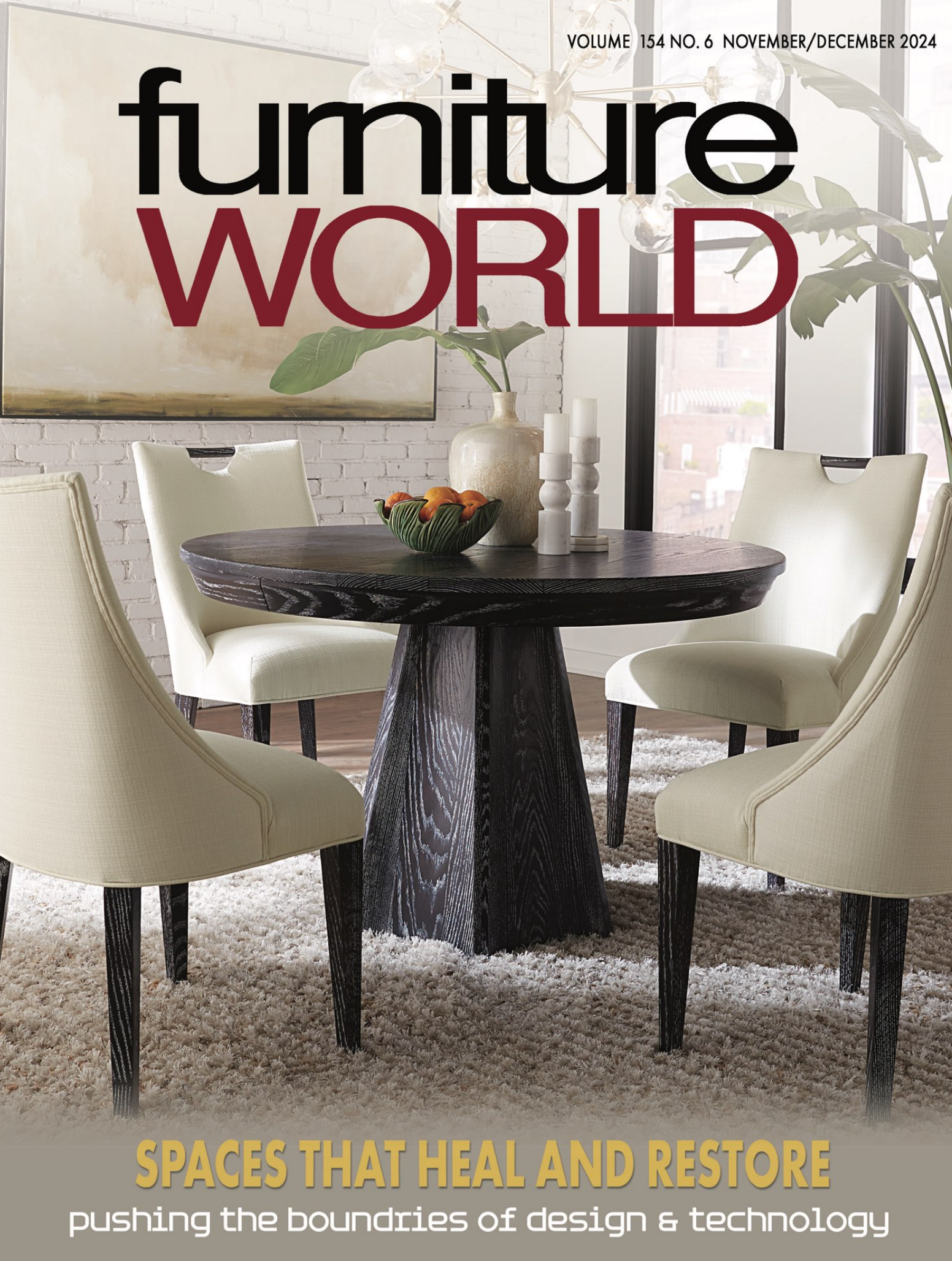


VOLUME 154 NO. 6 NOVEMBER/DECEMBER 2024

# furniture WORLD



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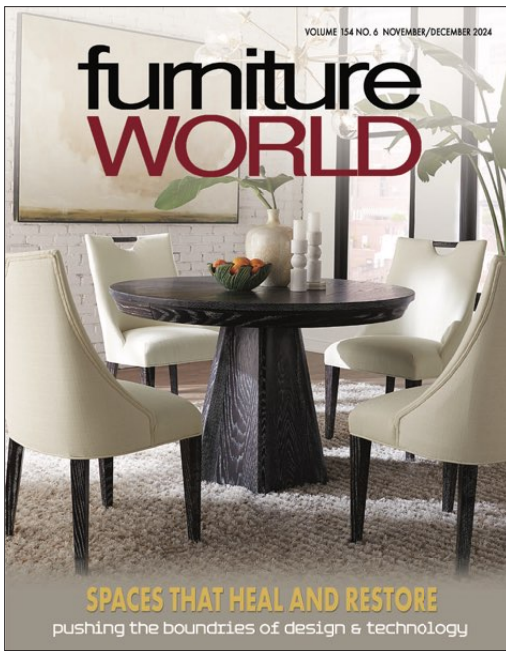
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**FRONT COVER:** Dining room from RH Yoder featuring Westal Chairs in Oak with an Ebony/Ceruse stain [one of over 100 chair styles] and the meticulously crafted Brogan table available in Oak, Cherry, Hard Maple, Brown Maple, Quarter Sawn White Oak, Hickory, Walnut, Rustic Cherry and Rustic Hickory. See page 17 for more information or visit [www.rhyoder.com](http://www.rhyoder.com).

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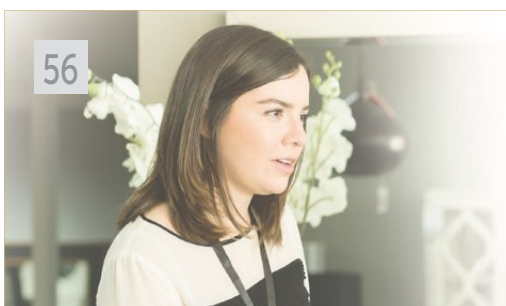
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## THE FUTURE OF WORK

*Collaborative Robots,  
AI & Automation*

Recently, I tuned into an interesting discussion between Stephen Dubner of Freakonomics and David Autor, the M.I.T. economist, about the future of work. The podcast “How to Stop Worrying and Love the Robot Apocalypse” is worth listening to.

Much of their discussion centered on the potential of AI and robotics to collaborate with people and what that may mean for businesses, employees and the nature of work in the future.

As we slide into 2025 with all its well-publicized uncertainties, it's a sure bet that many, if not most, Furniture World readers will accelerate their adoption of AI to automate marketing, merchandising, communications and operations tasks. David McMahon outlines many of AI's retail benefits in this issue [page 8]. It's hard to believe that it's only been two years since ChatGPT launched. Since then, we've seen the introduction of a host of furniture retail-specific AI-enabled software applications [visit HFA's Retail Resource Center at the Vegas Market if you need an update].

It's interesting how much alignment there is between employee job satisfaction and the adoption of collaborative technologies. In the podcast, Dubner and Autor discuss AI and flexible robots that work alongside human co-workers to improve the work experience by handling repetitive, less pleasant and dangerous tasks. AI can gather business intelligence and use data to make more informed decisions and ensure that necessary follow-up and intra-company communications don't fall through the cracks. In the near future, collaborative robots and assistive warehouse technology that can both slide and lift will be hugely beneficial in warehousing and delivering big and bulky items.

Adopting AI and other collaborative technology is largely about achieving operational efficiency and serving customers to gain a competitive advantage. However, the question of competitive advantage is nuanced. One solution does not fit every home furnishing niche or every retailer's optimal customer experience profile.

Should we stop worrying about a robot apocalypse? Maybe, maybe not. The wide range of possible outcomes depends on whether technology is introduced in ways that deliver differentiated customer experiences while remaining consistent with company goals, respecting employees, and promoting a positive future of work.

Wishing You Good Retailing!

Russell Bienenstock  
Editorial Director/CEO  
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# THE PROMISING FUTURE OF RETAIL FURNITURE STORE AI

by David McMahon, PerformNow

How AI will help build connections with customers and make retailers more competitive and adaptable in today's rapidly evolving business environment.

As the home furnishings industry continues to embrace artificial intelligence (AI), businesses stand to benefit from enhanced efficiency, optimized customer experiences, and increased profitability. In recent discussions with performance group members and CRM software clients, I explored various AI-driven strategies across marketing, merchandising, sales, and operations. Here's a look at these areas and some potential value-added AI use cases.

## 1. AI in Marketing: Data-driven Campaigns and Optimized Content Creation

AI's data-processing capabilities are invaluable in the highly competitive home furnishings landscape. By analyzing customer demographics, preferences, and purchasing behavior, AI enables marketing teams to develop targeted campaigns tailored to specific audiences. AI tools can process vast datasets, including website interactions, past purchases, and social media, creating robust customer profiles that inform advertising and promotional strategies. This precision in targeting can maximize ad spend and improve the relevance of messaging, thereby

enhancing conversion rates.

An entryway into AI for many furniture companies has been content creation. Tools like ChatGPT can generate content for product descriptions, blog posts, and social media posts. The result could increase SEO performance and improve online visibility. AI has the potential to refine existing promotional content and suggest improvements in engagement, tone, and clarity. For example, by analyzing past campaigns, AI can provide insights into messaging that may better resonate with customers. It also may offer actionable recommendations to make future promotions more impactful. The result

“AI's potential to refine existing promotional content and suggest improvements in engagement, tone, and clarity cannot be overstated.”

# furniture WORLD

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# “Asking the right

questions and qualifying them to limit source material will improve results.”

for many retailers could be a more dynamic and responsive content strategy that keeps brands visible and relevant.

AI can analyze how competitive retailers position themselves in marketplaces with policies and current promotions. See an example below of an AI response (#1) to a

query about what furniture retailers are advertising in the San Diego, California, market.

## 2. AI in Merchandising: Inventory Management and Trend Identification

Effective inventory management is a significant challenge in the home furnishings industry. Trends shift

rapidly, and considerable inventory risks are common. AI-powered systems can help manage stock by forecasting demand, identifying top-selling products, flagging slow-moving inventory, and sourcing new products. AI insights can further assist businesses in maintaining optimal inventory balance, ensuring that popular items remain in stock and losses are minimized on slow-moving items.

