

FURNITURE WORLD

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SALES *skills/management*

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- **DESIGN SECTION**
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Cover Photo:

The new, innovative Matrix Glider from **Dutailier** allows consumers to choose among a selection of components to "build" a glider that is perfectly adapted to their physical morphology. Interchangeable seats, armrests and mechanisms permit the glider to comfortably fit a short, average or tall person. The modular design also allows stock parts to be used to create instant custom design configurations. See page 1 in this issue or visit www.dutailier.com for more information.

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The 14 THINGS MOST “FURNITURE GUYS” DON’T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN

A partial and highly industry specific listing.

MARKETING OPINION BY BY STEVE FUSCO & LUCKY HAYES, TOMA ADVERTISING

Editor’s Note: The following 14 things that most “furniture guys” don’t know about women was written by Steve Fusco a veteran furniture ad man. Mr. Fusco realizes that, as a furniture “guy”, his opinions are suspect, so he enlisted his associate Ms. Hayes to explain to FURNITURE WORLD Magazine readers what he really should have written. For those readers who would like to add to his list of industry specific observations, please go to www.furninfo.com and add your comments to the message board posting section on this topic.

Observation #1: 50% of women are not married. The majority of our industry’s advertising is targeted toward married women with 1.5 kids and a nice house with a white picket fence. Our 50%-off-sales are missing half of the target audience! We need to aim for all the subsets of this highly desirable audience.

What he Really Means To Say: Don’t ignore those of us who choose to stand alone. We buy a lot of things and spend a lot of money. And no, thank you, we do not wish to be married. If we wanted to, we would be.

Observation #2: Women like to shop (take their time – explore). I know this might seem obvious but hear me out on this one. Even if they find what they want at the first stop, do not deprive them of the process. They have set aside three hours to go shopping. It’s their time: don’t steal that from them.

What he Really Means To Say: Unlike men who grab the first thing they see, we intend to make our purchase the best possible product at the best possible price. Therefore, we take the time to compare. So quit pushing, already.

Observation #3: Women love to talk. The average woman

says 22,000 words a day. Be a good listener. The best salespeople I have ever worked with were great listeners.

What he Really Means To Say: For heaven’s sake, hear what we say. Then you won’t waste your time and ours by shoving something we don’t want at us. Like a late date.

Observation #4: 92% of furniture purchases are made by women. We need to communicate with them and make sure we do so at every touch point.

What he Really Means To Say: We hold the charge cards, so give us the input we need and aim not at “significant others.”

Observation #5: Women speak a different language. Communicate with them in their tongue. Have women write your ads and be a part of your advertising team.

What he Really Means To Say: We have a different viewpoint of the world. We won’t know what you mean if you speak “man.”

Observation #6: Women want a relationship. Take the time to build relationships with them and you will have customers for life. Every point of contact you make with women needs to be geared toward that end, and yours will become the brand of choice.

What he Really Means To Say: Women do not relish being “sold” by weird strangers. We love buying what we know is a well-thought-out product from someone who knows our taste and desires. No, that is not a proposal.

Observation #7: A woman votes with her pocketbook. This should speak volumes about her likes and dislikes. Once again, please listen to what she is saying. Feature



- **Women don't relish getting "sold" by weird strangers.**
- **Without honest deals and added value it's sayonara!**
- **Communicate at every touch point.**
- **Pay attention. Don't waste their time.**
- **50% of women are unmarried. Are your ads directed at only married women?**
- **Your 50% off sales are missing half the audience.**
- **Appeal to their hearts, and emotions as well as their heads.**

your top selling items in your advertising, not the dogs you are about to discontinue. Sometimes non-verbal communication is the most powerful of all. Listen.

What he Really Means To Say: For goodness sake, pay attention! By assessing what we are buying, you'll know

exactly what to advertise to increase your sales. And make new customers and build relationships, and clear out merchandise.

Observation #8: Women are very trusting. Do not break that trust, as you will never regain it. Under-promise and

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14 THINGS “FURNITURE GUYS” DON’T KNOW ABOUT WOMEN

over-deliver has always been a good formula. A lot of our advertising does over-promise and when a consumer comes into the store they are disappointed by the actual experience.

What he Really Means To Say: Women have long memories. Don’t mess with us. If you give us honest deals and added value, we’ll be life-long customers. If not, sayonara.

Observation #9: Women and their friends love to share where they had the best shopping experience and where they found the best things at the best price. This is the preeminent form of advertising: referral from a friend.

What he Really Means To Say: We are a giving segment of humanity and cannot keep a bargain to ourselves. So do-right by us, and we’ll do-right by you, Dudley.

Observation #10: Don’t assume anything. When you assume, you know what happens.

What he Really Means To Say: Yeah: don’t take us for granted, or you are in deep kimshee.

Observation #11: Women are the largest segment moving toward the internet and embracing it as a medium. Newspapers seem to be suffering the most. Make sure your media mix addresses the media usage of today’s on-the-go women, not yesterday’s stay-at-home mom.

What he Really Means To Say: No more sweet little ol’ housewife keeping the hearth warm... we are worldly-wise, and take no guff from anyone. Advertise what we want where we want it, and voila! You’ve hit us in the medium. Watch it.

Observation #12: Women are very loyal. This works on

several levels. They are loyal to the programs they watch, magazines they read, websites they visit and most of all, to stores they shop and buy from.

What he Really Means To Say: Once our friend, always our friend. We’ve got you, babe.

Observation #13: Women buy based on emotions. Hit ‘em where they feel and you’ve hit ‘em in the pocketbook.

What he Really Means To Say: Women think with their hearts and emotions as well as with their smarts. If you can hit all three, you’re a better businessman than others, Gunga Din.

Observation #14: Anything else, wise guy – er – wise gal?

What he Really Means To Say: As a matter of fact, yes. If you are really smart, you will train your employees to always acknowledge my presence. No matter how busy, they should give me a high sign that they recognize I am there and will be with me shortly. I’ll be glad to wait as long as they don’t treat me as invisible. And SMILE! Nobody likes a grouch. Unless, of course, your name is Steve.

Steve Fusco is President and founder of Top of Mind Awareness Advertising, a full service Advertising Agency with offices in Scottsdale, AZ. and Milwaukee WI. Steve has been “trying to save the world from bad advertising one client at a time” for over 25 years.

Ms. Lucky Hayes is Creative Department Traffic Coordinator for T.O.M.A.. She is also an actor, the author of “That’s No Way To Act” - a handbook for actors and a contributing writer to Stars & Stripes, Japan.

Several of T.O.M.A.’s clients consistently rank among the top 100 furniture retailers in the nation. Others are the top performing licensee’s within the Ashley Furniture HomeStore, Drexel Heritage and Thomasville chains. Any thoughts good or bad can be sent to Steve@tomaadv.com or call 480-502-6852.

Why do women have to be so difficult?

Unlike men who grab the first thing they see, we intend to make our purchase the best possible product at the best possible price. Therefore, we take the time to compare. So quit pushing, already!

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THE SEVEN LOST AD SECRETS UPDATED FOR A DIGITAL AGE

Part 3: How can you squeeze the most out of every ad dollar now that our industry isn't booming?

ADVERTISING STRATEGIES BY LARRY MULLINS

Imagine an industry that spends millions of dollars every day of the year on advertising, and most of that money is wasted. You may think I am exaggerating. No, this is no time to exaggerate. Recently it was the giant screen TV fad that greatly cut into home furnishings sales. Then the housing market tsunami followed. Many big players have tanked, or are tanking. Man has never built an unsinkable ship — nor an invincible furniture chain. You may be looking around and wondering: “Who is going to survive?”

The answer is: two kinds of furniture

stores will survive — and prosper. The “stack ‘em up and blow ‘em out stores, and the stores that adopt new marketing techniques to tell their story. If you are the former, this article will not be of much help. However, if you are service oriented, open-minded, and hungry, I will suggest some techniques you can use to take advantage of the most exciting opportunity in home furnishings history.

Did I write “opportunity?” Isn’t the world falling apart? No, regardless of the negative press, the world is not falling apart. TRENDS E MAGAZINE (www.crucialtrends.com) observes in their latest issue: “Whether it’s the S&L crisis of 1989, the Asian debt crisis of 1998, the “tech wreck” crisis of 2000, or the American subprime mortgage crisis of 2007 ... the problem, the solution, and the outcome are fundamentally the same in every case ...”

The article goes on to point out that in times of crisis the market always sorts out the winners from the losers,

sometimes in spite of government or private intervention. First, the winners strive to figure out the big picture. Then they look for new tools to adapt to the situation. What are these new tools for today’s home furnishings dealers? How will they work? In this article I will explain a few — and how you can profit from understanding and using them.

“Well, OK,” you may counter, “But isn’t the United States economy falling apart?” No again. History tells us that a free economy system has ups and downs. And that is precisely why smart entrepreneurs use tough times to look for the new opportunities that are sure to come, and prepare to take advantage of them before their competitors wise up. TRENDS reports that employment continues at record highs. Average hourly earnings are up 8.4 percent versus September of 2005, the fastest pace of wage gains for any two year period since 1990. Incomes are growing rapidly and consumer net worth is at a record high. TRENDS suggests that we forget



USE HEADLINES THAT WORK

“O AT HOME” uses benefit headlines to capture readers for its successful magazine. The home furnishings industry generally lacks the talented advertising people who know how to write such headlines. The top pros in the best ad agencies apply proven principles to double or triple the effectiveness of their print media or they would not have jobs.



YOU CAN ADVERTISE MORE EFFECTIVELY THAN THE BIG BOXES

Is 'No Payments Until 2012' really the only message we have for the consumer? Don't we have anything to say about the things our fabulous products, dedicated service and unparalleled expertise can do for their home?"

Ads like this can be slapped together in twenty minutes and are a colossal waste of co-op and the store's advertising dollars.

about any short term recession. They expect a mild recession in 2011, but another explosive run-up until then.

So why isn't the home furnishings industry booming? Where are all the consumer dollars going? Don't people know that they are getting more for their money than ever when they buy furniture? Why don't they respond to our slick advertising messages any more?

In my judgment there are three reasons the furniture industry is foundering. First, creating selling messages in print is a lost art in the furniture industry. Promotional flyers, ROP newspaper ads and direct mail all look alike and fail to tell a story. Is "No Payments Until 2012" really the only message we have for the consumer? Don't we have anything to say about the things our fabulous products, dedicated service and unparalleled expertise can do for their home? At first, gorgeous computer generated color images and dramatic graphics, were effective traffic builders. But now everyone can do about the same thing and so beautiful pics and flashy graphics are table stakes. They can no longer distinguish a store and sell by themselves. They need to be complemented by a compelling message. Without persuasive, creative copy, computers only enable graphic artists to create bad advertising more rapidly.

Second, new techniques must be developed by smaller, middle of the road independents to deliver their message to the

communities they serve. The big furniture boxes succeed in drowning out the independent by sheer volume of weak, look-alike advertising. But there is an empty Blue Ocean of opportunity out there waiting for tomorrow's winners — those who are willing to commit the time, resources and energy — to take the plunge.

Third, those who would be tomorrow's leaders in the furniture industry must learn to plan strategically with vision and execute tactically with precision and flexibility. No professional football team enters a game without a strategic game plan ... a plan that every player understands and buys into. Moreover, a successful game plan must embrace a large number of complex plays (or tactics) that every player knows how to execute. In other words, the team enters the game prepared. Every wise athlete knows the game or the match is won or lost before it's played. And, there is more.

A professional football team has a crew of expert coaches. Their job is twofold — keep the game plan on target and make adjustments when things go wrong. No one can predict if or when the quarterback will be injured, the left tackle will break a rib, or when the weather will weaken the passing game. Coaches inspire and lead. When the coaches give up the game is over. They don't have to say anything. But, if they lose heart they may as well wave a white flag.

Everything you will read in this article boils down to these



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How Top Pros Sell Furniture By Mail

The "Perfect Chair" ad above is from a Sharper Image flyer. You may want to ask an ad person who claims that direct mail doesn't work anymore, or that a complete copy story is old fashioned: "How can Sharper Image sell a \$1,999 chair with a direct mail flyer?" Check out the benefit headlines and compelling copy in the Sky Mall catalogue exhibit at right. Why do the copywriters for Sharper Image and Sky Mall work so hard on small space ads? Because the cost-effectiveness of their efforts are constantly measured. Troubles in the economy or not, if they don't get response and sell merchandise in the expensive space allotted to them, their jobs will be in jeopardy.

conclusions: You need to learn to tell your story effectively and persuasively. It must be orchestrated to your prospects' personal interests and needs. You need new, inexpensive, uncluttered, media to reach the public and tell your story. And you need to craft a dynamic new game plan that your entire team understands and buys into.

Let's take a look at these three complex issues in turn and see if we can hammer out an action plan for selling lots more furniture in 2008.

1. HOW TO DOUBLE OR TRIPLE THE EFFECTIVENESS OF YOUR PRINT MEDIA

Oprah Winfrey publishes a remarkably successful magazine dedicated to the home environment. It is titled O AT HOME. It's successful because women have a passion for creating a beautiful home. They do not have a passion for sofas, loveseats and mattress sets. No payments until 2011 does not set their hearts aflutter. Label headlines and copy, and print ads that have confusing, glaring graphics won't hold their attention. Oprah succeeds because she hires top writers and art directors who do not destroy the story with graphics that make the copy unreadable. Invest a few bucks on a copy of Oprah's magazine and get a lesson in how to use print mes-

sages to attract and sell readers.

First of all, study the cover of Oprah's O AT HOME magazine. The writers and the editors know that the cover must work or they will soon be out of a job. So every cover is loaded with benefit headlines. The benefit headlines have one primary purpose: to get the reader to open the magazine and keep reading. This is close to what a headline and the subheads on a home furnishings direct mail piece, flyer or ROP ad must accomplish: get the reader to want to read more. Here are a few samples from Oprah's recent issues:

- **"No Hassle Makeovers ...**
- **"BLAH to WOW! In One Hour, One Day, One Weekend"**
- **"FALL IN LOVE WITH YOUR OWN HOME"**
- **"YES YOU CAN! Do it Yourself, Get Exactly What You Want, (AND SAVE BIG)"**
- **"How to Live Large in a Small Space"**

The reader or subscriber who opens the magazine will not be disappointed. They will be treated to a rich array of ideas, carefully crafted spreads that are easy to read and embroidered with beautiful illustrations. This is the stuff that women crave, and will not find in the clutter and glut of print

AD SECRETS UPDATED

advertising produced for retail furniture stores. I have a stack of ads and flyers in front of me from the best and brightest of the big box advertisers. What kind of headlines is the lady greeted with when she picks one up? Here are some samples.

