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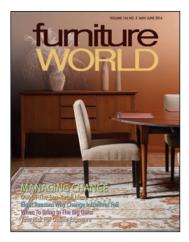
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CONTENTS FURNITURE WORLD MAGAZINE

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Cover: This unique group from Jaipur's Poeme Collection takes traditional designs and re-invents them in a palette of modern, highly livable colors. Each design is made from premiere hand-spun wool and crafted with precision for the look and feel of a hand-knotted rug, at the more affordable cost of a hand-tufted. See more information on page 40 of this issue or visit jaipurugs.com.

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EDITOR'S CORNER

Taming Power of The Small

his edition includes several useful articles that deal with the topic of managing change in retail organizations.

David McMahon discusses one of the best places to get game-changing ideas. Karen Florence explains how to effectively motivate associates and employees to do things differently. Joe Capillo and Rene' Johnston-Gingrich look at common reasons why change initiatives fail, plus give practical advice on how to keep them moving forward.

Often, organizational change is the result of exposure to big ideas that can transform the nature of a business and how its employees, customers and supplers interact.

Other times, change can be fostered by something as small as a shift in attitude, a word of encouragement, or a smile. So while you are looking for those necessary gamechanging ideas, also consider small actions that can create subtle tipping points in the way people interact, business policies are implemented and profitability enhanced. Just as a slight breeze can move a sailboat becalmed, so can the taming power of the small help move organizetions in new directions.

Insull

-Russell Bienenstock, Editorial Director



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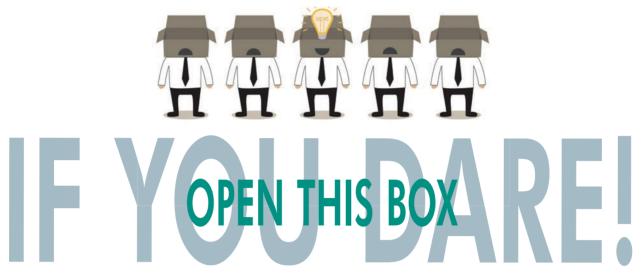
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Four out of the box ideas for retailers who do the same things year after year.

Greek legend tells us that in ancient times the beautiful Pandora, daughter of Zeus, King of the Gods, was given a jar with instructions not to open it. Later, stories refer to the jar as a box. Eventually curiosity got the better of her. She unlocked the box and let the contents free. The box contained all the evils of the world. She tried to close the box, but could only reseal it with one virtue still inside-Hope.

Business strategies, programs and merchandising are very much like Pandora's Box. With the high cost of advertising, human resources, and fixed expenses it gets more treacherous to experiment with unproven ideas. Many retailers, therefore, ignore their curiosity and rely on methods that are worn out from years of repetition. For example, one retailer in my area has used the same ROP for over 3 years.

The idea of investing in something radical that might bring great rewards but could fail, is tempting to many retailers. But, most take comfort in the status quo.

For a moment, forget what you know. Think about the person or peo-

by Gordon Hecht

ple who started your organization. They thought they had a better way to make a buck, and set out on their own to do things their own way. They brought new promotions, new operations, new sales process, and new displays. Chances are they failed a few times, but succeeded more often, which is why you have a job today!

If there were a Pandora's Box for retail ideas, here are some that might be set free. The only evil is that you may not even take a chance on one of them, and will continue doing the same ordinary things that yield the same ordinary results.

Salesman's Day Off: I am a firm believer in the 80/20 rule. I'll even split the 20! Ten percent of the shoppers in your store WILL BUY, despite what you do. Even if your sales team is rude, sloppy or inattentive, some people will buy from you just because they want the merchandise you are selling. Conversely, another ten percent will never buy from you even if you have the best looking store, people, and pricing. Based on that ten percent number, an RSA with a 25% close rate, is really closing 15% of the people they greet. The other 10% would buy without them.

Have you ever wanted to measure the actual effective close rate of your sales team? This is the number of people who are influenced by your team to make a buying decision. Try the Salesman's Day Off Promotion!

Here's the concept. My days in retail were filled with two complaints from shoppers- #1 Your Sales People attacked me at the door, and #2 No one offered to help me. Shoppers don't want anyone to help them, until they are ready for help.

"Take a few midweek days and promote that you will have no salespeople working in the store. All merchandise will be plainly marked with pricing and stock numbers." Omnia gives you the power for Personalizing Comfort[™]. Shown is the Key Largo with free flowing lines that add beauty to any room. With over 150 models and 400 leather and fabric options, plus motion, Omnia gives you the freedom to create designer looks and levels of comfort that speak to your customers tastes and lifestyles. Visit our showroom to expand your retail design boundaries. Ask about our latest offers, promotions, retailer incentives & gallery programs.

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Take a few midweek days and promote that you will have no salespeople working in the store. All merchandise will be plainly marked with pricing and stock numbers. Have a greeter at the door (perhaps a security guard) provide your shoppers with paper, pencil and information on where to find ordering information on your merchandise. Let them know that when they complete their selections, they can bring their order blank to the cash office for payment and delivery dates. You might even sweeten the pot with a discount equal to your commission rate (We Pay You to Shop!).

It becomes the best of the "Click" mixed with the best of the "Brick", all the leisurely browsing of online shopping, and you get to feel and touch the merchandise!

Annual Delivery Charge: Whether items they purchase cost \$299 or \$20,000, shoppers hate to pay delivery charges. Sure, you could raise your pricing, and call it FREE delivery, but then your pricing may not be competitive.

We also know that the hottest time

for shoppers to buy furniture is within 90 days of buying furniture. This is a result of placing new furniture in a house full of existing furniture. It just makes the old furniture look older! But some shoppers won't purchase more, just because they don't want to invest another \$59-199 in another delivery charge.

You can overcome the pressures of dropping delivery charges and welcoming shoppers back into your store. Simply charge delivery ONCE, and it is good for any purchases for the next 365 days. Call it an annual delivery charge. At the price of \$99 (or your prevailing rate) your shopper gets home delivery today and FREE delivery on any additional items purchased to their home for a full year.

Your first thought is, "What if I have to cover the cost of delivering a lot of \$199 tables, rugs, and lamps?" The last time I checked, those are sales too! And probably sales you are not making today. Ask your non-furniture friends about Amazon Prime. They charge \$79 for free shipping for a full year. People who have Amazon Prime shop that site often and buy the Prime merchandise. Just like that famous "Stop paying commission on items that are clerked and pay double commission on add-on merchandise."

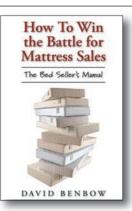


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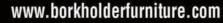
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"First, change your sales and operational paradigm towards an expectation that every shopper enters your store wanting to find something to buy. It's true for Kohl's, Wal-Mart, Taco Bell, Victoria's Secret, and even Jake Jabs' American Furniture Warehouse."

Pay Zero or Flat Commission on "Clerked" items: Some of your sales team may actually be selling. All the others may just be clerking. The difference is the result of your Shoppers' experiences in your store. People who want a new living room look come to your store asking for a sofa. Your CLERKS find a sofa for them and get the order placed. Your SELLERS describe the experience of having a complete coordinated look complete with accent items and place a 10 item order. In most cases, you pay them at the same rate.

This next suggestion will cause anxiety for your low performers and your top people will delight in their anticipated earnings. Stop paying commission on items that are clerked and double commission on add-on merchandise. Go to zero commission (or





flat rate \$10) on main items such as sofas, dining tables, headboards and footboards, and reward your team for adding the love seat, recliner, rugs, lamps, and pictures along with dining chairs, chests, night stands, and mattresses. You'll profit from the increase in average sale, your shoppers will be more satisfied with their complete rooms. Your operations and display team will be delighted with the velocity of typical slow moving items. You may even consider TRIPLE commission on orphan merchandise. That's a nice name for the high dollar furniture that you end up blowing out at 70% off during your warehouse liquidation sales... think about ottomans, china cabinets, and armoires.

The Dream of 80% Close: During a recent flight for business, I was seated next to an executive from a leading national Cable TV provider. She asked me what a typical closing rate is for furniture store sales associates. I told her that some stores like to claim 25%, and others who mis-measure tell me 40%, but the ugly truth is that Retail Furniture experiences around a

22% close rate. (If you think your close rate is 40%+, then invite me to your store for a weekend and we'll count incoming traffic together!).

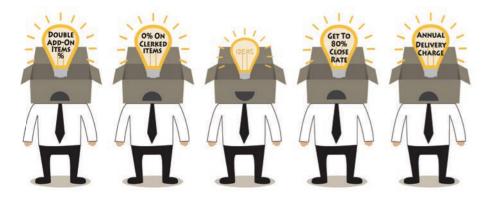
She laughed for a moment-and when I returned the question to her, she replied that 80% of incoming sales calls to her company resulted in some sort of transaction-including new service, upgraded programing or equipment, and pay-per-view. Their operators were trained to ask for some incremental sale, no matter how large or small. They set up their training, product assortment and sales process to make sure that every time the phone rings, the register also rings.

If you are weary of spending \$30 to \$100 per guest in advertising costs only to see 78% of your shoppers leave empty-handed, then it's time to change your operation with processes designed to make sure every time the door swings, the register rings. The secret isn't reducing the price of shopworn accessories, or playing "Let's Make a Deal" with your margin dollars.

First, change your sales and operational paradigm towards an expectation that every shopper enters your store wanting to find something to It's true for Kohl's, Wal-Mart, buv. Taco Bell, Victoria's Secret, and even lake Jabs' American Furniture Warehouse. Each of those businesses promotes Must-Have merchandise. new introductions, limited promotions, Too Cute not to Buy, or Special Purchases to ensure that every inbound shopper leaves as a departing customer. Their point of purchase signage directs you towards those items, their sales teams tell every shopper, and displays convey the feeling their shoppers will have once they own the item. Every item is available to take home today, and the checkout process is hassle free!