AI can identify trends by analyzing data from online sources such as social media, industry reports, and competitor offerings. It can help businesses stay current with trends, such as popular materials, colors, and furniture designs. For example, if mid-century modern styles or eco-friendly materials are trending, AI can highlight this information, enabling businesses to consider adjusting product mixes accordingly. A proactive approach positions

### AI RESPONSE #1: COMPETITIVE ADVERTISING QUERY

Several furniture sales are currently happening in San Diego, offering a variety of deals on home furnishings:

1. **IKEA:** IKEA San Diego has discounts of up to 25% on select sofas, storage systems, and bedspreads, exclusive to IKEA Family members. There's also 10% off SEKTION kitchen purchases over \$5,000, which runs until October 29. SOURCE: IKEA
2. **Mor Furniture:** This local favorite offers a "Double-the-Difference" guarantee to ensure the lowest prices on furniture essentials like bedroom, dining, and living room sets. Mor Furniture provides regular promotions and financing options, making it a reliable spot for affordable quality pieces. SOURCE: MOR FURNITURE FOR LESS
3. **CORT Furniture Outlet:** If you're looking for budget-friendly used furniture, CORT offers up to 70% off gently used, certified furniture, including sofas, beds, and office furniture. Their San Diego outlet ensures each piece is inspected and cleaned before sale. SOURCE: CORT FURNITURE OUTLET
4. **Greathouse Furniture:** Greathouse is featuring significant discounts on items like the McRaney loveseat (45% off), Cal King beds (50% off), and the Acapulco chaise lounge set (50% off). These markdowns are ideal for anyone interested in stylish and modern pieces. SOURCE: GREATHOUSE
5. **Ethan Allen:** Ethan Allen's clearance sale offers up to 60% off various high-end furniture and home decor items. This is a great option if you're looking to find designer quality at a fraction of the price. SOURCE: ETHAN ALLEN.

These stores offer both online and in-store deals, so you can check them out in person or browse online.

“AI can identify trends by analyzing data from online sources such as social media, industry reports, and competitor offerings.”



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The Oakdale Master and Youth Bedroom Collection tap into a resurgence of Craftsman style in architecture and design. The collection's framed panels on drawer fronts and headboards, peg detailing, bed cap rails and subtle splay legs reflect this style. Its rich medium brown tones over Oak solids and veneers address a market's need for warm, approachable brown tones. Stunning straight bar bracket pull hardware in a complementary bronze finish completes the look.

The slightly smaller scale of this group is right-sized for master bedrooms and guest rooms in primary residences and guest homes. Pieces include a king and queen bed, 5-drawer chest, 2-drawer chest, 2-drawer nightstand and 7-drawer dresser. New youth bedroom pieces include teen and full-size beds, twin-over-twin bunkbed, twin-over-full bunkbed and accompanying trundle.



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### AI RESPONSE #2: TOP SELLING SOFAS QUERY

While exact sales figures for specific sofa models are often proprietary and not publicly disclosed, industry reports and market analyses highlight several popular models and brands that consistently perform well in the U.S. market. Here are ten notable sofas known for their popularity and quality:

1. **Crate & Barrel Oceanside Sofa:** Renowned for its comfortable seating and customizable configurations, making it a versatile choice for various living spaces. SOURCE: NEW YORK MAGAZINE.
2. **Article Sven Couch:** A stylish and reasonably priced leather sofa that balances aesthetics with comfort, appealing to a wide range of consumers. SOURCE: NEW YORK MAGAZINE.
3. **West Elm Harmony Sofa:** Praised for its versatility and comfort, this sofa comes in various fabrics and configurations to suit different needs. SOURCE: NEW YORK MAGAZINE.
4. **Anthropologie Willoughby Sofa:** Known for its plush velvet upholstery and unique design, adding a touch of luxury to any living room. SOURCE: NEW YORK MAGAZINE.
5. **RH Cloud Sofa:** Offers premium comfort with down-filled cushions, providing a luxurious seating experience, though it requires regular maintenance. SOURCE: NEW YORK MAGAZINE.

companies to respond faster to market changes, aligning inventory with customer preferences and avoiding the risk of stocking outdated items. It's also a quick and easy way to research possible additions to product lineups before attending a furniture show. Retailers might, for example, ask ChatGPT, "What are some top-selling sofas in the USA?" See "AI Response #2:" at left.

Note that when asked the same question multiple times, whole-language chatbots like GPT will return different answers. Asking the right questions and qualifying them to limit source material can improve results.

Additionally, voice-activated queries in AI-driven systems will be able to allow staff to retrieve information about inventory levels, bestsellers, and other metrics in real-time without using their hands. This functionality will reduce the need for manual data entry and accelerates decision-making, allowing employees to spend more time delivering exceptional customer service.

### 3. AI in Sales: Enhanced Training, AI Chat, QR Codes, and Personalized Communication.

AI can support sales by making training and resources more accessible. Sales teams can use AI tools to create and locate process documentation, training modules, and product information in a centralized, easily accessible location. Having immediate access to relevant data can help employees better understand products, handle objections, and engage with customers.

**AI Chat:** AI chatbots are begging to either co-exist or take the place of humans. Chatbots can now be "trained" and "learn" to process common questions asked by customers. These questions can produce recommendations that in turn could pass a tangible lead on to a sales associate. The AI bot may recommend merchandise and provide a link to schedule an appointment with a real person, for example. A common question retailers ask is, "How do I manage the chat 24 hours a day?" The answer is "Turn on the AI Chatbot!"

**QR Code Integration:** Integrating QR codes into

### IdeaCast: Use Technology to Sell More

Recorded by David McMahon, 10/4/2024, 9:52:23 AM, 43 min, Last updated 4 weeks ago

#### AI Tools

##### Quick prompts

AI credit already used, no more needed

- Short summary
- Detailed summary with citation
- Write bullet point highlights
- Detailed summary
- Summary and Action items
- Generate action items

Or ask Tactiq anything about the meeting. Ask

View more

Language for AI output English (Default)

#### AI meeting notes

Summary and Action items

**Quick summary**

During this meeting, David discussed the importance of focusing on leading measures to improve sales and customer experience. He emphasized the use of technology, particularly the Perform Now CXM software, to enhance sales processes and follow-up activities. Additionally, strategies for capturing customer information and automating communication were highlighted to drive better engagement and results.

**Action items for David**

- Provide additional resources or training materials on using the Perform Now CXM software effectively.

# THE FUTURE OF RETAIL FURNITURE STORE AI

the retail experience is a popular way to enhance in-store and remote shopping. QR codes linked to product details allow customers to explore information at their own pace, viewing product specifications, pricing, and reviews without asking sales associates. This can empower customers and foster a more informed shopping experience, increasing satisfaction and sales volume.

**AI Personalized Communication:** AI enables personalized customer communication. With AI-enabled email templates and automation, businesses can automate post-purchase follow-up, offer tailored recommendations and generate customer reminders about new arrivals and special offers. These personalized interactions nurture customer relationships, increasing the likelihood of repeat purchases and brand loyalty.

Below is an unedited AI-generated email template from our CRM software. It was created in one second by filling in standardized fields and a pull-down menu.

The query entered into the CRM content builder was to: "Build an email to add a rug to a room." Then a choice of template was made, a subject specified, "Elevate Your Living Room with the Perfect Rug," and preheader text entered, "Discover how adding the right rug can transform your living space."

## 4. AI in Operations: Streamlined Documentation and Continuous Process Improvement

AI's ability to record and document meetings is invaluable for operational efficiency, especially for large teams where accurate communication is crucial. Automated transcrip-

tion tools capture conversations, identify action items, and organize notes, ensuring that all team members clearly understand the next steps and priorities. This functionality reduces the time spent on manual note-taking and keeps everyone aligned on project goals. See the "Ideacast: Use Technology to Sell More" example on page 10, based on AI output from a recorded meeting.

AI also plays a role in optimizing operational processes, from delivery to post-purchase services. For example, AI can analyze customer feedback and identify areas for improvement in delivery processes, such as customer pickups or white-glove delivery services. Data from past deliveries can highlight common challenges or delays, helping businesses refine procedures to reduce wait times and ensure seamless experiences.



**Transform Your Living Room with the Perfect Rug**

Welcome to our guide on adding a rug to your living room! A well-chosen rug can bring warmth, style, and a cohesive look to your space. In this newsletter, we'll explore everything from choosing the right size and style to arranging your furniture. Let's dive into how a simple rug can transform your living room.

### Choose the Right Rug Size

Selecting the perfect rug size is crucial for your room's harmony. A rug that is too small can make a room feel disjointed, while one that is too large can overwhelm the space. Ideally, choose a rug that fits under all key furniture pieces or at least under the front legs of your seating.



When adding a rug, think about the existing color scheme in your living

The material of your rug affects both its durability and comfort. Wool is a

Deciding on a pattern or plain rug depends on your design



# “AI’s integration into the

home furnishings industry offers transformative potential across marketing, merchandising, sales, and operations.”

To illustrate, below is a portion of an AI-generated checklist created by accessing customer feedback and delivery data.

## Competitive Edge with AI

AI’s integration into the home furnishings industry offers transformative potential across marketing, merchandising, sales, and operations. By leveraging AI, businesses can deliver highly personalized customer experiences, streamline internal processes, and stay agile in response to changing market trends. Companies prioritizing AI-driven solutions will be well-positioned to lead in an increasingly digital and customer-centric market.

On the horizon are AI-enabled whole language models that promise to handle lead funnel shopper

inquiries in a way that mimics natural human dialogues using real-time inventory and other data to coordinate post-inquiry follow-up.

Through capable technology leadership, organizations can use AI to strengthen their connections with customers, making them more competitive and adaptable in today’s rapidly evolving business environment.

**About David McMahon:** *Furniture World contributing editor David McMahon is the founder of PerformNOW Inc., which has three main products that help home furnishings businesses improve and innovate: PerformNOW CXM [Contact eXperience Management systems and processes], Performance Groups [Owners, Sales managers, Operations] and Furniture business consulting. See*

*all of his articles at [www.furninfo.com/Authors/David\\_McMahon/6](http://www.furninfo.com/Authors/David_McMahon/6). He can be reached with questions or comments about this article or any other topic at [david@performnow.com](mailto:david@performnow.com).*

“Voice-activated queries in AI-driven systems provide a hands-free way for staff to retrieve information about inventory levels, bestsellers, and other metrics in real time.”

### AI REPORT: PART OF A PRE-DELIVERY CHECKLIST GENERATED FROM CUSTOMER FEEDBACK AND DELIVERY DATA

#### Documentation and Order Verification:

- Verify the customer’s order number, item description, and quantity.
- Cross-check product specifications (model, color, size) against the order.
- Confirm any special requests or customizations as per the order details.

#### Visual Inspection of Product Exterior

- Check all surfaces for visible damages, like scratches, dents, scuffs, or cracks.
- Inspect for color consistency and finish quality.
- Confirm all labels, tags, or branding are in place and correct.

#### Structural Integrity & Functionality

- Check frame and structural elements for stability.

- Test all moving parts, such as hinges, drawers, reclining mechanisms, or adjustable features.
- For electronics, confirm power functionality and inspect for proper wiring and plugs.

#### Upholstery and Material Quality

- Inspect fabric, leather, or other materials for stains, tears or loose stitching.
- Check for any unpleasant odors or residue, especially on upholstery.
- Ensure seams and zippers (if applicable) are intact and secure.

#### Assembly Completeness and Hardware Check

- Verify that all parts are assembled correctly and securely.



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# Spaces That Heal & Restore

INTERVIEW WITH DESIGNER LISA KAHN

Lisa Kahn brings health and wellness into homes and addresses the special needs of families. She believes furniture retailers are missing an opportunity to do something similarly wonderful.

Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs is an award-winning interior design firm in Naples, Florida, founded by Lisa Kahn.

She and her team create residential and commercial spaces that address the comfort of the body, the curiosity of the mind and the nurturing of the spirit.

That might seem a lofty goal for the average furniture store and removed from the day-to-day business of retail, but Kahn disagrees. She believes that her firm's specialized design work addresses a pressing need in the marketplace and one that also presents an opportunity for furniture retailers.

