown here in a custom finish, it is made in America.

Contact information on index page 82



Mega Motion

The Mega Motion LC-503 with standard power recline and power lift delivers superior comfort, quality construction and a contemporary look that accents any home. Available with optional heat and massage.

Contact information on index page 82.

Northern Woodcrafts Products

The Grant Trestle is shown here in Quarter Sawn White Oak and comes standard with 1" tops, a mission edge, and gear slides. The table base is 42" in between trestles. The 42" table stores 2 leaves with a skirt and 2 leaves without. Also available in Cherry and Brown Maple. Made in America.

Contact information on index page 82.

Wallbeds

"Heritage" is made in America from Birch solids and premium furniture grade birch ply-core. This comfortable extra bed features a shelf headboard and crown molding. Available in eight finishes with over 19 different side cabinets.

Contact information on index page 82.





Rizzy

From the Century Collection, this hand tufted 100% Wool rug is made in India. Sugg. Retail 5' x 8' \$599. Sizes available are 2'x3', 3'x5', 5'x8', 8'x10', 9'x12', 2'6"x8' and 8' round custom.

Contact information on index page 82.

Agio

The Conquest Fire Pit is one of several fire pit chat groups that are crafted in styles to fit any decor. These cozy groups give homeowners access to the warmth and glow of an outdoor fire any time of the year.

Contact information on index page 82.



Country View Woodworking

The Odessa Modular Entertainment Center includes a bridge, TV console, curio case, and storage unit. The curios feature glass shelving, accent lighting, and glass doors. Wood doors or open cases are optional. Console and bridge are available in two sizes. Made in America.

Contact information on index page 82.



E&S Wood Creations

The Kashima Set has a straight line masculine look. The 1" tops are available in black, grey or light grey. Made in America.

Contact information on index page 82.



BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Jaipur Home

This whitewashed round side table with carved apron is made from responsibly harvested solid Sheesham timbers. The subtle finish combined with simple but classic details, guarantee this piece is at home in a myriad of design schemes.

Contact information on index page 82.



Jessica Charles

"Lauren", is boldy contemporary with a touch of traditional. It has a hand-crafted wood frame, and is available in hundreds of designer fabrics, wood finishes, and detailing options. Stylishly versatile and small-space friendly, it can multi-function as desk, vanity, or occasional chair for apartments, lofts, condos.

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Yoder's Woodworking

The elegant Canyon Creek collection with leather, is hand crafted of solid wood. The leather accents are bordered with nail heads. Made in America.

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Huppé

The Lyrics collection is part of the UP line, made of select American Walnut veneer and a combination of glass and microtextured lacquers. It has a multitude of configuration possibilities. Available in several UP colors and microtextured lacquer finishes.



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Furniture Traditions

The Master-piece Mid Wall features plenty of storage, dual reading lamps and secret compartments, yet occupies less space than a bed and 2 nightstands. A concealed lift-top hides a velvet-lined compartment.



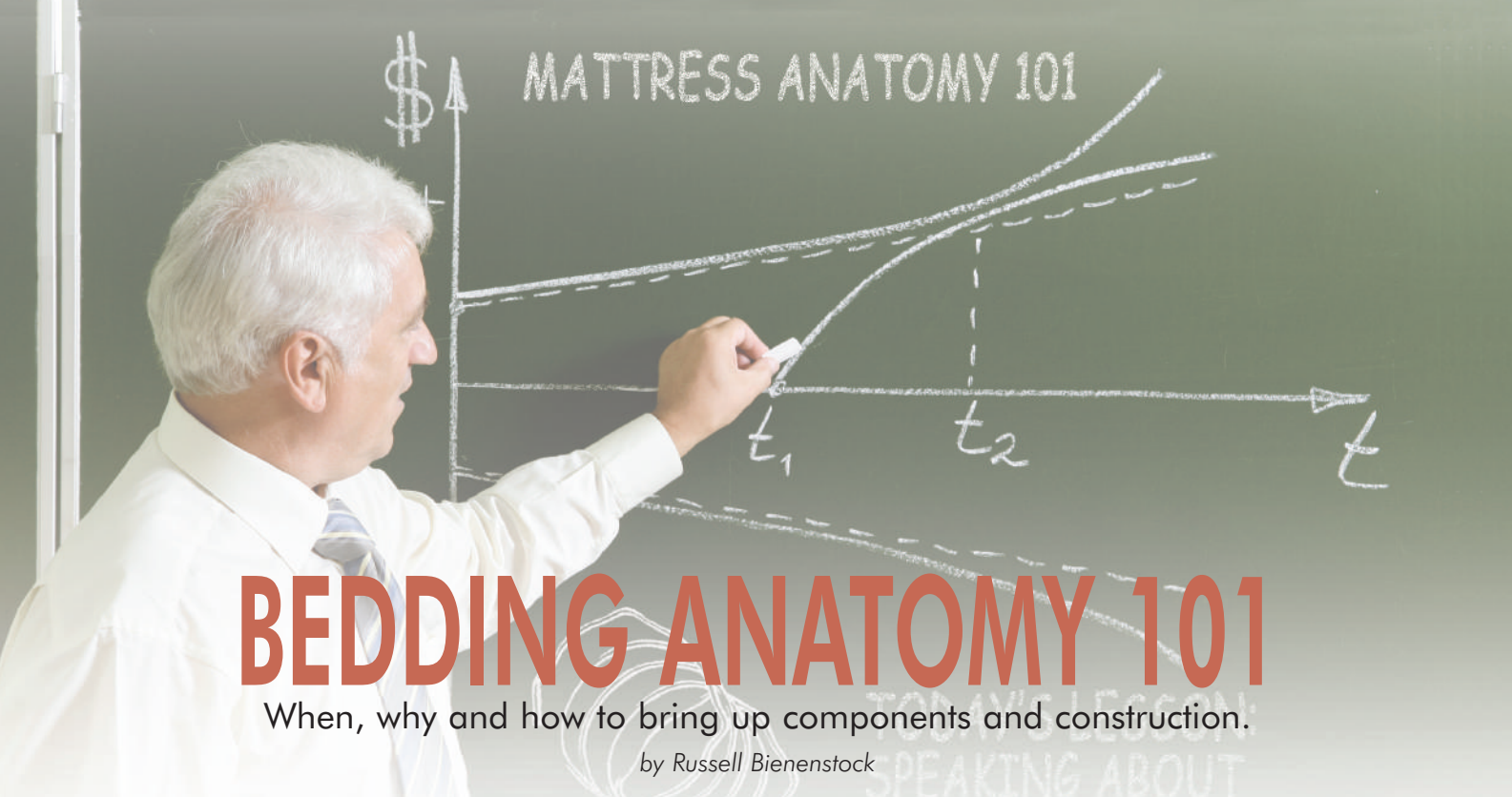
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College Woodwork

The Bayview Beauty bedroom is made of solid Birch harvested from managed Canadian forests. Features include English dovetail joinery, full extension slides and finished drawer interiors.



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BEDDING ANATOMY 101

When, why and how to bring up components and construction.

by Russell Bienenstock

The past seven installments in this series on selling better bedding presented tools and techniques that the best retail furniture stores use to price, promote and present mattresses, pillows, mattress protectors and foundations.

For readers who may have missed any of these, please visit <http://www.furninfo.com/series/bedding> to see a complete list and links to these articles.

This time, we start an exploration of mattress components and construction.

MATTRESS SPECS

In terms of the sales process, components (mattress specs) can be thought of as features that have associated benefits. Benefits, in turn, provide customers with advantages that are appropriate only when a customer has a need for that specific advantage.

In "Bedding Anatomy 101" our discussion will be framed in terms of how component/construction information should be introduced into the sales process. In the September/ October issue of Furniture World, we will start to delve deeper into mattress anatomy, organizing and presenting the different kinds of springs, foams, gels,

cushioning products and ticking.

CONSUMER RESEARCH

Let's start with some research. Furniture World spoke with Michael Magnuson, the founder and CEO of GoodBed.com, a leading mattress research destination for consumers, and targeted advertising platform for mattress retailers.

"We asked people what would get them more comfortable with the price of a good mattress," he said. "Eight percent of people chose detailed product specifications as their number one answer. So, there's a subset of

consumers who feel that specifications are the most important factor in determining the appropriate price to pay for a mattress. In this case, we only allowed people to mark their top choice, so there is also another portion of shoppers that factor product specs into their purchase decision as a secondary or tertiary consideration.

In this same survey, 3 out of 4 mattress shoppers said they thought mattresses were expensive or somewhat expensive. But surprisingly, getting a 'sale price or special deal' was not their top priority. When we asked them what would get them more comfort-

Q1: How CONFIDENT are you about choosing and purchasing your new mattress?

Very confident	28%
Somewhat confident	27%
Not confident	46%

Q2: What would most INCREASE YOUR CONFIDENCE in making a good purchase?

Sale price or special deal	20%
Consumer reviews	19%
Independent expert recommendations	15%
Trying mattresses in the store	13%
Detailed product specs	12%
Prices of comparable mattresses	10%
Salesperson recommendations	3%
Other	9%

Consumer research data compliments of www.GoodBed.com

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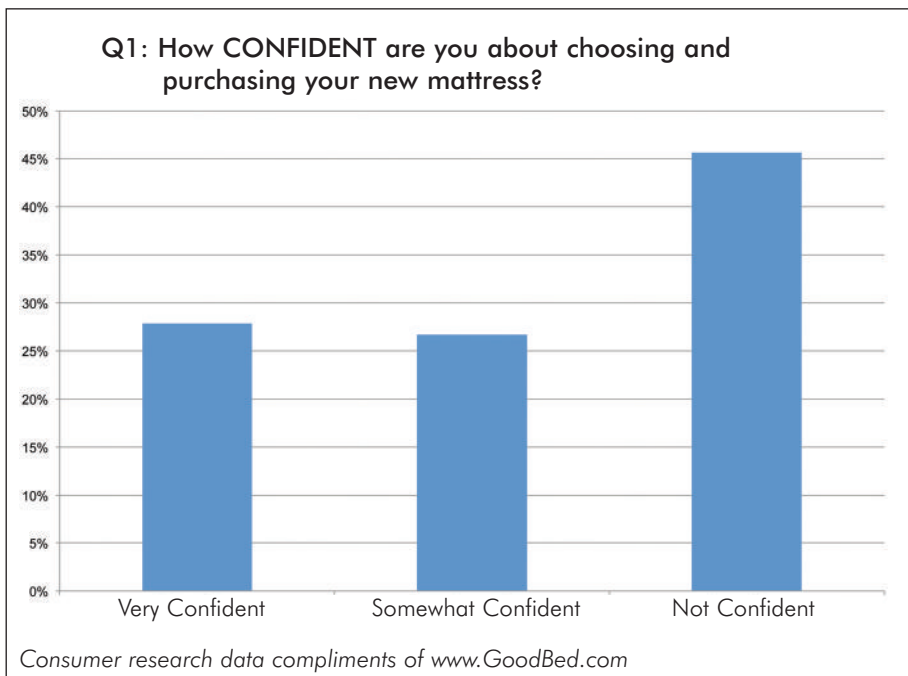
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“the less confident they are, the more they are seeking objective information like independent expert recommendations, detailed product specs or consumer reviews.”