Start your own program-first, making buying at your store easy. Ensure that your shoppers can pay for these purchases in 90 seconds or less, without having to give their name or email address. Get the coolest and hippest people on your team to suggest and select the items you will promote. It doesn't necessarily have to be a furniture item. It can be a multipurpose desk lamp for a kid's room, outdoor carpet in the summer and doormats in the winter, serving tables, or bed for a pet. Promote three different items every day. Next, be sure that

"Simply charge delivery ONCE, and it is good for any purchases for the next 365 days. Call it an annual delivery charge."



the merchandise is available in your store, and can be transported home in a compact car. Assembly should be minor. Build one or more merchandise stacks in your most traveled walkways. Your sales team should lead your shoppers to this unbelievable value. Pricing should be less than lunch for four people at TGI Friday's. That's the amount people will spend without agonizing over the cost.

Let your team know what your cost of advertising is, and that you are looking for some return on that advertising cost. The greater your return, the more you will advertise and the more shopping traffic they will have. Soon, your store will be known as the place to shop for the next cool product at the really hot price!

CONCLUSION

Curiosity killed the cat. And lack of curiosity is killing your business! Now that you've peeked inside the lid of Pandora's Box, you need to make a decision about your business and how it operates. You choose, lock the box now and seal it-and maybe things will change for the better. Or tap your entrepreneurial strength and leap towards a chance that your store will soar to the top. I hope you choose to tear that box open!

Gordon Hecht: Gordon Hecht is a 39 year maverick of the Home Furnishing business starting as a Delivery Helper in Las Vegas, NV. Following a successful sales, store management, and multi-store management career he joined Ashley Furniture Industries. In his role as National Director of Sales for Ashley Sleep Gordon helps Retailers improve Bedding Sales through training, merchandising and display. He lives in Columbus, OH with his wife Michelle.

Any questions or comments about this article or about any retail issue can be directed to Gordon at Ghecht@ashleyfurniture.com.

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THE TRANSFORMATIVE DOVER OF ERFORMANCE GROUPS

by David McMahon

wice a year for the past several years I have been travelling as a guide for two aroups of twenty retailers in an ongoing quest. We have been from Alaska to Aruba, from San Diego to New York, and to many places in between. We've evaluated countless stores and warehouses as part of our semi-annual performance meetings. It sounds like fun, and it is, but it is also work, a never-ending

quest for continual business improvement.

As a group leader, I see how executives in performance groups are able to leverage each other's advice. They develop a business camaraderie which exists "outside" the day-to-day operations that allows them to

"DMAIC is one Six Sigma methodology that can be adapted to continuously develop a retailer's operation in any area of the supply chain." achieve better results than they could achieve on their own.

You can probably tell that I am a fan of these groups called by various names including performance groups, best practice groups, peer groups and 20 groups (in the auto industry). There are a number of consultants in our industry that host them.

In this article, some powerful practices that act as a catalyst for growth will be discussed. You can use them to help you make your business operations more efficient, maximize sales, profitability, and cash flow.

FOUR PERFORMANCE GROUP PRACTICES

Practice #1: Kaizen (改善) and Six Sigma. Kaizen is the Japanese term for never-ending improvement at all levels of an organization. It is a philosophy that has been used successfully in the manufacturing, retail, and service sectors to help businesses continuously seek and implement ways to get to the next level. To me, this concept is at the core of the power of performance groups. It forms the necessary strategic, out-of-the-box thinking and ATTITUDE that is required for growth. It is a "big picture" approach with an eye on incremental steps forward.

The odd thing with big picture thinking is that seemingly simple ideas can have massive impact on retail operations. Performance group members engage each other with open minds. They understand that interaction with people from outside their business who understand their challenges can cause a golden light bulb to turn on.

The most common questions asked in these groups are about how to handle retail challenges. When you get twenty smart professionals, who can walk the talk, unselfishly helping other professionals to improve, one thing is certain: there's lots of sharing of qualified answers and opinions based on first hand experiences.

Related to the Kaizen way is the Six Sigma approach. It is a methodology that can be used tactically to continuously improve efficiency and minimize operational errors. Leaders such as Jack Welch at GE have used Six Sigma techniques for process improvements. Performance group members take a similar path to identify challenges and take positive actions.

DMAIC Methodology: DMAIC is one Six Sigma methodology that can be adapted to continuously develop a retailer's operation in any area of the supply chain including marketing, sales, purchasing, distribution, finance, and management reporting. By way of an example, here is a brief introduction:



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"Here's one more example. In fact, this is one of the best ways that I have ever seen a very profitable business spend \$10,000."

efine the challenge/opportunity. Performance group members are always looking to advance some area of their business or a process in it. However, the particular area often shows itself unexpectedly. For example, once twenty of us toured a member operation in Texas. After viewing the distribution center, we travelled to a second store. There we noticed some non-producing square footage, an alternate entrance beside the main entrance in a strip mall location. The aroup was asked to consider how to handle this space. That's Bingo when a golden light bulb moment occurred. A mattress gallery was the answer. Here an opportunity arose, the challenge defined and a solution found.

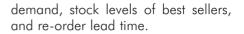
easure your current process. Performance group members measure how they are performing. They use a variety of metrics to report on and evaluate processes. Within a retail operation there are a multitude of job events occurring simultaneously. Management is clueless without proper measures. So, with defined measures in place in all departments, an underperforming process will send off a signal. Seek to set measures in the following operational areas: marketing, selling, customer management, purchasing, merchandising, receiving, picking, delivery, billing, accounting, and after-MARKETING sale service.

Analyze data. Performance group members are usual-

ly data rich. They employ industry specific systems and operating procedures. Over a fairly short amount of time, a wealth of information builds up in their databases. This enables analysis. It is critical to know what data to extract, how to extract it, when to extract it, what it is for, and how to use it to benefit an organization. For example, suppose a business determines that its inventory is underperforming by measuring performance against the dollars invested in merchandise. By analyzing inventory, sales, margin, and investment data each month by category and vendor, they will probably find at least a few segments are pulling the profitability of the averages down. Analyzing data properly leads to focus. Focus leads to the efficient use of resources - most notably time and money.

mprove your process or create a new process. Performance group members take action. They make decisions. They are the opposite of those that live by the notion of: "We do it that way because we always have." Let me continue the prior example of inventory performance. After analyzing data, suppose the evidence points to a poor re-purchasing process that reduces selling turns for a particular vendor due to stock-outs of

best sellers. By recognizing the problem, new processes can be put in place to elevate the performance of this vendor. For example, a routine scheduled review of the rates of sale



ontrol your new process. When -putting a new process in place or making any operational change for that matter, be viailant. One of the biggest problems retail furniture store managers exhibit is not the inability to recognize a problem, but the inability to continually execute on the solution. Performance group members face these same challenges. However, possibly due to their proactive nature they are more apt to follow up and ensure the changes that they make are successful. They control the new process. They continually measure it and analyze the data it produces. If it does not produce the desired increase in efficiency, they adjust and refine.

Practice #2: Benchmark against Peers. A powerful reason why performance group members are successful is that they benchmark. They compare themselves against each other and the industry at large. Using a host of operational and financial KPIs (Key Performance Indicators), each member can see where they are ahead or behind. This peer comparison is an important factor in their success.

Here is an example of KPI benchmarking at work: Several businesses in a group had a fairly decent net warehousing and delivery expense as a percent of sales - or so they thought. Then, in came a member who showed an expense structure of half the cost as a percentage. This made the other members perk up and ask, "How do you handle that level of business on such a minimal cost structure?" A combination of elements that resulted in cost savings included: justin-time purchasing, speedy display, cross docking, bar coding, appropriate set-up and delivery income, minimized damages, routing technology and a perfect delivery system.

In the end, businesses learn from other businesses and industry experts.



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"In came a member who showed an expense structure of half that cost as a percentage."

Some of the smartest people in this industry are borrowers who look to see what others are doing, how they compare, and improve ideas.

Practice #3: Share and Give Best Practices. One of the most powerful sessions in a meeting of performance-minded business owners is the best practice session. It's where people share what works (and what doesn't). Here, each person in the group brings something interesting to the table. The idea is to make a conscious effort to deliver a practice or idea that can help others. In return, each member gets repaid the favor at least ten-fold by hearing the ideas of the other participants. Practices include advertising campaigns, hiring, warehousing and delivery techniques, digital media, store design, merchandising tools, equipment purchases, incentive programs, management processes. There are no rules other than to make an effort to help everyone.

Once again, sometimes the simplest ideas can have a massive impact. Here is another example: A member shared a story about his frustration with the sheer amount of styrofoam his warehouse crew discarded. It cost labor hours, trash disposal fees, took up precious room, and was wasteful. So, he purchased a foam recycling machine. Not only did it squish the stuff into a small block, freeing up, time, space and money, but his company was able to generate revenue by selling the waste. His store became a recycling point for his city, generating more funds for the retailer. Plus, the store received free publicity, by becoming a known green leader in



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MANAGING CHANGE

the community.

Here's one final example of a best practice shared during a meeting. It's one of the best ways that I have ever seen a very profitable business invest \$10,000. This out-of-the-box retailer was tired of dropping money on ad campaign after ad campaign with questionable results. Instead, he asked his local news to announce that he would match any customer's Facebook "like" in support of the charity featured on his Facebook page with a \$1 donation. He received 5,000 "likes" in just a few days, doubled the amount, and gave away a big fat check on the morning news. He told us later, "The best marketing in the world is to give back to the community in which you do business."

Practice #4: Set Goals and Become Accountable. No goal equals no plan. No plan is a plan to fail. Those who set business goals with clear tactics are much more likely to achieve desirable results. Performance group members do three very important things when they meet twice per year.