"I believe that home furnishings retailers," she said, "have an unprecedented opportunity to tap into what people are thinking about and asking for in terms of sanctuary spaces."

---

## Sanctuary Beginnings

---

Kahn was introduced to the furniture business at a young age. "My parents founded an office supply business in Ohio, that quickly became home and office design center. My mom took classes to become an interior designer, so as my youngest self, I was surrounded by the design world. Their plan for me was to study interior design. Instead, in my freshman year of college, I chose to study business."

As she began classes, Kahn soon realized that she wanted a more hands-on creative outlet and switched to a design concentration while continuing to work at the family's retail store.

"I was able to take the three-part NCIDQ exam within a year of graduation and was hired as the corporate interior designer for Lutron Electronics, a supplier of residential and commercial lighting controls. Lutron is an incredible company. My experience there gave me an appreciation for beautiful, quality lighting design and a grounded experience in educating my peers."

After leaving Lutron, Kahn worked for a residential interior designer, learning the finer aspects of her craft, then took an interior design position at London Bay Homes, a building contractor and developer in Naples, Florida.

"There, I learned the building process, acted as the liaison with designers on their projects and developed great relationships with architects and builders."

In 2000, Kahn started her own firm, getting a big break when she landed a large residential project on the Gulf of Mexico, replacing a well-known, talented interior designer. "It was an eye-opening experience for a girl who grew up in the countryside of Ohio," she recalled, "and one that shaped



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## Organic Beauty

*Lisa Kahn's design work at Spyglass Lane illustrates how sanctuary is often achieved in spaces dedicated to thought, reflection and self care. With its cozy reading nooks and a desk for writing, the study is a place where sanctuary practices are supported by intentional design. In much the same way, other spaces focused on self-care practices, such as bathrooms, have a natural inclination to become sanctuaries. These spaces are woven into routines, fostering moments of mindfulness and calm that support well-being.*

the initial trajectory of my firm, which focused on serving top one percent earners who hired me to design beautiful and unique homes.”

### Life-Changing Epiphany

Kahn recalled that her life and work were upended when her daughter showed early signs of developmental and intellectual disabilities.

“At the time, I didn’t know anyone who had a nontypical child. Nor was I familiar with the challenges that raising a child with autism might present,” she recalled.

Kahn explained that following an official diagnosis at three, the medical community suggested that her daughter Chloe be heavily medicated. “It was horrifying to watch a child’s body try to process some of the medications, and it was impossible to reconcile how that might be good for her. Her sensory issues prevented her from sitting quietly in school; she presented with learning issues and would act out.

“We tried all kinds of holistic therapies and remedies and consulted with doctors at major hospitals in Miami and Tampa, Florida, and in

Rhinebeck, New York.

“When Chloe turned 10, she start-

“Addressing this need at retail can help stores differentiate their offerings from competitors and help them step out with fresh, new, and next-level ideas.”

ed having seizures. And so what had been difficult behavior-wise suddenly became life-threatening.

“Something needed to change. There were trips to the hospital; no one was sleeping, and she was falling and hurting herself. It took a long time to find the right medications to stabilize her.

“Sleep-deprived, stressed, and needing to find a better way to cope with the situation, I had an epiphany that changed both my family life and design career.

“I recall pausing on a bridge over a lake as the sun was starting to rise. The wind picked up, lifting my hair. I got goosebumps from head to toe, and I promise you that I heard the word ‘sanctuary’ whispered on the wind.

“It felt like a lifeline. I visualized a place where my daughter could

feel safe, secure, and calm down for everyone’s benefit. But, since the word ‘sanctuary’ didn’t come with an instruction manual, I spent the next few years unpacking what that word could mean.

“I hired Gail Doby, the well known interior design business coach who connected me with the communications coach Nancy Greystone and her business, Communicating with Clarity. Nancy helped me realize what my intuition about ‘sanctuary’ meant, and how it might translate into a design philosophy.”

---

### Sanctuary Takes Shape

---

“As the idea evolved, I created a sanctuary space for my daughter, addressing all of her senses. I considered how what she felt against her skin, heard and smelled affected

her moods. I believed that her unique way of experiencing the world would benefit from the creation of a space where she felt safe and nurtured.

“We encouraged her to spend more time in her sanctuary, especially when her behavior was challenging. It had an immediate effect. Our whole family dynamic improved and we were all able to take a collective deep breath.

“In 2000, I founded Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs.”

Kahn came to understand that the spaces around us affect our physical, mental, emotional and even spiritual health. Because we spend roughly 90% of our time indoors, these environments have an outsized and profound effect on our experience.

“I realized that when we have peace around us, it inspires peace inside us—was something I could



*The dining room at Lantern Lane, that Kahn designed, beautifully balances natural elegance with serene colors. A custom Murano glass chandelier by Louise Gaskill, with its delicate blue tones, pairs perfectly with the floral and bird motifs of Paul Montgomery’s ‘Maysong Spring’ wallpaper. These elements capture the peaceful beauty of the natural world, creating a luxurious yet calming environment that resonates with the essence of sanctuary.*

---

“As this market windfall reversed, I’ve noticed that most furniture retailers haven’t embraced the idea of promoting sanctuary spaces as a solution to people’s needs.”

---

bring to the world,” she explained. “Since then, I have spent time educating myself on ancient philosophy, various belief systems, the science of design, neuro-aesthetics, biophilia, and neuro-architecture. I returned to school, receiving a master’s degree in philosophy, cosmology and consciousness. The idea of sanctuary is so vast. It’s a concept that no one practice or belief system can own.

“When COVID arrived,” she noted, “suddenly staying healthy and healing at home became critical. This also resulted in large increases in demand for home furnishings. Yet as this market windfall reversed, I’ve noticed that most furniture retailers haven’t necessarily embraced the idea of

promoting wellness-focused spaces as a solution to people’s ongoing needs. There is a real opportunity for our entire industry to help its customers understand how their interior environments profoundly affect so many aspects of their lives.”

---

### Designing Sanctuary Spaces

---

“I loved design before my daughter helped me find the true purpose of my design career,” she said, “but I really love helping people transform their experience to find happier, more balanced ways of living in the world.”

Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs serves clients who are attracted to the idea of bringing

health, well-being and transformation into their homes. Because she is open in sharing her own story and experience, she finds that many clients feel comfortable sharing their own personal and family struggles with her.

“It’s amazing how many families have someone in their midst dealing with mental or physical issues or challenges,” she observed.

“Another group of clients are interested in practices like yoga, holistic living, well-being and mindfulness. I design spaces for them, write a weekly blog, host online classes and retreats for people who want to know more about harnessing their environments to support peace, harmony



*Lisa Kahn at Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs headquarters in Naples, Florida.*

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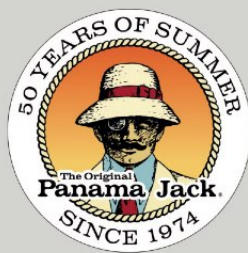


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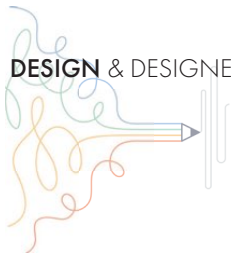
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## “Sanctuary does not have to cost a lot.

It doesn't have to be complicated. And people do not necessarily need to hire a designer to create it for them.”

and balance. The idea of transformation is the thread that ties all of my clients together.”

### Tools And Approaches

“We do an initial deep dive with clients to learn more about their needs and set expectations upfront. They share details of their family lives, daily routines, behaviors, habits, challenges and practices.”

Kahn said the onboarding process sets the stage for designing living environments that can transform lives. However, people may need assistance using the sanctuary spaces we create to support continued health and healing. “We often end up developing deep relationships with them that reach beyond designing their spaces,” said Kahn. “I welcome sharing ideas and support to help them along their journeys.”

### Nature Nurture

Kahn explained that she uses many tools, materials and pragmatic approaches to create harmonious spaces for her clients.

“One strong point of reference for my design work is the natural world. Blurring the line between inside and outside spaces is an important focus because connecting Mother Earth with interior spaces is a proven way to encourage healing and make people simply feel better. Tying inside and outside with biophilic design principles—using shapes, natural textures, colors, sights and sounds—is a huge part of every project.”

When Furniture World asked how furniture retailers might incorporate similar tools and approaches to attract and serve customers, she replied, “They might start by broad-



*Each room by Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs is crafted to support the essence of sanctuary, showcasing an approach to blending natural beauty, thoughtful materials, and intentional purpose. In the practice's Naples office meditation room, sanctuary is crafted through organic textures and earthy materials. Grasscloth wallpaper, natural crystals, and soft candlelight create a grounding atmosphere that reconnects with nature's restorative qualities. This focus on natural elements enhances the sense of sanctuary by inviting a feeling of calm and presence.*

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## *“It’s incredible how interior design choices*

can enhance well-being and calm when attention is paid to identifying how subtle changes in sensory experience affect mood and behavior.”

ening the scope of their thoughts about home furnishings from comfort, durability and style to include more of their customers’ senses.

“I suggest starting with basic elements, such as color, which significantly impacts how people see and experience their spaces. Certain colors support calming, relaxing environments. Consider bringing outside colors in to create timeless palettes.

“Pay attention to what people are experiencing audibly in their homes. Retailers who make house calls can focus on more than just furniture and accessories. They can notice the sounds and smells which are problematic for some people. Even the small whine of appliance motors or HVAC systems can affect the audio balance of a space. In cases where more calm and quiet is needed, I suggest adding beautiful background noise or music, which can make all the difference in the world to people with audio sensitivity. The same can be true for our olfactory sense.

“We specify natural products and materials in the environments we design, preferring those that don’t off-gas or contain volatile organic compounds. When possible, we add products that absorb some of these materials. Live plants can be beneficial in this regard. Biophilic design that includes live plants has been

shown to lower physiological markers of stress and has the added benefit of cleaning the air and removing odors.

“The Healthy Materials Lab, a design research lab at Parsons School of Design, introduced me to Keim mineral-based paints (<https://keim-usa.com>) that are sustainable and don’t contain plastics, VOCs or other toxic ingredients.

“Also consider the sense of touch. People have varying reactions to textures. Many respond positively to soft upholstery fabrics or throws. Some people with autism may be hypersensitive or hyposensitive to touching different textured materials, including fabrics.

“It’s incredible how interior design choices can enhance well-being and calm when attention is paid to identifying how subtle changes in sensory experience affect mood and behavior. Finding the right balance between adding items that enhance well-being and mitigating negative stimuli works in balance to create beautiful sanctuary environments.”

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### The Effect of Project Scale

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“We mostly design whole homes because it’s easier to help people transform their lives in a 360-degree way. But for people who don’t have

the budget, it’s good to know that sanctuary can be created at any scale, in almost any room.

“People will benefit from setting aside some personal sanctuary space,” Kahn observed. “It can be a beautifully designed space with a door that closes. Sometimes, a small part of a larger space that offers a bit of privacy will suffice. Think the end of a sofa in a living room, a corner in a bedroom, even a repurposed closet.

“Being surrounded by comforting elements adds to a feeling of sanctuary. Books, art supplies, crystals, candles and pets are comforting for me. Other people respond positively to a minimalist aesthetic and clean surfaces.”

Furniture World asked Kahn to share her feelings about how to help middle-income people, who might not be able to afford her services, reap the benefits of sanctuary.