Message From Big Box #1:

- **“YOU CAN’T BEAT THIS CREDIT OFFER! INTEREST FREE FOR FIVE YEARS! NO ... NO... NO...** *In the corner I read: “THERE IS A DIFFERENCE.” [Oh yeah? Then why don’t you tell me what the difference is?] This is one of those throw-away slogans that any business could use.*

Message From Big Box #2:

- **“NO INTEREST – NO PAYMENTS – NO DOWN PAYMENTS ‘TIL NOVEMBER 2008!”** *[What do I care? You haven’t sold me anything yet. Imagine a sales person greeting a customer with this tired phrase.]*

Message From Big Box #3:

- **“NEW DESIGNS. FRESH NEW LOOK.”** *Not a bad start. But where are these new designs and fresh new looks? Why are you showing me a huge illustration of a woman on a mattress? Wait a minute! This is a mattress ad! The illustration takes up the entire full page. The only other information on the ad are label headlines on three Simmons Beautyrest king sets with prices. And of course: “ONLY \$1 DOWN. TAKE 5 YEARS TO PAY!” No benefits or product features. Hey, do you guys sell only king size sets? Do you have a selection of mattress sets in different sizes and firmnesses? Are your sales consultants trained to sell me the right mattresses? This big box has a great story to tell, but you would never know it. Ads like this can be slapped together in twenty minutes and are a colossal waste of co-op and the store’s advertising dollars. Finally, there is a total absence of interesting, informative selling body copy in all these pieces.*

A long-standing mantra for one-on-one selling is: Never point out a product point without tying it to a benefit. For example, don’t talk price without talking value. Don’t make comments about merchandise that can be responded to with “So what? What’s in it for me?” Label headlines and nuts and

bolts copy put people to sleep. Here is a sample label headline and nuts and bolts description for the front page feature item for one of the big box flyers:

- **“THE GREGORY SECTIONAL” “Rich brown leather-like fabric with beige Microfiber super plush cushions.”** *[What does leather-like mean? What is Microfiber? What does it do for me?] “Loose pillow backs.” [I can’t see this?] “Matching chair available. Left arm facing sofa & right arm facing chaise.” [But there is no right arm facing the chaise. There is no right arm at all.]*

Compare the lazy big box efforts with the “Perfect Chair” ad in the Sharper Image flyer exhibit. Compare it to the benefit headlines and compelling copy in the Sky Mall catalogue exhibit. Why do the copywriters for Sharper Image and Sky Mall work so hard on small space ads? Because the cost-effectiveness of their efforts are constantly measured. If they don’t get response and sell merchandise in the expensive space allotted to them, they will not have a job for the next issue.

Millions and millions of dollars of research have established a core of basic advertising principles that make advertising effective. These foundational principles are not a matter of opinion. They have been distilled and tested over and over again by men like Bedell, Ogilvy, Caples, and modern marketers like Gerber, Abraham and a dozen others. It is appalling that so much wasteful furniture advertising is created today by people who are unaware of this body of knowledge. The top pros in the best ad agencies apply proven principles to double or triple the effectiveness of their print media or they would not have jobs. I adopt these principles for modern readers and use them faithfully in the national marketplace almost daily, and I know they still work.

Within this big box incompetence lies your opportunity. I don’t want to belabor the need for advertising knowledge and expertise in the furniture industry. If you want to know more, check out the marketing article archives on FURNITURE WORLD Magazine’s website www.furninfo.com and search for “Advertising Principles - Parts 1 & 2”. These articles will enlarge upon the issues of advertising professionalism, and how to acquire it. If you think that you don’t have time to research this, consider the football coach. He also has a large number of hats to wear. He must be an astute psychologist and motivator, trainer, strategic planner and so on. He must find time to study his competition and create new tactics. It



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the exciting new additions
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-Cathy Bartolowits

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AD SECRETS UPDATED

would be unthinkable for a professional football coach to go into a game without knowing the basic principles that drive great teams.

2. MAKE YOUR COMPETITION IRRELEVANT

The principles of Blue Ocean marketing have been covered in previous issues. See FURNITURE WORLD articles, "Blue Ocean Marketing Can Make Your Competitors Irrelevant" - Parts 1&2 posted to the marketing article archives on www.furninfo.com. There are two Blue Ocean programs that you simply must launch before the big boxes in your marketplace do. These are free Decorator Clinics for the public, and a Shop at Home program. The clin-

ics will exponentially increase your market share, and the Shop at Home program can be an important new profit center for you. Ethan Allen has long employed this program, and sooner or later the more middle-of-the-road big boxes will come up with their own versions. Beat them to it in your market.

The key to making these programs successful is to train several of your best sales associates to become leaders and trainers for the rest of the staff. You may already have decorators on staff, but it is important to have several people who are qualified to train the entire staff and new associates in the basics of decorating. Both Cathy Finney, a feature editor for FURNITURE WORLD Magazine, and Margaret

DeGange, another FURNITURE WORLD contributor, have programs to "train the trainers" so you can independently sustain your programs. DeGange has produced an excellent running series of articles, "Decorator School Crash Course", that gives you step by step instructions for staging a public decorating clinic. Check furninfo.com for earlier installments.

USE BLUE OCEAN AND PEOPLE MEDIA MAGIC

A Blue Ocean game plan can revolutionize your store in 2008. While you cannot outgun the big boxes, you can run better, more appealing ads. But more is needed. Media is becoming prohibitively costly. It is harder and harder to reach the public. The public is simply getting too many messages, there is too much repetitive and boring advertising clutter, too many look-alike flyers, too many intrusive TV and radio commercials.

You need to learn to tell your story effectively and persuasively. It must be orchestrated to your prospects' personal interests and needs. You need to begin to use new, inexpensive, uncluttered, media to reach the public and tell your story. And you need to craft a dynamic new game plan that your entire team understands and buys into.

The three concepts above are interrelated. It is hard to grasp a whole new strategic paradigm of marketing furniture, but new gimmicks won't suffice anymore. A professional football team would not consider entering into a game with the New England Patriots by just adding a few trick plays to their tactics. They would develop an overall strategy, a game plan that embraces all three factors above. And finally, you need a secret weapon that the big boxes cannot copy in their massive central advertising departments.

The secret weapon that can change everything is People Media. Word of mouth advertising. Some intellectual giant once came up with a saying: The

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How “COOL GRAPHICS” CAN SOMETIMES DESTROY AD EFFECTIVENESS

Research has proven that large amounts of reverse copy reduces readership, in some cases as much as 50 to 70%.

But graphic artists love to reverse copy on layouts to make the design of the page look contemporary and cool.

Even Sharper Image sometimes surrenders to the graphic artist's passion to be cool, as in the spreads at right. As a result, very well written and persuasive copy is rendered far less readable. Oprah's O AT HOME magazine manages

to have dynamic spreads without reversing large area's of copy. Unless ad people know and apply the proven principles of advertising they will inadvertently make costly errors.



medium IS the message. In the case of PEOPLE, this is a truth. People communicating with other people... saying good things about your store and about your merchandise... People Media may be the best-kept and most powerful secret in marketing! The quality of your People Media depends upon the quality of the messages you send to your associates, executives and managers, the messages that your staff sends to each other—and the messages that your company, as a whole, sends out to your customers and the general community.

People Media work much faster and more effectively than all the other media put together, and it is more effective. People Media is essential because traditional media suffers from a growing glut and a general lack of credibility.

Here is an example of the power of

People Media. A while back I wanted to buy a new digital camera. I went on line and was totally overwhelmed. After a few hours of confusion I happened to ask a friend his opinion of digital cameras. He immediately responded that he had researched them carefully, and decided to buy a particular brand and he loves it. Bingo! I was sold and bought the one he recommended. I love it and have told several people about it.

Lack of space compels me to continue this discussion in the next FURNITURE WORLD issue. We will examine the power of People Media in depth, and how you can harness them with programs like Shop at Home to make 2008 a banner year of profit and fun. We will also discuss how to create a world-class game plan to set all of these ideas into motion. It will be a great ride and I hope

you will join me.

Contributing Editor Larry Mullins has 30+ years experience in the front lines of furniture marketing. Over the past ten years he has developed a Visionary Management program that can impact the culture of an entire organization and bring it to life. He also produces state-of-the-art promotional advertising packages for everything from quick cash flow to complete exit strategies and store closings. Larry is the President of UltraSales, Inc.. Questions about this article can be sent to Larry care of FURNITURE WORLD to mullins@furninfo.com.

See more articles by Larry in the marketing management archives on furninfo.com or call him direct at (303)530-5366.

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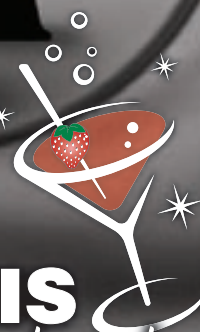


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FURNITURE WORLD READERS LOVE THEIR **BEAUTIFUL TRUCKS**

Second beautiful furniture truck contest attracts some winners.

WAREHOUSE & DELIVERY BY DAN BOLGER, P.E.

North America's furniture retailers continue to come up with superb delivery truck graphics as part of their advertising and corporate identity programs. It's logical that beautiful trucks hit home with consumers because they are highly visible to Ms. Smith. When your truck delivers to her neighborhood, it not only delivers the obvious information related by the truck's condition and graphics, but also a more subtle one that tells her where her neighbors' needs for home furnishings are being met.

A really great benefit of great looking trucks is the fact that they cover your entire marketing area and your moving bill boards are even seen inside gated communities as you make perfect deliveries. To ensure the best possible image, during routine maintenance, you should make sure that truck bumpers and vehicle under-structure are touched up as necessary. This is a step that many furniture retailers overlook. In addition, wheels should either be routinely painted or, if you want to go upscale, you can consider buying polished aluminum rims. And of course, with increased concern for environmental pollution and going green, your drivers should never leave their truck idling. For security, make sure that drivers make sure to remove the key and take it with them inside the home. And your procedure manual should specify that the helper gets out of the truck at each delivery and guides the driver while backing up to eliminate the possibility of property damage or snagging a low hanging TV cable.

When one of your trucks is sitting at a customer's home with the rear door open, the view should not be at odds with your reputation. Furniture should be properly blanket wrapped and everything should be tied for stability. Insist that all trash be bagged or placed after each stop in an empty carton. What if your customer should look in the truck cab and see a mess of cups, lunch bags and other debris? That would not be optimal, so make sure that garbage is removed from the cab daily and that the interior is cleaned at weekly intervals. This establishes a standard of performance you expect your delivery team to adhere to, regardless of whether they are your own employees or a delivery service. It's your reputation on the line... the last opportunity to satisfy the customer on this order and an opportunity to plant the seeds for their next purchase. Remember that training yields positive benefits.

Beautiful trucks aren't an extra cost but a joy to behold and real benefit. Did you know that a 30 inch by 12 foot banner on the side of a bus in a relatively small community can cost \$500 each month? Doing a wrapped bus can cost \$1,000 per month, or more depending on the population and traffic volume. Billboards range from \$500 to over \$2,000 each month for space rental plus a production fee. You can estimate the advertising value for your beautiful trucks by visiting the web site of the large billboard and bus advertising com-



Upscale retailer Robb & Stucky won for it's beautiful truck in the "Local Delivery In-House" for home furnishings with over \$25 million in sales. Baers Furniture received honorable mention in the same category.

Your Solid Wood Domestic Table Source

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Michael Alan Furnishings was the winner in the "Small Service/Furniture Van" category and received honorable

mention for Local Furniture Delivery - In House for retailers \$5-25 million.



pany www.lamar.com.

When I first put graphics on my truck fleet in the mid seventies, the options were paint or 3M decals. Today's decals are far superior. An increasing number are graphics printed on vinyl, like the ones from TruckSkin on some of this year's entries. Creative retailers rotate the graphics seasonally or during special promotion periods or to announce store openings. Also consider putting your most beautiful truck in community parades. Art Van's Show Truck gets accolades everywhere it goes and communities throughout their marketing area ask them to send it. IKEA uses the unique services of locomotion-media.com for special events throughout the USA with excellent results. (especially the one used at a Florida opening set up as a bedroom and filled with human models.)

While not specifically part of this contest, another evident trend is the increasing role of demountable truck bodies. These units are loaded at central furniture distribution centers, transported two at a time to distant points by a single driver. Local delivery teams then deliver the boxes within that marketing area. There can be strategic advantages for retailers with stores where outlying points are beyond two hour driving time.

Bottom line, having beautiful trucks isn't an expense. Beautiful trucks pay dividends in so many ways for single store retailers and multiple location retailers. That's why you want them to look great all the time.

SMALL SERVICE/FURNITURE VAN

Winner - Michael Alan Furnishings: This Lake Havasu, Arizona retailer, known for excellent service, submitted entries in the "Local Furniture Delivery In-House" and "Small Service/Furniture Van" categories.

Family owned Michael Alan Furnishings & Interior Design features, "beautifully displayed, quality furniture and accessories at the best possible prices." The company also offers design services.

This retailer wins in the cargo van category and gets honorable mention in the local furniture delivery category.

Equipment: '99 Chevy Cargo Van (winner) and Isuzu NPR (honorable mention). The store credits the van's

longevity to Mark Denevan, their Customer Service Technician. Mark has been with Michael Alan since 1995, and is its primary driver and care giver. The van is washed and thoroughly inspected weekly. Every 3,000 miles the oil is changed, and every 5,000 the tires are rotated.

Van Use: The van is used for large accessory jobs, service calls, small deliveries, or in some cases quick emergency deliveries. It is equipped with a ladder, toolbox, blankets, furniture touch-up kits, and other appropriate supplies to handle any job situation. It is not uncommon for the van to be used on a morning accessory job, then go to a service call and transport a recliner to the local upholsterer, and then go on a delivery. It is even used to run errands, such as picking up water and soda for the store. Michael Alan's desert living customers appreciated the water and soda they offer free to their customers... and they go through a lot of bottled water!

Submitted by: Mark Brady.

Sales Volume: 5-25 Million Dollars.

Cargo Van Graphics: Graphics that relate a clean, professional and upscale image were designed in-house and air-brushed by a local graphics company.

Delivery Truck Graphics: Vinyl graphics by TruckSkin, Traverse City, MI were designed and installed in Lake Havasu. Rails and straps secure the design to the side. Each truck has different graphics, with the same picture on each side. The back has another smaller picture with logo, and the front shows just the logo.

Michael Allen inspects and preps all products in the warehouse before loading for delivery. Once in the home, items receive their "White Glove" treatment. The delivery team makes sure everything is set-up and cleaned again before they leave. The customer is then asked to sign a delivery receipt, which states they have received their product in good condition. Should there be a need for service, due to whatever circumstance, the issue is reported right away to the service department. Customers are left with the feeling that they know they will be taken care of.

Bowen's Big On EasyPlan Pro

If you want to find out how much difference the right room-planning software can make, just ask **Bowen Town & Country Furniture** in Winston-Salem, NC. With as many as 50,000 manufacturers' templates, plus a full range of configurable shapes, doors, windows and accessories to choose from, MicroD's EasyPlan Pro lets Bowen's designers and sales associates create room plans to scale and arrange correctly-sized furniture and fixtures in a room of virtually any shape or size. Even more important, it helps close more sales. According to owner Scott Bowen, "EasyPlan Pro and ePreVue (web-based electronic catalog) are practical tools that we use and give freely to every customer. It's a bargain!"