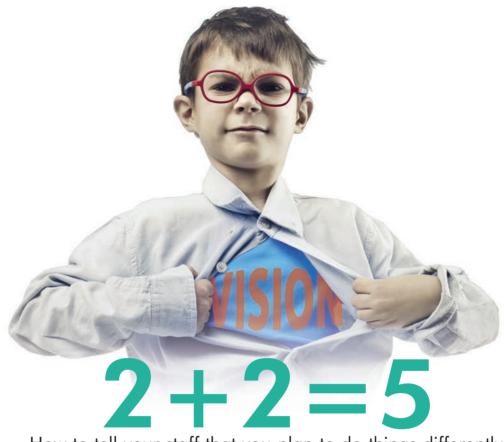
- They report on the progress of their goals from the last meeting.
- They hold each other accountable for achieving those goals.
- They report to the members about the goals they plan to achieve before the next meeting.

Often times, group members set goals after hearing feedback from the group. In many cases, too, strategic areas that need attention are suggested by peers. Members agree to take action and sign their name to it. At subsequent meetings, members report the results of their actions and are held accountable for successes and failures. The peers support each other in this process – congratulating each other for achievements and offering advice in times of failure. In effect, performance group members become an impartial, benevolent, and external board of directors.

When considering how you can grow your business profitably into the future, consider some of these ideas and practices. Commit to a business lifestyle of continuous improvements. About David McMahon: David McMahon, Director of PROFITsystems, Accellos Performance Groups is a management consultant and certified management accountant. He specializes in helping businesses grow profitability, sales, and cash flow. Contact David if you wish to discuss your business challenges at david.mcmahon@accellos.com.

See all of David's articles at http://www.furninfo.com/Authors/List.





How to tell your staff that you plan to do things differently.

f someone told you that 2+2=5 you would probably say, "No way!" It's the response of a normal brain when it encounters an idea, plan or directive that goes against a firmly held worldview. Likewise,

when a customer, salesperson or friend tells you that some aspect of your retail business model, or your thinking is ill advised, it can almost hurt. Few people like to be told they are wrong. The same is true when you tell members of your team, your salespeople and managers that from here on in you plan to change the way they perform their jobs.

"Carrots and sticks work for menial tasks, not the kinds of productivity you want from your people." Those of you who read the article in the January/February issue of Furniture World about Gallery Furniture, will remember what Jim "Mattress Mack" McIngvale experienced when he told his salespeople that he had decided to make a move from paying sales commission to salary.

"When we made the change from commission to salary," he noted, "a lot of the hotshot salespeople who were making lots of money left, they didn't want to be a part of this new thing. Many of my friends in the furniture business told me I was crazy, that it would be the ruination of Gallery Furniture."

This is an example of how brains are hardwired to react in certain ways to maintain individual identity. So, it's not surprising that when someone comes up against an idea like 2+2=5, their ego will initiate feelings that make them want to deny and retract.

People generally resist anything that is out of their normal comfortable worldview. Note that I did not say, "worldview that is great" or even "worldview that is good". Brains are hardwired to maintain the status quo, good or bad. As I often say to clients, "The status quo is not great, it's not even good. But you know how to do it." Knowing how to do it is comfortable. That is why furniture retailers often do the same things over and over again even though the results they say they desire don't materialize.

The purpose of this article is to give you tools that can be used to convince your team of managers and associates to give 110 percent support to your vision, even if it's a 2+2=5proposition that may not be easy or comfortable for them to accept.

As a business owner, high level exec, or store manger, understanding how brains work (yours and theirs), will make it easier to create the movement in your business that alludes you. So, if you are pitching a new plan for your business or a 2+2=5 paradigm, there are two main elements to consider. These are effectively communicating your goals, and then motivating your team.

"Motivation is complicated. There are many factors that determine why a person is motivated to do something."

COMMUNICATING GOALS

Helping your team "get it" starts with your ability to communicate goals in a way that everyone can understand and feel comfortable implementing.

I am not talking about cheerleading. There has to be something in it for them if you want to motivate people to take action. If you try to convince people to work toward a goal without this element, you will only get about 50% effort. If, on the other hand, they believe in your idea and are positioned to get a personal reward, they will become fully invested.

It is easy to see if your people fully support your ideas by simply listening carefully to them. Are they making excuses? Are they complaining? Are they sitting there listening to you with a "deer in the headlights" look on their faces? These are indications that they don't get it yet. This is resistance in action. So, how do you penetrate their worldview so you can move them from stuck mode into forward motion mode?

It is not as hard as you think. But before you can move forward, consider that getting your team members to accept your ideas and plans has a great deal to do with trust. Do your people believe that you have their back? If you want to motivate them to move forward, they need to believe that you are a leader they can trust to take on the sticky issues that will arise. This is a good time to ask yourself if your team can trust you. If not, you may need to address this issue before going forward.

If there is an atmosphere of trust, communicating your goals, your plans, and your strategy to those who will help you achieve what you want doesn't have to be scary. Let's go back to 2+2=5 rule. Often the new goals you set will be viewed as unattainable. I can hear your team talking at the back of the store lamenting about how you must be out of your mind if you think that goal can ever be reached. If your goal is especially challenging, and I hope it is, the resistance will be high.

So, if your coworkers are resistant to changing a behavior or achieving a

goal that seems out of reach, just call it out. Say, "what I am about to say may sound like 2+2=5, which of course on the surface makes no sense. However, I want you to consider that there is a point of view that makes it right. I want you to consider it." This can be the beginning of making a crack in a belief system to let the idea seep in. The brain wants to make sense of everything. When you make this statement it gives your associates a chance to pause and think before rejecting the idea. And now, you have



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also created curiosity. Curiosity is so much better than resistance and anger. Curiosity is openness at its best. When we are curious, we are leaning in, we are focusing and open to what is coming next.

MOTIVATE YOUR TEAM

Motivation is complicated. There are many factors that determine why a person is motivated to do something. The main reason is that they want to. Carrots and sticks work for menial tasks, not the kinds of productivity you want from your people. So how do you get your people to "want to"? Understand that each member of your team wants the same thing, but by their own def-

inition. So, how do you approach this issue skillfully?

Autonomy: To begin with, everyone wants autonomy. The freedom to make choices and decisions about work and how it is done is critical. The amount of autonomy each member of your team wants will vary. Give thought to which of your employees thrive on lots of autonomy as well as the ones who need more structure. Also consider what autonomy looks like in your store and how that concept might reconcile with goals such as delivering a consistent experience to each customer.

Growth: Another factor in motivating people is the opportunity to grow. Most job descriptions include a sentence about career advancement.

"Suppose your goal is to increase sales by 10% each month for the next 6 months. That's a big job. Your staff will resist if they don't believe it is possible. "

That is not what I am talking about. I am referring to the personal fulfillment kind of growth. Where do you people have the chance to become engaged with self-growth? Everyone has the desire to do better; to learn more, which translates into having more to offer. Do you know your employees well enough to know their hidden talents? Do you offer them the opportunity to find their own hidden talents themselves?

The best way to find a hidden talent is to allow your staff the autonomy to try new tasks. Let me give you a personal example. When I worked in a furniture showroom, I was just one of the salespeople sitting and waiting for my next "up" to walk thru the door. One day a manufacturer's rep offered an incentive program to sell his line of leather furniture. I love leather. I went at that challenge like a chicken on a June Bug, surprising myself about how much I learned and what I knew about leather furniture within a month's time. In the end, the rep compensated me well for my effort and I became the go-to person in the store about everything leather. Not only that, I stepped up to help co-workers and became an unique asset to the store. And because I felt fulfilled personally, I

gave 110% effort.

Purpose: When we talk about motivation, there is nothing more powerful than purpose. The "why" behind what we are doing. "Why" will cancel the 2+2=5 rule. If I can understand why 2+2=5, and make it meaningful to myself, I can jump on board with you.

Suppose your goal is to increase sales by 10% each month for the next six months. That's a big job. Your staff will resist if they don't believe it is possible. All of the structure you put around this project will be useless unless you get buy-in from everyone. Your job is to provide the vision and the why of that vision. For a more on how to get to the "Why?" of your business check out the last installment in this series on the furninfo.com website at http://furninfo.com/Authors/ Karen Florence/26. Once you get people leaning in and curious, start asking them for help. "What would you do if you were me? If this was your goal, how would you make this happen?" Engage your team and watch their hidden talent rise up. Watch how they will grab onto your "Why" if it is compelling. When people are engaged and committed to the "Why", given the autonomy to try new things in an empowering positive



Tweaking Policies - A Dead-End Effort?

t's human nature to want to fix what needs fixing, not interfere with what works. Often though, retail owners and managers avoid the most basic issues holding back their businesses. Instead, they tweak policies and procedures that are already working relatively well, and call that progress. This can be demotivating to team members, giving them the sinking impression that the problems that most concern them are not going to get solved. The result is that managers feel good about taking action while their employees feel helpless and start looking for other jobs. And let's be honest about this. There are lots of job openings in the furniture field. So if you find that you are tweaking policies instead of addressing core issues, take a step back and consider if you would be better served by a 2+2=5 idea.

environment, there is no telling where you will go. That deer in the headlights look will turn into the face of satisfaction.

In your business, where do you give your people opportunity in autonomy, self growth and purpose? The more room you make for these three very important aspects of your employees' work life, the more they will embrace any 2+2=5 challenge you can dream up.

About Karen Florence: Karen Florence is a Certified Professional Coach and founder of Tabula Rasa Coaching, a coaching firm that specializes in transformational coaching for individuals as well as organizations. She works with people who want to explore their lives in a deeper way to create change in their personal, business and spiritual challenges.

Karen has worked with CEO's and high level executives around the world, coaching, mentoring and consulting. She has worked one-on-one with executives from Pierce Global Promotions, Pinnacle Foods, Jaguar Land Rover, The Disney Channel, BBDO Russia, New York Life, The St. Croix Foundation, Volvo Italia, Prudential Life, Intel and The Learning Channel among others.