-Michael Magnuson, GoodBed.com

able with the price of a good mattress, the number one answer was consumer reviews. A special deal was the number two selection. And number three was independent expert recommendations. So, if you look at number one and three together, you find that what they most value is third party validation. People are saying, ‘I’m willing to pay this price for a mattress as long as you can show me other consumers who confirm that this thing lasts for ten years. Or, show me an independent expert who has no vested interest in the outcome of this sale who says this will provide the right support for me.’

“Where the specifications fit in, is that they’re something factual that salespeople can use to try to overcome the skepticism that consumers have during their mattress purchase process. The salesperson can say, ‘Hey, don’t believe me. This mattress has three-quarters inch of five-pound density memory foam, which is really high quality foam. If you don’t believe me, believe this fact.’

“We also asked, ‘are you confident about buying a mattress?’ and then followed-up with a question about what would get them to be more con-

fident. Overall, twelve per cent of mattress shoppers chose detailed specs as their number one answer. It’s interesting to note that the least confident mattress shoppers are most likely to choose product specs as the number one thing that would increase their confidence. So, the very confident people are just looking for the best price. But the less confident they are, the more they are seeking objective information like independent expert recommendations, detailed product specs or consumer reviews.”

Given that GoodBed.com found that for most customers mattress construction isn’t their primary concern, Furniture World asked Magnuson at what point in the sales process a customer might want to know about components.

“Let’s say,” he replied, “that a salesman says, ‘Hey, this mattress is \$1,200 and that one is \$600,’ and the consumer lies on both of them and they feel the same. Then when she asks the salesperson, ‘Why is this one \$600 more?’ she is told that it’s better quality. But she is skeptical. She is saying, ‘Well you’ve got to give me something more than that, because

six hundred bucks is a lot more to pay just because you say it has better quality.’ At that point the salesperson has an opportunity to introduce any facts that substantiate this quality claim, including product specs.”

WHY CUSTOMERS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT SPECS

“Most customers are trying to justify the price they are paying for their mattress,” continues Magnuson. “They want to get comfortable with the price, because they are interested in purchasing a good mattress. But they have a trust issue, so they’re trying to filter out things like opinions and benefits, which sound like spin to them. When they filter out the spin, they end up with specs. The problem is that most consumers can’t translate mattress specs into meaningful benefits on their own, so having this information often leaves them feeling rather cold.”

In addition to Michael Magnuson’s observation that customers are interested in construction features to find some facts they can trust, industry experts interviewed for this article noted that customers may have an

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BEDDING ANATOMY 101

interest in knowing more about components as the result of visits to other stores, internet research, brand advertising or social networking.

Bob Muenkel, Director of Sales Education & Development at Serta International agrees that, "They're trying to educate themselves. "It's really all about building their confidence in the outcome, and of course overcoming their fear of making a purchase mistake. The outcome isn't necessarily buying a good mattress, the outcome is to sleep well and feel really great in the morning. So, they'll latch onto whatever facts are easy to understand. But inevitably, there is much more to those facts about components than meets the eye, and absent the detail, customers are really not protecting themselves."

"At some point in the sales process, construction does become important to many guests," adds Cory Ludens, Director of Learning and Development for retailer Mattress Firm.

"It may be that a guest has cued in on a particular component such as memory foam, latex or a specific coil. I think

that often, this interest is seeded either by research on the Internet, or a visit to another store. A friend or relative who owns a bed that has a feature they really like may have placed the idea there. But I think that generally they're looking for a comfortable bed. They're looking for a good value and for relief from a problem that they have. If there's a specific problem they have with their existing mattress, then they may be looking for a bed that has a component that helps to solve that problem."

Let's focus for a moment on the eight per cent of respondents to the GoodBed.com survey who said a knowledge of components would make them feel more comfortable with their purchase. Might they all be male, pocket protector carrying "engineer types"?

Brett Swygman, Director of Sales and RSA Development for Simmons Bedding Company comments that, "Those engineer types that ask what I would consider deep dive questions have done all the research, and come in with a folder full of papers. These people want to know the whys and the hows of the mattress."

Mark Quinn, Segment Vice President Of Marketing at component manufacturer Leggett & Platt,

Incorporated agrees, telling Furniture World that, "I've got friends that work in Houston, Texas where NASA is. These people want to know the gauge, the turn of the coil, the metal-lurgy composite. I think you have to measure every customer based on the questions they ask, the good qualifying you're doing up front to really understand at what level they want to have a detailed spec discussion.

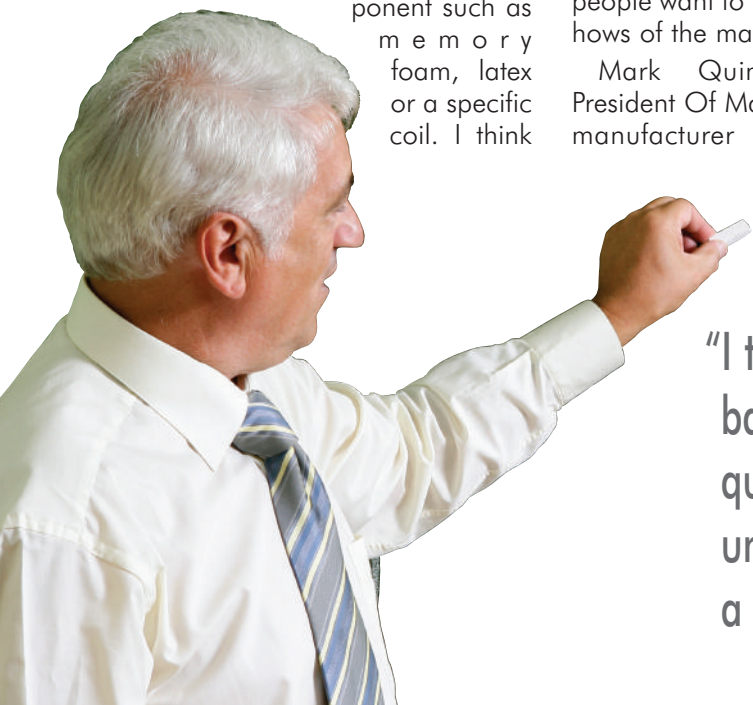
"But I'd say as a general rule you want to keep it all focused on the ultimate benefit the component can give the consumer. Maybe only explain the two different types of coils.

"But we have to be careful not to stereotype," cautions Kurt Ling, CEO of Pure LatexBLISS. There are some customers that care more about specifications than others, that's for sure. But it isn't just men, engineers with slide rules in their pockets. The web has enabled customers to do research before and after they start shopping, equipping them with a lot more information than they have ever had before. "

WHAT SALESPEOPLE SHOULD KNOW

"Retail sales professionals should know about the internal construction of the products that they sell," instructs Mattress Firm's Cory Ludens. "I believe it's important for retail sales associates to know and understand

"I think you have to measure every customer based on the questions they ask, the good qualifying you're doing up front to really understand at what level they want to have a detailed spec discussion." -Mark Quinn, Leggett & Platt



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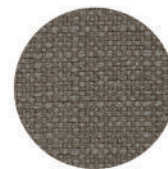
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"Just knowing this one has 300 coils and that one has 800 coils, isn't enough. Knowing why a particular bed has 300 coils and the purpose those 300 coils serve, is important." -Cory Ludens, Mattress Firm

components so that they can be an educated resource for guests. I don't think that they necessarily need to be able to explain all of those construction elements to every guest, because some people, obviously, don't care about that.

"I'm talking about things such as the kinds of foam, the type of inner spring system, how the mattress and foundation are built, and how the components are arranged to work together. They should know if there is an edge support system, and how it is

made. Also, if there is anything noteworthy about the cover.

"Ultimately they should be able to guide guests through the decision-making process and help them to be able to make the right decision on the right product for them. So, just knowing this one has 300 coils and that one has 800 coils, isn't enough. Knowing why a particular bed has 300 coils and the purpose those 300 coils serve, is important."

Leggett & Platt's Mark Quinn believes as well, that sales associates

should know their components because, "Consumers are more discerning in how they approach buying products today. They're not willing to just throw out money based on general discussions about what's better. They want tangible information stated in clear-cut language about what makes a product better. So, we need to be able to have that discussion, whether it be on a website where we're catching consumers in the shopping phase or, if they're in the store.

"The number one reason consumers buy a new bed is because of comfort, and so we have to be realistic. But factors such as durability, or a \$300 difference between two similar mattresses also come into play. A discussion of components can be a big part of that discussion. There is a catch though. If we drag the consumer into an industry-speak kind of conversation we're going to lose them. And, it's not something we want to do because those consumers aren't going to, number one, be interested or, number two, follow the conversation."

W. Brent Limer, National Product Manager, Hickory Springs Bedding Products, believes that, "Now more than ever, consumers are becoming more educated. The Internet makes it easy to look up reviews at the touch of a button, they are able to see what types of components go into certain products, across the board. So if you are a retail sales associate and you don't know the difference between a 1.8 pound foam and a one pound foam, then you need a little more education.

"Comfort is the key selling point, but if a mattress is only going to last a short period of time because of body



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"The most important thing that we can relate to customers is that our beds are made up of components, and these components are designed to provide a certain level of comfort." -Mark Wells Sleep City

impressions or defects, that is also a key factor, so that's why the retail sales associate should understand construction. Maybe a customer can't decide between two different models or even two different brands. If RSAs are knowledgeable enough to know what the specs are, they can utilize them in their sales presentations, particularly as they relate to durability, comfort or other customer concerns. It can end up breaking a tie because sometimes customers just can't decide, and walk off without making a purchase."

RETAIL EDUCATION

Moving into a discussion of how retailers can design programs to train this skill, Ludens continues. "We teach construction in a number of ways at Mattress Firm.

"So, let's say we've received product construction information about a new bed. The next step is to talk about how we can convey that information to our guests, so we can explain why this particular product "X" is different, from product "Y" and why product "Y" might be better suited for their needs. Typically we rely on manufacturers to supply the information. Then we take that information, and build it into our training here at Mattress Firm.

"We also ask manufacturer's representatives to conduct sales meetings and workshops. Training product knowledge is viewed as a shared responsibility.