Here's what other staff members have to say:



Cynthia Tesh, Director of Design Services:
"MicroD's Room Planner is so easy to use!
Plans can quickly be shared with clients."

Garry Crist, Bowen Sales Associate:
"I tell all my customers about Room Planner and ePreVue. In fact, I received an order today for a sofa, leather chair and ottoman that was the direct result of my customer using Room Planner to confirm the sizes that they needed."



To find out more, see us at the
Las Vegas Market, World Market Center,
Building B 16th Floor,
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January 28 - February 1, 2008
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Texas based Interior Ideas is the winner for "Local Delivery Truck - In House" for home furnishings retailers with under \$25 million in sales. Bradens and Circle Furniture receive honorable mention in this category.

The company says that they receive calls all the time on what an outstanding delivery team they have.

LOCAL DELIVERY TRUCK IN-HOUSE UNDER \$25 MILLION SALES

Interior Ideas, Inc.: San Antonio, Texas based Interior Ideas is located in a high-end shopping center that contains a movie theater and more than 10 restaurants. The truck is a three sided billboard that sits in the parking lot visible to everyone who visits this center. There is a different image on each side of the truck.

Graphics: This retailer chose the graphics to showcase their vendor Vanguard.

Equipment: 2005 Isuzu NPR With 14 foot Supreme Box.

Graphics: The graphics were chosen from hundreds of options to showcase the look and caliber of their store.

Benefits: Chris Pfeiffer, President of Interior Ideas noted that, "It's a great delivery truck, very eye-catching as it delivers around town and a wonderful billboard when it sits in the parking lot."

Delivery Area: Delivers furniture and accessories to San Antonio and surrounding Towns.

and two outlet centers in Massachusetts, Circle Furniture gets honorable mention for its attention grabbing graphics approach and use of color. The retailer is known for eclectic, contemporary selection, fast delivery times for made-to-order items, corporate philanthropy, support of the regional economy, and most of all, fun.

Equipment: Isuzu FTR.

Graphics: Their advertising agency designed and the graphic created by TruckSkin.

Person Responsible: Jonathan Boyle

Maintenance: Monthly preventative maintenance and weekly washing.

Delivery Area: Delivers home furnishings to New England states, small items via UPS and nationally via furniture carrier.

Honorable Mention - Braden's Fine Furniture & Interiors: This retailer founded in 1956 offers fine furniture and quality design services in its 95,000 square foot showroom and two Braden's Lifestyles stores.

Equipment: Freightliner M2 with 26 foot Morgan Box and Demountable Truck Body System.

Delivery Area: Furniture delivered around the Knoxville, TN area.

Honorable Mention - Circle Furniture: With five stores

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According to The Wall Street Journal, 80% of big-ticket purchases — furniture included — are first researched on the Internet. So if you are not offering a valuable pre-shopping experience on your website, you're missing a tremendous sales opportunity. Our Internet-based EasyPlan Pro and ePreVue provide that opportunity.

With as many as 50,000 manufacturers' templates, plus a full range of configurable shapes, doors, windows and accessories to choose from, EasyPlan Pro enables users to create a room plan to scale and arrange correctly sized furniture and fixtures in a room of virtually any shape or size.

ePreVue presents your product on your website and enables users to search for and visualize exactly how custom-order furniture, case goods and accessories will look. They can also select a choice of fabrics for an upholstered item, then automatically drape it. It's a 24/7 advertising tool that will help increase your revenue.



Together, EasyPlan Pro and ePreVue help customers visualize and feel more confident about their room plan and furniture decisions. Even more important, this one-two punch on your website will help you close more sales.

To find out more, see us at the Las Vegas Market, World Market Center, Building B 16th Floor, Retail Resource Center #5, January 28 - February 1, 2008 or call 800-964-3876, ext. 253.



Click on the picture icon around a highlighted item to view and drape it in ePreVue



BEAUTIFUL TRUCKS

Four store, Ontario based Tepperman's wins for "Best Local Furniture Delivery Truck- Outsourced."



LOCAL DELIVERY IN HOUSE OVER \$25 MILLION SALES

Winner Robb & Stucky: Upscale retailer offers interior design services complemented by high-end products. Three customer service centers (CSCs) are used to provide home delivery in Texas, Nevada, Florida and Arizona. Delivery within a 250 mile delivery radius from each customer service center uses the demountable concept to extend their reach. See truck photo on the first page of this article.

Sales Volume: +25 million dollars.

Equipment: 2006 Freightliner/Mercedes M2 business class straight truck.

Graphics: The Robb & Stucky advertising department designed the graphics to coincide with their ongoing branding campaign and worked with specialist Lee Bonsper to execute the application. 3M vinyl was applied to the aluminum truck body. The brown and gold colors represent understated elegance that the affluent Robb & Stucky customer responds to and appreciates. The color mixing and design "ooze" class and quality for upscale markets in Scottsdale, AZ, Dallas, TX, Las Vegas, NV and Boca Raton, Naples, Coral Gables, West Palm Beach and Sarasota, FL.

Special Modifications: The truck body is removable. The Robb & Stucky fleet is made of Demountable truck bodies that increases productivity.

Additional information: To enhance name brand recognition, the graphic design on the trucks is reflected on gift boxes, shopping bags and marketing collateral as well. There is a certain cachet associated with a Robb & Stucky truck arriving in a customer's driveway; it is a reflection of quality. The delivery team is trained to reinforce that quality image with white-glove delivery service.

Submitted By: Ken Fitzgerald, VP of Logistics/Ops

Baer's Furniture (Honorable Mention): Furniture deliv-

ered within a 250 mile radius of Pompano Beach.

Submitted By: Bruce Dorfman, Baer's Director of Transportation

Equipment: International 4300 with Morgan 26' Box and Demountable Truck Body System.

Sales Volume: Over \$25 Million.

LOCAL FURNITURE DELIVERY TRUCK FRANCHISE OR LICENSEE

Winner Verlo Mattress Factory Stores: Wisconsin based Verlo Mattress Factory Stores deliver competitively priced, top-quality sleep sets and sleep-related products, built-to-order to consumers in Colorado, Missouri, Iowa, Illinois, Wisconsin, Texas, Pennsylvania, Florida, North Carolina and Georgia.

Store Sales Volume: Over \$25 million.

Truck Brand/Model: 2007 Isuzu NPR with a 20' box from Morgan. Box interior has a wood floor with wooden walls and quick connects built into the walls. Truck configurations vary from franchise to franchise. This entry is from the Houston, TX franchisee.

Modifications: Step bumper for ease in and out of the truck as well as easy-attach strap systems for tying down products.

Graphics: The graphics align with Verlo's new branding campaign containing elements touting Old World craftsmanship - the brown leather strap and the Verlo craftsman wearing a leather apron. Graphics packages are designed by the Verlo Mattress Factory Stores home office marketing team and formatted for application by local sign companies. This allows Verlo to control the creative direction while still allowing the franchise owner to develop and support local business relationships. Updated versions of the graphics package are released approximately every 18 months. Verlo realizes that their trucks are not only moving billboards, but that the delivery team



Verlo Mattress Factory Stores had the best Local Furniture Delivery Truck in the franchise or Licensee category.



Haverty's Furniture is the winner for best "Long Haul Delivery Truck with Ivan Smith Furniture getting honorable mention in this category. Both use Demountable Concepts' truck body system.

makes the last point of contact with customers. A section of their franchise operations manual dedicated to delivery includes step-by-step procedures, scripting, scheduling, uniforms, appearance, maintenance, driver hiring criteria, and even theft prevention.

Truck Advertising Benefits: The roving billboard keeps the Verlo name in the public eye, drawing top-of-mind awareness. Their goal: instant recognition!

Truck Maintenance: Individual franchise owners are responsible for maintenance and fleet operations. Monthly maintenance is required of each franchise owner, including cleaning, washing, and waxing schedules. The delivery section of Verlo Mattress Factory Stores Operations Manual outlines items for daily (tires, lights, washer fluid, general appearance, etc.), weekly (handling, brakes, alignment, etc.), monthly (transmission, oil, radiator), and quarterly (speedometer, dashboards gauges, etc.) inspections that must be submitted and filed with the local franchise owner.

Product Description: Each franchise owner has a delivery team responsible for getting beds, futons, pillows, frames, etc. to the customer.

LOCAL FURNITURE DELIVERY TRUCK OUTSOURCED

Winner Tepperman's: This four store Ontario, Canada based retailer promises its customers, "the best fashions, values and brand names in Furniture, Mattresses, Appliances, and Audio/Video at guaranteed lowest prices

providing you the after-sale service."

Sales Volume: Over 25 million dollars.

Equipment: International 4400 DT466.

Truck Graphics: The logo was developed by their in-house advertising department. It was applied using paint.

Benefits: Tepperman's goal was to keep the graphics design simple, but very visible. The bright red grabs attention. The same design and color is used on their delivery shuttle and in-home service trucks. The website address is visible on the rear of each of the trucks which are kept exceptionally clean and scratch free.

Special Modifications: Tepperman's added air conditioning due to the very humid Ontario summers.

Special Maintenance: Trucks receive a daily circle check and monthly on-site check up. The leasing company offers a mobile repair service. Trucks are replaced every three years or 75,000 miles and re-painted every two years.

Delivery Area: 100 miles from each DC.

LONG HAUL FURNITURE DELIVERY

Winner - Haverty's Furniture: Haverty's Furniture is a full-service home furnishings retailer with over 120 showrooms in 17 states in the Southern and Midwestern US regions providing its customers with a wide selection of quality merchandise in middle to upper-middle price

ranges. Founded in 1885.

Submitted By: Steve Schingler, Assistant VP of Distribution.

Equipment: Freightliner M2 with 26 foot Morgan Box with Demountable Truck Body System

Delivery Area: 250 mile radius of Braselton, GA.

Honorable Mention - Ivan Smith Furniture: Shreveport, Louisiana based Ivan Smith Furniture has almost 30 store locations in Arkansas, Louisiana and Texas. They promise their customers, professional delivery services and a follow up call after delivery to ensure that customers are satisfied and were treated with courtesy.

Equipment: Hino 258LP with Supreme 26 foot box and the Demountable Truck Body System.

Delivery Area: Delivery within a 250 mile radius of Shreveport, LA.

Sales Volume: More than 25 Million.

SHOW TRUCKS

Winner: Art Van Furniture based in Warren Michigan, Art Van Furniture operates Michigan's largest private delivery fleet and travels over five million miles per year throughout the state of Michigan. Art Van is a family owned and operated company with 29 stores in 28 cities in Michigan

Sales Volume: More than \$25 million.

Equipment: Sterling Truck.

Truck Graphics: Graphics were designed and developed by Art Van's in-house graphics team. The "Cindy Truck" has applied vinyl graphics and the "Holiday Truck" graphics are

applied vinyl with metallic overlay.

Special Events: The Art Van trucks participate in several cruises and parades, receiving enthusiastic community support. Both the Cindy Truck and Holiday Truck have speakers to play music in parades.

Submitted by: Mike Hogan, Fleet Manager.

Delivered Products: Home furnishings in northern Indiana, Northern, Ohio, Ontario and throughout Michigan.

Honorable Mention- IKEA: IKEA operates over 265 stores worldwide and more than 30 in the US. The chain is known for offering low prices for well-designed, stylish, functional furnishings along with a family and employee friendly atmosphere. Although not known for home delivery services; home-delivery, export and assembly services can be arranged.

Equipment: The IKEA custom made "glass truck" has been used in many markets around the country to promote store openings and events. The truck is so unusual that it commands attention wherever it goes. There are even video clips of the truck on YouTube.

Daniel Bolger P.E. provides operations consulting services to clients throughout North America. You can contact Dan at bolger@furninfo.com or call 740-503-8875. For more information on this or other transportation, logistics and furniture warehousing topics, go to www.furninfo.com to read all of Dan's articles. Don't Miss Dan Bolger's Las Vegas Market Seminar, "Warehouse & Delivery Excellence--Getting Back to Basics. Warehouse Improvements Without Large Capital Investments." Thursday, January 31 from 10:00-11:30 a.m. in the RRC, 16th Fl., Bldg B.



BEAUTIFUL TRUCKS



Show trucks make their debut in this installment of FURNITURE WORLD's Beautiful Furniture Truck Contest. Art Van Furniture's "Cindy" and "Holiday" truck were winners. IKEA's eye catching "Glass Truck" ran a close second based on its unique advertising potential.





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:: Enter to win a complete July 08 Mandalay Bay vacation package. The Viva Las Vegas Market Giveaway includes accommodations for five nights, two dinner vouchers, two VIP nightclub passes, and two show or concert tickets.

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MEET THE RETAIL SALES Power Players

Sales tips and training tools from successful sales associates.

CUSTOMERS INTO CLIENTS BY CATHY FINNEY.

The quarterback doesn't stay in the locker room trying to score the much needed touchdown. Baseball players don't stay "dug out" in the dugout trying to figure out when it's their turn at bat. They know when it is their time to make that wood connect with the ball and hit it out of the park, and they're ready.

Likewise, professional sales and design associates need to know when it is their turn to be "UP" and be ready to perform.

All of the sales associates (power players) interviewed for this article were asked to speak about their sales success strategies.

One underlying aspect of selling they all spoke of is the importance of connecting quickly with customers. In every aspect of life, perception is reality. Salespeople only get one shot at connecting with "Ethel" by making the best possible first impression.

THE PLAYERS' APPROACH

Renee Elzea from Norwalk in Tulsa, Oklahoma told us, "It's all in the greeting. It's meeting them and connecting intellect to intellect." Rhonda Benzig, her sales manager and

coach said that Renee and her "entire team are driven to succeed. They have a passion for helping the client."

Karen Currier, one of the top "players" at Jonn's Contemporary Interiors in Phila., PA. is in total agreement, "Connecting with the client as their advisor and their professional friend" is just one of the keys to her success.

But to connect, salespeople first have to – GET OUT OF THE FORT! They can't play the game while sitting on the bench! To quote Goethe, "Whatever you can do, or dream you can, begin it. Boldness has genius, power, and magic in it."

THE PLAYERS' MISSION

"Power Players" must be on a mission. They must be ready to play and act boldly. The best ones are the acting CMO's (Chief Motivational Officers) of their companies. Before they take to the field, they already know what they want to accomplish. According to Charles Garfield author of "Peak Performers," "Mission is the source of peak performance... It determines behavior and fuels motivation.... A peak performer sorts things out and takes not just action, but purposeful action, in the service of results." It helps people, "To stand out, to excel at achieving something uniquely one's own that one cares deeply about."

In "The Art of Power," Thich Nhat Hanh, says that, "when we are clear about our motivations, our actions are much more powerful because we can do them with one hundred percent intention... Everyone of us has a strong goal for our life. We want to achieve something." All of the "Power

"IT'S ALL IN THE GREETING."

It's meeting them and connecting intellect to intellect."