When working with Karen, clients' lives change. With her unique way of digging for the truth and finding the answers within her clients, doors open and circumstances change. Karen's keen intuition and curiosity often helps the truth to bubble up in surprising ways, allowing her clients to see themselves as whole and resourceful individuals moving forward into all that is possible. Questions about this article or related to her consulting practice can be directed to Karen Florence at karen@tabularasacoaching.com, or call 610.228.4145. "Consider what autonomy looks like in your store and how that concept might reconcile with goals such as delivering a consistent experience to each customer."

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And what you can do about it.

by Joe Capillo

implement any new business practice:

his article is based on the work of John P. Kotter, Professor of Management Science at the Harvard Business School. I've been following Kotter's work for over two decades, and I hope this provides some good food for thought around how you can bring substantive changes to your company and break the bonds of organizational inertia for everyone's benefit.

Having worked with dozens of client companies from very small, singlestore family businesses, to the largest retailers in our industry to implement strategic selling system changes, I believe that every one of the following eight points are right on target.

There are eight main reasons why companies, large and small, fail at bringing new ideas to their businesses. Traditionally, about 90% of all change initiatives fail to accomplish their stated goals. Going forward, however, furniture retailers are in a unique position to succeed because of recent changes in the economic environment.

EIGHT MISTAKES

Here are the 8 mistakes most business owners make when attempting to

Failure to Overcome Complacent Behavior. This

• is the one we all know well. You tell people what you want, and they shake their heads, and then go back to doing what they always have done. Just think of sales training. How many training courses have you provided to your salespeople only to have most of them change little or nothing about the way they work? This is a pattern experienced by most retailers. The solution to the issue of employee complacency is to show a high-level sense of urgency to whatever strategic changes you determine are needed.

It's necessary to tell everyone what you're doing and why you're doing it. Tell them what you expect the outcome to be, and that you trust them to do everything they can to help make it happen. Tell them you'll report to them regularly with progress reports, and be specific where numerical measurements are concerned. Give it all to them in writing.

Pail to Develop a Powerful Guiding Coalition. Who belongs to the guiding coalition in your company? This guiding coalition talks-the-talk and walks-thewalk all day, every day, with no exceptions. They have to live and breathe whatever new initiatives you develop and initiate. When you train on selling skills, your store managers have to become fanatics about observing changes in every salesperson's behavior. And, they must use highly honed coaching skills instead of "forcing." Likewise, you, the boss, has to be a fanatic about them, too. This is part of the challenge you face. The next mistake explains how this usually becomes a problem.

B Underestimate the Power of Vision. Your vision is person-• al to you, but defines your "perfect" company. Your mission statement is presented for the consumption of the people who work for and with you. It's something for them to live up to, and is far more impor-

"Your Vision and by extension your mission, has to be a living thing in everyone's daily work. Think of it like many people think about the writings in the Bible or any religious text."

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YOU CAN'T IGNORE A 46% INCREASE IN OUTDOOR FURNITURE SALES.

Look around! Outdoor furniture sales have seen the largest increases in the industry more than any other category you are selling on your floor. That's why more furniture retailers than ever are adding furnishings for outdoor rooms to their mix. Outdoor furniture sales have ballooned - increasing 46% since 2005!' If you haven't added Agio' to your product offering, you're missing a huge opportunity for increased sales. See for yourself. It just may get you up and running toward better margins, sales and profits.



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"Be very aware of what's not right in your organization, and address these issues or they will become obstacles to your action on the selling side."

tant than most owners know. I suggest you consider not saying anything in your mission statement that any other retail furniture company can say – like "being the best" or "selling high guality products." If you want to enhance the overall economic well-being and quality of life for your family and employees, perhaps the best way to accomplish this goal is to improve the quality of life for customers by helping them to learn how to use your products to enhance the beauty and comfort of their homes. This includes helping them create more beautiful, comfortable and functional rooms using your products. So, state those things.

Under-Communicate Your Vision. Kotter believes that • most leaders under-communicate their vision by a power of 10 times, 100 times, or 1,000 times. That's what is meant by talking-thetalk and walking-the-walk. Your vision, and by extension your mission, has to be a living thing in everyone's daily work. Think of it like many people think about the writings in the Bible - or any religious text. The "word" has been preached for thousands of years, and has been pretty consistent over all that time. The point is; the "vision" has provided the basis for human action for millions of people for thousands of years because it's well communicated.

Permit Obstacles to Block the Vision. Obstacles can include anything from a dysfunctional computer system, to weak back-end performance, to poor customer service. You'll have to be very aware of what's not right in your organization, and address these issues or they will become obstacles to your action on the selling side.

The typical thinking of the salespeople is; "Why are they picking on us when everything else is screwed up?"

Fail to Create Short-Term Wins. You have to carefully • develop early expectations and closely manage details down at the salesperson/customer level, and celebrate (really celebrate) each small victory. Then, you have to leverage these wins, keep them coming, and communicate great results to everyone. Then, you have to continue to talk-the-talk and walk-the-walk.

Declare Victory Too Soon. Many new initiatives take longer than you think they should to take hold. I've been down this road many times with many furniture retailers who believed that when training ended, the project was over. Nothing you can do will kill all hope of truly changing things than this mistake, and the next one. This is also why you should make every attempt to quantify the project using analytics to put a value on the changes you want to make. It's important to inject a sense of urgency and patience at the same time.

B Neglect to Anchor the Changes in the Company • Culture. This is part of the declaring victory too soon syndrome. I know from having had many longterm, multi-year projects over the last 35 years, that some of these changes will take as long as a year to truly become "the way we do things here." That is the ultimate goal for all such projects – to effect permanent, changes that become part of your company culture to improve everyone's performance forever.

IMPORTANT TAKE AWAY

Professor Cotter has, in recent years, renamed the last two elements, but the descriptions remain fundamentally unchanged, and the message is still applicable to our industry and types of businesses.

In my view, the single most important take away from this is that most furniture store owners, leaders, and managers have not adopted a strategic approach to selling that lies on the customer side of the process. It is the side of the process that accounts for what our customers are thinking and trying to achieve. We are generally good at developing merchandise strategies, display strategies, advertising strategies – and implementing them across time. We are generally terrible at developing customer engagement strategies, defining them, and implementing them. The truth is in the execution, not the development or the training process.

Customers are "moving" targets, shifting needs, likes and dislikes, timing, and decision making. When a salesperson is doing poorly, there is almost never a documented strategic selling process that everyone knows and understands; one that begins and ends in the customer's home where

"Leverage wins keep them coming, and communicate great results to everyone. Then, you have to continue to talk-the-talk and walk-the-walk."

final satisfaction actually takes place. There usually is no observation during the customer engagement process to be compared to an established model of how things should be done. Professional sports teams coach "inthe-game" – live coaching immediately following every play, reflecting on the game-plan. It's this kind of sales management that defines strategic selling. You need to have a defined customer engagement process that allows for flexibility, but follows a common thread from Hello to Goodbye.

About Joe Capillo: Joe Capillo is a 41 year career veteran, experienced in managing and consulting with furniture retail operations. He is also a contributing editor for Furniture World Magazine. Questions on any aspect of this article or retail sales management, can be directed to Joe Capillo at joefcap@gmail.com. See all of Joe Capillo's articles on Furniture World's information rich website at http:// furninfo.com/Authors/List.

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FOLLOW THROUGH Six follow-up strategies to help you grow your furniture business.

Rene' Johnston-Gingrich

ngoing workplace education and prof e s s i o n a l development should be a vital part of every retail furniture business. The implementation of a new training or professional development goal can, however, be challenging. That's because for most retailers, finding the time and tools to "fit in" additional work can be a struggle.

It has happened to us all. We go to a conference, lis-

ten to a speaker, attend a seminar, or read a book. Inspired, we return to work brimming with inspiration, motivation and creative ideas. The days that follow may look something like this:

Day one: Share all we have learned with anyone who will listen.

Day two: Share methodologies regarding how to implement these new strategies in the store.

Day three: Get sidetracked by the business of doing business. "New" programs get put on the back burner.

Day four: Resolve to get the programs underway.

Day five, six seven: Get excited, get sidetracked, brainstorm implementa-

tion, put out fires... fizzle, fizzle, fizzle.

HOW TO KEEP INITIATIVES ON TRACK

Here are six follow-up strategies to help you avoid having your initiatives fizzle.

Strategy 1 - Get Help: Engage a partner or associate to help, get excited about the project and hold you accountable. Create a support system or committee. If you are an owner, ask a manager to act as your support system. If you are a sales team member, enlist other associates and help hold each other accountable. Assembling a team that is committed to the goal will help to ensure that if an emergency arises or you take a day off, there will still be accountability and follow through so the implementation of your project will not fall apart.

Strategy 2 -Schedule it: Create goals and structure timeframes around the objective. These goals should be ambitious but attainable. Make it a habit.

Strategy 3 - Be patient: let it work. Don't expect immediate results. It will take time to work out the bugs and get into a new routine. Stick with it and don't let the next shiny thing distract you from your mission. Also, in exercising patience be sure to keep true to the new system. Don't dilute it and expect the same results. Strategy 4 - Don't let a setback derail you: Get back on track. There will be times when you will be unable to devote the time and energy to move your initiative forward. If this happens, get over it and get back on track. Think of using the same advice most fitness experts give when people are trying to make lifestyle changes. If you have a bad day, forgive yourself and get back on track tomorrow.

Strategy 5 - Know when it is not working: Let's face it, sometimes new ideas aren't compatible with a retail organization, the timing isn't right, or an initiative just doesn't work. Whether your idea is a change in policy, a system, or a technique used to contact customers, the key here is to be objective. When faced with a choice to go forward with your plan or reevaluate it, don't just do the easy thing, do the right thing.

Strategy 6 - Reward yourself and others: When you reach a milestone or achieve success, celebrate the moment. Acknowledge it, announce it and reward your team for their part in this the effort..

ADDITIONAL TIPS

Typically, when retailers set a workplace goal, it falls into one of three categories; a policy, a customer initiative or an idea.