"The most successful retailers really have in-depth, deep training departments," observes Simmons Bedding Company's Brett Swygman. "From a manufacturer's standpoint, we are very good at providing product knowl-

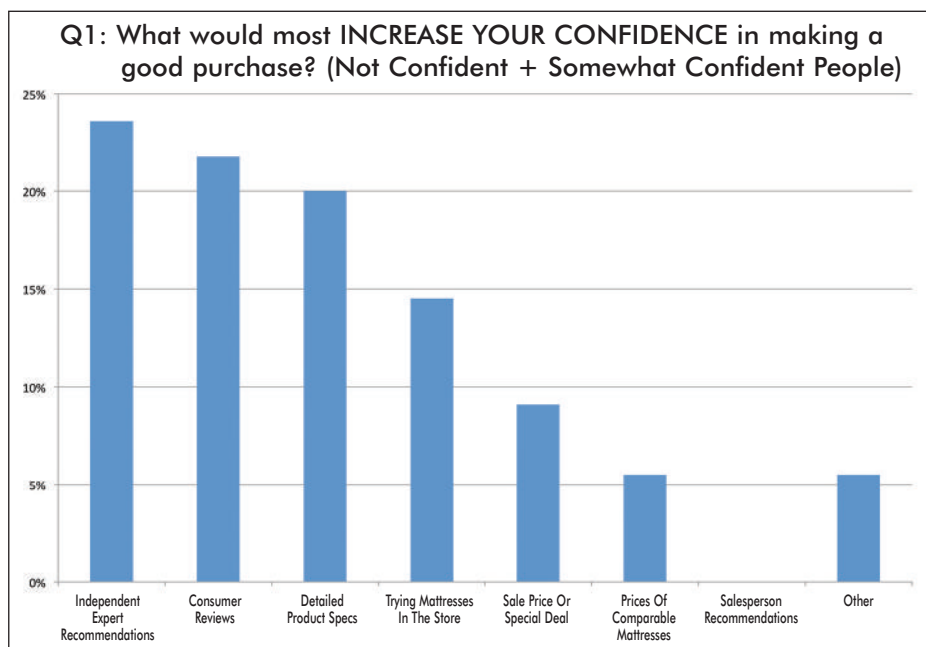
edge education. But sometimes retail sales associates focus too much on that product knowledge, causing them to over-sell. They need to resist the temptation to get into the nuts and bolts of sleep sets, and instead focus on customers and their true needs. It's all about providing a better night's sleep, allowing that customer to wake up refreshed. That's what customers want."

WHEN TO TALK ABOUT COMPONENTS

When we asked Simmons' Brett Swygman about the best time to introduce information on components, he told us, "You want to wait a little bit until you are well into the sales process before you discuss construction. First, you need to qualify customers to identify their needs. When you get to the point where a consumer is starting to show interest in a specific product, at that point it might be

time, at a high level, to discuss construction. Let me give you an example. The sales associate might say, 'There are many technologies in the mattress industry. They keep evolving, and growing. There are some newer technologies and some different technologies out there that I'm going to be showing you today.' And then the sales associate listens to see what the customer's level of interest is, and can add, 'Our sales process includes a comfort test.' At that point the associate stops to identify what comfort is, and then goes into, at a high level, the different types of constructions. I don't think retailers should get into the nuts and bolts 100 per cent early in the product presentation, until they've identified what the customer's needs are."

Swygman gives an example of a good reason for not jumping in early, telling Furniture World that if a customer tested out, for example, a spe-





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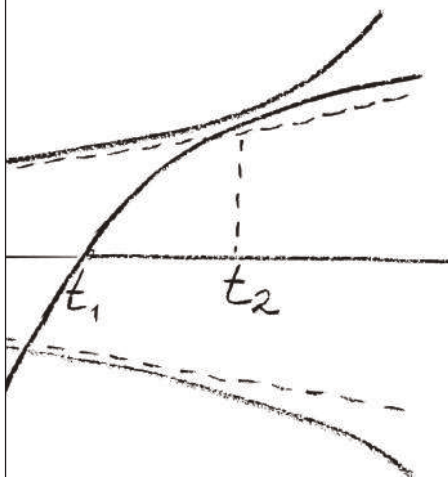
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"Salespeople can collect a lot of information and words during the qualifying stage to help them position a feature or component as likely to solve their customer's problem as soon as it delivers its benefit."

-Brett Swygman, Simmons



cialty product early on in the sales process, "They may not even like it. So, why would you go into a deep dive, telling them about memory foam? The minute you start going into these nuts and bolts," he says, "consumers may start to get confused. And you don't want to confuse them. So, you really have to focus on their needs, and on the benefits that product is going to deliver. If the customer asks how or why a product is going to deliver that benefit, then that's when you want to get into the nuts and bolts."

"Usually we present construction features toward the middle of our presentations," adds Mark Wells, Vice President Digital Marketing and Commercial Business at Montana

BEDDING ANATOMY 101

based Sleep City. "It's never something we lead with. We get a lot of customers who just want to feel comfortable, and that's when we say, 'This new construction provides more comfort. You will have more freedom of movement, your weight distribution will be dissipated among multiple springs. And what this technology means to you is that you will feel comfortable.' And, that will apply to whether they need more comfort in their hips, pressure points and back. Or, if they are a side sleeper, sometimes their knees."

ASKING THE RIGHT QUESTIONS IS CRITICAL

Our experts were generally in agreement that customers have varying degrees of interest in finding out about components. Also, that presenting information on construction can move the sale along by resolving concerns about price, trust, and relative value. It can also support sales claims about comfort, therapeutic benefits and durability. Knowing this, it is plain that in order to present construction information in a skillful way, sales associates need to get information about what is relevant to their customers.

Addressing this topic, Brett Swygman, recommends that when salespeople, "position construction in the qualifying stage, they need to be focused on getting information about their consumers and their needs. Find out their past experiences," he told Furniture World. "Some may have had a mattress for 10 or 15 years. They're having back pain and pressure points that's causing difficulty in their lives. So, salespeople can collect a lot of information and words during the qualifying stage that will help them to position a feature or component as

likely to solve their customer's problem as soon as it delivers its benefit. Use this information and the words that they gave you early in the sales process and relate them back to the benefit and ultimately to the feature or features that deliver that benefit.

"If you find out that a customer is a side sleeper, for example and his hands become numb, or if he reports having back pain, relief could be delivered by a pocketed coil spring. Memory foam is also going to be a great component to bring up. It's going to deliver that pressure relieving benefit they need. It's also going to help to conform, and provide the enhanced support that many consumers with back pain are looking for.

"Also, keep in mind that the manufacturer's goal isn't to deliver one component or one feature in a mattress. We want to deliver an all-encompassing system to deliver that benefit. Those words that you listen to in the qualifying stage are a big deal. So when you use those words, be sure to talk to customers the way they talk to you. If they were very technical, then you talk technical. You want to mirror your customer."

Sleep City's Mark Wells, gave us another piece of advice about qualifying questions. "You really have to establish a rapport with the customer to make them feel comfortable," he noted. "Once the customer has told you that they're looking for a new bed say, 'What brought you in? Why are you looking for a new mattress?' To that question, there are usually three responses. They may say that their old bed has body impressions, their back hurts when they wake up in the morning or it's a comfort issue. Many of our customers have had back surgery or other injuries, or their old mattress has just gone south so they're looking

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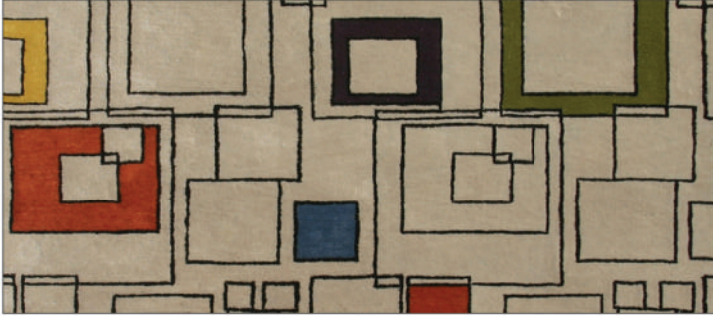
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"If they're never rolling off the edge of the mattress, why would you talk about foam encasements. How would that be relevant to that consumer?" -Bob Muenkel, Serta

for new things in a new mattress.

"Let's say, for example that if a customer comes in and says, 'I want a firm bed.' I like to put them on a firm bed and then start the process from there. They might say, 'Oh, this is really firm.' I then explain why it's firm and ask, 'What are you looking for?' If they respond, 'Well, I like that support, but I don't want to sleep on a board,' I would ask what position they sleep in, if they've had any injuries and why they're looking to change from their current mattress. In that way, I can get more information about what's going on with that customer which opens up an opportunity to go

into the different foams, innersprings or specialty bedding."

Serta's Bob Muenkel, told Furniture World, "We suggest that sales associates ask five questions that target the most common sleep problems consumers have. One of the questions, just to give your readers an example is, 'Do you find yourself rolling towards the middle or off the edge?' It's a simple question. If they're never rolling off the edge of the mattress, why would you talk about foam encasements. How would that be relevant to that consumer? Why would they even pay attention to you? Sales associates need to learn how to explain that technology in a meaningful way so that the consumer recognizes that the presented technology is a good solution to their problem."

With regard to qualification questions, Kurt Ling of PureLatexBLISS, believes that it is important to find out how much information people really want to know. He suggests that sales associates first try to match up mattress features with benefits that are relevant to each customer. "For example," he says, "we have a new climate control technology that's about temperature regulation while a consumer sleeps. To find out if this feature provides a relevant benefit we ask the following questions in this order. First, 'Would you or your spouse say you are either a warm sleeper or a cool sleeper?' Second, 'Would you be interested in seeing a mattress that can help you sleep slightly cooler or warmer depending on your need in the same bed?' This second question asks permission to take them to a product that helps solve that problem. And third, 'I can tell you about how this works if you would like. Would you be interested in understanding

either the design or technology?' Some retail sales associates don't talk enough about the benefits features provide," he says. "Others tell more than consumers want to know. Some of the time, they talk about what they know rather than what the consumer wants to know. Questions are a great way to bridge that gap."

Like Kurt Ling, Mattress Firm's Cory Ludens also believes in asking permission to present component information. "What we teach at Mattress Firm, and what great sales professionals do," he said, "is to confirm understanding by asking, 'What I'm hearing is this. Is that accurate? Great. Would you like to see a couple of beds that have some components that may solve that problem for you, or may help to rectify that problem in your next purchase?' From there, they can go into a presentation of those products. Again, probably still not going through every single component that's in that bed, but rather, cueing in on those components that are designed to help to solve a problem or serve a need that the guest has."

PRESENTATION TECHNIQUES

Furniture World also asked our experts to share specific presentation techniques that sales associates can incorporate into their presentations. We received the following tips:

- When talking about components, Simmons' Brett Swygman counsels that it is best to just present them as the facts. "Whenever the sales associate is talking to a customer who is really concerned about the components in a bed," he continues, "they need to take the position of a news reporter. If they're asking about coil count or what type of foam is in the

"Maybe a customer can't decide between two different models or even two different brands. If RSAs are knowledgeable enough to know what the specs are, they can utilize them in their sales presentations, particularly as they relate to durability, comfort or other customer concerns."

-W. Brent Limer, Hickory Springs

BEDDING ANATOMY 101

bed, then they want to be direct, and to the point. They could say that the benefit is delivered because of this or that component, and then follow up with a demonstration. Hand customers a demonstration unit so they can touch it and feel it."

- "The most important thing that we can relate to our customers is that our beds are made up of components and these components are designed to provide a certain level of comfort," Sleep City's Mark Wells points out.