-Renee Elzea, Norwalk in Tulsa



Norwalk Tulsa "Power Players" Clockwise from top left: Jeanne Meek: Sales, Rhonda Benzing: Manager, Sonni Sears: Sales, Kristin Yannacombe: Sales, Debbie Sumrall: Sales, Renee Elzea: Sales

A Typical Furniture Store Owner Can Make \$5,260 Just By Waking Up!

Replace Your Table Lamp Bulbs

40 Watt Standard Frost to a 9 watt spiral: Annual Savings \$12.40 per lamp

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90PAR38 to a 60PAR38/IRC: Annual Savings \$12.00 per lamp

100 Table Lamps x \$12.40 = \$1,240

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300 Track Heads x \$12.00 = \$3,600

Total Annual Savings* \$5,260

* Savings calculations incorporate: Average hours per day lights on, Average days per week lights on, Average kilowatt hour rate, Average cost per lamp change, Rated average Lamp life, Lamp cost.



Wake Up!

Every watt of electricity you save is worth 40 cents, probably more. You can save money and have a great looking store. Call us today to place your order and start saving money.

Want to know how much YOU can save? Want to improve the color and look of your displays? Give us a call. Ask for a free lighting energy energy analysis.

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High Point**

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THE ACT OF LISTENING...

is Michael Shank's secret for success. He asks his customers, "What goals may I help you accomplish here today?" Then he listens.

Players" we spoke with set goals, and once they hit a goal, they raise the bar again. Half way through one month, a consultant interviewed for this article who was at \$8,000 told me, "Cathy, it's okay. I'll make my goal." Her goal was \$80,000. She hit \$91,000. She was on a mission. There was never any doubt! Purposeful action was the key.

HOW PLAYERS VIEW THE GAME

"Victims are nouns. Owners are verbs. They take action." Years ago when I read this quote by Buckminster Fuller, I walked around for days chanting, "I seem to be a verb. I seem to be a verb." If you want to be a player, you need to start chanting too!

This notion of being a verb implies self confidence. If you're not confident, you're not credible. Al Siebert who wrote, "The Resiliency Advantage," points out that "self-confidence is an action predictor. It is your gatekeeper to effective action." In "Peak Performers," Mr. Garfield agrees, "Self-confident people feel an internal authority to act, based on a sense of their own expertise."

Confident people are curious. They always want to know more, be more, do more. They enjoy "learning in the school of life." Dr. Siebert says that, "curiosity can be viewed as a sort of open-brainedness... People with closed brains refuse to listen to information. It's rapid reality reading." It's the old saying - "Your mind is like a parachute; it doesn't work unless it's open!"

Curious people, and successful sales professionals want to learn, so they listen, really listen. They employ the FACE Formula.

Forward lean – Lean or turn toward your client as they're speaking.

Acknowledge what they are saying by nodding, saying "um, hum," or use reflective statements. "So what you're saying is . . ." This way they know that you "get it."

Care about your client and their needs.

Empathize – Put yourself in their shoes. Become the buyer.

THE PLAYERS' WINNING TECHNIQUES

People like to buy, but they don't like to be sold. Customers are in your store to become owners, so refer to the sofa you present to them as, "Your new sofa." Give them ownership. In "Stop Acting like a Seller and Start Thinking like a Buyer," Jerry Acuff talks about the five rules of buying:

Rule #1: "Think like a buyer – NOT a seller – You'll sell more."

Rule #2: "The quality of your business is directly linked to the desire of your customer to want to have a conversation with you."

Rule #3: "The size of your business is directly linked to your ability to ask questions that get your prospective customer thinking."

Rule #4: "If they feel pressure, there won't be any meaningful dialogue." If they feel "pressure," there probably won't be any dialogue at all!

Rule #5: "No pressure = conversation." It becomes an invitation for the partnering process to begin.

To summarize, conversation can lead to communication which can foster connecting and mutual collaboration for the purpose of meeting the customer's needs.

Michael Shank, the Director of Design, at Interiors in Lancaster, PA said that the act of listening is his secret for



From Jonn's Contemporary Interiors (left to right top row) Mark Camphouse, Dominic Cozzi, Marie Kooker, David Stein, (left to right bottom) Mimi Yu, Karen Currier, Joan Paaske, Francois Jawarhi, Susan Silver.

New Traffic Boosting Advertising and Marketing Pieces, *Already Created And Ready To Use*, So You Can Increase Sales And Traffic During Difficult Retail Cycles

It's no secret that times have been difficult for retailers over the past several months in the home furnishings industry.

Talk of recession abounds. GOB sales all around you... customers holding back the purse strings because of economic uncertainty, and gloom and doom all over the news make for a difficult retail cycle now and into 2008.

However there is good news.

NEW PROGRAM GIVES YOU ADS, MAILERS, AND MARKETING PIECES PROVEN TO PUT CUSTOMERS IN YOUR STORE... ALREADY DONE FOR YOU!

Even during tough times many retailers thrive, gain market share, and make more money than ever before. *They do it by marketing effectively to get new members.*

If you think people aren't buying furniture or bedding, just look at the IKEA parking lot. It's full from morning till night!

The problem isn't that people aren't spending money.

The problem isn't that people aren't spending money. It's that retailers aren't advertising effectively to get customers to come see them.

It's that retailers aren't advertising effectively to get customers to come see them, instead of IKEA, Costco, Sam's Club, or any number of other big box competitors.

Getting Customers In The Door Is EVERYTHING.

There's nothing more frustrating than spending thousands of dollars on advertising and getting poor results. It's enough to drive you crazy!

It's really quite simple. No customers mean no sales. *The number one priority of every store owner in the world should be MARKETING to get new and past customers into the store.*

The problem is marketing can be a fickle, difficult and unpredictable thing. What worked in the past isn't working any more...there's nothing more frustrating than spending thousands of dollars on advertising and getting poor results. It's enough to drive you crazy! (Believe me, I've been there too!)

The Solution Is A New Kind Of Marketing

Well, not new *really*. But very new to most home furnishings retailers. It's called Direct Response Marketing. You've probably read several of my articles in this magazine, even received information from us in the mail.

But Things Have Changed, And We've Changed Too!

Over the past year Ethan and I have been *teaching* our 200+ retailer members how to use this new kind of marketing to **increase sales with great results**. The problem is learning and creating this type of marketing is difficult, time consuming, and expensive to learn.

We've Changed Everything For 2008.

Now you can get DONE FOR YOU ads, inserts and mailers that you simply copy and paste for use in your store.

These professionally written ads have been tested in the real world to generate powerful results, *FAST*. They all have the 11 essential elements that are needed to make an ad perform incredibly well. This includes engaging copy, great offers, compelling headlines, testimonials, guarantees and more.

Now you can get a marketing calendar with effective ads EVERY SINGLE MONTH (proven to fill your store with customers) without having to do any of the creative work yourself for just \$297 per month. Just one new customer from these ads will more than pay back your small investment. *Plus we guarantee you'll get much more than just 1 new customer from these Done For You Ads.* That's a fraction of the price you'd pay to have an ad agency or freelance copywriter create them for you (Plus ad agencies don't even know how to do this type of marketing!)

Sorry!

NOT EVERYONE CAN JOIN

Each member using these powerful marketing pieces is allowed to veto their top competitor. *If you are already on the veto list you cannot join.* **So call today to make sure you get involved before it's too late!**

CALL 800-393-2054

ADVERTISEMENT

Call 800-393-2054 Now To Get More Information And To Finally Fill Your Store With Customers Using Proven Advertising Done For You!

Meet The Sales Power Players

success. He asks his customers, "What goals may I help you accomplish here today?" Then he listens. Listening is what separates the "players" from everybody else. Listening is what you do with people. Hearing is what you do to noise!

As you're listening, take notes. It shows "Louise" that what she's saying is important to you. It's quite a compliment to someone when they know that what they're saying is important enough for you to write down. Tell her what you're doing so that there aren't any surprises. Just say, "Louise, I'm just going to take a few notes because I don't want to miss anything." David Stein, also from Jonn's Contemporary Interiors is great at this. He starts taking notes, while creating a room sketch (on the back of an envelope if need be), all at the same time. For more information on creating effective room sketches read, "I'm Here, Your Sketch!" from the March/April 2007 issue of FURNITURE WORLD posted to the article archives on www.furninfo.com,

Josh Gordin, author of "Presentations that Change Minds," says that, "Every presentation should be customized. Match your messaging. Some people buy on emotion, some buy on price, and some buy on ideas." Listening helps you find out what your customer's ideas are, and what she really wants. It also helps to establish you as a professional, and differentiates you from the clerk in that other furniture store down the street whose sales pitch consisted of "spraying and praying." For Francois Jawahri and Dominic Cozzi from Philadelphia, establishing yourself as a professional is what helps you stay in control of the selling situation. That's why listening is such a crucial step in the partnering process. Nobody ever listened themselves out of a sale, but, how many times have we talked ourselves out of one?

Will Rogers nailed it when he said, "If you love what you do you'll never work a day in your life!" All the "Power People" interviewed were passionate about "going the distance." They had store goals, but they all had their own personal goals as well to chart their success. When you're passionate about what you do, people know because you glow! People like to be around people who love what they do. Misery may love company but your customer doesn't want to keep company with misery and neither should you! Hang out with winners, not whiners! Emulate the winning members of your team. Learn from them. "Copy cats cash in!"

HOW PLAYERS FOLLOW UP

Follow-up was high on the list of valuable skills cited by the group. All "Power People" reached out and touched their clients – A LOT! Kristen Yannaccone from Tulsa has a long list of clients who are loyal to her because of how often she communicates with them. Kristen posts consistent high sales numbers month after month. She's built her business by cultivating her client base and working to get referrals. Kristen has adopted the principles in "Let Your Clients be Your Sales Force," the terrific book by Robert Reck. "Players" don't wait for traffic to come through the door. They create their own traffic! That's why it's follow-up or fall down!

BATTER UP!

"Players" like to play! They have a great sense of fun. Another Tulsa teammate, Sunny Sears engages her clients in "fun." She is like a puppy. She just makes you want to play. She gets "Ethel" emotionally involved and helps to eliminate any apprehension she might be feeling. Smile! Have fun! Smiling is wonderful. When you're smiling, nobody is really sure what you've been up to! Who wants to be around a grump? Not "Ethel!" Not me. Neither should you. If you let someone else bring you down, they are literally taking money out of your wallet. Yep, they're costing you a fortune. Attitude is everything in this business. Be a "Player!" Play!

A very special thank you to all the consultants who participated, and to the coaches of these team of "players" Michele Consylman of Interiors, Marie Kooker of Jonn's Contemporary

Interiors and Rhonda Benzig of Norwalk.

Cathy Finney is President of Ancell Affiliates\T'N T." She is a noted motivational speaker, sales trainer, and management consultant. Questions on any aspect of sales training or sales management can be sent to Cathy care of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine, at finney@furninfo.com or call her toll free at (877-FINNYFX).

See all of Cathy's articles on furninfo.com in the Sales Skills Index. Call 877-235-3095 for more information on her audio learning courses: "Pass the Power, Please!" on retail management; "House Calls" on how to do more and more profitable house calls; and "The Marketing of Me Inc." on how to follow-up to turn retail customers into clients for life.

**DAVID STEIN
FROM JONN'S
CONTEMPORARY
INTERIORS**
*is great at this. He
starts taking notes, while
creating a room sketch,
all at the same time.*



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Isolated

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Scott Reid
Reid's Countrywide Home Furnishings
Thunder Bay, Ontario

 **PROFIT** *Systems*



DOUBLE YOUR STORE TRAFFIC Put A Stamp On It!

Part 6: The most effective traffic building tool for furniture retailers.

ADVERTISING STRATEGY BY BRETT KITCHEN AND ETHAN KAP

It was an incredible experience. The single best marketing piece I ever received at home was a personal letter in an envelope with a live stamp on it.

Several years ago I came across what appeared to be a personal letter sent to me by someone in my area. It had a live stamp on the envelope and what looked like a handwritten address.

I opened it up and read that, "Frustrated Plumber is practically 'giving away' 54 premium pullout spout faucets, 54 top tier disposals, and 54 high grade toilets (The kind large enough to flush a tennis ball)." Okay, he had my attention.

I went on to read 5 pages about this plumber and why he was doing this incredible deal. The piece had no pictures, no prices, and no "Sale, Sale, Sale" anywhere in it.

Unfortunately I didn't need any of the above plumbing services, but I was so impressed with this marketing piece that I called the plumbing contractor myself. I asked him about the letter, and he told me "We picked the people we wanted to do business with, and sent it specifically to those neighborhoods. Our phones have been ringing off the hook! People love that letter, and are calling us like crazy."

Just like the "Frustrated Plumber" we all have "people we want to do business with". These are customers that buy with higher average sales, buy often, and refer all of their friends and family.

Wouldn't you love to identify, target, and spend your marketing dollars only on these perfect customers to bring more of them into your store on a regular basis? You Can. And it's simple to do.

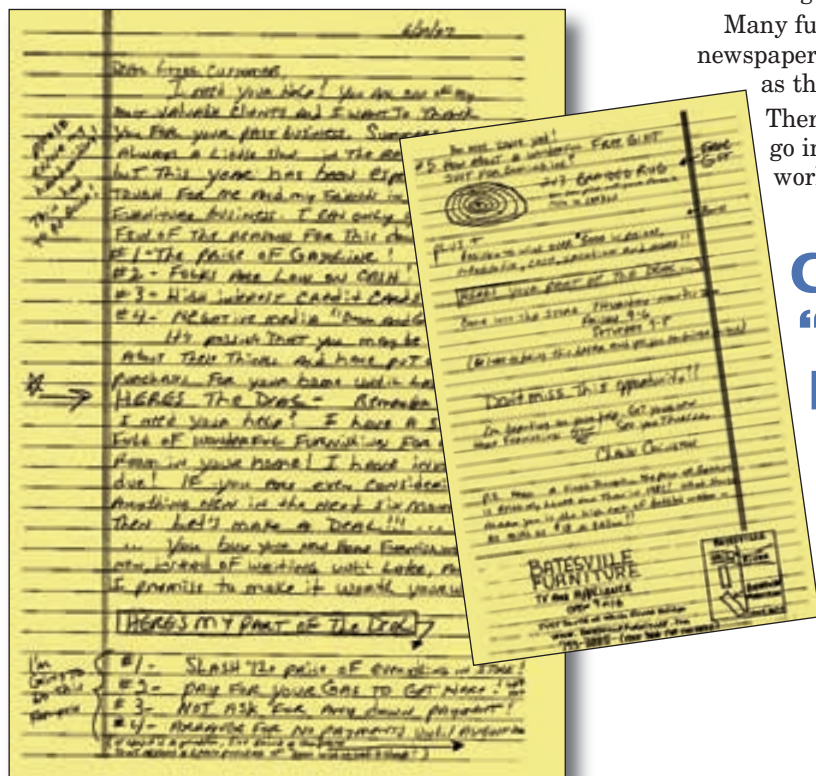
You do it by using the best tool available to retailers in the marketing world... direct mail.