“I believe in my deepest heart of hearts,” she said, “that if everyone had even the smallest safe place where they could go to recharge their battery, calm down, and connect with who they really are, the world would be radically different in the best of ways. Sanctuary does not have to cost a lot of money or be at all complicated. People do not necessarily even need to hire a designer to create it for them.

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# Work Spaces, Swings & Hammocks



*Pictured above is a home redesigned by Lisa Kahn to accommodate a child with intellectual disabilities. Soft rugs and plush chairs were used to prevent injury.. Swings and hammocks provide valuable sensory stimulation. Work spaces with paint brushes and books became areas for family members to express themselves.*

"I'm writing a book that explains the ins and outs of creating spaces of sanctuary, including the amazing benefits I've seen it produce in the lives around me over the past 25 years. I will share the resources and tools we use at Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs. I am also in the process of launching Sanctuary Consulting.

"Corporations, organizations and retailers can all benefit from encapsulating the essence of sanctuary into their spaces and stores. And yes, I believe there is an opportunity for some furniture retailers to add

sanctuary experiences to their showrooms.

"A great start is designing store entries that project healing, positive energy to customers. Natural elements that connect us back to the earth will convey a grounded, peaceful feeling to shoppers. Adding the right colors, textures, sounds, and smells early on sets the mood for the remainder of a gratifying shopping experience. You never get a second chance to make a first impression, and those impressions stick with guests as they travel throughout the rest of a store."

When Furniture World pointed out that some customers are only look-

"Retailers who make house calls can focus on more than just furniture and accessories. They can notice sounds and smells which can be problematic for some people."

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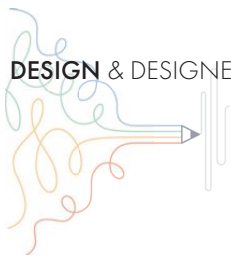
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# Lisa Kahn

ing for an inexpensive dining set or to create a place to entertain groups of friends who stop by to watch a big game, she observed, “It’s true that people are looking to have different experiences in their homes, but I’ve seen that there is a largely unmet desire among consumers to find sanctuary in their homes. Addressing this need at retail can help stores differentiate their offerings from competitors and help them step out with fresh, new, and next-level ideas.”

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## Serving Other Groups

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“Our primary headquarters is in Naples, Florida,” Kahn pointed out, “so it makes sense for us to also serve an aging population with mobility and health issues. We help clients downsize, often working with senior living facilities and campuses here.

“The idea is that as our clients enter a new chapter of their lives, it’s

“I suggest starting with basic elements, such as color, which significantly impacts how people see and experience their spaces.”

possible and necessary to find sanctuary. I believe that aging consumers represent another under-served market for many furniture retailers.”

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## Community Outreach.

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In 2024, Kahn and her team reached out to provide sanctuary to residents of a local homeless shelter. “Instead of continuing to do show houses, we decided to channel those marketing dollars into pro bono design jobs where we can create lasting, meaningful sanctuary in our own community for people who need it.

“Last year, we helped our local shelter renovate cottages to create calming environments for these displaced children. These kids differed from our typical clients, and speaking with them profoundly changed how we approached the project.

“Our focus on a natural world connection stayed the same, but a lot of our other design work was customized to meet their unique needs.

“We are also working with the STARability Foundation, which serves intellectually and developmentally disabled adults who have graduated from high school and lack work, community and purpose. My daughter participates in their programming. STARability recently purchased a small university campus. We are donating our design services to upgrade their office and program-

ming spaces, a new event space and eventually a housing program.

“STARability participants want to feel a sense of community and to have meaningful work and activities during the day. We worked with their team to open a resale store to support programming. The participants are now also pouring candles containing essential oils for my Sanctuary candle line. I provide the containers, boxes, and labels. Program participants get paid to pour the wax, package the finished product, and add a little card at the top, connecting the purchaser of the candle with the person who created it. It’s very personal.”

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## Conclusion

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“Over the past 25 years, I’ve learned that success for those of us in the furniture business rests on the quality of the relationships we cultivate with customers and clients.

“A renewed focus on developing lasting relationships and meeting customers where they are allows us to create spaces that improve their surroundings and their lives.

“The relationships we create at Finding Sanctuary by Lisa Kahn Designs result from working closely with clients to provide sanctuary and well-being. The need for wellness and peace is greater than ever before. We as an industry are uniquely situated to impact lives in meaningful ways.”



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# ASHLEY DSG'S CONNECTED HOMES INITIATIVE

*Interview with Lisa Fanaro & Chad Spencer, Dufresne Spencer Group*

Ashley's Dufresne Spencer Group believes that their new initiative will change the face of home furnishings retail by pushing the boundaries of design and technology.

Lisa Fanaro, EVP of Strategy and Experience at the Dufresne Spencer Group (DSG), leads with her heart, believing that creating meaningful experiences is essential to the company's success.

We chatted with Fanaro as The Connected Home Experience was launched at its Brentwood, Tennessee, flagship store. The store experience encompasses a groundbreaking partnership between Ashley and Samsung. DSG's CEO Chad Spencer described it as a "shared commitment to pushing the boundaries of design and technology that will transform the way consumers experience their homes."

Robb & Stucky in Tampa, had a fortuitous meeting with Ron Wanek, founder and chairman of Ashley Furniture Industries. "He was buying artwork from one of our interior designers. I introduced myself, not knowing who he was," she recalled. "When he handed over his credit card, our designer asked if he worked for Ashley. 'As a matter of fact, I do,' he chuckled. He had such charisma, and I immediately knew that Mr. Wanek was someone I could work for. Later that night, I remember Googling him. That moment changed everything."

Soon after that chance encounter with Wanek, Fanaro joined Ashley

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### Getting To Ashley

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After graduating with a psychology degree, Lisa Fanaro began her journey with an interior design role at a retail furniture store. "I thought this interim position working in retail would suffice until I found my dream job," she recalled. "But then, I quickly realized how rewarding it is to transform someone's house into a home."

Fourteen years into her career, Fanaro, then a general manager at

"DSG is the largest licensee of Ashley furniture with 133 retail locations, 20 distribution centers, and approximately 4,000 employees."



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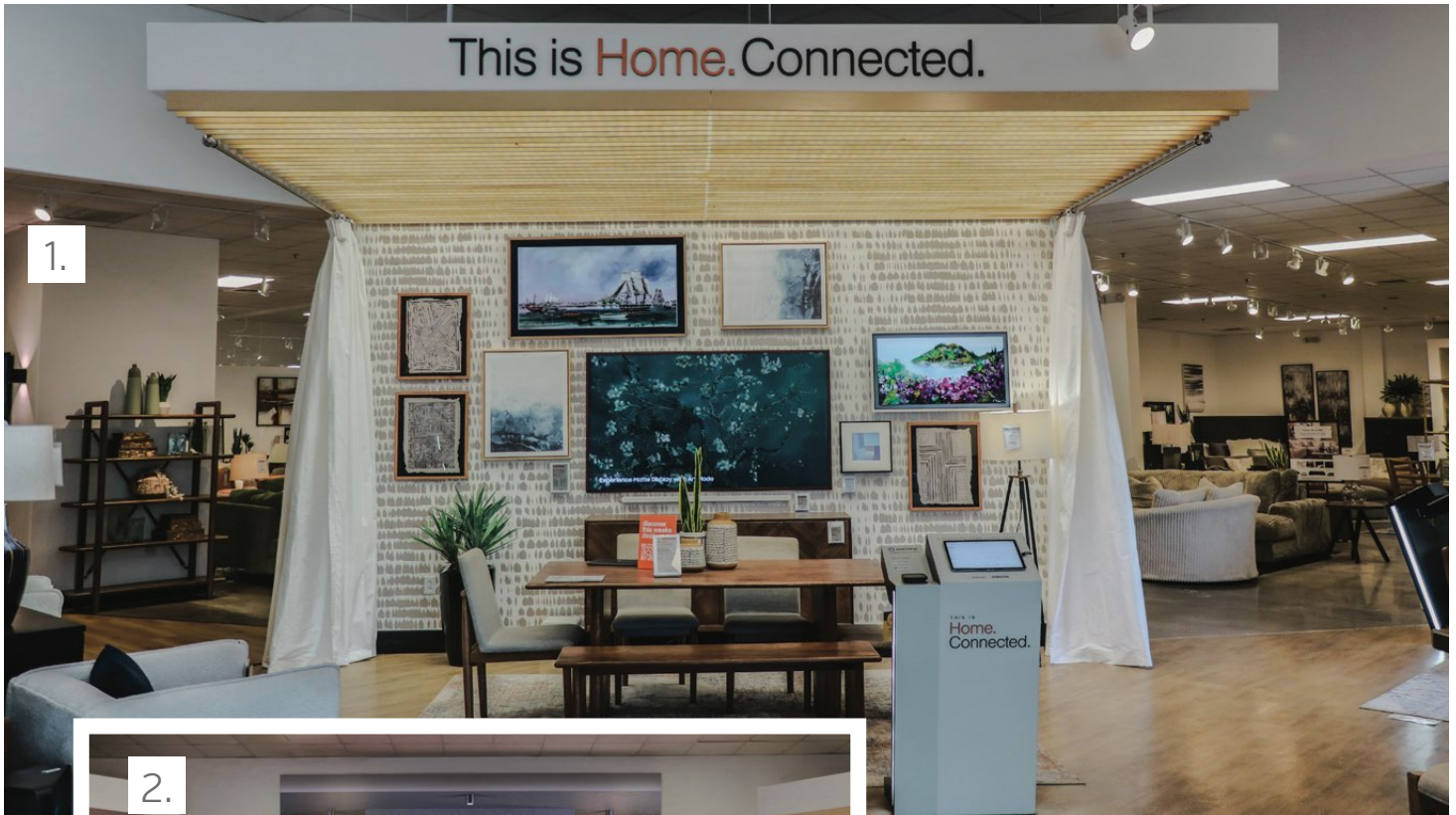


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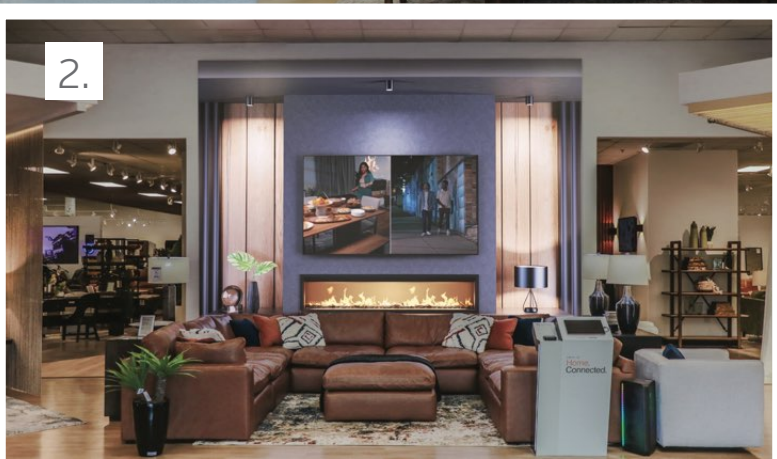
Cloud Gray

Navy

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1.



2.

*The Welcome Home experience invites guests to be inspired to create spaces that evoke the joy of entertaining and welcoming others.*

**1. The Art of Dining:** This space allows for personalized expression in dining areas with unlimited possibilities with the Frame TV.