"When a customer is testing beds for comfort and tells us that she wants, for example, a softer feel, that's when we can explain that a particular bed is soft because it contains foam with certain properties or has foam layers that give it a soft feel. At that point the customer can feel what that means to her. And if she would like something a little bit firmer, then we can show her the next model up that has a little more memory foam, or one that has a different coil system, and she will start to notice the differences."

FEATURES TELL, ADVANTAGES SELL MORE!

Bottom line in this discussion is the fact that, as Sleep City's Mark Wells reminds us, "Features tell, benefits sell." Beyond that adage, it is the advantage to each customer that components and construction methods provide that are most relevant.

"Ultimately when we are talking about product specifications," concludes Cory Ludens, "we teach our sales professionals to talk not only about features and not even necessarily about just the benefits of those features, but about the advantage that

benefit provides. So, they might point out a feature of a particular bed such as viscoelastic memory foam. The benefit would be that memory foam is

"Would you be interested in seeing a mattress that can help you sleep slightly cooler or warmer depending on your need in the same bed?" This second question asks permission to take them to a product that helps solve that problem." - Kurt Ling, PureLatexBLISS



more pressure relieving, which allows the guest to stay in one position for a longer period of time. The advantage then is that the customer wakes up more refreshed, with less tossing and turning. To be able to talk about a feature is one thing, but to have the skill to take this understanding and convert it into an advantage for your guest, is much more useful.

"Our guests are shopping for solutions to needs they have, and memory foam isn't the solution. Being able to sleep at night is the solution. So, being able to convert that feature to an advantage that a customer will own if they purchase a particular product is persuasive.

"They're not buying the features," Simmons' Brett Swygman adds. "One of the things that sales associates do is put too much weight on the features. When a sales associate can effectively show the benefit, whether it's motion separation, pressure relief, how a product can provide independent back support, allow the customer to move freely within the product, and then wake up feeling refreshed -- that's where the proof is. That is the step that they really need to focus on."

FINAL ADVICE

Serta's Bob Muenkel, concludes his remarks by advising us to, "Imagine we have a room. The consumer walks in on one side of it with no knowledge of sleep and mattresses. We enter at the other side with all of our knowledge of sleep and mattresses. We've been taught to bring the consumer into the middle of the room by educating them. We've been told that the best way to get them to buy is to meet them in the middle.

"I would suggest that, instead of

"To be able to talk about a feature is one thing, but to have the skill to take this understanding of a feature and convert it into an advantage for your guest, is much more useful." -Cory Ludens, Mattress Firm

meeting them in the middle, our obligation is to bring our knowledge across the entire room in a way they can understand, without all the technical language. The consumer has no obligation to learn about sleep or our mattresses. Whatever their problems are, we should take this technology to them in a simple, understandable way and make sure that it's relevant to solving their problems. Again, our obligation is to bring our knowledge to them, not to educate them to us.

"The people who know the most about technology, and who are most effective at bedding sales, are the

ones who talk about it the least. Instead, they take that vast knowledge and explain it at a level that is relevant to the consumer and in a way that their customers can appreciate, understand and not feel diminished in the process. That's the art.

"Sales associates should never talk about a specification unless it has relevance to a customer's particular sleep problems. They should never talk about mattress ingredients that don't apply to the customer.

"Also, how sales associates answer the question, 'What's the difference' between mattress A and mattress B, is

critical to making the sale. If the sales associate just gives them a litany of specifications, without explaining the relevance to their life and their sleep problems, and how this manifests itself into a better night's sleep, they are wasting their time.

And finally, consumers, buy mattresses based upon body comfort, and wallet comfort. The sale is made when a consumer has high confidence in the outcome, and low fear of making a purchase mistake. So, I believe the conversation should be focused on them, their sleep problems, and their sleep experience."

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DREAM TEAM

How to build an exceptional team of employees - Part 1.

by Rene' Johnston-Gingrich

In today's hyper competitive environment and constricted economy, home furnishings retailers are working harder than ever before to capture more business. One strategy that is more important than ever is to staff our stores with a sales team of experts, a team of the industry's best.

Interestingly enough, as I was contemplating this article topic, ESPN aired a documentary on 1992's Olympic Basketball Dream Team. This got me thinking about how we can go about creating Dream Teams in our stores.

Building a Dream Team requires commitment from both management and sales professionals. We ask a lot of our sales professionals and we must also ask a lot of ourselves as owners and managers. True teamwork requires a commitment to providing ongoing education to our team. It also requires a commitment to lead by example and demonstrate behavior

that reflects the values we want to see echoed in our team. In other words, we have to not only recruit great players but we have to hire and be excellent coaches as well. Sales people have to understand the value of mastering multiple areas and we have to commit to demonstrating the value of ongoing training and coaching of our staff.

This is the first in a series of articles you can use to build a Dream Team from the ground up. This time you will get an overview of the three skills your team has to master to excel at home furnishings sales. Three of the top skill sets sales professionals must master are the fundamentals (product knowledge), being a team player, and "wowing" the crowd (customer service

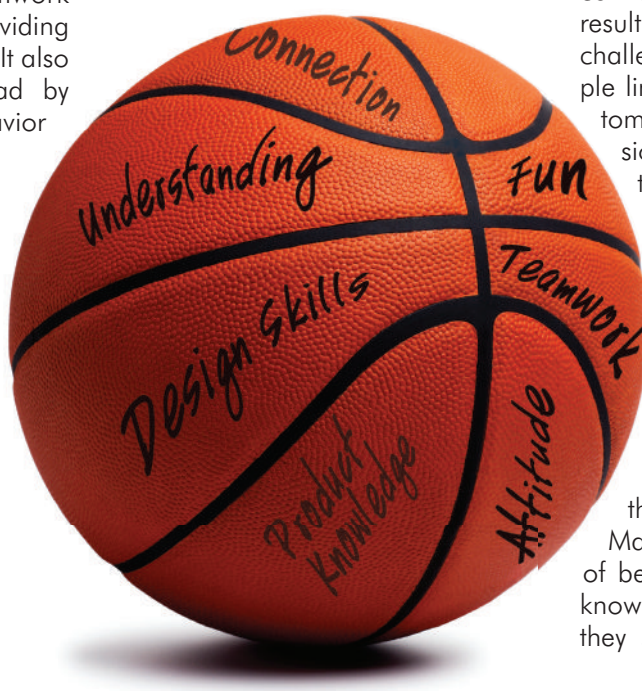
skills). Subsequent installments will provide practical tools and techniques you can use to help your team to achieve mastery in all of these areas.

MASTER THE FUNDAMENTALS

In this case, the fundamental we are focusing on is Product Knowledge. It is critical that we have sales staff trained so that they can make solid recommendations on products and give customers useful information to help them make informed buying decisions. Our dream team may not need to keep their dribbling skills sharp, but they do have to be committed to constantly updating their knowledge of the features and benefits of the lines on their sales floors. Product knowledge will help sales professionals feel more confident and that confidence will result in sales. This can be especially challenging in stores that carry multiple lines. We deal with educated customers today and our sales professionals need to be able to provide them with the information they need to feel comfortable with their purchases.

There are a few ways we can encourage ongoing learning in our stores. First, establish it as a priority. From the onset, let sales professionals know that it is an expectation that they have a baseline level (determined by the store) of product knowledge. Make sure they understand that part of being a true professional is being knowledgeable about the products they sell. Also, help them to under-

"From the onset, let sales professionals know that it is an expectation that they have a baseline level of product knowledge."



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"There are three concepts to consider when evaluating the overall morale of your sales team or what I like to call Team Player Criteria."

stand the payoff of doing so. Secondly, take advantage of learning opportunities. When manufacturers' reps are available, use them. Take them up on offers to come in early and share new (or review existing) product information with your team. Next, coach staff on how to leverage this information in the selling process. Mastering product knowledge is important and it's crucial that the information is used correctly. Having a handle on product knowledge is only useful if a sales professional delivers the right information to his or her customer. Sometimes customers will make it simple by asking, "Where is this made?" or "Does it come with a warranty?" Other times it is left to the sales staff to determine what information is important to their customers. Some customers will be thrilled to know that they are looking at a designer line. Others want to know all about construction, and still others may be intrigued by the company story. In order to help staff master these fundamentals, it is essential that retailers do their best to make learning enjoyable. One way to do this is to incorporate product knowledge into contests and activities.

Ongoing education programs that focus on product knowledge build employee confidence and ensure that they have the ability to do an exemplary job. The right coaching and training will, in turn increase revenue.

BEING A TEAM PLAYER

Did you know Michael Jordan admitted to agreeing to play on the Dream Team only if Isaiah Thomas did not? Many analysts believe the team functioned at the highest level possible due in part to this decision.

Organizations spend a lot of time evaluating how they are treating their external customers. While external customer relations are important, attending to internal relationships is equally important. Having players on your team that get along well and function at the highest level is critical to long-term success. Many businesses fail to take the time to evaluate how employees are treating each other within their organizations. If employees are not satisfied and working well with other team members, it shows outwardly. This is why it is so important to encourage sales professionals to hone their team skills.

Organizational morale has a tremendous ripple effect. That is why it's so important to ensure our team members are working in a symbiotic manner. Happy employees don't just improve morale. They achieve higher productivity and you can count on retaining them longer. As owners and managers, we want to recognize this value and make it a top training priority. After all, happy employees equal happy external customers and happy customers (internal and external) equal a healthy bottom line.

There are three concepts to consider when evaluating the overall morale of your sales team. It's what I like to call Team Player Criteria:

1) Attitude—Is it positive? Do team members show up on the court (or sales floor) with a smile on their face and leave their personal problems at home? A bad attitude seems like a major stumbling block, but the beauty of attitude is that it is completely controllable. Be sure to hire employees that recognize that they can control their attitude, and are willing to do so



or learn how to. Truth be told, if an employee's attitude is consistently negative, that person is probably unhappy and not a good fit. Most of us in the workforce spend 40, 50, 60 hours a week working (many more hours than we are able to spend with friends and family). Why would anyone want to spend that much time in an environment that they don't enjoy? It is everyone's responsibility, leadership and staff, to make a positive contribution to a positive work environment.