Policies: You can set yourself up for

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Chris Cooley and Carrie Molitor Michael Alan Furniture



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"When you have the support of staff from the onset, your chances for successful follow through are much greater."

success when introducing a new policy by getting buy in. People are more likely to respond positively if they are given enough information to understand why an idea is a good one. When you have the support of staff from the onset, your chances for successful follow through are much greater.

Customer Initiative: It is critical to keep in touch with current customers regarding the progress of any ongoing projects. You must respond to customer inquiries in a timely manner and stay in touch with past and poten-

tial customers.

Use an efficient CRM (Customer Relationship Management) System to ensure referrals and repeat business. Some great CRM's are available either as standalone programs or are integrated into your furniture software program. Combine this with a low tech approach such as sending postcards to a different group of valued customers once a week.

Ideas: Ideas and ideals can be difficult to measure. Perhaps you have decided to abandon a supervisory coaching style in favor of one that is

"Truth is the best sales tool. It is today, just as it was when my father started this business in 1914."

Daniel Lynch, Chairman Emeritus, Lynch Sales Company

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more progressive. This type of initiative often takes the form of an internal shift in thought processes or behaviors rather than a procedural change. Journaling and setting specific goals and benchmarks can be a beneficial way to track progress in this area.

CONCLUSION

Whether it's implementing a new system or process, keeping in touch with customers or sticking true to your ideals, these strategies will help you achieve the desired results of improving and growing your business.

About Rene' Johnston-Gingrich: Rene' Johnston-Gingrich is Vice President of Training Development for Profitability Consulting Group, specializing in

delivering 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. Questions about this article or any sales/design topic can be directed to her at reneg@furninfo.com or call her direct at 208-790-3594.



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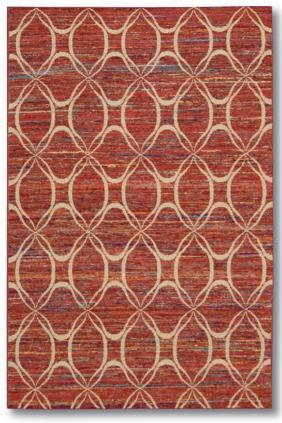




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Contact information on index page 64.



Stressles by Ekornes

The Stressless Metro with ottoman has unique functions including the Plus[™] System, which gives perfect lumbar and neck support, and the Glide System that follows the body's movements to adjust to the perfect position. The adjustable ottoman completes the experience of comfort.

Contact information on index page 64.

Bugatti Design

This Contemporary designed chair and ottoman features a solid wood frame that is guaranteed for life. Rugged springs and high quality foam are topped with choice of hundreds of fabrics and leathers. The Comfort Gel filling uses the latest technology and offers both soothing support and temperature control.

Contact information on index page 64



Legends

The Novella Entertainment Center with 65" fireplace console is made of solid Poplar with Birch veneer. Shown in Dark Chocolate finish.

Contact information on index page 64.



Elran

The Naomi collection home theatre features a straight track style console with cup holder. The contemporary style integrates clean lines with chaise seating. Available with or without contrast stitching. Matching chair, loveseat & sofa are available.

Contact information on index page 64.





Mastercraft

The Ovation bedroom is made from solid American Alder and shown in Aged Cherry finish with solid Walnut and Acacia accents. The collection features two storage beds queen and king sizes, an eight drawer dresser, five drawer chest, five drawer lingerie chest and choice of two three-drawer nightstands.

Contact information on index page 64.

BEST SELLING DESIGNS.



Greenington

The Mimosa dining table is crafted in 100% solid Moso bamboo. The matching stool combines natural bamboo with a steel footrest. It comes in two color finishes, classic caramelized and dark walnut, in counter and bar heights.

Contact information on index page 64.



Jaipur

From the Luli Sanchez collection, this rug is made of 100% wool with tufted construction made in India.

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Douglas Casual Living

This new dining collection features 42" x 60" x 78" dining table with high pressure laminate top and solid wood edge in oval, square round and clipped corner shapes. Available in Oak or Walnut finishes.

Contact information on index page 64.

Sunset International

The all-new Fabio sofa and armchair collection owes its popularity to mid-century modern design and numerous color options. This collection features long thin espresso-colored legs, quilted arms, and the comfortable and reliable click-clack mechanism.



Agio

The Moonlight Gas Fire Pit features Fire Glass, which gives this fire pit its contemporary edge. It is a combination of high style and modern flare without the mess of soot or ash. Fire Glass offers a lot of heat and is a stylized upgrade from a traditional wood burning fire. The round shape makes it the perfect place to relax with friends while keeping warm.

Contact information on index page 64.





Capel Rugs

This rug features layers of high fashion color paralleled with a micro braid to create a high-low effect. Pizzazz is made in the USA of 95% wool and 5% other fibers in three colorways: Amethyst, deep emerald and sapphire. It is reversible and available in 3' x 5', 4' x 6', 5' x 8', 7' x 9', 8' x 11', 9'2" x 13'2" and custom. A 5' x 8' may retail for \$619

Contact information on index page 64.

Ashley

The Lenoris-Coffee upholstery collection combines both style and comfort to create a shining example of contemporary living room furnishings. Sofa features top-grain leather in the seating areas with skillfully matched vinyl everywhere else. The plush pillow tops and comfortable bustle back design make this sofa a best seller.



Contact information on index page 64.

BEST SELLING DESIGNS



Borkholder Furniture

The York table collection is made with a York Rod iron base, powder coated black. Top is Quarter Sawn Red Oak finished in Michaels Cherry. Made in America.

Contact information on index page 64.





Violino

This power motion sofa is covered in a heavy weight leather with detailed contrast stitching. Suggested retail is \$1499.

Contact information on index page 64.

Simply Amish

Surya

The MäRyan Collection is crafted of Quartersawn White Oak in the traditional Arts & Crafts style. Shown in Bourbon finish.

Contact information on index page 64.

The Oasis rug is hand tufted in India of 100% wool with hand-carved details.

Contact information on index page 64.

Suggested retail price for a $5' \times 8'$ is \$499.





Eurodwell Division of Chairtech

From the Modern Dutch line of high end furniture, this dining group has a contemporary European look and feel. Cool stainless steel and chrome combined with high quality fabrics and leather are typical for Eurodwell designs.

Contact information on index page 64.





Loloi

The Giselle Collection is hand knotted of refurbished sari silks from India. Each design is in colors like ruby red and sapphire blue resulting in a vibrant collection, ideal for contemporary and transitional interiors.

Contact information on index page 64.

Woodworks

The Austin Table is suitable for dining experiences from casual to elegant. Shown here with a 48" solid top, it is also available in 54". Made in Canada.

Contact information on index page 64.

Omnia

Messina, with its clean contemporary look, lends itself to all style settings. The functional adjustable arm allows for both personalizing comfort and storage. Available in a wide selection of leather colors.

Contact information on index page 64.



May/June 2014 FURNITURE WORLD 39

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When influence or inspiration hits, it can be a make or break moment for an artist. In the case of the Jaipur summer influence series it's apparent that all things 'lagoon' made their way from concept to reality in the newly launched 'THE BOOK Spring/Summer 2014'. Indoor/Outdoor pillows from the Veranda collection are fresh and vibrant in a range of patterns and styles, while the new Desert Indoor/ Outdoor flat weave rugs provide a cool Aztec inspired aura. Aqua, teal, sea foam, powder blue, and shades of sky and sea are heavy players along with the idea of texture. Jaipur has taken the look textures, in their inspirational sense, and recreated the essence using pattern instead of the tactile. The

finished creation is a tonal playground of a fresh and awakened style. Mixing in jute and hemp fibers in the form of true texture creates the ambiance of wide open space along with a new take on a tried and true pallet. There is much to be said for the idea of calming the senses through our surroundings and our vote is for the summer influence year round.

THE BOOK SPRING / SUMMER 2014 CATALOG



VER28



Indoor / Outdoor Pillow Collection

These fashion forward pillows, in trellis, stripes and whimsical patterns are for both indoor and outdoor use. These come in 13"x18" lumbar and 18"x18" square.



Desert Indoor / Outdoor Rug Collection

This indoor outdoor flatweave is inspired by the traditional kilims of the desert region, with both warm and bright colors.



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WHEN TO BRING IN THE

A retailer's perspective on using an outside company to do a GOB, inventory reduction, cash raising sale or other high impact promotion.

by David Benbow

eed an excuse to have a "SALE?" There are a lot more reasons than you may think. I'm not talking about your regular, run-of-the-mill Labor Day, or Memorial Day sale; or the kind of sale that every retail furniture and mattress store has every weekend. I'm talking about the kind of sale where you call in a "liquidator." This is a company that comes in, sets up your store, and runs the sale as a third party manager, for the duration of the sale event.

Companies who conduct these third party sales often refer to these events as "promotions," primarily because they can be framed or structured to address a wide range of situations. They also offer many other business services, but for this article, we will discuss "sales."

WHY HAVE A SALE?

Some retailers think that the only time to have this kind of sale is when they are Going Out of Business (commonly referred to as a G.O.B.) But, as any good liquidator will tell you, a well-performed sale run by a competent third party, may be able to SAVE you from going out of business. Cash raising sales are a good example. Whatever the reason, crisis is all too often the motive for the sale; and crisis is always accompanied with a set of special problems, as we will discuss

in a few paragraphs. Before I continue, I want to make certain that whoever is reading this does NOT think I am advertising for liquidators. I am a retailer, and this article is written for retailers by a retailer, not a liquidator. In my 23 years in the retail business, I have hired liquidators on several occasions, so I have some experience in dealing with them. In the following paragraphs, I will try to cover some of the points that a retailer needs to think about before hiring a liquidator.

WHEN SHOULD YOU BRING IN A LIQUIDATOR?

Although it is certainly not the only reason to hire a liquidator, the most common reason a store owner would consider a third party sale, is when he is thinking about closing, for good.