**2. Heart of the Home:** Guests are empowered to set a scene that embodies their unique version of home design by interacting with the LED panel wall.

Corporate in 2012 as the Director of Strategic Planning, where she honed

her skills in organizational strategy, taking on initiatives that shaped the Ashley brand and its future.

when the company tripled its size via a series of acquisitions in Texas, Louisiana, Michigan, New Mexico, and other markets. Today, DSG is the largest licensee of Ashley furniture with 133 retail locations, 20 distribution centers, and approximately 4,000 employees, with further expansion planned for the future.

Fanaro credits DSG's exponential growth to CEO Chad Spencer, who drives a culture that aligns every effort with the company's vision to make "life moments matter," fostering a commitment to meaningful experiences for DSG's employees,

“Chad has led our executive team to focus daily on how best to engage with both our team members and our guests,” she explained. “My role has evolved to prioritize these experiences.”

### Exponential Growth

In 2016, Fanaro transitioned to DSG, where she has been integral to its evolution. “DSG has been a journey of growth,” she reflected. “When the Spencer family—who had 15 Ashley stores at the time—partnered with the Dufresne Group in 2012, DSG began its exponential expansion.” The growth was kicked into high gear between 2017 and 2020

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# CONNECTED HOMES INITIATIVE

their customers, and the communities that DSG serves. “Chad has led our executive team to focus daily on how best to engage with both our team members and our guests,” she explained. “My role has evolved to prioritize these experiences, perfectly summarized in my title: EVP of Strategy and Experience.”

As a member of the executive team, Fanaro plays a central role in orchestrating DSG’s initiatives across departments. Fanaro emphasizes that trust is foundational to their success. “Our deep-rooted culture of trust is what allows us to sustain growth and succeed in initia-

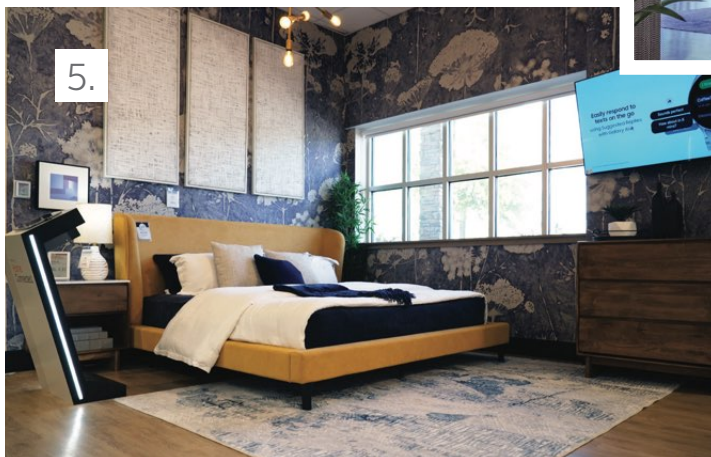
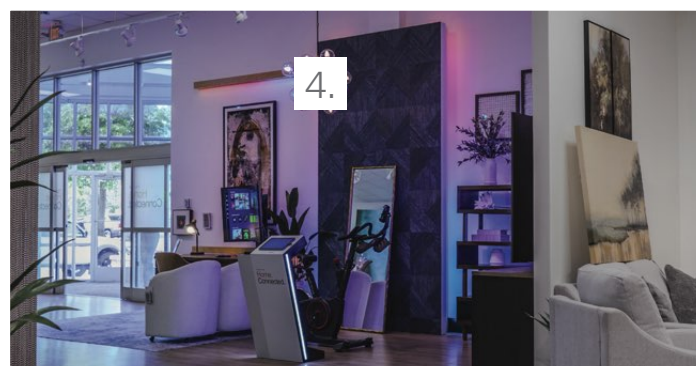
tives that genuinely enhance guest experiences.” Fanaro’s perspective shapes DSG’s approach as an industry leader, setting a standard for a holistic, experience-driven retail model.

## The Inspiration Behind the Connected Home Experience

“The idea was sparked when Chad Spencer and Todd Wanek attended the Consumer Electronics Show [CES] in January 2023,” explained Fanaro. “They were inspired by how tech companies like Samsung generate excitement around every product

launch.” In the fast-paced, competitive world of consumer electronics, companies must constantly innovate to stand out, creating high-energy, immersive launch experiences. The furniture industry, on the other hand, rarely embraces this approach. Fanaro continued, “Chad saw this as a powerful opportunity to bring fresh excitement and engagement to our showrooms.”

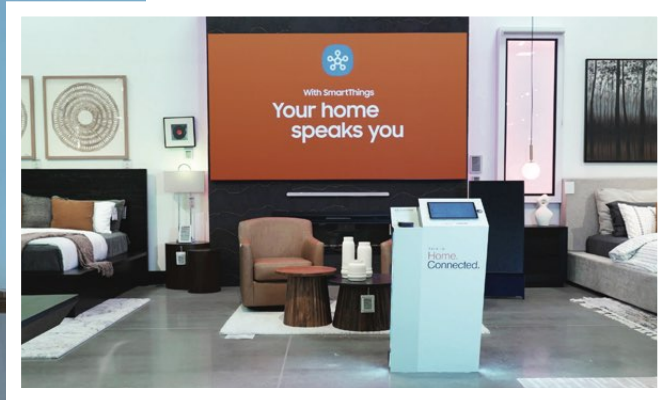
Inspired by CES, Spencer saw an opportunity to revolutionize the home furnishings retail industry, beginning with a partnership between Ashley and Samsung—two leaders in their respective fields.



**3. Music and Vibe:** A sensory-driven display illustrates customizable ambiance. Connected Philips Hue lighting, music from the Sound Tower, and visuals from the Freestyle and Premier projector set the mood for any mood imaginable.

**4. Work-Life Balance, Re-imagined:** Allows guests to envision how to seamlessly transition from work to gaming with Samsung’s Odyssey Ark Monitor.

**5. Rise Up, Wind Down:** This room demonstrates how, with the touch of a button, the bedroom transitions to support morning and evening routines with Samsung SmartThings.



*"Guests interact with cinema, home theater and gaming area experiences. A sports experience area has a hyper-local focus on one of our sports partners, the Tennessee Titans."*

Together, DSG and Samsung set out to redefine how customers shop for their home, and the concept of bringing an integrated, tech-enabled home into the Ashley showroom was born.

"With our mutual commitment to advancing design and technology, this partnership is set to reshape the way consumers interact with their living spaces," said Spencer. "Samsung was the natural partner to infuse new energy into the

retail space, offering smart, seamless solutions that elevate everyday moments for our guests."

### Flagship Showroom

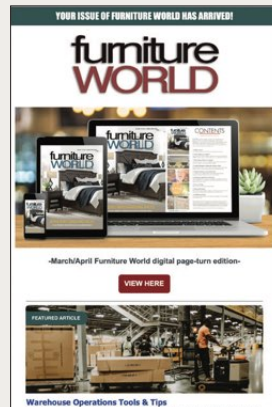
Ashley's flagship showroom in Brentwood, Tennessee, redefines the furniture shopping experience by blending cutting-edge technology with the warmth and comfort of home. Designed to demonstrate how Ashley and Samsung products

"The showroom flows like a curated journey, with zones that include a home theater, gaming area, and a locally inspired sports section featuring the Tennessee Titans."

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## the connected home experience

*The Dufresne Spencer Group's CEO, Chad Spencer, and Lisa Fanaro, EVP of Strategy and Experience at DSG.*

integrate seamlessly, this space showcases a connected home that enhances life's cherished moments—whether gathering with friends, enjoying a family dinner, or winding down for the night. “Our goal was to bring these experiences to life through immersive vignettes,” Fanaro explained. “We wanted guests to feel inspired by spaces that capture meaningful moments, seeing firsthand how Ashley and Samsung elevate everyday life.”

Upon entering, visitors are welcomed by a striking 240-inch Samsung LED wall that acts as a backdrop to the showroom's featured product, the Emilia 5-piece modular leather sofa. The LED wall highlights the versatility of the sofa. The front entry area features several experiential zones—a music-themed

room, a cozy dining area, a bedroom, and a flex home office/gaming room—all designed around creating life moments. Guests can engage with Samsung's SmartThings technology, activating routines that transform the space through multiple sensory touchpoints such as visual cues from the Samsung TVs, audio from the Music Frame, and mood lighting from Philips Hue.

The showroom flows like a curated journey, with zones that include a home theater, gaming area, and a locally inspired sports section featuring the Tennessee Titans. These immersive spaces allow guests to activate personalized settings with a simple tap, mirroring the SmartThings app routines they can use in their own homes, helping them envision how these solutions could enrich their daily lives.

“With our Samsung partnership, we're excited to explore new possibilities as technology evolves,” Fanaro added. “I believe guests will see continuous innovation in our spaces, especially as Samsung introduces new products, and we look forward to launching those enhancements together.”

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### The Products

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Ashley DSG and Samsung collaborated closely to curate a line-

up of products that blend style and function. Every piece in the Connected Home Experience was chosen with intention—from modular sofas and mango wood dining sets to Samsung's customizable Frame TV and versatile projectors—all aimed at resonating with the needs and tastes of Ashley's customer. Together, the brands focused on designing spaces that feel both aspirational and attainable.

Ashley DSG's vignettes include Samsung's newest product offerings and over 200 functional, connected devices from Samsung and SmartThings-compatible brands. These include Philips Hue lighting, Nanoleaf lighting, Eve roller shades, Kasa Smart home products, and Aqara curtain drivers. SmartThings is compatible with more than 3,800 products from over 340 third-party brands, including leading smart plugs, locks, light bulbs, and more.

All of Samsung's 2024 TVs that Ashley DSG currently sells include a built-in SmartThings IoT hub, which is Matter-enabled, making it easier to set up connected homes. In addition to selling Samsung TVs and projectors, the Connected Home Experience offers home audio and gaming monitors for purchase in their Brentwood location.

“Ashley's value proposition has always been style and value, mak-

“SmartThings is compatible with more than 3,800 products from over 340 third-party brands, including leading smart plugs, locks, light bulbs, and more.”



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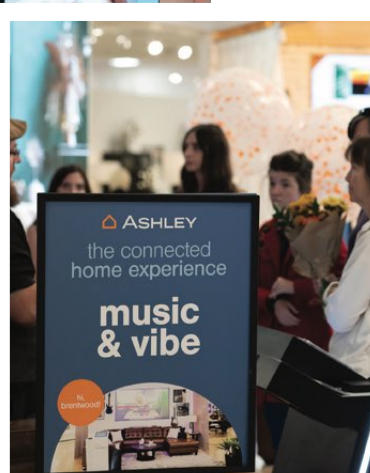


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ing quality home furnishings accessible without compromising price,” Fanaro explained. “As we continue developing the experience, we want to maintain affordability and quality for our guests, even with electronics. We are doing that by offering best-in-class financing and warranty options that go above and beyond what a customer would find at competitors.”

## The Future of Furniture Retail

Reflecting on her journey in the retail furniture industry, Fanaro highlighted how the Connected Home Experience represents the culmination of her dedication to creating innovative, guest-centered experiences that drive Ashley DSG’s growth. “This initiative allows us to connect with younger customers who value technology and smart

devices in their homes. It’s an opportunity to meet our guests where they are,” she shared.