2) Connection via Communication:

Do employees actively attempt to connect with their co-workers? Do managers make it a point to show appreciation for a job well done? Are they quick with a compliment when it is well deserved? Are people within the company really working to understand and listen to each other and not just going through the motions? It is important to have those strong connections in order to build trust and a sense of security. Team members have to be confident that the person they pass the ball to is going to execute the play. When team members feel valued, they perform better and, in turn, maximize opportunities by providing genuine, enthusiastic customer care. Communication preferences differ greatly and miscommunications are usually at the root of any conflict. Understanding one's own communication style and being observant and tolerant of other's styles can cut conflict down to a minimum. In our organizations communicating information

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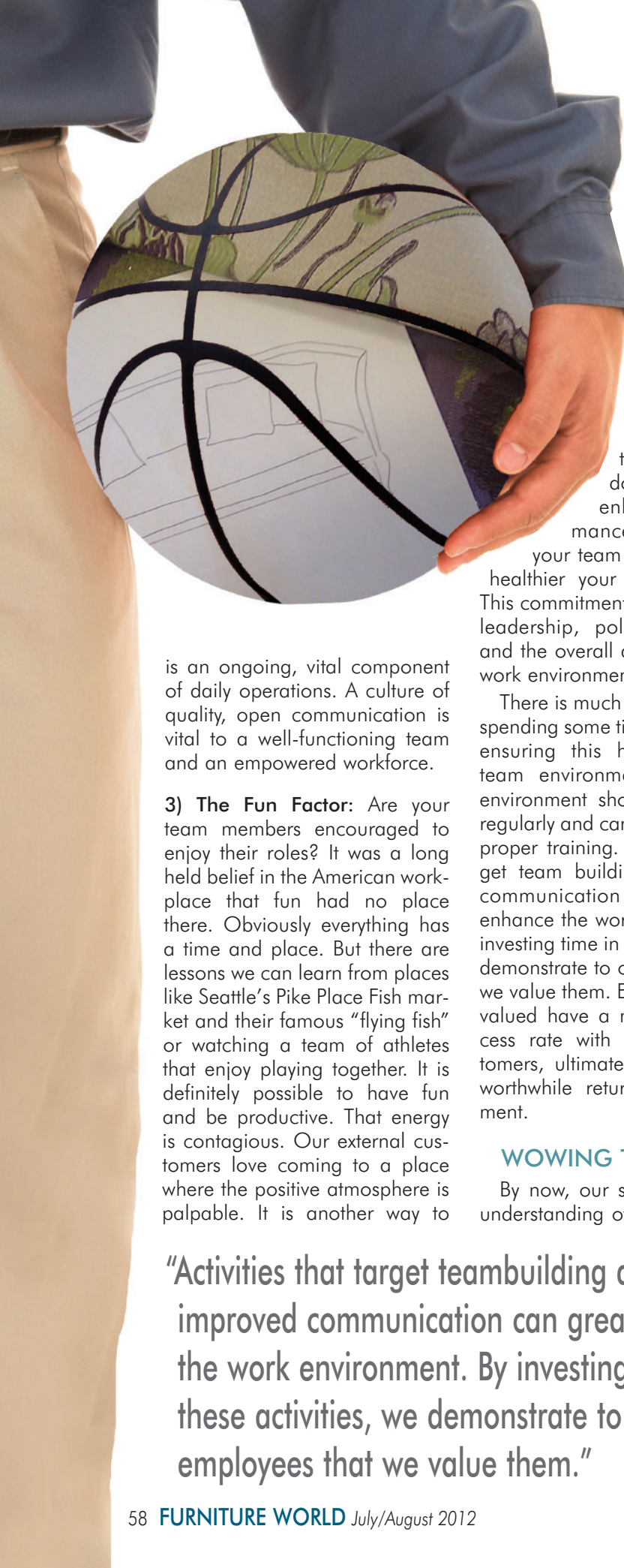


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is an ongoing, vital component of daily operations. A culture of quality, open communication is vital to a well-functioning team and an empowered workforce.

3) The Fun Factor: Are your team members encouraged to enjoy their roles? It was a long held belief in the American workplace that fun had no place there. Obviously everything has a time and place. But there are lessons we can learn from places like Seattle's Pike Place Fish market and their famous "flying fish" or watching a team of athletes that enjoy playing together. It is definitely possible to have fun and be productive. That energy is contagious. Our external customers love coming to a place where the positive atmosphere is palpable. It is another way to

ensure they keep coming back for more.

Having this foundation in place is similar to the human body having a strong core. It prevents a multitude of problems down the road and enhances performance. The healthier your team members are, the healthier your business will be. This commitment is reflected in our leadership, policies, procedures and the overall atmosphere of our work environment.

There is much to be gained from spending some time cultivating and ensuring this highly functioning team environment. The internal environment should be evaluated regularly and can be improved with proper training. Activities that target team building and improved communication can greatly enhance the work environment. By investing time in these activities, we demonstrate to our employees that we value them. Employees that feel valued have a much greater success rate with our external customers, ultimately creating a very worthwhile return on this investment.

WOWING THE CROWD

By now, our sales team has an understanding of what it means to

provide an adequate level of customer service. Now it is time to challenge them to up their game and reap the rewards. There are two areas of focus that can take the delivery of good service and escalate it to the level of delivering exceptional customer service.

The first is communication skills. This goes beyond the basics. An expert sales professional is completely tuned into each customer. This means tuning out the distractions in their heads and in the store, giving customers their full attention, and actively listening.

When working with a customer, it is also essential for sales staff to know who they are dealing with in terms of communication style. One of the most fundamental concepts of effective communication in the work environment is making sure that the message is "customer-oriented". This means not only communicating what is most important to the client or customer, but also communicating it in a way that they will understand. The cause of most misunderstandings is ineffective communication. This includes non-verbal communication. What is the body language and tone communicating? Is it reinforcing the message or fighting with it? Dream Team members know how to not only pick up on a customer's communication style and read his or her body language but they know to adjust their style to subtly mirror that of the customer. Providing training on understanding body language and customers' processing and communication styles can be a great addition to your company's professional development program.

The second element that should be included in this upper echelon of customer service is Design Skills. You may be wondering how mastering design skills relates to providing exceptional customer service

"Activities that target teambuilding and improved communication can greatly enhance the work environment. By investing time in these activities, we demonstrate to our employees that we value them."

How to Build Your Dream Team

- Coach Sales Professionals to recognize the value of product knowledge.
- Demonstrate the importance of communicating the information that is of primary interest to the customer.
- Emphasize the importance of a highly functioning team environment.
- Clarify each person's responsibility to make a positive contribution to the team environment.
- Train your team to leverage knowledge, build relationships and provide exceptional service during the sales process.
- Offer and support opportunities for continuous growth.

(and just how I am going to tie this into Olympic Basketball). If we are truly going to provide exceptional service, we must not just offer what the customer is looking for, but go beyond this ordinary expectation. The Olympic Dream Team did not receive that moniker by being average or delivering what all the other teams delivered. Today's furniture customer has high expectations. Today's furniture customer is design-oriented. When was the last time you overheard a customer say to a sales person that they just needed a sofa and did not care what it looked like? That is not the world we work in today. Our customers are reading design magazines, watching HGTV, and scrolling through Houzz and Pinterest. Although many

customers may not be seeking to hire an interior designer, they are always looking for design guidance when it comes to making purchases for their homes. The beauty of the furniture industry today is that there is style available now at every price point and even budget-minded customers are looking for pieces that reflect their design aesthetic and objectives.

Exposure to fundamental design principles boosts confidence and allow sales associates to be responsive to this customer need. Design savvy associates help guide customers to make good design and purchasing decisions beyond a single item or vignette as it is shown on the showroom floor. This is a skill that has been proven to build long-term relation-

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ships, generate referral business, boost close rates and average sale figures.

There are a variety of ways to incorporate design skills training into your sales environment. First, there are firms that specialize in that type of training and will come to your store to deliver these types of programs. If you have an interior designer on staff, he or she can assist the others in learning the fundamentals. Management can also encourage sales professionals to take courses, read design magazines and watch design-oriented programs to create awareness of what is currently trending. This information can be easily incorporated into the structure of weekly sales meetings. Manufacturers' reps are also a great resource. Ask them to report to your team on the latest trends they are seeing and how their companies are responding. This is great information that sales professionals can share with their customers. Customers love getting inside information on the latest

trends. It is a great way to make them feel that they are getting a level of service that is above and beyond the norm. Selling with a design perspective takes customer service to the next level.

CONCLUSION

Building a Dream Team involves coaching a team to master the fundamentals, be team players, and to continually "wow" the crowd. These efforts have to be supported by a solid sales process as well as leadership that models the desired behavior and reflects the values of the organization. These efforts also require a commitment to ongoing education as this is not a static environment. The rate of change in our industry requires that we are dedicated to keeping up on information that will continually direct us and our sales team toward improvement.

Creating and coaching a Dream Team is an ongoing process. The creation of this team however will result

in a stronger, more confident and productive sales team that is well-equipped to maximize every opportunity and bring home the gold!

Rene' Johnston-Gingrich is Vice President of Training Development for the Profitability Consulting Group, specializing in delivering the programs Design Trac: Design Skills for Retail Sales People and Sales Trac III: In Home Selling. Rene' has owned and operated an interior design firm for 17 years and now works with organizations to ensure they have the best possible team environment.

She served as a regular columnist for The Lewiston Tribune Business Profile and is an adjunct faculty member of Lewis-Clark State College's Business Division. Rene' has a Bachelor of Fine Arts Degree in Interior Planning and Design and a Master's Degree in Adult Education and Human Resource Development. She can be contacted at reneg@profitabilityconsulting.com.



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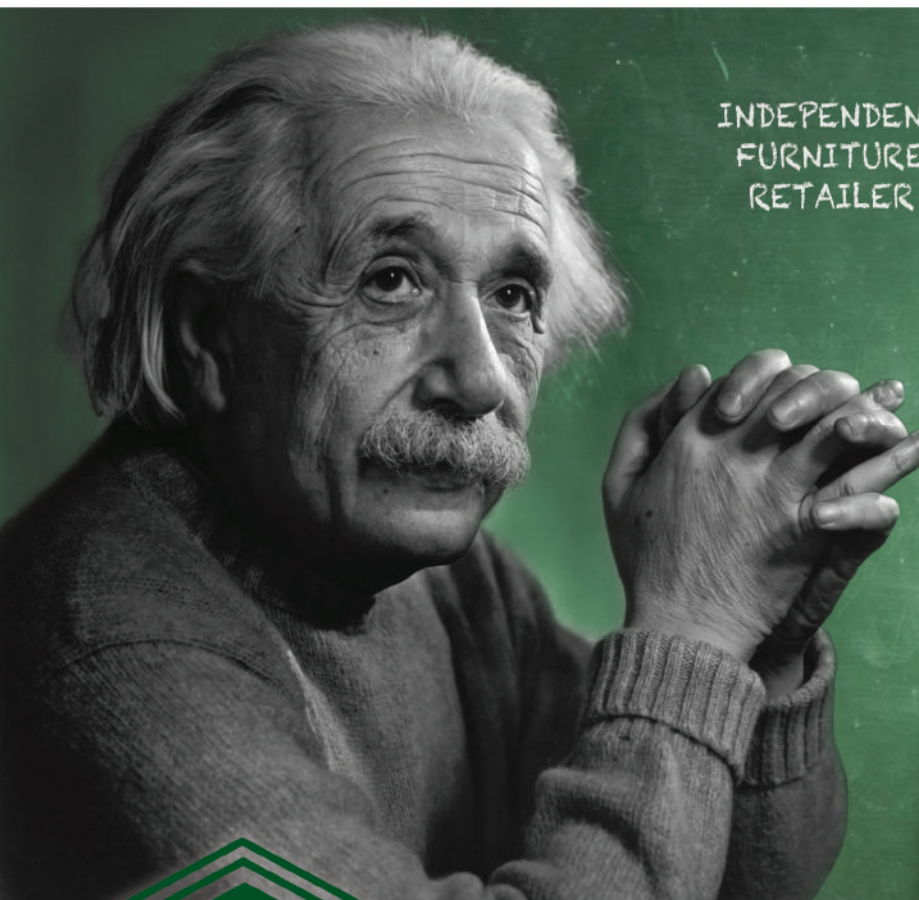
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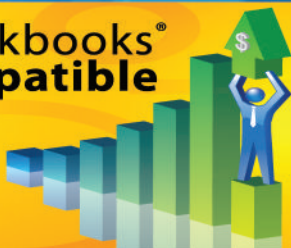
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GET NOTICED ONLINE!