My first suggestion is, don't do a Going-Out-of-Business sale by yourself, with your existing staff. GOB sales should make you money, not be the final nail in your proverbial coffin. You should interview several liquidators. They are not hard to find. Many advertise regularly in the furniture trade magazines. Explain your situation to them. They will tell you if you are a candidate for their services. These companies are specialists. Most of them are professionals. They know what they are doing. Again, DON'T do a GOB sale by yourself, with your salespeople. It will fail.

"Cash raising sales" are another good reason for hiring a liquidator. A cash raising sale is an event to inject some high voltage into plodding, faltering store performance and image. The liquidator probably won't call it a "cash raising sale." He'll think of a more compelling reason to entice customers into your store. A well-executed sale can often double or triple a store's normal sales volume. If your sale is not a retirement event, or a GOB, and you intend to remain in

"When you conduct this kind of sale, it is very important to remember the following fact. Your competitors won't like it."



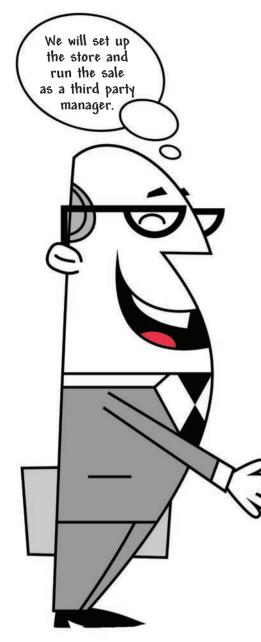
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business, advise your liquidator to plan the sale to ENHANCE your store image, not degrade it.

When you conduct this kind of sale, it is very important to remember the following fact. Your competitors won't like it. It pulls business away from their stores. They are going to try to make it look like you are going out of business. This reality makes it very hard to maintain your store's image as a "going concern."

HOW TO FIND A GOOD PROMOTION COMPANY?

Look for experience. There are probably some sales going on, at this moment, somewhere within 100 miles of your store. Find out which company is conducting the sale. Does the sale appear to be successful? It is a good idea to interview several liquidators before making a decision. Make sure they have a long record of successful sales. Think twice before hiring somebody who is "just getting started in the business." He or she may charge you a smaller commission, but are you going to get the performance you really need?

HOW OFTEN SHOULD I HAVE A SALE?

Don't overdo it. I can tell you that when the sale is over, your sales volume will probably drop back to presale levels. In reaction to the suddenly lower revenue, the store owner's normal impulse is to "have another sale!" Too many sales, too soon, will destroy your store's image, unless you want to be thought of as some kind of clearance house. Having too many sales will also cause your customers to become jaded. They won't even come in unless you are having some kind of liquidation. Sales are good for primarily two reasons. One, to close shop, liquidate your inventory and walk away with as much cash as possible; and two, to jump start a business that is in the doldrums.

A sale will be more effective if you are not competing with another ongoing sale at another store. Too many sales in one town, too often, spoil the market for everybody. Most experienced promotion companies will ask you, in the interview, "When was the



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"Let's say you have a store currently averaging \$125K per month in sales. Your profit margin is 40 percent, leaving you with a gross profit of \$50K per month..."

last sale conducted in your town or market area?" Liquidators like what they call "virgin territory," meaning that it has been a long time since the local buyers were treated to a big inventory liquidation event.

WHAT WILL THEY DO?

Not all liquidators are exactly alike. That is why you should interview more than one before making a decision. (This, of course, assumes that you can find a company willing to take the assignment.) Remember, liquidation companies do this to make money. It can be a big commitment on their part. They don't want to waste money and valuable employee time on an unprofitable project.

What will they do? They will usually do what you ask them to do. But, to give a general idea, the normal protocol is as follows.

They will probably want to • change the set-up of the showroom to be in line with their sales methodology. This usually includes papering the windows to create mystery and excitement for customers. They will bring in other merchandise that you do not normally carry. These events can run for as long as 120 days, with high sales volume, and they need to know that they can keep inventory flowing in. Your store probably does not have enough inventory on hand to supply a 4 month sale, and some stores are on credit hold with their vendors. They must have a merchandise flow that they can rely on.

2. They will manage the sale. This efforts, designing advertising and promotion, merchandising, tagging, inventory control, writing sales tickets and collecting money, and re-ordering depleted inventory.

3. They will bring in their own sales people. Some companies may include some of your sales staff, and some may prefer not to. It probably depends on the quality of your staff. Either way, they will have their own personnel on the floor and their salespeople will handle most of the store's traffic.

4 In short, they will handle as . much of the store operation as you ask them to do. It's probably not a very good idea, but the store owner could probably take a vacation during the liquidator's tenure.

HOW MUCH WILL IT COST?

There are normally at least three or four categories of cost to the store owner.

First, unless some other arrangements are made, the liquidator usually charges a commission. This commission, as you would expect, is a percentage of the total gross sales of the store during the event. These fees

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PAUL BARBARO, President, Slumberland Furniture of Willmar, MN

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"It isn't unrealistic to see sales double (or more) in a promotional sales event."

can vary, but fifteen percent is a ballpark figure.

Second, the store owner usually pays for all advertising. Your advertising expense will be higher in a sale than you are normally used to paying. Some store owners are shocked at the advertising cost. But, it has to be promoted, and if your sales volume increases by 150 percent, the extra cost is certainly justified.

Third, the store owner will normally pay all the usual rent, utilities, warehouse and service employees, phone, insurance etc. The usual "nut."

Fourth, the store owner will normally pay for all of the new inventory coming in. Since some stores are in financial crisis at the outset of the event, the liquidator may have ways to work with you on this problem. Just remember, the more expense and trouble the liquidator has to assume, the more money he will probably charge.

Many readers will react; "Fifteen percent? I only pay my salespeople five percent! And, all those huge advertising costs? And, having to buy inventory that I don't even recognize? How could I possibly make money?" Keep reading.

CAN I REALLY MAKE MONEY DOING THIS?

You can, if the sale is done professionally. This is why you carefully review your goals, financial position and store operations with the prospective sales company. They want you to make money and will work within your ability to handle expenses and operations. They may offer, if they perceive a good possible return, to assume all expenses, and give the store owner a share of the sales, or profits. Ask about all the options offered.

Let's look at an example. Let's say you have a store currently averaging \$125K per month in sales. Your profit margin is 40 percent, leaving you with a gross profit of \$50K per month. Your total monthly expenses, which include advertising of \$12.5K, are \$45K per month. This leaves you with a monthly net profit of \$5,000. I don't know about you, but \$5K per month is not nearly enough compensation to persuade me to assume the risk and aggravation of running an operation like this.

Now, you have a sale. It isn't unrealistic to see sales double (or even better) in a promotional sales event.



Let's update our example. Your sales now increase to \$250K per month. Your liquidator will probably guarantee you a certain average profit margin, and it is usually more than 40 percent, but let's use that same figure in this example. Now, your net is \$100K per month. The liquidator is spending double your normal advertising budget, up to \$25K per month. He is charging 15 percent commission, which comes to \$37.5K per month. Add up your regular nut which is 45K per month + an extra \$12.5Kfor additional advertising, and \$37.5K for sales fees and the answer equals \$95K per month, which leaves vou....(oops) \$5K per month profit. What happened here?

I included this example to show that there are risks. That is why the store owner is well advised to thoroughly discuss his goals and situation with the sales company, before jumping off into a sale. The idea is to MAKE MONEY, not break even, or worse, lose money.

WHAT DOES THE SALES COMPANY EXPECT?

If you're still reading after that last example, you may be wondering what your role is in the sale. Your role is pretty much whatever you want it to be. The liquidator expects you to pay him, first and foremost. He will expect you to pay your store expenses to

"Remember, liquidation companies do this to make money. It can be a big commitment on their part."

What if you could do a full line conversion to a specialty store? What if you could do a conversion away from a franchise? What if you could do a conversion away from a franchise? What if you could do a conversion away from a franchise? What if you could do a conversion away from a franchise? What if your could reinwent your company?

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WHEN TO BRING IN THE BIG GUNS

keep the store open, and probably pay for the additional advertising. After that, it is between you and the liquidator. Most store owners prefer to watch sale in action (it is a good learning experience) but, try not to get in the way.

The sales company will ask you to sign a contract that should clearly define all the duties of both parties, including payment and money handling.

HOW LONG SHOULD THE SALE LAST?

Most sales last anywhere from 30 to 120 days. Not many companies want to go to the trouble for a 30 day sale, but some will. Some states have a statutory limit of 120 days on certain sales, such as GOB sales. Most sales will start slowing down significantly after 120 days anyway. Four months is an average life span. After that, your signs and advertising become part of the city's "woodwork" in the eyes of passing customers.

WHAT HAPPENS AFTER THE SALE?

Even if you are retiring, or going out of business, most conscientious store owners want to make sure their customers, many of whom are friends, can be taken care of, if a problem, such as warranty, crops up after the store has closed. Some liquidators offer customer care after the sale. Ask your prospective liquidator about this issue.

What about left-over inventory? Since you have to be fully merchandised for the full length of the sale, obviously, when you slam the door on day 120, you will have a lot of mer-48 **FURNITURE WORLD** May/June 2014 chandise left over. What happens to that? Again, discuss this before signing a contract.

If you resume normal operations, carefully monitor both sales and customer attitudes to see if the sale truly succeeded or failed. A short term 4 month profit can deteriorate into a long-term loser if the sale is not done professionally and carefully with the store owner's best interest in mind.

SUMMARY

A final note about G.O.B. sales. The whole point of a GOB is to make money, not just unload a bunch of old merchandise at deeply discounted prices. That is why you need a professional to handle the job. If you are closing shop, everyone on your sales staff is looking for another job. They will be un-motivated and un-productive. You cannot possibly win in that situation.

Is it worth it? It has worked for some and not for others. As with any venture, it depends a lot on the pre-planning, forecasting of possible sales, and finding a liquidator who is looking out for your best interests.