Many furniture retailers are finding that right now their newspaper, television and radio ads aren't working as well as they have in the past.

There are reasons for all of this that we don't need to go into, but direct mail still works, and will always work if done properly.

CAN A LONG, "HANDWRITTEN" SALES LETTER BE EFFECTIVE?

Yes. The presentation can include testimonials, guarantees and personality. These are all essential elements. You simply can't work all of this into a postcard or one page newspaper ad. Batesville Furniture, recently used this two page letter and had its best month ever.





THE MOST IMPORTANT PART OF ANY ADVERTISING

you can possibly do is crafting a believable, compelling story or concept. This is what lets customers 'buy in', and helps them to believe that what you are sharing is a legitimate offer.

THE BENEFITS OF DIRECT MAIL

1. It's targeted.

2. You can customize your message to a specific person or market.

3. You can make it feel personal. Personal one-on-one marketing always sells better than generic mass media advertising. No other kind of advertising lets you connect like this.

4. You target your message to reach the people who are most likely to do business with you.

5. It gives you greater control over your marketing, budgets, and timelines.

6. Flexibility: You have no limits on the length or format of your sales presentation. In fact this is one of the single most important attributes of direct mail. The best marketers know that, "The more you tell, the more you sell." Contrary to popular belief, pictures and logos don't sell anything. WORDS compel emotions, and emotions cause people to buy.

Some of the most effective marketing pieces are 3, 4 even 5 pages long. Can you imagine sending a 5 page letter to sell furniture or bedding? If your first thought is "That won't work for me" then you are dead wrong. The most effective marketing pieces retailers use are not postcards or full page newspaper ads. They are personal, compelling, letters.

The letter format allows you to tell your story, give a good reason why your target customer should want to buy, develop emotional wants, and present them with a good offer. The presentation can include testimonials, guarantees and personality. These are all essential elements. You simply can't work all of this into a postcard or one page newspaper ad.

7. Cheap Testing Ground. You can send out a couple hundred or thousand direct mail pieces and see if it works before wasting much money.

Retailers should be spending at least half of their marketing budget on direct mail. That's right. It may seem high to you, but it's all about Return on Investment, and what works, wins.

In fact, the reason most retailers don't use more direct mail is because there is no direct mail salesperson.

You probably have a radio sales rep, a TV rep and newspaper ad rep. The Yellow Pages ad rep knows where to find you as well. But you don't have the direct mail sales rep showing up on your doorstep talking you into using direct mail. It just doesn't happen. Therefore you don't spend as much on direct mail as you should.

Individually sent direct mail pieces are highly effective in a way that co-op mailers or buying group flyers are not. Sure, these are inexpensive, but not cost effective in terms of time or money.

Sure you spend a little more per piece for direct mail, but you also get the benefit of being able to target your customers precisely with a message crafted just for them.

In direct mail you can lose small and win big. Let's recap. First you test carefully to find a winner, and once you find a winner, you roll out. All it takes is one call to your mailing house.

Now before you run out and stop all your marketing and put it in direct mail, you need to know how to make it work.

Home furnishings retailer Naturwood did over \$700,000.00 in sales with a 4 page letter. Giff Gates at Gates Furniture in Grants Pass Oregon had his best December in his store's history with a 5 page letter. Jim Fisher at Amish Furniture Shoppe, Chicago Illinois did \$310,000 in a month off a 4 page letter. Charles Covington at Batesville Furniture, Batesville Arkansas just had his best month in recent history with a 2 page handwritten letter.

All of these sales numbers are nice, but the ROI is what matters. In every case these numbers are even more exciting once you figure in the low cost of the marketing that generated the sales figures. Jim Fisher spent 4,000 to generate \$310,000. Naturwood spent \$20,000 to generate over \$700,000. Giff Gates only sent out 10,000 mailings (at a cost of less than \$1.00 per piece) to create sales of over \$650,000.

8. It's reusable! It's a system. Once you create a winner, you can reuse it, re-target it to other market segments and employ it year after year with just a few small tweaks.

We will now briefly look at the three steps you can take to

Put A Stamp On It!

Jane Doe
1234 Any Rd.
Any Town, USA



create effective direct mail pieces. Further discussion of these steps will appear in the next issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine.

STEP #1: THE MESSAGE

The most important part of any advertising you can possibly do is crafting a believable, compelling story. The story is the basis of all successful marketing. You can also call it the "Concept." The concept is what creates interest in customers. It lets them 'buy in', and helps them to believe that what you are sharing is a legitimate offer. This is one of the reasons why direct mail is so effective. A newspaper ad, television radio commercial doesn't allow you the space to tell a story that is compelling enough to have our customers take action.

STEP #2: THE HEADLINE

Imagine walking out the front door tomorrow morning, hot coffee in hand, picking up your newspaper only to realize, there are NO headlines. None-just page after page of text. Tons of content with no way to distinguish what articles were about.

How excited would you be about reading the paper every day? You wouldn't know where to start, what articles interested you, or where to find them. Finding an article you were interested in would be like finding a needle in a haystack.

In this analogy it's easy to see the importance of using headlines to direct people to read what is interesting to them. Yet time after time furniture retailers use ads and marketing that simply broadcasts "SALE" or "Company Name" as a headline. Neither of these are remotely effective in grabbing customer interest or encouraging them to read your marketing piece. Yet, this is absolutely critical for suc-

cess.

What is one good way to learn to write good headlines? One of the quickest, is to look at the magazines on the grocery store rack while you are checking out.

Who can resist reading...

- "99 Ways to lose weight fast (but we'll show you the ONE that actually works)"
- "NEW DISCOVERY! Secret ingredient in eggs and nacho cheese that could cure cancer!"
- "7 Ways Celebrity Furniture Writer Brett Kitchen got back to "Pre baby shape" just 43 days after delivery!"
- "How to have your friends and family secretly whispering behind your back...envying your beautiful home"

Direct Marketing experts agree that the headline is between 75% and 90% of the ad. Putting your company name, or the same old "Labor Day Sale" at the top of your ads will ruin the rest of the ad...no matter how good it is.

STEP #3: PERSONALITY

You want to make sure that your customer feels like they know you, the owner personally, and that when they buy from your store, they are actually buying from you.

This is one of the premiere ways independent "David" retailers can beat "Goliaths" in your market. People don't want to do business with a nameless, faceless "big box" organization. In fact, "Anti-Megacorporation (Wal-Mart, Home Depot, etc.) sentiment" is as high as it has ever been. People want to have a relationship, they crave the feeling that they belong, and want to feel like "Everyone Knows Their Name." More information on making yourself a celebrity expert/spokesperson can be found in Part 4 of this "Double Your Store Traffic" series, posted to FURNITURE WORLD

DIRECT MARKETING EXPERTS AGREE

that the headline is between 75% and 90% of the ad. Putting the company name, or the same old "Labor Day Sale" headline will ruin the whole ad.



“Best Profit Per Square Foot In My Entire Lineup!”

-Don Olsen, Owner

It's Another Amazing Wallbeds! Success Story

Don's store has sold an average of 1.5 Wallbeds per month for the past 14 years. The 247th Wallbed is on the way.

That's pretty remarkable! Particularly when you consider that his store is in a town of 7,500, 100 miles north of Seattle.

You don't have to be a big guy in a big town to win with Wallbeds, as Don can tell you.

Wallbeds has slowly and carefully developed a network of retail partners. There are still markets open, so, if you are interested in looking at this high performing category, please give us a call. We would like to share a few more success stories with you, and explore the possibility of your company becoming another one!



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Home office to bed in 2 seconds!***



A FOUR PAGE LETTER

from the president of Gates Furniture includes a great headline, three offers, testimonials, information on their profit structure and how they treat their staff in a personal, interesting format.

Magazine's article archives section on the furninfo.com website.

You can give customers the illusion that they know you, without actually having ever met you. Start to do this by putting "personality" into your ads. Include pictures of you, your family, dog, and staff. The other critical element is to have your ad text "speak" to customers one-on-one. People resonate and respond to targeted messages, so you want them to believe that this was a letter sent specifically to them, directly from you. You don't want to give them the idea that they are being sent a message from a lifeless company, and that it is being sent to thousands of customers in order to get their money.

CONCLUSION

So if you aren't using lots of direct mail now in your business, you must start today. If you are, but aren't using the techniques mentioned above, then you are missing out on business that should be yours. Implement these techniques and you'll see results in a hurry.

Direct mail is proving to be more and more effective, even

while traffic and sales slump for most furniture retailers. If, however, you find that your direct mail results are flagging as well, then some review may be necessary.

Dufrense Furniture one of the largest independent retailers in Canada had this experience with their "New Mover" direct mail program. They were sending a 'one shot' mailing to new movers in their area. Unfortunately it wasn't working as well as they'd like.

After applying these 3 principles above, plus the 8 Direct Mail principles of effectiveness, Dufrense is now getting 3 times better response, and gaining extremely high value customers.

Direct mail can be used in at least 7 different ways to produce more business for example: lost customer campaigns, new movers, private mailing invitations, radius marketing (hitting the neighborhoods of recent customers with a timely message), to name a few.

NEXT ISSUE

More essential direct mail elements and advanced strategies to make sure that your mailers are getting maximum impact.

Brett Kitchen and Ethan Kap are Co-founders of Furniture Marketing Systems, and are commonly known as the "Traffic Guys." Brett and Ethan run a retailer Marketing Mastermind Group to help retailers increase store traffic and sales, while cutting the fat and waste from current advertising. They don't sell advertising services. Questions on any aspect of direct response marketing can be sent to Brett and Ethan care of [FURNITURE WORLD at \[bretk@furninfo.com\]\(mailto:bretk@furninfo.com\)](mailto:bretk@furninfo.com) or call them direct at 1-800-393-2054.

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Part 4: You have an official written selling strategy, so why do each of your salespeople still have *their own personal way of dealing with your customers*?

RETAIL MANAGEMENT BY JOE CAPILLO

Don't you love that old saying "When the going gets tough, the tough get going"? It's one of those clichés that speaks to our topic but is, in cliché terms, easier said than done. What does "get going" mean in the context of surviving in tough times? To me it means not doing the same things over and over and expecting different results (I am obviously cliché-ridden).

In the last issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine you read about the importance of having a selling strategy, a written description of your customer engagement principles, and your written set of "how to's" for all of your staff members to follow when dealing with your customers. If you don't have one, you haven't a chance of influencing (controlling, in Peter Drucker's world) the

most important relationship in your business – the one between your customers and your salespeople.

Strategies are developed so that the processes of sales can be managed. Your strategy should be based on the things covered in earlier articles, such as measurements and results analysis. If, for example, you know that your closing ratio is 10% on first visits on a particular customer home furnishings project, but 60% on the second visit, your strategy cannot be based on closing sales the first time, but rather on doing things that ensure customers who don't buy today will return a second time.

So, assuming you have such a strategy, have developed a training program around it, and have provided training to your sales staff, you're good to go, right? Well, think about what would happen if an NFL team developed their offensive strategy – the West Coast Offense for example – trained all the professional players in the system, put the players on the field with another team (who also has a strategy) but had no coaching staff at all on the sidelines to oversee performance? I'm sorry about the football reference, but it really is a perfect example of what I'm trying to get across. In the end, even with a great strategy and professional players, without a coaching staff who observe, adjust, consult with individual players, and perform ongoing training, and who measure everything, the results will not be good.

Sales management in furniture stores should take place on the selling floor, with your customers, as your "game" is being played. You have one tremendous advantage over an NFL team, too – your coaches can actually get in the game and play right along with the salespeople, demonstrating desired strategic elements of your plan, showing salespeople what is expected and how to interact. You have to have some sales manager/coaches who can do this or your performance will suffer.

There's another major difference between us and our NFL team: our players are not part of a team when playing our game. They are, instead, individual players, more like sprinters or swimmers (except for relays, of course).

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"It was a pleasure doing business with Retailbuyers.com. I especially liked the fact that they make sure you are happy with the price, including shipping charges, before any money is exchanged."

-Paul



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Why is the owner of Harvest Home Stores So Relaxed?

"Genesis Software helped us to get our sales, special order and inventory management under control. This allows us to focus on the growth and development of our company."

-Karsten Iwers, Owner, Harvest Home Stores

- Easy To Use
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- Email Your Customers With Ease
- Fast And Efficient Payroll
- Electronic Timeclock
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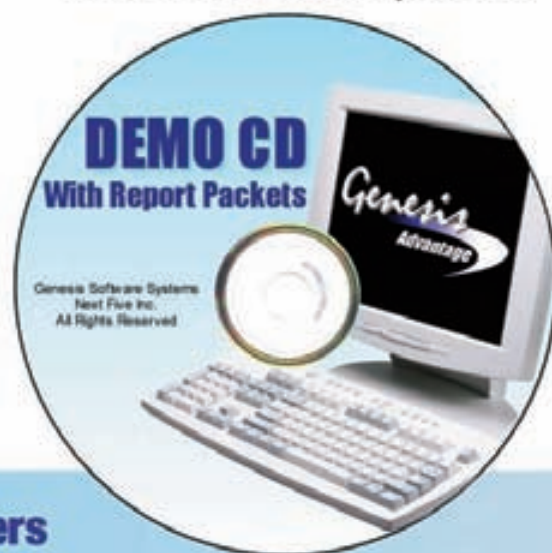
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STAYING ALIVE

Some companies do utilize T/O (Turn Over) systems, where customers can't leave the store without talking to two people, one of them usually a "closer" (a floor or sales manager). This type of system is a strategy I personally reject because its affect on customers is almost always negative.

Hardly any retail home furnishings stores field active, involved, instructive sales managers on the selling floor to insure that their company's selling strategy, explained so carefully and thoroughly in sales training, is actually delivered to customers. Usually, each salesperson has his or her own way of dealing with customers, and the company's strategy be damned. There are also no effective management systems in place for "adjusting" deviations from proscribed methods, and no effective measurement system to provide managers and salespeople with accurate assessments of their performance. In contrast, The NFL runs one of the most high-tech video studios in the country. A permanent visual record of every game is made, studied, compared against the expected standard and used to coach individual players.

Most retail sales managers don't understand how far "down the line" coaching has to go, meaning how close to the actual customer, engagement should be. In our business, the best possible coaching is done right down there with the salesperson and the customer. Sometimes coaching can consist of as little as a word or two, sometimes more, but always it must be done against the background of an established selling strategy. The written selling strategy is the standard of behavior against which all actual behavior should be compared.

THE BEST POSSIBLE COACHING

*can consist of as little as a word or two, but
it must always be done against the
background of an established selling strategy.*

Feedback is a critical element of coaching and it has to be current, and related to actual observed behavior. Your favorite question for salespeople when asking them to compare their behavior against the standard should be, "How could that have been better?" So when should you ask that question? Should it be at a monthly or semi annual performance review? Of course not! You want to ask the question as close to the actual sales performance as possible. Only then can you effectively reinforce a coaching cycle that consists of measure > train > observe > feedback > observe.