In a cluttered online world, attending to the basics of good website design and marketing can make a huge difference to your furniture business.

by Richard Stevenson, 1&1 Internet, Inc.

Business owners often rely on their website to build awareness about their company and stand out online. However, to drive traffic and get noticed, you must consider all aspects of online marketing. Here are a number of different techniques furniture retailers should use to take their online visibility to the next level.

Achieving notoriety on the World Wide Web where anything and everything is accessible can seem overwhelming, but with an effective strategy it can be the key to business success. Many businesses feel that their online efforts are complete once they have established a professional website. To be truly effective, however, your virtual

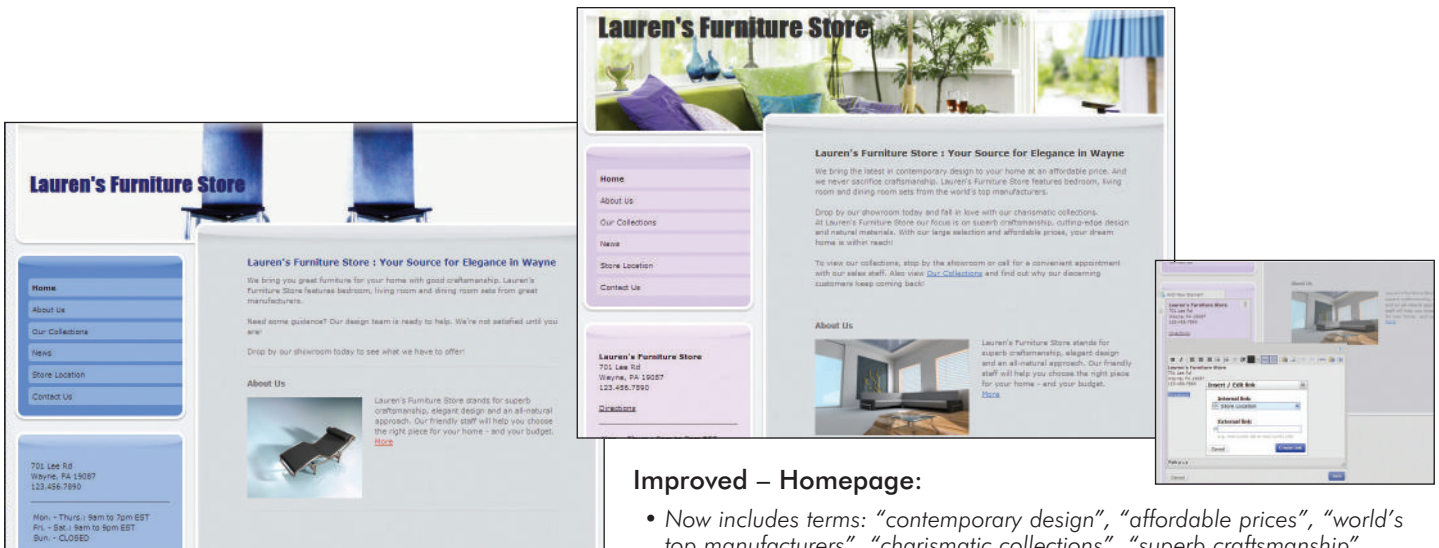
space should be used as the cornerstone to build a notable and attractive reputation with customers. There are many valuable opportunities to develop this strategy that are often neglected.

A professional website creates a designated space for you to tout the positive attributes of your inventory. It is a platform to present your unique selling points with target customers while also providing them with an information resource that is always available. But once the site is live on the Web, consider how you can best utilize it to maximize awareness and outreach. To do this successfully requires online marketing initiatives that are the important next steps for business growth. Opportunities with search engines like

Google, online listings in virtual directories, social media and even analytical data about website activity are all channels to use for expanding touch points between business and consumer.

Before the birth of digital media, prime marketing techniques included public displays, sponsorships and advertisements in print publications. Today, the focus has shifted from print to online banners, ad words, virtual communities and search engine marketing placements, as well as from one to two-way communication. And although furniture retailers are aware of this shift, many have been slow to become fully engaged in its implementation.

If you suspect that you could be get-



Poor Homepage:

- Words are simple and boring. They do not contain any industry buzz words to help with SEO.
- Images are boring, do not stand out, only chairs are shown without captions or tags.
- Contact Information isn't specific.
- No internal hyperlink for the directions to store.

Improved – Homepage:

- Now includes terms: “contemporary design”, “affordable prices”, “world’s top manufacturers”, “charismatic collections”, “superb craftsmanship”, “cutting-edge design”, “natural materials” and “large selection”, for SEO.
- Includes a variety of furniture pieces pictured in a setting to inspire shoppers.
- Title image is bright, drawing eyes towards the top of the page so the title “Lauren’s Furniture Store” stands-out.
- Contact Information has the name of the store added, and a link to a “Directions” sub-page that is found under the “Contact” page.
- Internal hyperlink added giving store directions.



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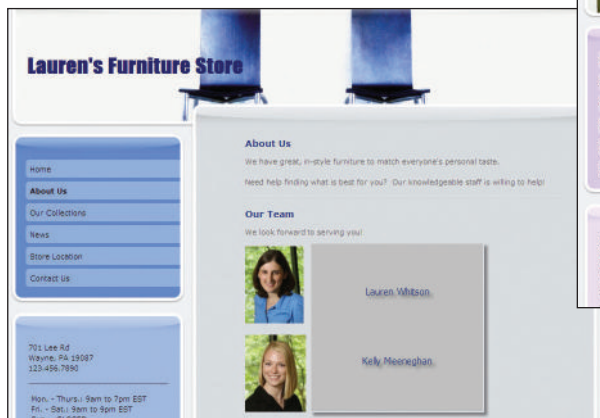
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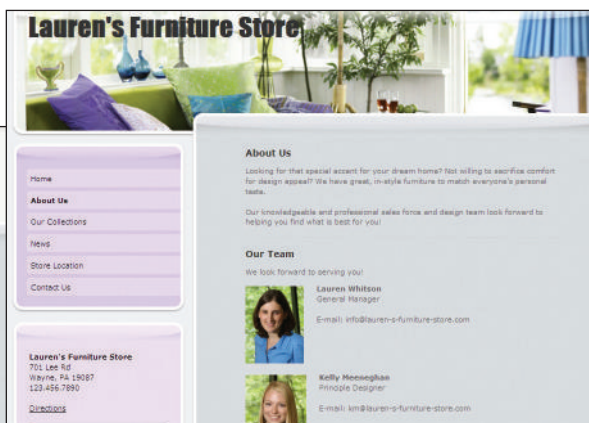
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Before – About Us:

- The wording is vague and unhelpful.
- The team members have no description nor contact information.



Improved – About Us:

- Spruced up the wording – added buzzwords “dream home” “design appeal” “comfort” “in-style furniture” “knowledgeable”, “professional”, “sales force” and “design team”.
- Added title and email to the team members.

ting better results from your online marketing efforts, and do a better job of developing and maintaining customer relationships, keep reading.

The number and categories of online advertising opportunities in general has dramatically increased thanks to a rising

emphasis on gaining consumer trust and proving relevance instead of merely ‘shouting the loudest’ amongst competitors.

site, this all combines into a testament of the quality items and customer service you can offer to customers.

Crafting An Online Marketing Strategy:

- Create a Facebook business page and link it with your website.
- Link to Google Maps. Include mailing address, Web address and phone number.
- Determine valuable keywords for your website and use them to structure its content.
- Regularly update website content.
- Contribute content and comments on other industry forums or blogs.
- If budget is available, investigate SEM opportunities.
- Use analytics to determine what pages of your website are most successful and which are not.
- Don't give up! It will take time for you to notice the impact of your efforts.

GETTING STARTED

If you are unsure of how to get started, it may be beneficial to start small. If you are like most furniture retailers, focusing your outreach to consumers in your local trading area is ideal. As a first step, market your business through online directory listings on local search engines. Placements in these resources help boost visibility when someone searches on the Web for a retailer in your area, and will display a business's contact and website details for immediate accessibility. Checking with your current Web hosting provider for tools that help push your business content out to several directories like Google™ Maps, Yahoo!® Local, Bing™, Ask.com™ and Yellowpages, is also a good idea. Submitting information once rather than individually to each listing can greatly save on time.

Facebook, Twitter and YouTube are great for making personal connections. These platforms have been transformed into popular marketing tools for managing customer relations. Social media is no longer just a tool consumers expect to be used among their personal circles; instead, it is now an avenue the public requires businesses to also utilize for communication. Along with your web-

TAKING NEXT STEPS

A website is great to have but not nearly as effective as it could be if not utilized through other online channels. Many opportunities on the Web keep a website at the heart of its strategy. Search Engine Optimization (SEO) is one of them. The primary benefit found in SEO is the careful look it forces you to take at your website. For example, is your site's content enhanced with keywords and features that push the site to a prominent position in online search results? In other words, if someone were to search for a furniture store in your specific area, will search engines consider your website relevant enough to place it prominently in the list of results? Working to enhance SEO for your business website is a free technique you can use to get better visibility in search engines. Try it by doing the following:

- Strategically place keywords and industry vocabulary in site content.
- Update website material on a regular basis.
- Offer credible third-party links that expand on information about topics to visitors.
- Write descriptive captions to photos of individual pieces of furniture.



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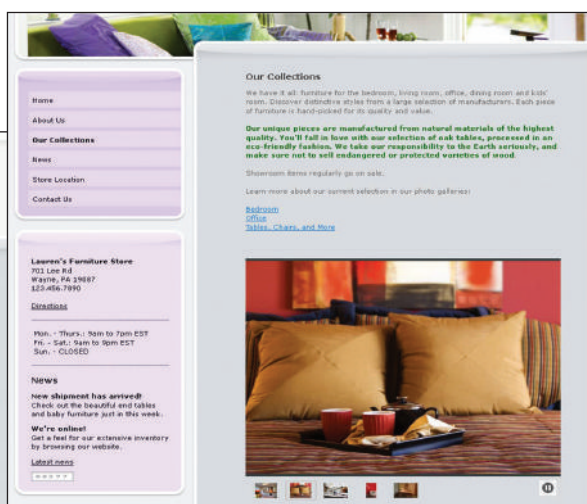
Poor – Our Collections Page:

- A simple list of furniture categories
- No pictures to view the collections. It's just a statement saying to visit the showroom.

- If you deliver, specify the regions within your area that you service.

To help determine valuable keywords, place yourself in the shoes of your target customer. Conduct a search on Google that you think they would use to find your business (i.e. quality dining room tables, comfortable sofa, etc). Use this strategy to develop a list of terms to use throughout the site and ideas of how to organize content. While there are no fool-proof methods that guarantee a top placement in results, utilizing multiple avenues can significantly improve visibility and reputability on the Web.