About David Benbow: David Benbow, a twenty-three year veteran of the mattress and bedding industry, is owner of Mattress Retail Training Company offering retailers a full array of retail guidance; from small store management to training retail sales associates (RSAs.) His many years of hands-on experience as retail sales associate, store manager, sales manager/ trainer and store owner of multiple stores in six different American metropolitan areas qualifies him as an expert in selling bedding at the retail level. David is the author of the recently published book, "How to Win the Battle for Mattress Sales, the Bed Seller's Manual". This book is the first to systematically present a complete, organized, but easily read and understood text book for mattress and bedding retail sales associates, beginner and experienced professional alike. It is a complete training course in one 292 page book. The book can be purchased on-line at either http://www. bedsellersmanual.com or www.mattressretailtraining.com.

He also offers hands-on training classes for retailers on a variety of subjects and offers on-line classes that can be downloaded from the websites mentioned above.

David can be contacted via e-mail at dave@bedsellersmanual.com or in person at 361-648-3775.

"As with any venture, it depends a lot on the pre-planning, forecasting of possible sales, and finding a company that is looking out for your best interests."



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RISKY BUSINESS

Part 4: Your retail liability from online exposure.

he Internet – that technological wonder of World Wide communication has spun a whole new "WEB" of liability exposures for individuals and businesses. It's a fact that many retail furniture operations haven't thought about, but should.

Prior to 1984, computers were BIG, costly central systems owned by large companies. Remember COBOL or Fortran?

Personal Computers (PCs) did not exist except as games. Remember playing Pong?

In 1982 the first PC was introduced by IBM. Macintosh Apple followed in 1984. Today 75.6% of US households own a PC. 30,000,000 pay their bills via the Internet and 50,000,000 bank online. Over 50 percent of the US population shops and buys online generating about \$1 trillion in sales yearly. Internet traffic in the US has,



by Stephen J. Wisocky

the past 10 years, generated 12 trillion emails. There are more than 150,000,000 websites internationally that sell a product, distribute information or provide a service to 1.6 billion people.

Today the news is full of stories about threats directed against countries and large businesses including media giants, financial institutions and technology companies. And although high level hackers may not be targeting your store specifically, you are still at risk of loss from a number of internal and external exposures including:

Direct Damage or Destruction of your systems software and electronic data by outside sources.

These include fire, wind, vandalism, flood, system malfunction, program errors, employee error, or intentional acts of others such as a Virus, Worm, or Trojan Horse.

- Virus A small piece of software that piggybacks on real programs. Once it is running, it can spread to other programs and documents.
- Worm A small piece of software that uses computer networks and security holes to replicate itself.

• Trojan Horse – a computer program that claims to do one thing, but actually does damage when it is run.

In 2000, the ILOVEYOU virus attacked hundreds of corporate computers at a cost of billions of dollars in lost income and additional programming needs.

Loss of Income due to the suspension of your business.

Your liability subsequent to damage from outside sources is the cost to reprogram and restore data. Also, your system may be shut down due to a Virus threat, Denial of Service Attacks (system saturated with outside requests causing it to be unresponsive), Mail Bombs (website receives emails from a bogus source which explode upon opening).

Recently a dealer's website was vandalized by hackers who installed profane language. The site was shut down for many days. \$1,800,000 was the cost to restore the site including loss of income.

Loss of Market Share.

This could certainly result from the suspension of your operations or bad

"Perhaps a disgruntled employee intentionally acts maliciously by transmitting a virus to a customer via your email system." "One of your employees uses their personal computer to access the company's customer database which is then printed and sold to a competitor or a computer hacker."



publicity following a loss.

Remember Circuit City? In September 2008, 6,000,000 Circuit City credit card holders were notified that computer files containing personal information was mistakenly thrown out. Just recently Target lost credit and debit card information for 40 million customers, as well as the names, addresses, and phone numbers of many more. The result was huge negative publicity for the retailer.

Theft of a Customer's Personal Data.

In 2006 laptops were stolen from three Sovereign Bank employees' vehicles that contained customers' personal data. The bank was forced to advise thousands of customers that their personal data was at risk.

Damage to Someone Else's Data or Software and Subsequent Loss of Income.

What if your company accidentally transmits a virus or faulty data to a customer or supplier?

- Perhaps a disgruntled employee intentionally acts maliciously by transmitting a virus to a customer via your email system.
- Or, your company's website that is considered secure has its email system infected by a virus. An employee transmits this via email to several customers. Those customers then file claims against you for the cost of cleansing their systems.

Theft of Money or Intellectual

Property.

• One of your employees uses their personal computer to access the company's customer database.

The information is then sold to a competitor or a computer hacker who gains access to company files and steals your software development programs.

Extortion.

- A hacker might scramble codes, encrypt programs then hold your data for ransom.
- One of your employees or someone else could demand money under the threat of unleashing a virus that would delete information or release confidential information



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"Your employee sends an email describing a certain customer

sends an email describing a certain customer as a hot babe. In addition he expresses a desire for a sexual relationship."

over the Internet.

• Or, you might receive an email claiming that the sender has penetrated your firewall and copied customer's credit card information. The sender threatens to post the information on the Internet unless \$1,000,000 is received within hours.

Defamation.

- Employee sends an email to company officers questioning a vendor's professionalism. The officers distribute the email throughout the company. After learning of this email the vendor sues you alleging defamation.
- You launch a new website that includes unfavorable remarks about one of your competitors. The competitor then sues alleging defamation.

Infringement.

- Your company posts files that contain copyrighted clip art on its web page. The owner of the clip art sues for infringement.
- You attempt to increase the hit ratio on your website by listing several famous lines on the Meta tag even though you do not represent them. One of the lines sues for trademark infringement.

Invasion of Privacy.

One of the nation's largest health insurers inadvertently sent emails to members containing confidential medical and personal information of other members. Lawsuit filed for millions of dollars alleging invasion of privacy.

Harassment.

• An employee posts a joke on your

INSURANCE COMPANY	POLICY NAMES			
Ace	SafeCommerce, SafeEnterprise			
AIG	netAdvantage			
Arch	WebNet Protection			
Chubb	ForeFront, SafetyNet, Intellectual Property and Communications Liability			
Gulf	Cyber Liability Plus			
Hartford	FailSafe			
Liberty Surplus	Internet Advantage			
Lloyd's	e-Comprehensive, Media Tech			
Zurich	E-Risk Edge			

company's email that contains language that is offensive to female employees. One of these employees then sues alleging workplace harassment.

• Employee sends an email describing a certain customer as a hot babe. In addition he expresses a desire for a sexual relationship. However, the fellow employee who receives the email is not his friend and he forwards the email to the customer who then sues the company and employee for sexual harassment.

Identity Theft.

Certainly last but not least, identity theft is the most common exposure we see. Criminals steal information about a person to impersonate them and acquire credit under their names. The victims are then left with bad credit ratings and the cost to repair the damage may be considerable.

According to 2008 estimates there were 8.1 million victims of Identity Theft in the United States which had a \$48 billion price tag. The average number of hours spent to recover from Identity Theft is 600.

HOW TO PROTECT YOUR BUSINESS

Although the eRisk is still new to all of us including the insurance industry where coverage premiums currently trend high due to the "UNKNOWN" and lack of rate setting experience, the standard of the industry is being addressed by a few available endorsements:

- Identity Fraud Expense coverage for homeowners policies.
- Electronic Commerce for business policies.
- Electronic Data Liability for business policies.

See the table on the previous page for a list of specialty carriers providing E-Commerce policies.

Building a website can be simple but the onslaught of exposures is not. Be prepared, as you venture on to the World Wide Web, realizing that the liability exposures you face are still emerging, evolving and complex.

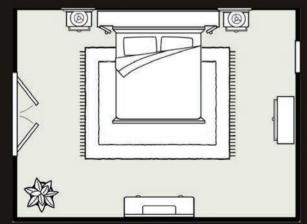
I strongly suggest that you identify your particular exposures and to get a quote to determine the costs on this type of insurance to cover those exposures and your ASSets!

About Stephen J. Wisocky: Stephen J. Wisocky, Home Furnishings Insurance Group President, has over 30 years of experience as a property and casualty insurance broker. He began with the home furnishings industry in 1986.

In January 2004 Stephen created HFIG whose mission is exceptional service to the home furnishings industry with the most competitive and comprehensive insurance products. For many years Stephen has been the trusted insurance advisor for the International Home Furnishings Representatives Association (IHFRA), Interior Design Society (IDS) and Tri-State Home Furnishings Association (TSHFA). In 2011 he was named a Dean of IHFRA, and earlier received from TSHFA their President's Award given in recognition of his accomplishments and dedication to the industry.

See additional articles in Steve's "Risky Business" series at http:// furninfo.com/Series/RiskyBusiness. Questions about this article or any insurance related topic or issue can be directed to Steve at 610-366-0105 or email swisocky@hfig.net.

Which image would you buy from?



(room shown in online 2D planner)



(room created in 3Dream 3D Room Designer)

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KANE'S FURNITURE

Success Story: A history of managing the bottom line.

ummer 2014, Central Florida. With more than one million square feet of furniture retail space in eight major regional markets, Kane's Furniture, one of the oldest and most respected home furnishings businesses in Florida, is headquartered in Pinellas Park. Their 18 locations include Tampa, St. Petersburg, Sarasota, Port Charlotte, Ocala, Melbourne, Naples, Fort Myers and Orlando. The stores stretch for 300 miles along the Gulf of Kane's is now the 43rd Mexico. laraest furniture chain in the United States.

Back in the beginning, 66 years ago, the focus was a perceptive strategic vision. In the spring of 1948, just three years after the conclusion of World War II, veteran and young entrepreneur, Maurice A. Rothman, founded Kane's original store. But, it was the right price and

by Janet Holt-Johnstone

it was perfectly placed on the corner of 8th Street and Central in downtown St. Petersburg. Location, location, location! It quickly became the go-to store for both locals and snowbirds. Kane's Furniture remained at this site for 10 productive years.

A pragmatist as well as a business mind and with intuitive foresight, Maurice conjured up the name of his retail creation. With a limited budget, Kane, he reasoned, was a short name. A name that could fit cost effectively on a large sign. A keeper.