This is really simple. When you have a clearly defined and documented selling strategy and have built an effective training system around it, the only way to ensure you get the results you want is to provide your adult employees with on-the-floor coaching in real situations, and provide them with supportive environments in which to develop.

Joe Capillo is a furniture industry veteran with 35 years combined experience as a retail consultant and retail industry executive.

He is a contributing editor to FURNITURE WORLD and a frequent speaker at industry functions. Joe makes himself available for private consultations on any aspect of retail sales management and sales education. He can be reached at joeapillo@furninfo.com. See many more articles by Joe Capillo on the FURNITURE WORLD website furninfo.com.

DECORATING SCHOOL Crash Course

Lesson #5: Furniture Placement Strategies to Bring Your Rooms to Life.

LEARNING BASIC SKILLS BY: MARGARETT DeGANGE, M.ED.

Editor's note: This is the fifth article in our Decorating Crash Course series. The text is written so that you can easily use it to conduct a customer seminar on furniture placement. It can be presented "as is" but you should add additional elements to give your seminars a personal touch as outlined in the December/January 2007 issue of FURNITURE WORLD Magazine, "Simple but Sensational Seminars: Keys to a Memorable Presentation," posted to the article archives on www.furninfo.com. Decorating seminars are a fantastic way to get quality leads and referrals. They help customers to solve decorating problems, and they position you as a home furnishings expert.

Quotation marks only appear at the very beginning and end of the "sample seminar script" for ease of presentation.

"I have been black and blue in some spot, somewhere, almost all my life from too intimate contacts with my own furniture."

- Frank Lloyd Wright

SAMPLE SCRIPT FURNITURE ARRANGING

Welcome everybody to the fifth Decorating School Crash Course seminar given compliments of XYZ Furniture Store. My name is _____ and we will be looking at the heart of Interior Decorating; the art of furniture placement, better known as simply rearranging the furniture.

When I was a child, I was often greeted with a new arrangement of our living room, dining room, or bedroom furniture when I came through the door after school. My mother had mastered the most inexpensive method for gaining an interior design impact—she knew how to successfully place furnishings. It was cheap, and it was easy, and she took full advantage of the facts. She rearranged the furniture several times a year!

It had a powerful impact on me. I remember many times feeling as though I had walked into a new home, basking in the exciting new placement

of otherwise old furniture. It was nice, and it made me feel special. I'm sure this played a part in my career choice in the home decorating industry.

(Note: You can insert your own interesting or "ice breaking" story to replace this and the previous paragraph.)

The point should be clear. Our interior furniture arrangements affect our lives—sometimes mildly, but sometimes not. If you have ever been in a room where the furniture placement was awkward or unattractive, you probably felt a sense of unrest. There is a certain and sure energy or "vibe" that comes from a beautifully placed room. Quite simply, it makes us feel GOOD!

HAPPIER LIVES THROUGH FURNITURE PLACEMENT

Creating pleasing furniture arrangements can help us live happy and productive lives by contributing to a sense of security and feeling grounded within our homes. There is tremendous power in creating spaces that improve



FIGURE 1

The Fireplace is the focal point with upholstery pieces relating to it in a U-shaped configuration. Furniture is floated away from the wall and there is adequate room for around the design elements.

Top down and perspective view graphics created with the online room design tool 3Dream.net



TELL YOUR SEMINAR GUESTS...

"Keep it simple at first as you are gaining experience, and use the basic guidelines presented today for success. Focus on the main principles of arrangement. Use what works, looks, and feels best in a particular space."

Another U-shaped configuration facing a focal point fireplace.

the quality of our lives, and the lives of our loved ones. When a room "feels" good in terms of the arrangement, it causes us to feel good emotionally. As we design our rooms, we should strive for furniture arrangements that are both aesthetically pleasing and functional.

There are a few basic principles to keep in mind as you rearrange furnishings and redesign rooms. Once you master these guidelines, you can experiment with additional furniture placement ideas that serve to broaden your options. Keep it simple at first as you are gaining experience, and use the basic guidelines presented today for success. Focus on the main principles of arrangement. Use what works, looks, and feels best in a particular space.

START WITH QUESTIONS

Before you begin creating the furniture layout in any space, you must first make some specific assessments. Ask yourself what you will use the space for. Don't just fall into the usual room-use patterns. For example, a bedroom may be used for sleeping, but many people would love to read in the bedroom if there was a sitting area available. A formal dining room may best serve you as an office that can quickly be transformed back to dining space as the need arises.

There are other questions to consider. What kind of mood do you want to create in the space? Do you want a warm and cozy environment, or a trendy and modern space? How many people on any given day or evening will occupy the space? Are there small children to consider in the placement of furniture, lamps, and accessories? Will the room be used for tasks such

as reading that will require table lamps? Will you entertain frequently? Which pieces **MUST** remain in the space? Can some of the pieces be removed—brought to another room or given to a friend? Are you open to using pieces from other rooms that can be incorporated into the space? Do you want to add a few new pieces such as a writing desk or ottoman with hidden storage space to give your room new life or to serve a particular function? The answer to these and other questions will help you to create seating arrangements and furniture place-

ment schemes that work well for daily living, entertaining, and home-based work situations. Below are a few tips to get you started.

QUICK TIPS TO GET YOU GOING

- *Discover what bothers you about the space you have to work with—be clear about any architectural or structural details that disturb you.*
- *Decide what you **DON'T** like about the arrangement now. It may be that currently it is too tight to move*

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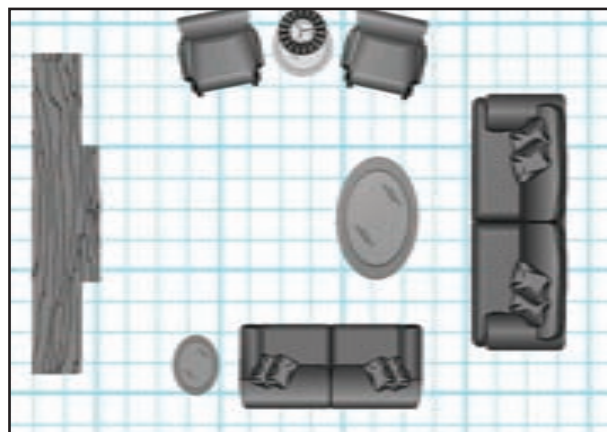


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FIGURE 2

"If a room is very long and narrow, try to place the focal piece of furniture on the short wall to create a sense of visual balance. Then you can position the sofa across from the focal point, and arrange the other, smaller chairs and end tables around the sofa in some variation of the U-shape."



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in and out of the space comfortably, or you may have to turn or stretch your neck in order to see a T.V.

- Know what you **DO** like about the arrangement now.
- Clearly define your goals for the room and the activities that will take place there.
- Understand what mood you would like to elicit in this space.
- Factor in some of your favorite colors, or ask yourself if you're willing to experiment with new colors or combinations.
- Figure out how many people typically visit in the room on a "busy" night, other than during a party.
- Decide how often you want to entertain in the home.
- Get clear on whether or not you are open to using pieces from other rooms.
- Decide if there are a few new pieces you may want to purchase to add to the room's style, such as a console table, a coffee table, or storage ottoman.

ottoman.

THE BASICS FIRST

The first step in the placement process is to find or establish a focal point. This could be a large hutch, T.V. center, armoire, fireplace, or large window. Place the focal point on the room's **DOMINANT WALL**—the wall you typically notice most when entering a room. After the focal point is set, arrange the next largest piece of furniture first. This piece will likely be placed to directly face the focal, to establish visual balance.

All of your arrangements, particularly seating, must relate well to the room's focal point. Most of the furniture pieces in a space will face the focal point either straight on, or with the furnishings angled. Angling chairs and accent furnishings is a great way to soften strict traditional or formal lines, and give a space a sense of liveliness. When large furnishings such as a sofa or bed are displayed on an angle, if you have an area rug in the room, you might angle it as well.

In common living areas a successful

strategy is to assemble seating in the shape of a "U" that faces the focal point (see Figure 1). You can also try variations of the U-shape by slightly angling some of the chairs and end tables. The pieces can also form a square or a variation of a square (again, through angling some of the pieces).

Other than with a focal point piece, it is usually best to avoid placing furniture against the walls. We in the design business call moving furniture away from the walls, "floating" it.

CONSIDER THE ROOM'S SHAPE AND SIZE

The shape of a room will help you to determine where to place your furniture. If a room is very long and narrow, try to place the focal piece of furniture on the short wall to create a sense of visual balance, rather than placing it on the long wall (see Figure 2). Then you can position the sofa across from the focal point, and arrange the other, smaller chairs and end tables around the sofa in some variation of the U-shape that again,

Tell your seminar guests that, "Since the bed is the focal point, play it up with exceptional linens and pillows, and perhaps a canopy or gorgeous headboard. If you do not already have a headboard, you can easily create one!"



Furniture Placement

faces the focal point. In long and narrow living and family rooms, try not to place the furniture, particularly the sofa, lengthwise with the long wall if you can help it, since doing so will accentuate the room's narrowness.

Angling furnishings can also be a very effective placement strategy in narrow rooms, giving a sense of excitement to your space.

If a room is very long or very big, create two or more separate and distinct areas within the room, each with its own conversation grouping or groupings. If possible, allow a large piece in each area to be set as an anchor, positioned directly across from one another from the far ends of the total space.

If a room with low ceilings appears short, use visual height to "add length". Try long drapery panels, tall furniture, and tall plants and trees. To add needed height where you have no tall pieces, stack tall accessories on top of a console table, buffet, or dresser.

If a room appears very tall or the ceilings seem unusually high, then create a "normal" height line and do not decorate above this line. Keep window treatments and artwork in this "normal" height range and ignore the area above. If you are ignoring unusually tall ceilings, try using furnishings with horizontal lines rather than long vertical lines to fill the space. This will help take the attention away from the height. Just be very careful to estab-

lish the imaginary height line first. If some accessories are mistakenly placed above it, then using lower setting furniture with horizontal lines may seem too short within the space.

PLACEMENT BASICS FOR LIVING/FAMILY ROOMS

As you place your pieces, create conversation groupings in the space, where 5-6 people can sit comfortably,

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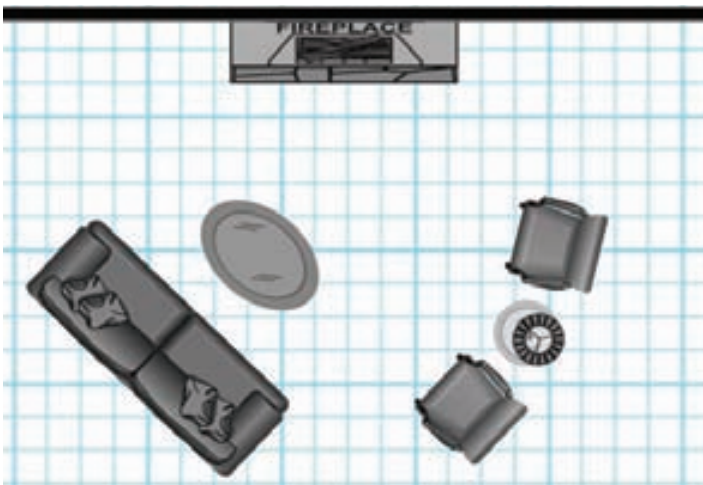
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Furniture Placement Seminar -Part 5

and talk at a normal level without shouting. To help accomplish this, imagine an invisible circle eight feet across. Place your groupings to fit within this circle. The pieces can make a U-shape, a variation of the U-shape, or even a square within the imaginary circle. Make sure there is room between furnishings to freely move about. Build large traffic ways into the room for easy access in and out. These should be about 3-4 feet wide. Allow at least 2.5-3 feet for other walkways through the room.

To begin the arrangement in the living or family room, place the focal point piece—perhaps an entertainment center or large bookshelf—on the DOMINANT WALL. There may be a fireplace or large window on that wall already, which will be the room's focal point. Really play up and decorate the focal point. Mantels provide a great opportunity for a wonderful presentation.

Position the biggest piece of furniture first—most likely the sofa—opposite the focal point - usually facing it.



Remember to use the U-shape as a guide for placing furniture in relation to (facing) the focal point. You can always “loosen up” the strict u-shape later by angling pieces, but use the “U” to get started. Try to place seating pieces across from each other or next to each other, whether chairs are angled or straight.

As an alternative to the U-shape, consider using the “V” shape (see Figure 3). For example, you can place the sofa at a deep angle, with 2 chairs or a loveseat next to the sofa and angled towards it (think of a triangle). Deeply angled furniture often looks good in square rooms. Place the chairs after you place the sofa—usually across from the sofa. You can use just one chair if you balance it with something of equal weight. Avoid using too many chairs.

Keep in mind that your arrangement should encourage intimacy, friendship, and social activity at a close distance. Remember the imaginary eight-foot circle and create conversation groupings within this circle. A living or family room should seat at least five or six people very comfortably.

I consider coffee tables to be the CENTERPIECES of conversation groupings. They should be placed a reasonable distance from the sofa, as well as within reach of the other seating pieces. Too close to the sofa and your legs hit it, too far and you must reach for your drink. A good distance between the sofa and coffee table is 14-18 inches.

Within the living area setting, have a nice mix of upholstered or fabric covered pieces with wooden or metal pieces,



FIGURE 3

“As an alternative to the U-shape, consider using the “V” shape. For example, you can place the sofa at a deep angle, with 2 chairs or a loveseat next to the sofa and angled towards it (think of a triangle).”

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mixing hard surfaces with soft to create interest. Keep the scale and visual weight of items proportionate to one another to support the balance and harmony of the space as a whole. Position delicate pieces with delicate, and chunky with chunky. Use the principle of line by remembering to mix curved furnishings with straight edges to find a pleasing look.

Keep chair and sofa heights within five inches of each other for a nice visual line around the room. Each chair, sofa, or seating piece should have a table or stand within easy reach for placing drinks or books. Side table height should be roughly as tall as the arm of the nearby chair or sofa, within about three inches. These accent tables can be placed between the sofa and chairs, and between pairs of chairs.

Add task lighting for each seat. This is where your lamps come into play. Lamps should match the decorating style, and should be balanced in scale and proportion to the other accessories in the room. Change out the shades from different lamps to get the balance you need.

To give your space dimension and interest, add trees or tall plants. If you choose to use real plants, make certain that the containers are in good shape so that water does not damage flooring or furnishings. Corners offer a good location for trees and plants. Try using a small table with a plant on top for height, color, and texture. Create depth by layering plants behind furnishings. Add wall art and accessories in proportion and scale to the furnishings.

FURNITURE PLACEMENT BASICS FOR DINING ROOMS

Believe it or not, in dining areas, the focal point is very rarely the table and chairs. To create a pleasing dining arrangement, create the focal point first by positioning the biggest piece of furniture other than the table. Most likely this will be the hutch or china cabinet. Place it on the DOMINANT WALL. Let this create a glamorous, dramatic, or grand statement. Again, play up the focal point. You can use runners, plants, urns, glassware, china, or a floral arrangement. If you are using a low and wide buffet as a focal point, you must dress up the area above it to take up wall space that is about equal to the width of the buffet. To make an impact, use a large picture, mirror, and glamorous accessories to scale.