Just as SEO can be extremely effective, Search Engine Marketing (SEM) has also become a valuable strategy for those business owners. Unlike SEO where website content is the key, SEM uses online ads to place information on search ranking pages. This includes banners or graphics around the border of a search results page and sponsored links that connect directly to the company's website. In practice, this heightens brand awareness and recognition among consumers while giving you, as a business owner, more control over targeted marketing initiatives. Your Web



Improved – Our Collections Page:

- Furniture now listed as hyperlinks to photo galleries that display the different pieces accordingly with prices.
- Added buzzwords to more detailed text: "large selection", "hand-picked", "quality", "value", "unique pieces", "highest quality" and "eco-friendly".
- Highlighted the feature of natural/eco-friendly pieces in the appropriate color of green.
- Added product lifestyle images.

host can be a valuable source of information about SEM.

The science behind successful SEO and SEM strategies is yet to fully be perfected by marketing experts. But to help you get a basic understanding, here are some of the most frequently asked questions about SEM and SEO from business owners.

How is SEM impacted by my website?

Ensure that your website's homepage is relevant with the keywords used in your online advertisement. If Google cannot determine the connection between the ad and your site's homepage, the relevance will be missed and it will not consider your website as significant as those from competitors. Additionally, ensure that your website loads properly and all Web pages are fully functional.

What does a Google Ad consist of?

The advertisements consists of three different parts - a title linking to the website, up to two lines for a description, and the business' URL. The topic of the advertisement can be anything relevant to your organization, from an overview of your store to a specific promotion you currently offer.

How long does it take for SEO to

impact my listing in search results?

This is difficult to say. SEO is not an overnight fix, and takes many things into account. It can take up to a few months after any changes are made for search engines to recognize the new optimized content. Also, rankings are affected by elements such as the number of visits to your homepage and links to your site in other online content. These recommendations are a key factor for your SEO technique. If other sources are recommending your website, your credibility and in turn your ranking will improve.

What is an ideal number of keywords to include in website content?

It is not necessarily how many different words you use, but how often you use them that matters the most. Forcing this vocabulary into places where it does not make sense will hurt your reputation as a knowledgeable source and potentially damage how search engines analyze your website.

Is there a special process that a search engine like Google will use to "find" my website? There is, but only to a degree. Search engines send out "crawlers" around the Web each time someone performs a search online.

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GET NOTICED ONLINE!

Depending on what the search terms are specifically, these crawlers will focus on reading and analyzing websites that include these exact words or similar phrases. An extensive algorithm is performed on the back end and the resulting analysis of sites' content produces a list of links from most to least relevant.

ANALYZING YOUR EFFORTS

Your website is up and running for people to visit. You have optimized content to pull traffic from search engine results and use a Facebook profile as a key source for customer feedback. With a website at the heart of your online endeavors, analyzing the impact your site is having on consumers is vital to tuning into your target demographic.

Website data, or site analytics, is an efficient tool to use to measure the success of a site with an intended audience. This batch of statistics measures

important details that can act as learnings about what and how to improve your business presence, revealing details like levels of traffic to site pages, geographic locations of online visitors, time spent on the site and keywords used in search engine requests. Businesses can also ask visitors questions directly through surveys and polls posted on the site. By offering two-way communication between business and consumer, surveys allow a business owner to get specific information about what customers are interested in both on your website and about their services.

As you leverage your website in communicating your services, you are raising awareness with those who matter the most for your growth and success. Accessibility to your business increases and clients have a resource to share with others.

Richard Stevenson, is Head of Corporate Communications for 1&1's hosting divisions worldwide. Having worked in web hosting for 10 years, Richard has spent many years working with media to raise awareness for Web related issues to small business audiences all over the world. His key areas of interest include championing micro-sized businesses on the Web, and discussing ways to improve consumer experiences online.

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SUCCESS STORIES

Design oriented Insideout Homestore has fun while expanding its business with a new store theme, social networking initiative and condo packages.

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

Some three decades ago, a budding home furnishings entrepreneur of adventurous nature set sail from New Zealand to conquer the Americas. She surveyed the scene in the City of Vancouver, and decided to move on across the Straits of Georgia to an island to the west with direct access to the Pacific. Victoria was far less claustrophobic for her innovative imagination, the capital of the province and home of Tofino's legendary surfers' beaches and the mystic lands of the Haida Gwaii.

Sue Toby focused on a promising property once a warehouse, then a brewery, then a blacksmith shop. It was close to Victoria's docks, the vibrant Inner Harbour of Vancouver Island, now recognized as "The Design District". She's just down the block from the iconic Swan, an ebullient, up-market boutique pub/hotel, replete with a multitude of paintings and sculptures and a large and constantly flowing eclectic patronage. If you keep going and turn the corner, you're right in the middle of Canada's oldest China Town with all its sights, sounds and fragrances. And, constant money-in-the-pocket tourist traffic.

But there have been some negatives, too, in the heady mix that needed more than a duct tape response. There were some socio-cultural hurdles to jump, startling realities partially brought about by dramatic economic shifts. As well as the affluent Baby Boomers, comfortably off retirees and the mega-rich who have driven property values sky-high on the West Coast, British Columbia's famously equable climate, the mildest in Canada,

also beckons the out of work, homeless population who found "living rough" in Victoria's neighbourhoods a more tolerable alternative. There were times when Sue, her daughters and their staff, had to make their way through a crowd of "between 20 to 60 street people around our building every day which, of course, made our clients afraid to come into our store! Actually this was my eureka moment. Every day that was slow, we were driven to work even harder on our website, as well as developing our furniture packages that are still so successful today."

Insideout was and is a home furnishings jewel. The name? Well, Sue hails from Down Under. Her concepts tend to reflect a somewhat unique point of view. The best semantic interpretation of the name "Insideout" is perhaps its openness, the owner's willingness to let it all hang out when it comes to flexing with the times, tough though they may be. Seeing trends and portents for what they are... and might soon be! ...and juggling every detectable positive aspect of that sometimes esoteric mix.

A customer reaction to Insideout's website, "I've never seen so many wonderful /beautiful/insightful home furnishings on one website ever, ever before! Stunning! All my credit cards are itching!" Check it out, www.insideoutvictoria.com.

And what about the furniture packages? At the height of Sue's most difficult time, "a local designer came to view our inventory; she had an assignment to fully furnish six resort homes for a major developer. She was concerned that my business was too small to have this

capability, but I convinced her to let me try. Within three days I was able to assure her I could do it; within six weeks all the homes were complete, looked fantastic and sold shortly thereafter. This was the beginning of our packaging projects.

"We subsequently went directly to developers and told them about our ser-

"We subsequently went directly to developers and told them about our service, that we had developed packages that would suit any size or style of condo or house."

vice, that we had developed packages that would suit any size or style of condo or house. They contacted their clients who either wanted to furnish their suites for investment purposes and charge more for rent, or just welcomed the ease of being able to furnish their own new home, hassle free. It worked.

"Angie, one of my two beautiful daughters, gave up her real estate license three years ago to come and work with me. I'm a lucky woman to have her, and love that I get to work alongside my daughter every day. She is a natural. She keeps in regular contact with all the developers in Victoria and even Vancouver, talking to them about the added value these unique packages



Sue Toby, Owner and Daughter Angie.



Pictured is the Home Package page from the www.insideoutvictoria.com website. Standard package prices start at \$16,200-\$18,000 for a one bedroom apartment with custom options available.

offer their present and potential clients. It's such a great add on to their real estate sales.

"The cost of real estate is still very high in Victoria, but we are seeing a small rise in purchases over the past 10 months. Gradually there seem to be more confident buyers out there, and we are ready to jump into top-speed action the minute

things pick up. We continue to do packages from time to time and the response is invariably the same, people love it!" Go to that great website, click on "Home Packages" and read all about it! Introduction, how it works, example packages, design portfolio, etc. A eureka moment indeed.

"The message is, don't sit around and

wait for the customer to come to you. Go find them!"

And the challenge is not to simply flex to the stresses of post-recession's constantly changing scene, but encourage and help targeted demographics replace their negative vibes with positive energy, revitalizing, reawakening their attainable dreams.

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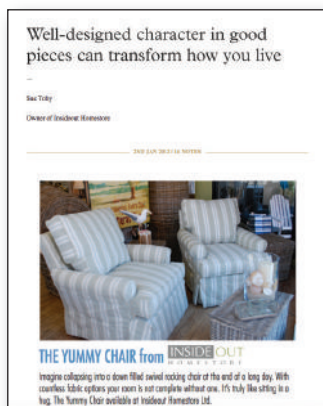
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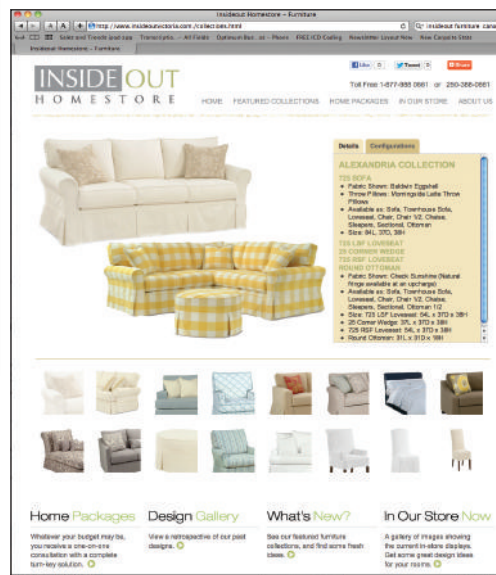
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Insideout's website reflects the enticing look of the store (right). Above is an entry on the store's new blog featuring the very popular 'Yummy Mummy' chair.



"We've introduced a way of living that makes them feel special, happy, snugly. It's a great environment to be in, kind of like pretending to be somewhere else."

"People are still holding on to their money, but not quite so tightly. We decided to assist them in loosening their pockets by exciting them with a new look, an entirely new concept, something that would generate the euphoria of falling in love! Over the past two years, we've changed everything in the store to reflect the theme 'I'd Rather Be Living in the Hamptons'. Think (and see on our blog) lots of beautiful slip-covered furniture, mostly in washable white or cream fabrics, amazing cushions emblazoned with shells and sea creatures, lovely throws in delectable colours. We have wonderful signs that say 'Welcome to the Beach!' and 'Summertime on the Cape' (especially fun during the winter months!) all in the soft blues of the ocean and sunshine

yellows. We're really running with the theme, so we're buying a lot more sustainable, eco-friendly organic products, sea grass rugs, baskets and even sea grass coffee tables, some in the shape of bongo drums. I've been successful with teak root coffee tables as well. From Indonesia, the roots of the teak tree, kiln dried. The artisans craft the root branches to make table legs. Some of the larger ones are used for dining tables. Really beautiful, and a 'statement' and our customers just love them.