Fanaro’s commitment to continually improving and redefining the furniture shopping experience has positioned Ashley DSG as a leader in the industry, and she views the partnership with Samsung as a critical milestone in sustaining that growth. “Our collaboration with Samsung is one of the most exciting and impactful partnerships we’ve taken on, and it’s my primary focus right now,” she added. “Our relationship with Samsung holds a bright future, and I expect other Ashley licensees will be just as inspired to bring similar experiences to Ashley customers nationwide.”

Chad Spencer, CEO of Ashley DSG, shares that plans are already underway to expand the Samsung partnership into more Ashley DSG

locations. Spencer echoed Fanaro’s enthusiasm for the future, emphasizing that “we’re just getting started and are incredibly excited about what lies ahead in furniture retail, underscoring DSG’s commitment to innovation and industry leadership.”

“The front entry area features several experiential zones—a music-themed room, a cozy dining area, a bedroom, and a flex home office/gaming room—all designed around creating life moments.”

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# BOLD 2025 PREDICTIONS

Amazing but true predictions for furniture & bedding retailers

by Gordon Hecht

If you're wondering how hot dogs, old spinning bratwurst, inflation, AI and recent slow traffic will affect your furniture & bedding business, read on!

They used to be a staple at the supermarket checkout. Right next to the Dentyne and Hershey's Krackel bars stood the tabloid newspapers. The National Enquirer and Weekly World News featured headlines like "Elvis found working at Wal-Mart" and "Taylor Dumps Travis for ALF."

Sure, I glanced at them and probably turned a page or two while waiting to pay for my twelve-pack and Twinkies. My favorite issues would arrive around this time of the year with the tabloids' prognostications for the upcoming year.

In the spirit of those forecasts from years past, here are my predictions for 2025.

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## Future of Artificial Intelligence

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Customers get turned off. Early in 2024, I heard a lot of buzz about a guy named AI. At the time, I didn't know if people were talking about Al Pacino, Al Gore or Albert Einstein. It turns out the buzz was about artificial intelligence.

AI is being used in a lot of business applications. It's supposed to speed processes and reduce the need for actual intelligent humans. You've probably experienced it when calling a customer service line or

using the chat feature on a website.

I've found that most current human-AI interactions are one-sided and generally result in an endless loop of questions, choices, and button-pushing. The final step is often frustration, which ends any reasonable path to purchasing.

On the other hand, I hear that the AI landscape is evolving rapidly. At the recent High Point Market, a beta version of whole-language AI described as an "artificially intelligent personal retail liaison" was introduced that promised to have back-and-forth personal conversations with furniture shoppers via text, chat and voice. The newest buzz is that it will be able to make personalized product recommenda-

"Despite slow traffic at the July Vegas show and less than stellar October High Point traffic, I predict more owners, buyers, and retail gurus will show up."

USA finebedroomfurniture HANDCRAFTEDINUSA finebedroom

# Ohio

## FURNITURE MARKET

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# AMAZING BUT TRUE PREDICTIONS!

tions and have a deep knowledge of furniture, store policies and store culture. They say the result will be more natural and productive conversations that prioritize and pass on high-value leads to drive appointments with real people.

**Prediction:** I will believe it when I experience it myself. Until then, I predict that businesses with real people answering phones and texts will see real increases in sales volume. Companies using some of the current AI models to make first contact with shoppers will enjoy artificial savings but have a degraded customer experience and lose customers at the margins.

“Next year, there is a high likelihood that your best employee will leave. Or your worst employee will stay!”

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## Show Up

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The upcoming year will offer furniture dealers many opportunities to find exciting new products. Of course, there are the High Point and Las Vegas Furniture markets, buying group conventions, regional shows, manufacturer’s open houses, and road shows.

This year was marked by high

retail inventory and slower retail traffic. Many mid-sized and smaller retailers skipped shows. Larger retailers, however, were out in force before official opening dates. I predict that in 2025, more independent furniture and bedding retailers will come to their senses and show up. Those who attend may get early access to new merchandise if the “big guys” don’t scoop up distribution first. Doing so will provide advantages in planning advertising and merchandising in advance of product shipments.

**Prediction:** Despite slow traffic at the July Vegas show and less than stellar October High Point traffic, I predict more owners, buyers, and retail gurus will show up as traffic increases and interest rates continue to decrease. They will see the cost of travel as an investment in their shops.

Those who skip shows and stay locked within their own four walls will miss out on upgrading their inventory and discovering new sources of supply, technology and ideas. They can look out the front window and see traffic racing past their store to shop the competition.

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## The Hot Dog Roller Grill

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You may have noticed that convenience stores are entering the fast-food business. This is a smart move, as Mickey D’s meals cost around \$10.

One of the largest C-store chains has introduced a rule regarding hot food displays. Any fare not sold within two hours must be tossed in the trash. Every shopper is entitled to a fresh offering. Old spinning hot dogs, bratwurst, and egg rolls don’t sell and take up space from items that will move.

It’s a lesson in inventory management that applies to the retail world. Each new year brings hot new products that are updated to sell to today’s shoppers.

**Prediction:** the brightest retailers will continue to pare down stale inventory and clear warehouses to make room for the many new introductions aggressive manufacturers offer. When it comes down to the last floor samples, savvy business owners mark them to rock-bottom blowout prices so that no inventory is over 180 days old. That allows retailers to show more new, exciting and promotable traffic builders.

Retailers that don’t do this will lazily tag floor samples at 10-25% off and sit on them until Rose Bowl 2026, never getting the chance to create revenue with the industry’s best offerings.

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## Don’t Take it Personnel-ly

---

Even though our industry has seen a loosening in the tight employment market, attracting and hiring good candidates over the last 36 months

# “Will 2025 bring surprises?”

I'm willing to predict that it will. But one thing that never changes is that it's always survival of the fittest in retail furniture and bedding.”



has been challenging. I predict the 2025 labor market will be friendlier to furniture and bedding retailers.

Next year, there is a high likelihood that your best employee will leave. Or your worst employee will stay! Whether or not that prediction comes true is up to you, your organization, and your company culture.

Remember that the people who work for you experienced inflation of 7% in 2021, 6.5% in 2022, 3.4% in 2023 and 2.4% this past year. Nobody can put that genie back in the bottle. The result is that even your most loyal workers may be enticed to switch companies if offered a few more bucks. Salespeople who work on commission see income rise with price increases. Hourly people do not.

When staffing is at a minimum, it becomes more difficult to cut lower-producing people. Sometimes, retailers just want a warm body in place.

**Prediction:** More store owners will prioritize recruiting 24/7/365 over the next 12 months. They will work to fill their files with resumes and applications by promoting their company on hiring websites, store websites,

social media, good old-fashioned face-to-face recruiting and store signage. They will offer recruiting bonuses to current staff members and provide cash or other incentives to current and past customers who refer candidates.

In 2025, more retailers will move compensation for every position in their company toward performance-based pay. Sure, commissions and bonuses for salespeople are a must, but it's a good idea to spread those bonuses more broadly as sales goals are achieved. Also, extra compensation should be offered for drivers and helpers who deliver bulky items like adjustable bed bases and motion sectional sofas.

Further, in 2025, owners and managers will invest more time in training, reviewing and coaching their teams for maximum performance. Reward the better and best employees and cut those who can't make the grade.

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## One Final Prediction

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I wish I had a Magic 8 Ball with all the answers. Will 2025 bring surpris-

es? I'm willing to predict that it will. But one thing that never changes is that it's always survival of the fittest in retail furniture and bedding. Winning at retail favors those who are most able to adapt to change.

Retailers that continue investing in advertising, people, physical structures, inventory, technology, visual merchandising, corporate culture and community goodwill will survive. Those who don't may not see 2026.

**About Gordon Hecht:** *Gordon Hecht is a business growth and development consultant to the retail home furnishings industry and a regular contributor to Furniture World. Reach him with questions at Gordon.Hecht@aol.com.*

“In 2025, more retailers will move compensation for every position in their company toward performance-based pay.”

Focus on  
DESIGN



### Omnia

The Joy sleep sofa features a graceful slope arm style with no uncomfortable bars. The king "SLOFA" bed shown, is available in both fabric and leather.

Contact information on page 66.



### Panama Jack

Wave two-piece sectional and matching coffee table adds a touch of modern sophistication, comfort and durability to any space. Contact information on page 66.

### Coaster

The Winchester Boucle Upholstered Extra Long Sofa with boucle upholstery in a sand pebble hue features extra plush channeling and tufted accents on a waterfall bench seat. Its wide armrests are piped to create texture and depth. Wide corduroy accent pillows filled with premium down-like fill complete the look.

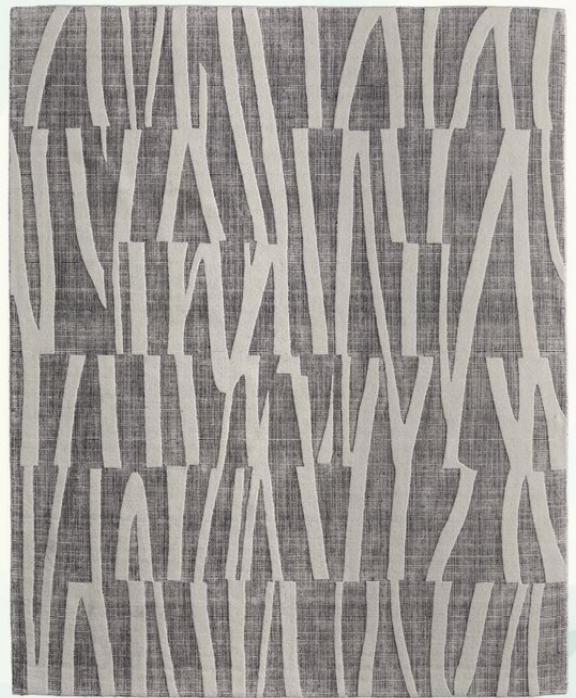
Contact information on page 66.



## Feizy

Handcrafted in India, the Peconic Collection by Thom Filicia features a blend of Belgian and Indian wool with pot-dyed yarn. Its loop and cut high/low pile and geometric design offer a sophisticated and tactile element to any room.

**Contact information on page 66.**



## Blu Furniture

The River Falls collection is shown here in rustic White Oak and Brown Maple. This collection includes a wide array of pieces available in numerous wood and finish combinations.

**Contact information on page 66.**



## Leather Living

The Parker in 100% top-grain leather seating with match on sides and backs has dual power headrests and footrests. It's available to quick ship with married covers in four colors. Made in Canada at \$479 FOB. **Contact information on page 66.**

Focus on

# DESIGN



## Whittier Wood

The new McKenzie Upholstered Panel Storage Bed offers 10 upholstery choices, five new bed styles and three new finish options. It is made from certified sustainable American Alder hardwoods and shown with blue steel diamond quilt upholstery and Snowbound finish.

Contact information on page 66.



## Murcano

The eco-friendly Eastlake chat set comes in premium HDPE with a two-toned gray and hand-brushed teak finish, complete with weather-resistant fabric cushions.

Contact information on page 66.



## Country View Woodworking

The most recent addition to CVW's "Make-It-Your-Way," collection features a 42" x 72" table with two leaves. It is available in multiple top shapes and edge profiles with a standard pedestal. Table is shown in Brown Maple finish.