Although the dining table will NOT be the focal point of the room, you should accent it. Dress the

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“THE VISUAL WEIGHT

of the elements within the space should be balanced throughout the room. Balance is more important than strict symmetry. Balance can be achieved by having equivalent visual weights on the “right hand” and on the “left hand” of a particular piece of furniture, or by centering items, as in the case of a lamp that is centered on a table.”

table with a runner, beautiful linens, and/or a centerpiece that is proper scale to the room. The centerpiece, if large, can come off when entertaining guests.

The formal dining room is typically a much more glamorous room than other rooms, so you can really embellish your displays here. Dress the window in a stunning treatment. Add plants, flowers, sconces, trimmings, accessories, and beautiful accent chairs to the room for a grand statement of elegance.

FURNITURE PLACEMENT BASICS FOR BEDROOMS

In most bedrooms, the bed will be your focal point. Center it on the DOMINANT WALL. That’s the wall you see first when entering the room.

Since the bed is the focal point, play it up with exceptional linens and pillows, and perhaps a canopy or gorgeous headboard. If you do not already have a headboard, you can easily create one! Use a decorative screen, large European pillows, a beautiful quilt or tapestry on a rod, or fabric panels draped through large rings (such as towel rings) attached to the wall or ceiling. Accent the bed with a throw or perhaps a wooden or rattan tray holding a small floral arrangement.

Since many bedrooms are small or have multiple doors and windows that infringe on the space, you could try arranging the bed in a corner. In certain rooms, this will free up space, visually enlarge the space, and add romance and drama.

Place the next largest piece of furniture after you place the bed. This will likely be an armoire, dresser, or large desk. If possible, place it directly opposite the bed to create a sense of balance. You can make a short dresser appear taller by adding a large framed mirror or picture above it so it is appropriately scaled. Keep scale, weight, and propor-

tion in mind. A big bed needs big case goods and accessories for balance.

Use an accent table or upholstered ottoman on either side of the bed to act as nightstands. The tables do not have to match as long as they use roughly the same amount of visual space and are of the same visual weight. Try placing a long bench or ottoman in front of the bed. Accent it with a throw or some pillows.

Place an upholstered chair (left over from the living room), a desk, or chest of drawers on a wall to the immediate right (or left) of the bed, preferably on the wall that is the second most dominant wall.

FURNITURE PLACEMENT BASICS FOR MULTI PURPOSE ROOMS

The use of seating groups is effective for managing a space. When placing your furnishings in a large, open, or multipurpose room, create departments within the space, each with its own seating group or conversation area. Position the furnishings in each separate area or “room” independently while at the same time allowing them to flow together visually.

Use furniture pieces to make “walls” in multi purpose and large rooms that need division. Sofas, upholstered benches, fabric screens, a console table, or a pair of chairs are some suggestions for room dividers. Area rugs can help divide and/or define a space within a space. Multiple area rugs do not have to match as long as they blend and/or generally flow.

Each area or “room” within the multipurpose space should have an anchor or a dominant feature or focal point. In each distinct space, line up that area’s largest furniture piece with its corresponding focal point. Place furniture in a U-shape positioned towards the focal point, or angle the furniture in a “V” or triangle when appropriate. Focal point

“USE FURNITURE PIECES TO MAKE ‘WALLS’

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pieces should be placed so that the entire multipurpose area has balanced weight (this usually means two large or focal point pieces will be opposite of each other in the grand, overall multipurpose space).

Allow the appropriate room for traffic flow. Think in terms of small parties and family gatherings.

LARGE ROOMS

In a large room, consider using the space for a different purpose than it was intended. This may help to make the furniture placement work better. Don't feel compelled to fill up a large room with “stuff” (and don't feel you must minimize the number of items in a small room). Sometimes a lot of items in a big room are not necessary (and a lot of furnishings and accessories in a small space can be very cozy). It depends on the way all of the elements work together. Learn to listen to your “gut” and “instinct”.

Avoid letting big pieces of furniture become “wall flowers”, and float and angle sofas and chairs. Layering is another useful design tool for creating interesting spaces that have a sense of depth. For example, position a console table backed up to a sofa, or place a large ficus tree in the corner behind a caddy-cornered chair.

For really cozy arrangements in very large rooms, use the middle of the room to create your seating groups. Angle the chairs and tables for added interest. Fill up gaps in the room by making little “nooks”,

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such as a place to house an upholstered ottoman and lots of pillows, or an area with a rocker and small shelf of books, accented with a comfy throw.

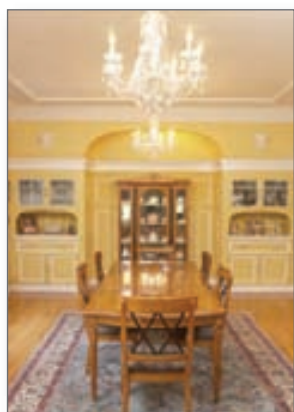
SHAPES, HEIGHTS, WEIGHTS, SCALE, AND BALANCE

A sense of harmony can be achieved if you deal properly with the shapes, heights, and visual weights of your furnishings. For example, wide and chunky large furnishings generally work well with chunky accent pieces. Proportion and scale matter too. Small, delicate pieces should not be lost in very large or very tall rooms, or be encased by overwhelming patterns or accessories. Pieces should be generally proportionate in size to one another.

You can also visually change the heights and weights of furnishings simply by adding certain accessories. For example, a box or basket on top of a shelf or armoire can make it appear taller, and two huge ornaments flanking a bookcase can make the bookcase seem much wider. It will help to remember that tall furnishings with vertical lines lean towards formal interior spaces, and shorter heights with horizontal lines lean towards a more casual look.

As you arrange your rooms, the “visual weight” of the elements within the space should be balanced throughout the room. Balance is more important than strict symmetry. Balance can be achieved by having equivalent visual weights on the “right hand” and on the “left hand” of a particular piece of furniture, or by centering items, as in the case of a lamp that is centered on a table.

Here’s another tip. Do not get caught having too many straight lines or too many curves in an area. Change it up, or at least accent a line with its opposite line. For example, introduce curves into a room that has too many straight lines, and visa versa. Think “outside the box”! If your sofa, love seat, and chairs all feature straight lines with no real curves, add a round coffee table or a couple of oval-shaped end tables.



“To create a pleasing dining arrangement, create the focal point first by positioning the biggest piece of furniture other than the table on the dominant wall.”

If some of the furnishings you own do not work well within the space, consider purchasing just one or two pieces that will help bridge the gaps.

A CALL TO ACTION

It’s once again time to take action to beautify your home! Last time, your “homework” was to pick one room and establish its focal point. Your new assignment is to continue in that same area, and rearrange the furniture so that it relates well to the focal point. If you are working in a living or family room, use the U-shape as a starting point, then angle individual pieces within the “U” to add interest. Or, try the “V”. You may want to define your new conversation grouping with an area rug. If you are dealing with a bedroom, remember that the bed IS the focal point, so place the other furnishings to relate to the bed as we discussed in this article.

CONCLUSION

As you step forth to conquer new arrangements, always approach your projects with a mindset of fun, and ditch the fear. No matter what the outcome, you can always move the furniture back to its original placement, so there is really no risk. Get started right away, and keep going if you are so inclined! The payoff is a home that will make you feel really good. What more could you ask for in home design?

As always, if you need some expert advice, feel free to visit the design area at “XYZ Furniture” or speak with me or one of our other friendly design consultants.

NEXT ISSUE

Lesson #6 – Successful Accessorizing: Winning Strategies to Show-Off Furnishings and “Wow” Your Friends.

Margarett DeGange, M.Ed. is a Home Fashions designer, Writer, and Professional Speaker. She is the creator of Communicate 2 Connect Seminars for business and personal development, and she is the Founder and Director of The DeGangi School of Interior Decoration, with both on sight and on-line courses in Interior Decorating and Redesign. For the past 20 years she has helped business owners in the interior fashions and decorating industries to communicate better with customers, run their businesses more effectively, and increase sales and profits.

Margarett’s new product, *Let’s Talk About... Decorating* (www.letstalkaboutdecorating.com), features pre-packaged seminars for those who want to put on the customer presentations featured in this series of FURNITURE WORLD articles without going through the bother of additional preparation. Questions can be directed to Margarett DeGange at margarett@furninfo.com or Visit DecoratingSchool.com.

"Great design begins in a moment of inspiration, but realizing that vision requires close attention to many minute details. As a fashion-driven brand, Century seeks ideas from leading designers around the world, but there is only one place that has all the resources we need to transform those ideas into fine furniture. The materials suppliers, artisans, craftsmen, showroom designers, marketing experts and photographers in the High Point area represent a unique concentration of home furnishings knowledge and skills that simply doesn't exist anywhere else. And perhaps the one piece that ties it all together is the High Point Market, the only Market that affords us the size and scope of showroom space to tell our fashion story completely, compellingly and cost-effectively."

- Bob Maricich, CEO, Century Furniture



Bob Maricich is one of the many industry leaders who celebrate High Point as the world's home for home furnishings. See what others have to say at: www.marketportraits.com



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THE MEDIA IS THE MESSAGE AT Conway Furniture

Retailer uses light and entertaining radio commercial format to promote a “Shop North America”, environmental and quality message.

FURNITURE TRENDS BY JANET HOLT-JOHNSTONE

“Can’t put my finger on it, but there’s something different about you,” said the morning show host. “There’s a lot different about us at Conway Furniture... like quality,” answered retailer Paul Dekker.

This is a relatively serious segment of a sprightly dialogue-format commercial featured on Radio Station CHYM fm / 570 NEWS (CKGL). Paul and host have been “chatting” on a regular basis for several years now. CHYM is “not comfortable” with ad lib pieces and prefers an edited script. Other stations are more relaxed, like CKNX fm and am, Wingham, and CHKOOL fm, Kitchener, and, said Paul, “the commercials are much more fun”.

Informal, often funny, always memorable, Paul’s present and future customers look forward to hearing Conway commercials. “On a rotten, cold morning driving to work, snow flying, slippery conditions, a thousand things on your mind, Paul actually makes me smile!” confided one of his Listowel customers.

Where’s Listowel? It’s a town of 5,476, “with lots of subdi-

visions”, situated in Perth County, Ontario, Canada, officially settled in 1902 and incorporated during the amalgamation of several other communities in 1998. Listowel is named after a town in County Kerry, Ireland, even though a majority of the early settlers were Scottish and from a variety of European countries. For history buffs, the story begins earlier than 1902. It was back in January 1852 that John Binning bought wilderness land rights from a squatter named Henry for a rifle, and kicked off the chain of events that created the now bustling community.

Conway Furniture came into being in 1968 when partners Peter Dekker and Jim Mulholland, while installing carpet in Listowel, saw an empty storefront in the downtown area. In a surge of entrepreneurial spirit they began by retailing and continuing to install carpeting, then added some furniture to fill up floor space.

Conway was Mulholland’s mother’s maiden name, specifically chosen for its lack of ethnicity. Within three years, Peter and Jim opened two more stores, one in nearby Kincardine, the second in Hanover. In 1972, Peter bought out Jim and conceived a major change

Brother and sister team Paul Dekker and Penny Evans.

**“WE’VE
MADE OUR
COMMERCIALS**

*light and
entertaining, a
dialogue between me and the
host of the morning show, ad
libbing at the studio.*



Get More Traffic ...Increase Your Sales ... Save Your Margins!

**Did You
Have The
Best
December In
The History
Of Your
Store?**

Giff Gates Did!

You CAN fight declining traffic and poor sales. In fact, it's easier than you might think. (And you can cut the fat and waste from your marketing and advertising expenses at the same time.)



Ethan Kap & Brett Kitchen

Darvin Yoder, A dealer from a small town in Washington, Indiana who did 1.75 million in sales last year in a 6000 sq foot store has this to say...

If you are a furniture, bedding or appliance store owner and not using the Traffic Guys marketing systems, you don't have any idea what you are missing out on....My sales have been up significantly because of what I'm learning and implementing from the Traffic Guys. The stuff they share doesn't cost a lot to implement, but it sure work wells. I highly recommend them to anyone.

--Yoder's Furniture, Indiana

From: Giff Gates
[mailto:Giff@****.com]
Sent: Thursday, December 21, 2006
9:50 AM
To: traffic@furnituretrafficguys.com
Subject: Re: 4 page letter

Sat, Sun & Mon we wrote in excess of \$100,000. I suppose that's all relative for stores; for some that might be a lot; for others disappointing. **For Us, It's Phenomenal!**

We were very pleased -- daily averages would run \$16,000 to \$20,000. We're consistently hitting over \$25,000. On Tues and Wed we pulled in over \$50,000. **The staying power of the promo is surprising....**

As you know, we've been in business for over 60 years. And after 10 down months in a row, I was amazed to see that **We Had the Best December in the History of our company...** Now that is saying something.

Giff Gates is a past president of the **Western Home Furnishings Association**, and NHFA National Retailer of the year. He is currently on the WHFA Board.

The Traffic Guys, are now offering an All New, FREE Traffic and Sales Building Package (a \$79.00 Value!) for independent home furnishings retailers only. It is FREE & guaranteed to put more ups in your store.

The Traffic Exploding Package Includes 4 Powerful Tools...

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(This is a card stock cheat sheet. We both use it to double check all our advertising before we spend a penny.)
- ✓ **An Actual Marketing Piece You Can Use (\$20.00 value)**
See What Is Really Working For Independent Home Furnishings Retailers to bring in more ups.
- ✓ **Brand New Audio CD (\$20.00 Value)**
"12 Traffic Tips That Create A Constant Flow Of Ups In Your Store"
- ✓ **Retailer Advisory (\$29.00 Value)**
"How To Use Proven Strategies To Increase Traffic and Boost Store Sales Without Spending A Fortune On Advertising."

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or US at 1-800-393-2054.

"What's the catch?" you may be asking. Really, there is no catch. Brett and Ethan believe that some people who get the free business building toolkit may want to invest in their traffic building system. However, by requesting this valuable FREE toolkit, you are under no obligation to buy anything, ever! (And you will get great strategies and tips from this information. We promise.) They even pay the postage!

"IN OUR GEOGRAPHIC AREA, THERE ARE 20 DIFFERENT SMALL NEWSPAPERS,

increasingly expensive with less return, and certainly bad from the environmental point of view. Print is just not as successful for us as investing in effective radio."

den, but March and April are still effective."

When Paul began full time with Conway in 1985, he opened a Factory Clearance Center, closed about 18 months later when construction was completed on his "Gallery" addition, focusing on vignette merchandising and decorating. Full day-to-day operations were turned over to Paul by his father during the late '80s. The Gallery was converted to a La-Z-Boy Gallery in 1994 and remains a "Comfort Studio" today.

In 1990, electronics were added to the product mix, and appliances were dropped. Then in 2004, Paul dropped electronics to "focus on our key strengths in furniture, upholstery and flooring at mid-price point. Appliances and electronics are fields of their own. Leave them to the Future Shops of the world!"