"We feel that our demographic, our everyday customer, outside the furniture packages, remains the baby boomer, men and women, all across the spectrum. Many of our customers have not been affected by the economic downturn; they simply need to be encouraged and inspired to continue to buy. The older ones don't see retirement as an option. But generally speaking she/he is tired and just doesn't have a lot of time or the confidence to put this inspiring and comfortable styling together." Sue laughed, "Her/his kids have left home, the dog died, their professional life is stressful and they just want to melt into their beautiful living room at the end of a long day with a glass of wine in hand. They always wanted white or cream but never had the courage when the kids were still at home. We've introduced a way of living that makes them feel special, happy, snugly. It's a great environment to be in, kind of like pretending

to be somewhere else.

"One of the great things about this furniture styling is that both sexes love it. As soon as we're able to seduce them into sitting in it, it's a done deal. They just smile.

"Angie is constantly visiting clients at their homes to help them achieve the look, and feel they've made the right choices, assisting with paint colours, rugs, and other accessories. She is a no nonsense girl with the ability to make the process comfortable and fun. They love her easy going nature and bright ideas that help to make their homes special."

Sue and Angie were delighted with the opportunities to augment "The Hamptons" at the Vegas Show. "It made our creative juices run wild. A more upbeat and positive attitude all 'round. To us it seemed the trends were towards natural fabrics, lots of hemp, cotton and linen, jute, sea grass and fascinating bamboo rugs.

"And then, of course, there is our 'Yummy Mummy' chair! It has been one of our best sellers for the past several years and is still alive and kicking. Everyone deserves this chair, not just the breastfeeding market! Think instead of a group of people who want to be cuddled without child attached. Once we get a customer to sit in a 'Yummy Mummy', a giggly smile invariably appears on their face and they ask what

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INSIDEOUT HOMESTORE

it's made of. We tell them love, hugs, clouds and down. We try to keep seven on the floor at all times, all in different fabrics/leathers, so no matter where you are in the store, one is close by."

The use of media has changed, too. "In the last two years we've come to realize that we just cannot afford to advertise in the conventional way, newspapers, radio, television, etc., so we have become more creative and use social media, e-mail being one of the most important. And, of course, our website, our blog and twitter. We invested in a really good camera and we take great photos of our products for the blog. For example, it's a great way to

display a domestically made product, writing a little story about the wood and where it came from. Our blog has only been active for a few months, but we are definitely getting a positive response. It sure is a learning curve, but one we can clearly see is of benefit.

"I've also discovered the use of group e-mails within our Design District. My idea is that each store has its own e-mail list. We decide on a weekend, and all the stores e-mail to our clients that we have some sort of sale or promotion, new items in the store, whatever. With all the stores involved, before long thousands of customers have received an e-mail from someone in the area inviting

them to visit! And it doesn't cost a cent! I'm still working on other stores to join me in this venture and thankfully there are a lot of forward-thinking people who want to be part of the action."

Sue believes there is a real trend in Victoria and environs to buy locally made products. "However, we usually say 'North American' made, as we have so much to offer on both sides of the border. Drop shipping is easier as it can either come to me or go to you for no extra delivery charge. We are very hands on about telling the 'local' story in our store. We do sell a lot of international products, too, and I do not believe that emphasizing locally made

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RETAIL STORIES

products will detract from my other furniture and accessories. I really do get the vibe that people are very interested in local, but it is still about the dollar. We have lowered our prices by not including the shipping on certain products to keep the prices down; seems to be working in this market.

"In my experience, the early thirties to the baby boomers are most concerned about domestically made furniture. We preach the most successful message, that domestically made products keep jobs in Canada, they support the economy, etc.

"But again, directed to the same demographic, they want the new, the eco-friendly, the exciting, the unique product wherever it comes from!

Regular customers drop by constantly

to see our latest inspirations. Many come in or phone us/e-mail us, to hear from us about the latest trends.

"For example, from the Netherlands, one of our great successes is a compelling high-end upholstery line of woven wire pieces, developed originally by Lloyd Loom. The 'loomed' fabric is composed of natural fibre twisted into twine over the metal core. This core adds strength and bounce to the upholstery unlike a typical wicker. Loom does not split or crack and has no ends or

joins sticking out. The beech wood frames are hand bent and air dried for nine months prior to upholstering. The line can be used for both residential and contract applications and is ISO tested for durability and stability on a regular basis by an outside lab. It's completely assembled by hand, and only environmentally safe water colours are used. A wonderful product!

"And here's another unique product, this one really close to home! My very creative husband, Craig, has been



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INSIDEOUT HOMESTORE

working along with me, diligently putting more 'local' into the store. He's been making the most amazing coffee tables from 200 to 300 year old fir beams and coal mining wheels. The fir comes from old commercial buildings, was milled in the early 1900s, then remilled this year by Craig. We're always on the lookout for old wheels, mainly

"We've changed everything in the store to reflect the theme, 'I'd Rather Be Living in the Hamptons'."

using old coal cart wheels from train tracks. We've found some wagon wheels, too, that look fantastic. The coffee tables were an instant hit. One man was so intrigued that he ordered one immediately, then brought his wife in to collaborate on the planning of a whole new living room inspired by the table.

"Craig has also been making dining tables from the fir, candle holders from the sides of wine barrels, and using the tops and bottoms of the barrels to craft Lazy Susans.

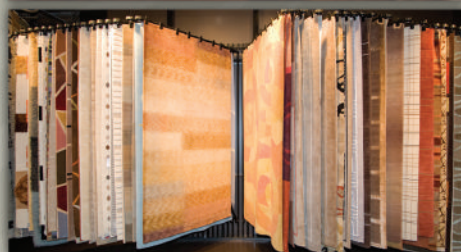
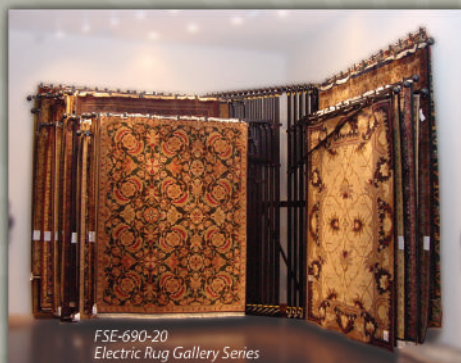
"So you can see the local shop movement is in full gear in Victoria and the tables, of course very much a local product, work very well. Our special customers really seem to want/need a story about the products they're purchasing, and Craig's pieces tell a lovely

story. Amongst other things, they love that the wood has never left the island!

"Also, I've started to buy fabulous, old pieces of furniture to put in the store. We paint them in sea foam colours and, once again, the histories of the pieces are great selling features. And they add a fresh twist to the slip covered look."

As you might expect, Insideout's community involvement is a tad "different", perhaps more sensitive. "We've worked with single Moms for years," Sue told us. "Back in the beginning of things we let them pay off a piece of furniture on layaway, so all year they would save up and pay a bit at a time. Then, at the end, we would surprise them with a discount and say, OK; you now have \$200 or whatever the amount was, to decorate your table with dishes, etc. This was

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Top Ten reasons why furniture retailers that switched, love their Custom Design Software.

1. Their old software was so complicated, sales people were still writing manual tickets.
2. They were constantly on the phone with tech support!
3. Support fees were killing their profit margins.
4. They were unable to adjust sales after they were written.
5. They were forced to write separate sales for special order and stock.
6. Had to add items into the computer before special order them.
7. Reports were too complicated to understand.
8. No real-time Quick Books Integration.
9. Had limited space for descriptions on sales orders.
10. Couldn't go onto the next month until they closed the current month.

Ten More reasons to love Custom Design Software...

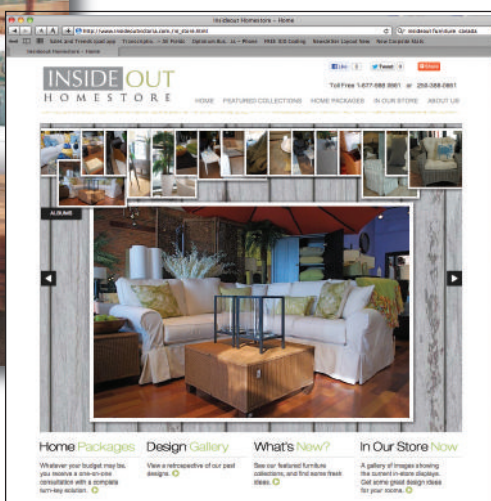


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A portfolio of completed rooms can be seen online. Pictured below left is a coffee table crafted by Sue's husband, Craig, who, helps to put more 'local' into store offerings.



"I've started to buy fabulous, old pieces of furniture to put in the store. We paint them in sea foam colours and, once again, the histories of the pieces are great selling features."

a lot of fun for all of us!

"Also, now when many of our customers are ordering new furniture they're concerned because they still have lovely furniture in their homes they're replacing; they ask what should they do with it? And then we tell them that we work with single Moms and Dads who would love to own a nice sofa, etc. It's a great way to recycle."

The Provincial government is now working with citizens of Victoria to find solutions for the homeless who once populated The Design District and the nearby docks. The Victoria Cool Aid Society provides shelter and transitional

housing through Streetlink Emergency Services. The new, purpose-built Rock Bay Landing facility was constructed "to the highest green standards including solar panels on the roof, heat recovery, superior insulation and much more" with 84 permanent shelter beds, units for family shelter, and soon 23 new transitional units, with expanded space for overflow conditions. Training workshops and computer access is available to residents as well as counseling. A long term problem and solution, and one to which the Insideout family gladly contribute. And there's a new source of inspiration this summer, an anonymous

couple have just donated \$30 million to an expanded dream, this to pay for the operation of a supportive housing project. Things are looking brighter.

There's a wedding coming up, the Toby's daughter Maria, sister Angie as her attendant. A good percentage of the population of New Zealand will soon swell the population of Victoria for the celebration. Insideout will continue its exuberant operation during the event in the care of four trusted friends! A reflection of new times, new horizons, a fresh approach to an optimistic future.

-Janet Holt-Johnstone

If You Want an Exit Strategy that Makes YOU Money, Why Use Hired Guns and Pay Four or Five Times More?



"Larry's time-tested plan for going out of business is detailed & laid out so there is no question what the next step is or when it will take place. He got to know us and our business and I am convinced that there is no one in the industry that could tell our story to our customers the way he has. With nervous anticipation we prepared for the opening day and when it came we were absolutely blown away! **For the first three days customers poured into our store and sales were beyond our wildest expectations! I am writing this on the fourth day of the sale and already our 7000 square foot store in a rural town of 1200 people has grossed over \$90,000.** Thanks, Larry, for all you've done for us and for our business—it's been a great ride!" *Dave & Alisha Riemenschneider, Kingsley Home Furnishings, Kingsley, IA*

● **NOTE:** Dave and Alisha continued their blistering sales pace. When their eight-week sale ended on Thursday, May 8, 2012, they had achieved sales of \$573,000, with an advertising cost of under 5%. To my knowledge, this is the largest sustained volume of home furnishings per square foot recorded in recent history. *Larry Mullins*

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- 5) Guest Bedroom
- 6) Kitchen
- 7) Home Office
- 8) Home Theater Room

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**Furniture Today*, December 7, 2009.