Contact information on page 66.

## Nourison

With a delicately layered high-low construction and hand-carved finish, this abstract rug from the Graceful Collection adds a stunning sense of depth to any space. The nature-inspired design ebbs and flows like a changing landscape, complemented by a soothing grey color palette. Handmade from 100% wool for enhanced comfort.

**Contact information on page 66.**



## Bellini Modern

The elegant curve of the Bridge base with extendable ceramic top is available in several new colors, Calacatta Gold, Calacatta Black, Onice Beige, and Patagonia. It's shown here in Kalkbeige. The base is also available in Anthracite. Made in Italy.

**Contact information on page 66.**



## Craftmaster

This new sofa from the CM Modern collection, features a unique inset arm with a clean architectural look. Plush blend down seating offers luxurious comfort.

**Contact information on page 66.**



*Focus on*  
**DESIGN**



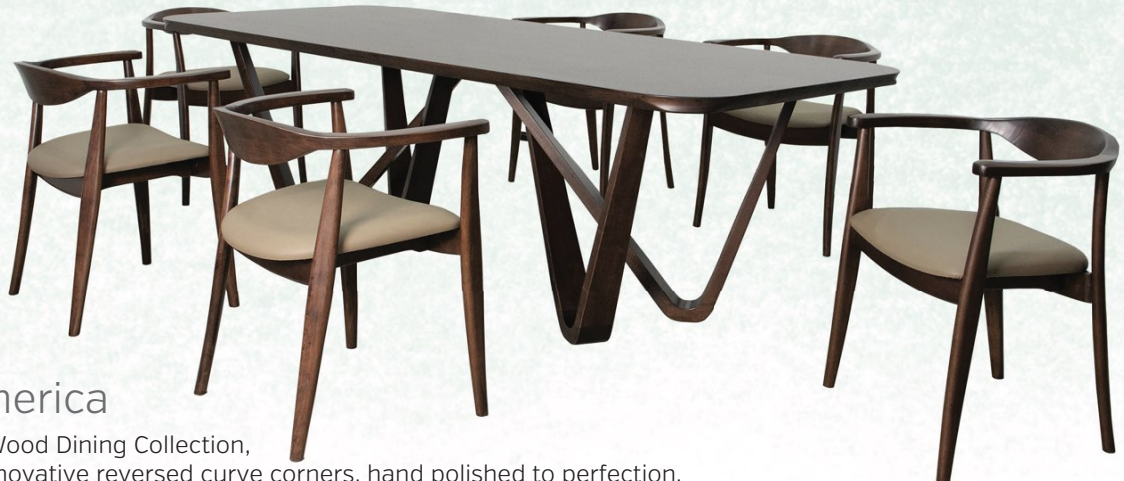
### Skyline Design

The four-piece Rodona Seating Set is constructed with premium aluminum and resilient polyester. This collection stands as a testament to timeless craftsmanship, promising enduring beauty against the elements. **Contact information on page 66.**



### Legends

The Serenity Shelter Boucle Bed is upholstered in lavish boucle fabric, with a soft, textured finish that adds a touch of refinement to any bedroom. **Contact information on page 66.**



### Furniture of America

Part of the Madiera Solid Wood Dining Collection, the Nordby set features innovative reversed curve corners, hand polished to perfection. Semi-handmade solid wood chairs with premium upholstered seats and a sleek, rounded design complete the look. **Contact information on page 66.**

## IFD

The Balam collection is made from, Teak and Mango wood. It features unique curves and handles that follow the trend of organic shapes and natural textures. Available in two colors. Sustainable, made in Mexico and warehoused in Phoenix, Houston, Atlanta, and Chicago.

**Contact information on page 66.**



## American Woodcrafters

This seven drawer dresser from the Oakdale Bedroom Collection is shown in a rich medium brown finish over Oak Solids and veneers. Hardware is a straight bar with bracket pull in a complementary bronze finish.

**Contact information on page 66.**

## Simply Amish

The Harper Bedroom Collection combines simplicity with contemporary elegance. Available in two and four post versions, meticulously constructed, showcasing the natural beauty of the wood and the craftsmanship that defines the Shaker tradition.

**Contact information on page 66.**



Focus on  
DESIGN



### Paragon

Two dramatic white sandhill cranes strolling along a green landscape are framed in a modern rubbed matte black wood with honeycomb embossing. **Contact information on page 66.**



### Union Home

The Mound Drink Table is a sculptural functional table. Quirky and unique, it's made of FSC Certified Oak in a natural finish. **Contact information on page 66.**

### Rainbow Outdoor

Rainbow Outdoor Stackable commercial grade barstools are made of UV resistant resin reinforced with glass fiber. **Contact information on page 66.**



### COZZIA

The CZ-645 is designed to offer a luxurious and therapeutic massage experience. It combines advanced technology with ergonomic design to deliver a wide range of massage techniques aimed at promoting relaxation, stress relief, and overall well-being.

**Contact information on page 66.**





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[pafurniturebuilders.com/pa-furniture-show](https://pafurniturebuilders.com/pa-furniture-show)

# REPAIRING DELIVERY EXPERIENCES

by Peter Schlosser

Dressing in the armor of digital tools is only as effective as a retailer's ability and willingness to do its due diligence in other important areas that affect customer delivery satisfaction.

I recently read an article published on the Furniture World website entitled "New Research Shows Impact of Delivery Experience on Major Furniture Retailers." I was pleased to see that something I've been passionate about my entire career—perfect deliveries—was once again in the headlines. I agree with everything cited in the article by Deliveright, a logistics and delivery platform, which noted that "26% of all reviews mention the delivery experience, and 75% of those reviews mentioning delivery are negative." The article explained how digital tools could help "improve the final mile delivery experience through better communication with the customer."

There's no debate that customers want flawless deliveries. Who wouldn't? But many other factors go into crafting a perfect delivery that cannot be solved by relying on a single approach.

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## The Thin Balloon Margin Trap

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I've written before about customer expectations in Furniture World, and I must say that customer demands for delivery are higher than ever before, in spite of the fact that a large majority of customers do not want to pay for it. Before everyone

piles on and says, "Hey buddy, it's a fact of business; you need to deal with it." I'd like to reply, "Hey, it's time to focus on core issues affecting delivery satisfaction."

Metaphorically, I see furniture retailing as a long, thin balloon that represents an entire operation. Some owners squeeze the balloon in different places, solving one issue while moving others to one side or another. Ultimately, customers want great prices, excellent delivery, and high quality. But when retailers drop prices, margins shrink and cost cutting follows. Salaries are the easiest [and sometimes the only] expense that can be controlled. Delivery quality suffers when people get laid off, or those with questionable qualifica-

*"The delivery crew delivered a broken end table. Once they were gone, the end table fell apart..."*





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"My furniture is missing parts & damaged. Its been almost one year and they tell me they are on backorder."

# "Furniture gets moved around

as in Tetris to get the load tight again for strapping. This can make furniture that is simply draped with pads vulnerable."



tions are hired to replace more experienced workers at lower salaries.

## Rolling Delivery Dice

It's true that communication with customers is critical for making efficient deliveries, but dressing in the armor of digital tools is only as effective as a retailer's ability and willingness to do its due diligence in other important areas that affect customer delivery satisfaction.

"We had five parts delivered, five service tech visits, and one chase replacement. Each time it was defective or couldn't be fixed."



My grandfather, Bill McCloskey, also a furniture operations consultant, used to say to his clients, "Do It Right The First Time." This seems simple, right? But many retailers undo that logic and roll the dice when addressing the 75% of negative customer reviews that mention delivery. Here are some problem

areas and remedies to consider:

**1. Shipping in the box.** Nope, I'm never going to agree with this! Some retailers cut open the box's top and front face, check for common damages, and retape. This catches top corner and drawer damage, but after thirty years of inspecting and repairing furniture, I can guarantee that many other problems will be missed if you do this. These include back panel, drawer and door operation issues, rear corner damage, and construction flaws, to name a few. And once you cut open the top and front of the box, your drivers now operate in a trash truck rather than a clean, neat delivery vehicle. Manufacturers have gotten exponentially better about putting near-perfect products in the box, whatever their definition of near-perfect may be. But remember that when the product gets to the inspection area of your warehouse, it is well-traveled.

**2. Draping pads rather than wrapping with tape.** You may be thinking that when tape is used, sticky pads get returned with tape all over them! Drivers hate that. My question is: Who runs the warehouse? Who is the manager? Buildings cannot be run based on the individual wants and desires of employees. Efficient operations are run with processes that work. Yes,

draping is faster and very tempting, especially if the load is light or can be put onto the truck so that exposed panels and components run a low risk of damage. However, the integrity of the initial loadout usually becomes compromised after the first delivery. Protected surfaces get exposed. Forgetting to tie down the load is potentially catastrophic. Furniture gets moved around as in Tetris to get the load tight again for strapping. This can make furniture that is simply draped with pads vulnerable.

**3. Poor lighting in the warehouse and on trucks.** If your people can't see what they are working on, they will miss a lot. No, a flashlight isn't the same as color-corrected LED troffers in the inspection lanes. One of the most ingenious solutions I've seen was designed by Jeff Winter at Furniture Mall of Kansas, which bathed furniture with bright light from above and all around. Furniture is fed into this inspection booth and only exits when it is perfect or marked for additional attention. Process, process, process!

**4. Inexperienced inspectors, deluxers, and technicians.** I am keenly aware that people with my skill set are rapidly disappearing from the retail furniture store workforce. Furniture repair is simi-

# “Some retailers cut open

the box's top and front face, check for common damages, and retape. This catches damage to the top corners and drawers.”

lar to other high-demand skills, like plumbing or welding. Repair technicians spend years learning the trade and must adapt to unusual and challenging repair situations. What happens if a repair tech is tasked with repairing an Ashley B650 piece but has never fixed silvery gold before? Likely, they will be told, “Figure it out; we load in three hours.” I was overjoyed to discover that Mohawk Finishing makes this color in a can, but I knew where to look and who to ask. There are many instances where a driver with good repair sense is thrust into the technician position but isn't given enough training and ends up back on a truck.

There are several ways to avoid this situation. Ashley Corporate has a training center, Mohawk offers

classes, community colleges provide art classes, and industry consultants like me can visit and offer one-on-one training.

## Conclusion

When the furniture is sent out in excellent condition, the likelihood of a perfect delivery rises exponentially. Coupled with powerful, intuitive online communication tools, your hard-won, hopefully loyal, very vocal customers will get the treatment they deserve. And you will earn respect and, perhaps, adulation. It's a win-win for everyone.

**About Peter Schlosser:** A frequent contributor to *Furniture World Magazine*, Schlosser consults with home furnishings retailers and man-

ufacturers, focusing on backend operations and repair. He also owns and operates a successful furniture restoration shop in Winston-Salem, NC. See all of Peter's articles at <https://www.furninfo.com/authors/peter-schlosser/22>. Questions or comments can be directed to him at [peter\\_schlosser@rocketmail.com](mailto:peter_schlosser@rocketmail.com).

I wish I could give their white glove service negative stars! The table has so many scratches & dents.