An independent, medium sized store at 30,000 square

feet, Conway has "large enough volume to competitively deal with the larger chain stores, our reach from Kitchener towards Lake Huron, and from Mount Forest towards Mitchell, then up as far as Goderich and Port Elgin. Our strength is the Highway 8 and 9 corridor," said Paul, "the shoreline of Lake Huron. Our demographic targeting is more to the second time or more mature buyers, the average income consumer from 35 to seniors". Conway is a fashion store, the slogan, "Today's home trends embraced under one roof".

Penny Evans, Paul's sister, is an important part of Conway's action, particularly involved in store and room design. They're a happy team.

An area of great concern to Paul is the heavy and omnipresent Asian flood of merchandise directed to the North American marketplace. It's a frequent topic dis-

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WE GO TO BAT FOR THE CUSTOMER

with grey areas in warranties, for example. Even for problems that crop up after three years on one-year warranties.

cussed in Conway's radio commercials. And the entire back page of a brochure produced to celebrate the store's fortieth anniversary was devoted to the dilemma. The text is entitled "Shop North America", and goes on to comment, "Today, much of the furniture you see is made in places like China, Indonesia and soon Africa. Cheap labour and lax environmental laws make these the places of choice for high profit seeking manufacturers. Make no mistake, these products do not compare with the products built in North America.

"If you are looking for quality furniture that will stand the test of time, North America is still the source. From Ontario upholstery manufacturers like Décor-Rest and Superstyle to solid wood dining suites from Quebec's Canadel and solid bedroom furniture from Indiana's

Mobel, quality is always in fashion.

"Supporting our own manufacturing sector and having heirloom quality pieces is a win, win scenario and, as competition makes our manufacturers more and more efficient, the value gets better and better. Let us show you the difference."

In one recent radio commercial, Paul's excellent voice can be heard warning, "There's a lot of low quality imported furniture out there these days, more glue than wood, and we think people are getting sick of it," straight talk to a real problem. "You can't beat solid wood, hand-crafted in North America.

"Part of the difficulty arises because there are no standards or restrictions on wood finishing and leather tanning in Asia and South America. I wonder how many people out there are aware of how much crap is being used in the tanning process! Of course, hide is renewable, a plus factor, but how about the tanning process? And with case-goods, how about the finishes being used over there?

"Our North American manufacturers are seeing the light. Brentwood, for instance, is using soy foam now in its upholstery cushioning. And Mobel owns managed forest reserves themselves."

Take the time to look at Conway's evolving website, www.conwayfurniture.com. "We're on line, but we don't sell on line at this point, maybe in the future. Allyourfurniture.com, a web company assisting the industry, created our site, and we have store personnel managing it. And we're focusing on it more and more. We use it as a marketing tool to interest the consumer and entice them into our store."

Prizes are offered on the web. At the 40th anniversary and on holidays, consumers will see offers of free throw blankets with selected sofas, and free sheets, pillows and mattress pads with sleep systems. And their site is used for holiday messages and store hours as well as announcements of special sales.

"We regard ourselves as the liaison between the manufacturer and the consumer. We go to bat for the customer with grey areas in warranties, for example. Even for problems that crop up after three years on one-year warranties. If, for instance a fabric's wearing badly, if it were in our own house we wouldn't be pleased with it.

"In the less populated areas, you must work to bring people back. We price everything with all taxes included, offer free delivery, free set up and free removal of old furniture or bedding. And we don't tack on things. The price

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CONWAY FURNITURE'S WEBSITE

is used for holiday messages and store hours as well as announcements of special sales. It also features an interactive room planner.



they see is the price they get.

"We work to increase the average sale. Our store is very well accessorized; we know that people are eager to decorate their homes. We used to send out sales associates to homes, but discovered that after the experience, some customers were not particularly loyal. They didn't necessarily value the home visit and would still go out and price shop.

"But this has been counteracted with the room planner on our website. We encourage customers to work with this and email the result to us and we'll work with the result in the store. And they send us photos, too. When customers walk into the store, we use the room planner with them and it really does work very well. People like it!"

Customers find the room planner engaging and addictive, very easy to use, many opportunities to move things around and try different settings. It's simple to measure distance, the size of the room(s), of individual pieces from spinet pianos to potted plants. A great sales tool!

The website offers links to other businesses and to the Listowel Chamber of Commerce of North County Kerry, an unexpected trip to Ireland. And there's a well-struc-

tured tour of the store, too.

Looking to the future, Paul told us, "Creativity is our biggest market asset. We automated in the '80s and '90s and have a good flow of information that helps us to focus on business in transition and to look for the things that separate you from your competition where creativity will be important. It's a step by step process, to have and to provide information wherever you want it, however you want it."

A family man, Paul and his wife, Kristina, once a public health nurse, have two boys, Mitchell 16 and Harrison 14. He played keyboard and was soundman for a recent cantata at the church. With his band, he's involved in charity work for the local hospital and the annual Irish "Paddyfest", held over the two weeks surrounding St. Patrick's Day, maintained by the Kinsmen and Kinettes of Listowel.



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Toni Banuelos
IKEA Marketing Manager



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SolaraHome

The Sonic Seating line is made up of single leather match recliners with a home theater look built-in functionality of each chair is ergonomically designed for maximum comfort.

Contact information on index page 93.



Keystone

The Lancaster Cabinet from the Homestead Collection, with hand-painted wheat design, is rich in detail and alive with color. This graceful country style cabinet is available in Pine, Oak or Cherry in a variety of stains and finishes.

Contact information on index page 93.

Khoury

Echo Lake is made of Aspen wood and features dovetail drawer construction and powder coated Euroguides. Eight water based environmentally friendly paint and seven stain options are available. Contact information on index page 93.



Elran

"Jais", leather sofa with recliner feature is contemporary in style with T cushion. Featured leather is 6096-52.

Contact information on index page 93.



Square Nest

Creates vintage inspired home accessories with a modern twist. Collections include accessories (pillows, throws, vases, frames, baskets, candles, etc.), lighting, clocks, furniture and porch furniture. shown is the Iron Stool combining iron with leather. Contact information on index page 93.



Darafeev

Transform your customer's home into a resort with custom gaming tables and bars, matching chairs and barstools all manufactured from American hardwoods. Contact information on index page 93.

Design



Kathy Ireland Home by Omnia

This contemporary styled sofa is beautifully designed with chaise section and ottoman that opens for storage. Shown in white leather. Contact information on index page 93.

Bugatti Design

Clean lines and unique contemporary design describe this unusual sofa. Available in many fabrics, leathers and combinations. Contact information on index page 93.



Fashion Bed

The simplicity of design and curve of the silhouette make the Archer bed adaptable to many bedroom decors. The 60" headboard and 41" footboard are finished in Iced Bronze, a combination of browns, golds and silvers that will complement many wood furniture finishes. Contact information page 93.



Huppé

The 7800 Contemporary Bedroom with matching bedspread and upholstered benches has a designer look. The clean lines make a statement for modern living. Contact information on index page 93.

Mi-di

Manufacturer of a complete line of Canadian made Casual Dining Furniture. Tables are offered in 10 different sizes, with a choice of 13 table legs and a 3" edge. Chairs are available with regular cushion or webbing suspension seating. Contact information on index page 93.

Furniture Classics

Transitional chair based on the design of 19th Century oriental horseshoe chairs. The frame is made of Birch and offered in Antique Black with red rub-through and Antique Brown. Contact information on index page 93.



Design

Bermex

This modern dining group is made of North American Birch and is available in 86 finishes which can be combined. Available with a choice of 4 different profiles, 5 aprons, 10 legs and 13 bases. Contact information on index page 93.



g747

This Studio bedroom in Wipe Stained Black features an exclusive leg design. Dove tail assembled drawers are lined with brown felt and mounted on easy glide system. Contact information on index page 93.



Via

Leather sectional sofa, contemporary in style is available in a wide variety of decorator fabrics and leathers. Contact information on index page 93.



Perri

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in a wide variety of designer fabrics and leathers.
Contact information on index page 93.*



A.A. Laun

*Crafted of solid Maple, Harbour Town
features four primary wood stains and a
wide selection of painted finishes.
Contact information on index page 93.*

Dinec

*"Ambition" dining room is made of Birch and offers a
choice of table sizes, edge, apron and many different leg
options in a multitude of finishes.
Contact information on index page 93.*



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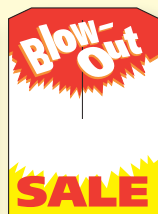
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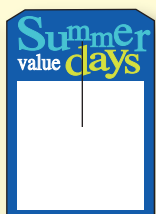
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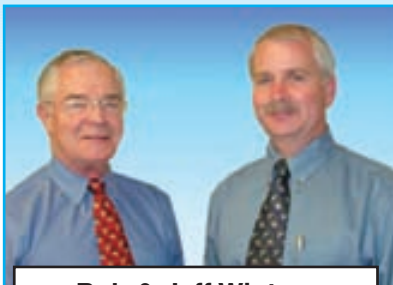
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"Larry has a rare understanding of what it takes to make advertising effective and do it in ways that builds our stores as a "brand" in the community. Larry spent the time and made the effort to learn about our business and get those facts into the ads...the best way we know to separate us from the competition. This promotion pulled the most traffic we've experienced to date - resulting in record-breaking sales. Our two stores enjoyed over 10,000 customers through our doors in a four-week period. We didn't have a counter at the warehouse, but traffic was super there too.

"We are also pleased to say that we stayed on budget. Larry used the opposite of current wisdom: which says that print advertising no longer works well. This is true unless you have the Larry Mullins touch. Larry has an organized way to help us do a better job of getting ready and staying focused throughout the promotion. Perhaps our biggest challenge was keeping our sales force excited, as they tended to get over-tired...a high-class problem. We can live with problems like this."

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(Be sure to read Larry's timely article in this month's Furniture World!)





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A person is seen from behind, walking out of a large glass door. The scene is brightly lit, suggesting a sunny day outside. The person is wearing a dark shirt and light-colored pants. The door has a metal frame and a handle. The background shows a bright outdoor area with some foliage.

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Don't let your next sale walk away!

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Advertiser & Design Editorial Index

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A.A. Laun	920-894-7441	service@aalaun.com	29	Truck Skin	877-866-7546	joe@truckskin.com	79
Arc Way Trolleys	204-383-5950	arcway@furninfo.com	45-50	UltraSales	303-530-5366	lmullins@ultrasales.com	90
Bermex	819-227-2284	denis.darveau@bermex.ca	4-5	Via Furniture	514-648-4440	via@viafurniture.com	84
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DG Associates	800-551-5864	dgaevents@aol.com	91				
Dinec	819-227-2284	denis.darveau@bermex.ca	26-27				
Dutailier Furniture	800-363-9817	davidf@dutailier.com	Covers 1, 2, 4				
Easels By Amron	800-44-EASEL	admin@easelsbyamron.com	69				
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Furniture Wizard	619-482-2613	wizard@furniturewiz.com	94, Cov 3				
Genesis Software	509-536-4739	crystal@genesis4windows.com	57				
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Karel Expositions	305-792-9990	info@kemexpo.com	74				
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Square Nest	800-435-1000	tmakin@ncegifts.com	81				
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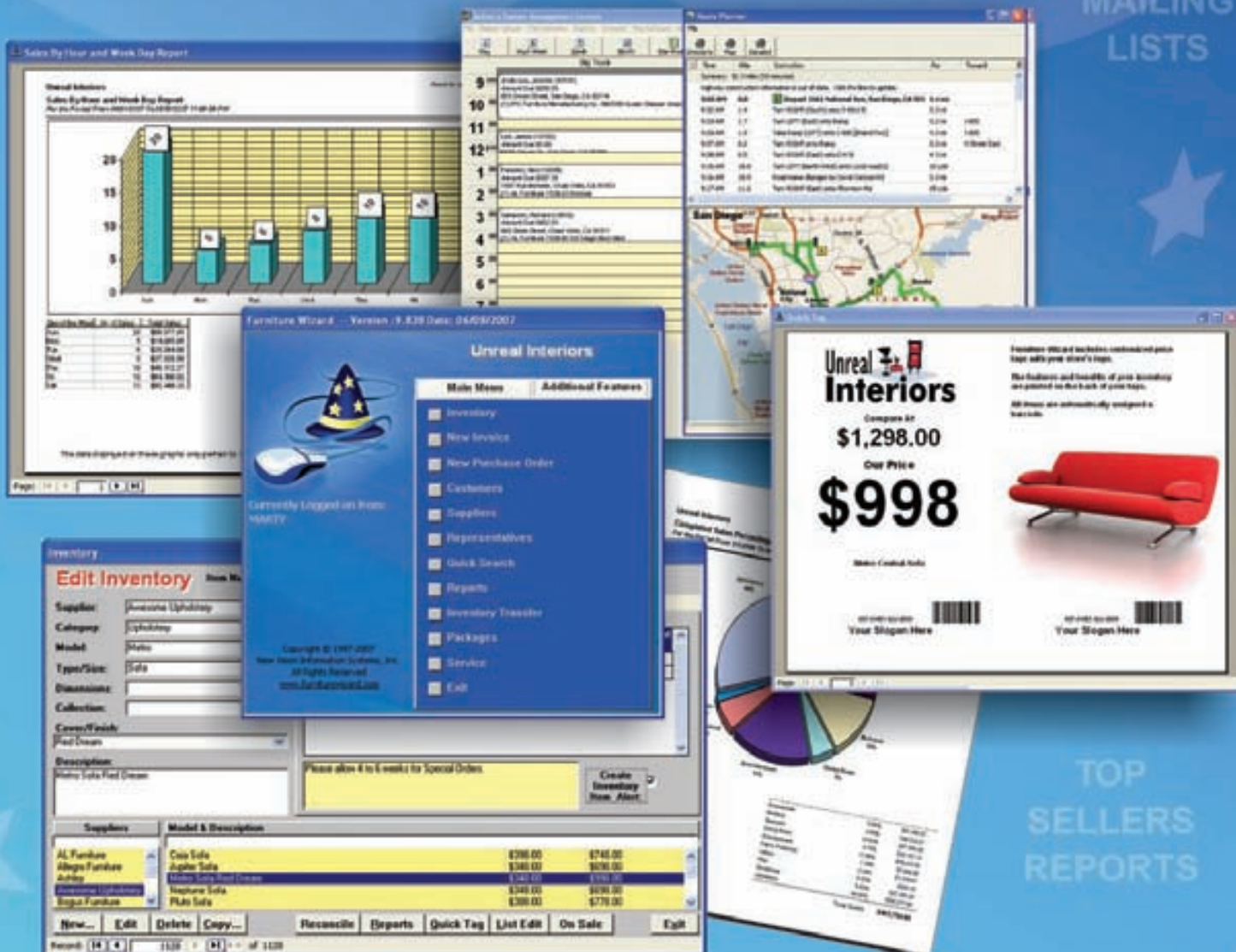
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