Inspiration, ambition and more careful analysis led him to gather momentum and spread his corporate wings. He searched again for magical locations and re-discovered the principals of clever conversion, this time former food markets in Clearwater, Madeira Beach, Lakeland and Holiday Isle.

In another propitious springtime,



April 1958, he opened Kane's approximately 50,000 square foot store in St. Petersburg. It became so successful that Rothman closed all his other smaller stores.

St. Petersburg's triumph kicked off construction in Tampa in 1963 and 10 years later Clearwater and New Port Richey. In 1975, a store was established in St. Petersburg North and three years afterwards another in Fort Myers. The year 1979 marked the acquisition of Savon Furniture in Sarasota, which operated as a division of Kane's.

The following banner year was highlighted by the arrival on the scene of Irwin Novack, Kane's present day President and CEO.

Construction continued in 1986 with the appearance of the Pinellas

"With a limited budget, the name Kane Rothman reasoned, could fit cost effectively on a large sign."

Pictured is the original location on 8th Street and Central Avenue, St. Petersburg that became a go-to store for both locals and snowbirds. Far left is Irwin Novack, Kane's President & CEO.

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Advertising on the rails, closeouts headed for Kanes North St. Petersburg store (above), plus the original West Colonial, Orlando store sign.

"After assessing many opportunities, he had cleverly picked a two-story converted rooming house, a walk-up, with no air-conditioning."

Park Distribution Center and Corporate Office and, a year later, June 1987, the company's next acquisition was Kane's of Orlando. Port Charlotte and Ocala came on the scene in 1992, Tampa, Orlando and Melbourne in 1997. And in 2014, not only did Naples highlight the corporate family but, in January, Savon Furniture became Kane's Furniture in Sarasota, Fort Myers and Port Charlotte.

Irwin Novack began to master the business while working in operations at Kane's, absorbing everything he could about the furniture industry with the brilliant founder, Maurice Rothman, as his mentor. Originally a New Englander, Irwin was a graduate of the University of Massachusetts Amherst in 1970, where he earned a Bachelor of Arts degree in political science. He continued his education at Suffolk University Law School, and was granted an MBA from the University of Hartford in 1975. A former CPA, his business career officially began in 1976 in Charlotte, North Carolina, the heart of furniture country. Here he worked with Haskins and Sells, once one of the "Big 8" accounting firms. Important fact to note, his wife Patti's family was in the furniture business.

When Irwin and Patti moved on to their Pinellas County adventure, they chose well both for career and lifestyle. The Spaniards called the area Punta Pinal, the Point of Pines, while possibly seeking the fountain of youth and displacing the original people, the Tocobaga Indians. Thev swapped ownership with the British for a few centuries but, in 1821 Spain finally ceded Florida to the United States. With a registered 361 days of sunshine each year, the Pinellas Peninsula was said to be "the healthiest spot on earth" by the American Medical Society in the late 1800s. It's not surprising that the area became a magnet then and now for tourists as well as eager business folk of all sorts, and is still dubbed "one of America's most livable counties".

The Novacks and their children, Paige, Kim and Mark, and Kane's Furniture, too, have all grown and thrived. Irwin's remarkable decades at Kane's have highlighted his knack for seizing the moment. He closely oversees the motivation and management of Kane's more than 800 employees deployed throughout the spider-net of locations. They've survived tough times, said Novack, by "Knowing that since it would be difficult to grow the top line, we've closely managed the bottom line, re-evaluating every aspect of our business in the process. It's super-close management of dayto-day business.

"It has all been a process of learning, spread over my 40 years at Kane's. This latest economic turndown streamlined the business and helped us to sharpen our skills. But we survived, and the future looks bright again.

"I believe it is important to pay attention to business and to focus on detail."

Some of Novack's inspiration comes from extensive business travel in both Europe and Asia.

Staff remuneration is managed through commissions, bonuses and

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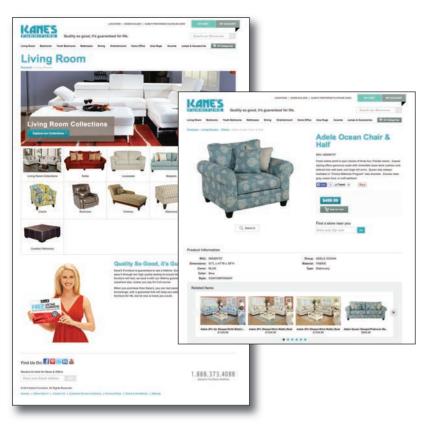
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"Online sales were initiated in 2013, managed by internal staff, a response to their customers, "to meet their needs and increase revenues."

profit-sharing and Kane's boasts many long term employees. The

company utilizes internal seminars and workshops at each of the loca-



tions, as well as corporate gatherings to keep in touch.

There are designers on staff and independent local practitioners are offered co-op privileges in all stores.

Beyond his executive duties, Novack can often be found in various leadership positions within the community. He's given a great deal of his time as a member of the board of directors of many organizations. Amongst them, the National Home Furnishings Association, the Tampa Bay Sports Commission, the Tampa Bay Lightning Foundation and The Vincent Lecavalier Foundation. Irwin was a part of the ownership group of Tampa Bay Lightning from 2008-2010.

He is the former chair and current executive committee member of the Pinellas Education Foundation. It's a highly respected coalition of business and community leaders who work together to improve the quality of public education. The Foundation's vision is that every student will be prepared for life after high school whether it's their choice to attend college, to enter the workforce, or to obtain technical training.

The Foundation advocates for public education reform, creates programs to improve student and teacher "So easy to use, it's brainless!" Best Furniture Point of Sale Software

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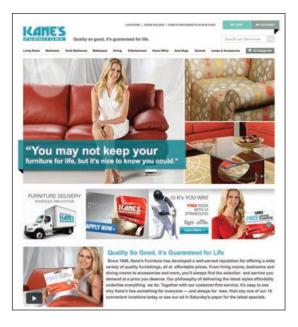
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Kane's offers a free Lifetime guarantee. The tag line that's reinforced in ads, its website, and on social media is, "Quality so good it's guaranteed for life." Below is Kane's home page at www.kanesfurniture.com. At right are YouTube videos featuring the guarantee and educational "Tuesday Tips:"



performance, and raises funds for scholarships, grants and teacher recognition.

Irwin has also been a frequent guest lecturer at the Gus A Stavros Center for Free Enterprise and Economic Education at USF on a variety of topics related to business. As an advocate for education and children, he has supported many local charities including Junior Achievement, All Children's' Hospital, Starting Right Now, helping at risk teens, and he was most recently appointed as a founding member of the local board of directors for the Positive Coaching Alliance. The Alliance is a national non-profit organization developing



"Customer service is a highly refined art at Kane's with its own special methodologies and under the surveillance of a customer service personnel group."

"Better Athletes, Better People" by working to provide all youth and high school athletes with a positive, character building youth sports experience. They partner with schools and youth sports groups, initiating and sponsoring live workshops, on line courses and e-communications.

When the 65,000 square foot Naples location was recently opened, publicity spoke of the introduction of "new store design". Certainly plenty of elbow-room for fresh ideas. "We work in conjunction with Interbrand Out of Ohio on interior display and layout and the ideas are a collaborative effort between the Kane's team and Interbrand. The Naples store is a two-story showroom like all our stores, but there is a new departmental layout. Some departments are larger, like bedding, and many are relocated. This design will allow our shoppers to flow in and out of rooms and allow for a more pleasant shopping experience. We've added 50 new team members to serve our customers here."

Kane's has a knack for catchy promotions and the opening of North Naples kicked off with an invitation to previous customers and special guests to preview the chic showroom; they received a choice of gifts for attending. And a sporty highlight, they were offered an opportunity to "roll the





"The Naples store is a two-story showroom like all our stores, but there is a new departmental layout. Some departments are larger, like bedding, and many are relocated."



Photos of original East Colonial Store, Orlando at left and the store today.

Kane's Furniture dice" for a chance to win \$50,000 in cash.

The following evening a community wide Grand Opening took place from 6 p.m. to midnight. This time guests were again invited to "roll the dice", this time for a reward of \$25,000. Additionally, guests could enter to win a \$10,000 grand prize shopping spree and a second chance at a \$2,000 shopping spree.

All guests could register to win furniture prizes including living rooms, bedroom and dining room sets, plus mattress giveaways.

While Kane's staff is integral to the management of promotions, they do "rely heavily on our advertising agency".

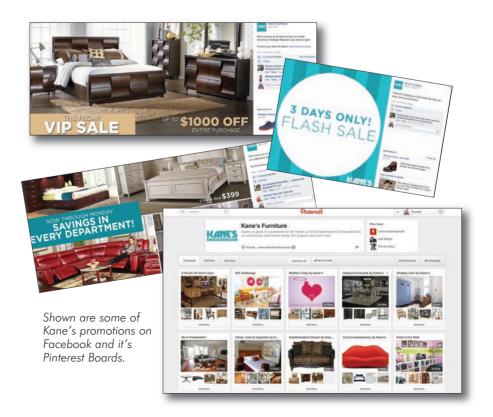
Promotions excite the attention of a wide demographic of consumers and Kane's also utilizes all the usual methods of communication, advertising, public relations, the Internet, social media, print, television, radio and direct mail.

Online sales were initiated in 2013, managed by internal staff, a response to their customers, "to meet their needs and increase revenues".

Customer service is a highly refined art at Kane's with its "own special methodologies" and under the surveillance of a customer service personnel group. Expert furniture repair is also a point of pride. And delivery, too, sports all the bells and whistles, with Kane's own fleet of trucks, white glove service and uniformed staff.

It can certainly be said that Kane's

highly noticeable and effective top spin has been their banner of community involvement over the decades. On their excellent website they invite readers to join them and "find a cause that interests you. Beauty can be seen in many forms, not just furniture, and we can all contribute."





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