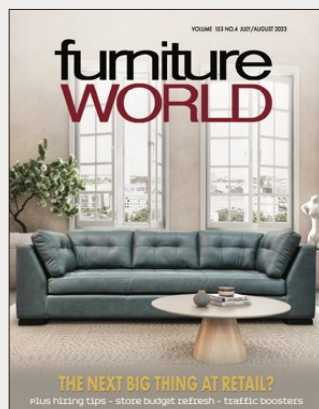


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# NEXT LEVEL TRAINING

Selling insights that will explode your sales volume!

Part 20 – by Scott Morris

Scott Morris presents sales practices to share with your sales team in 2025 to increase add-on sales, up-selling and cross selling.

There are many great ways to increase sales volume in furniture retail stores. In this Next Level Training installment, we will focus on things you can do individually and collectively to drive your sales to unexpected new heights. It will pay to frequently review these insights with your team to reinforce their importance and always keep your sales team in a selling frame of mind!

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## Down Time is for Learning!

---

It's common sense that the more your salespeople practice, the better they will be able to perform in front of customers. Taking time each day to practice presentations on their own or role-playing with other salespeople is one of the most important things they should do to improve sales performance. Each day comes with its opportunities and challenges, so this type of practice helps to ensure that each salesperson is primed and ready to go when their next customer comes in.

Downtime is also usually the only time most salespeople have to study new products, learn more about existing ones, and study the sales floor for natural step-ups and step-

downs. It also presents the most likely opportunity to ask managers for private mentoring from managers and fellow expert senior salespeople. You'll notice that the very best salespeople never sit around waiting for their next up. Instead, they are on a journey of constant self-improvement. Conversely, those who end up getting 'let go' for poor performance are those who sit around all day and frequently engage in fruitless personal conversations.

---

## Two Ways to Improve Sales Performance!

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One of the best ways to increase your company-wide close ratio is to hold sales meetings where salespeople are asked, "Could you please share your favorite 'close' and tell us exactly why and when you like to use it?" When I first asked this question, every salesperson in the room came to life, and each answer provided tremendous insight.

Some salespeople prefer to use closes that fit better with their personalities. It's a good idea to ask each salesperson to write down their favorite close. That way, you will have a complete list to pass out

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# EXPLODE YOUR SALES VOLUME

and discuss with your team at your next sales meeting. You will find that nobody will leave the room without that list!

Another excellent way to increase sales is to teach salespeople how to create their own customer traffic! Every truly great salesperson must cultivate a steady stream of repeat buyers. The ones who do this well provide customers with lots of genuine customer assistance that is remembered long after an initial sale. The best way to duplicate that is to become the type of salesperson who renders special help and insight to every customer. But exactly how do they learn that skill? By transforming your sales meeting into your store's training university!

Here's another question to stimulate the feedback that will benefit the whole group: "Who here gets a lot of repeat customers, and exactly why do they keep coming back to you?" You might also ask, "What can you do as a salesperson to

lock in all of your customers' future business?" This will generate great feedback and serve as a wake-up call for almost everyone to be more proactive about inquiring about a customer's future needs!

---

## Building Tickets

---

We will now look at three really great ways to help your salespeople increase the size of their sales. The first is "Add-on Selling," the second is "Up-selling," and the third is "Cross-selling."

**Add-on Selling:** Add-on selling, simply means adding something extra to a sales order, such as a complementary piece or item. Examples are an additional nightstand or two, an appropriate lamp for an end table, two extra dining chairs, and so on. Some customers might be characterized as minimalists who prefer uncluttered looks. Others are quite the opposite, preferring fully decorated looks. Most people have

preferences that fall somewhere in between.

It's very important to always sell to every individual's particular needs. The best way for your sales staff to find out where customers fall on the minimalist/maximalist scale is by simply asking, "Do you prefer a fully decorated look, a sparsely decorated one, or something between the two?" Their answers will often announce hidden add-on sales opportunities!

**Up-selling:** Up-selling to a higher-quality item or set can be achieved by steering customers in the right direction by appealing to their desire for durability, quality, style and craftsmanship. Many salespeople I've worked with over the years have had success up-selling dining or bedding sets by saying something like, "Betty, if you get the better set now, it will only cost you \$400 more, but it will likely last twice as long compared to the less expensive one. If you decide, howev-



"We will now look at three really great ways to help your salespeople increase the size of their sales! The first is 'Add-on Selling,' the second is 'Up-selling,' and the third is 'Cross-selling.'"

# Retail Performance Tip #20

## From David McMahon at PerformNOW

“Building a Pipeline for future sales from past customers and prospects enables retailers to maximize their sales today. Manage with innovative tools and processes to make it happen.”

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Follow-Up  
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# “Cross-selling a mattress

to someone who didn't come in to buy one requires a different sales approach.

The main difference is that the presentation should be shortened quite a bit.”

er, to go with the less expensive set today and replace it in 10 years, with inflation factored in, your total cost will end up being way more. In other words, you will only spend \$1,400 for the better set now and be done for a very long time. But if you don't, you'll be paying \$1,000 today plus about \$1,400 in the future, for a total of \$2,400, and miss out on all the advantages the better set will give you over that same 20-year period.”

Another up-selling approach that works with some customers is to point out that they can make a 'legacy purchase' by spending a little more. For example, say, “John and Mary, the better set you also like, for just \$500 more, would actually be an heirloom purchase. Its better quality ensures it will last and can be passed down to the family as a great reminder of both of you for

generations to come! These last two up-selling techniques can work like magic!

**Cross-selling:** Every sales associate should aim to cross-sell items unrelated to purchases customers have already decided upon. The best example is suggesting the addition of a mattress. As a sales associate, cross-selling mattresses accounted for 25% of my monthly sales and 25% of my compensation due to mattress spiffs and bonuses!

Cross-selling a mattress to someone who didn't come in to buy one requires a different sales approach. The main difference is that the presentation should be shortened quite a bit, and it usually takes an enticing invitation to get them to try one out. Something like, “Since you're already here, you really owe it to yourself to take a minute to try out the new

space-age materials our mattresses are made of. If you do, you'll remember it forever!” Instead of space-age materials, “technology-enabled smart beds that provide a better night's sleep” or other inviting mattress features can be substituted.

---

## Four Most Versatile Add-ons!

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Many versatile items present your salespeople with opportunities to create add-on sales and cross-sell. Dining chairs are a prime example. There are about a dozen places in homes where extra dining chairs can be used. Here are just a few: In a bedroom, as a dressing chair; by an entryway to change shoes and put boots on; and for extra seating in a home office.

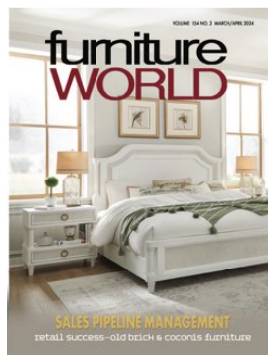
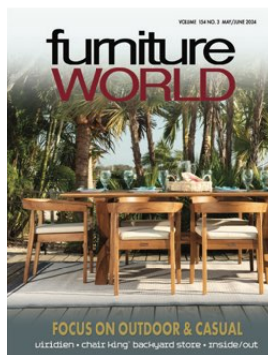
Another versatile item is the dining set bench. It can be placed under a

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# REPEAT BUYERS

window for people to enjoy the view, at the end of a bed, in entryways or mudrooms for putting on shoes, and basically in any room where seating is required when company arrives.

Nightstands provide great looks and convenient storage in entryways. With a lamp on top, they can fill awkward spaces and corners. They can sometimes be placed in large closets to provide additional drawer storage or in front of a large window next to a chair.

Last but not least, ottomans can

be placed in front of sofas, sectionals, or large chairs to provide convenient seating for guests and extra storage. Easy to move to other rooms, customers can use them to change diapers and fold clothes. An ottoman can turn any large chair, loveseat, sofa, or sectional into a chaise longue.

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## Conclusion

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Encouraging salespeople to use their downtime productively is one of the most important things an owner or sales manager can do. However, significant progress cannot be made if salespeople don't focus on sales basics every day with every customer.

They must focus on improving their close ratio and setting the stage for repeat business. They must also remember the three ways to increase their tickets and the four most versatile add-ons presented in this Next Level Training installment, which should be kept in mind

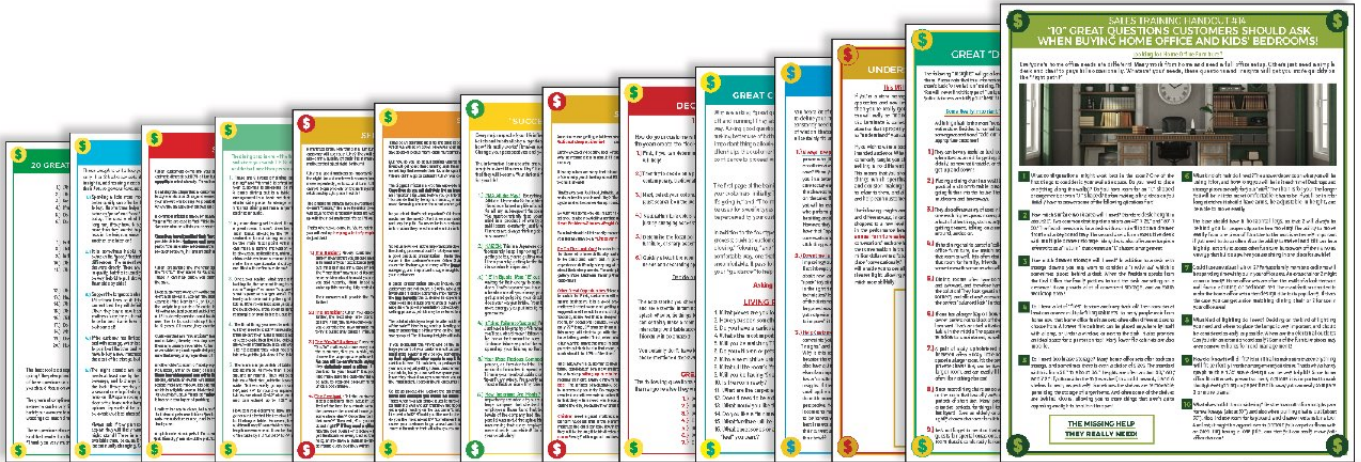
“Many versatile items present your salespeople with opportunities to create add-on sales and cross-sell. Dining chairs are a prime example.”

when waiting on customers. Happy Selling!!!

**About Scott Morris:** *Scott created the advanced “7 Furniture Sales Academies,” a 10-hour course designed for advanced training to be given several weeks after a store’s basic orientation training. He also recently developed “The Lunchroom Table Training University for Furniture Stores!” It consists of 14 permanent laminates that will allow any manager to instantly give informative sales meetings and provide an ongoing advanced training reference for salespeople when left on a stand in the lunchroom. It is a cutting-edge store training “Game-Changer!”*

*Questions about this article, his “Sales Closing Academy,” “Mattress Selling Academy,” or any of his advanced “7 Furniture Selling Academies” [or any sales topic at all, such as a free evaluation of your company’s sales training program, or writing periodic sales newsletters specifically for your company], contact him at: [hsm7777@att.net](mailto:hsm7777@att.net). To hear a pre-recorded message about the “16 important things most furniture salespeople currently never get trained on,” or if you wish to learn more about his transformational training, visit [www.TheBestFurnitureSalesEver.com](http://www.TheBestFurnitureSalesEver.com) : or simply speak “Scott Morris Furniture Trainer” into your phone!*

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