

Michael Knell's

HomeGoodsOnline.ca

HGO merchandiser

FALL 2018

Volume Seven, Issue 3

**SOUTH HILL'S
NEW HOME**

**ALLISON MCLELLAN:
BORN TO RUN A
FURNITURE STORE**

**COOPER ON THE
NEED FOR CLARITY**

**ROUND TABLE:
A GREAT TIME TO
BE IN THE INDUSTRY**

**SAMSUNG CANADA'S
TECHNOLOGY
PLAYGROUND**

**SPECIAL SECTION:
THE 2018**

**Retail Sales
Professional
Awards**



Because you
Love it ™



**Mattress
Protectors**



**Furniture
Service Plans**



We care for what you love!

They buy it because they **LOVE** it.
We help you with what happens after.
A **NEW** way of presenting complementary sales.

Contact us at 1.800.661.7313 ext. 3



**High Efficiency
Detergents**



**Appliance
Service Plans**



8



must be seen to be believed. In this special section, we introduce the 2018 award recipients, each of whom was profiled by contributing editor Ashley Newport.

24 **ROUND TABLE** A GREAT TIME FOR OUR INDUSTRY

Six furniture industry leaders agreed to talk on camera for *Home Goods Online's* first-ever round table. Several themes emerged, the most important being that now is a great time to be part of the Canadian industry and the need for independent retailers to adapt to a changing consumer reality – a task for which they may be better suited than their national chain competitors.

28 **NEXGEN** BORN TO RUN A FURNITURE STORE

Contributing editor Ashley Newport profiles Allison McLellan, the easy-going and passionate sales manager of – and heir to – a New Brunswick furniture retailer is still happy serving customers after finding his calling at the tender age of 14.

32 **APPLIANCES** A TECHNOLOGY PLAYGROUND

Consumer are wanting to experience their kitchen and laundry technology before buying. Samsung's newest and largest experience store, located in the heart of downtown Toronto at the Eaton Centre, should allow them to do just that. Our report is from Michael Knell.

35 **ON RETAIL** CLARITY IS JOB ONE

Without clarity, there can be no focus, commitment, urgency or accountability. It's the job of the business owner, leader or manager to provide it – for if he doesn't or can't, no one else in the organisation can. Wisdom from our resident retail guru, Donald Cooper.

ON OUR COVER: Brad Geddes, president and CEO of Zucora Home, the primary sponsor of the Retail Sales Professional Awards is seen with Marisa Deluca of La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries in Etobicoke, Ontario the recipient of the distinction for both the Central Region and the nation. Deluca and her fellow recipients were feted at the Canadian Home Furnishings Gala.

6 **EDITOR'S LETTER** LEADING LIGHTS

This year's Canadian Furniture Show gave us an opportunity to do something new – a video blog, the first of which bears good news from several leading lights of our industry: the future is good. They also offer insights into where the market is going now that Sears Canada has left the retail plane.

8 **OPENINGS** SOUTH HILL'S NEW HOME

Moving into a new space right next store to its original location in Toronto's design district has given this high-end purveyor more room to strut its classically modern stuff. HGO publisher Michael Knell reports on this new space designed to support the needs of a small, but growing furniture retailer.

15 **SPECIAL SECTION** WE FOUND CANADA'S BEST RETAIL FURNITURE SALES PEOPLE

In collaboration with Zucora Home, *Home Goods Online* hosted the second annual edition of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* program. Its goal is to seek out this country's best retail sales people and sales managers working in furniture, mattress and major appliance stores. The quality of the response we received from retailers across the country was staggering and truly encouraging. The amount of raw talent at work on retail floors from Victoria and to St. John's

32



28



Magnistretch



MAGNISTRETCH TECHNOLOGY

- HELPS REDUCING BACK AND NECK PAIN
- REVITALIZES DISCS DURING SLEEP
DUE TO AN IMPROVED BLOOD FLOW
- PREVENTS VERTEBRAE COMPACTING



Universidad
Zaragoza

www.magniflex.com

For more info please contact:

Richard Landriault, Director of Sales – Magniflex Canada

rlandriault1@videotron.ca - Tel 905.481.0940





MICHAEL J. KNELL

LEADING LIGHTS

This year's Canadian Furniture Show gave us an opportunity to do something new – a video blog, the first of which bears good news from several leading lights of our industry: the future is good.

WE ARE STARTING TO GROW AND CHANGE HERE AT HOME Goods Online. The most obvious is we've started to experiment with video and are not only incorporating it into our web site, but we've created a YouTube channel as well. One of the first major projects we've undertaken is round-table that was taped, as they say, during the recent Canadian Furniture Show.

Six leading lights in our industry were asked four main questions, but it's their response to the demise of Sears Canada and their take on the furniture, mattress and major appliances retailers' prospects that really need your attention.

The loss of Sears was at best a temporary set back for their suppliers. For retailers it may prove a gift if exploited properly. The toughest transition will be felt by Canadian furniture manufacturers as the traditional Sears customer for this category is likely to take her time finding a new place to buy. Our panel seems to agree retailers who are tag order experts and service oriented are the most likely to attract her. Here is where the independent has a chance to shine.

The six believe the mattress and major appliance customer has already migrated although the ramifications haven't been fully felt yet – after all, Sears only bit the dust six months ago.

What they really seem to agree on is that capable forward-looking retailers – particularly independents – have a good future. The past two or three years have been good for the industry. Sales have gone up over the past few years, most agree the average ticket is up and so long as employment levels remain relatively high, the housing market remains a powerful contributor to the overall economy and interest rates relatively low, the industry's prospects remain solid.

We still must contend with the internet and become social media experts while providing a great customer experience (if someone could only tell me what that means, precisely) but that's the new reality. Previous generations of independent furniture retailers had their new realities and they seem to cope with the them quite well. If they hadn't, we wouldn't be here. This is a long-winded way to encourage you to look at **HGO.tv** – and, if you're of a mind to do so, drop me a line and tell me your impressions as there is more to come.

Michael J. Knell
Publisher & Editor
mknell@homegoodsonline.ca



HomeGoodsOnline.ca

HGO merchandiser

FALL 2018 • VOLUME SEVEN, ISSUE 3
ISSN 2291-4765

www.HomeGoodsOnline.ca

PUBLISHER & EDITOR

Michael J. Knell

mknell@homegoodsonline.ca

MARKETING DIRECTOR

Corrie-Ann Knell

marketing@homegoodsonline.ca

CONTRIBUTING EDITOR

Ashley Newport

ashley@homegoodsonline.ca

CONTRIBUTOR

Donald Cooper

ART DIRECTOR

Samantha Edwards

Sam I Am Creative

samiamcreative@gmail.com

IT DIRECTOR

Jayne Cousins

In House Logic

websmith@inhouselogic.com

PUBLISHED BY

Windsor Bay Communications Inc.

P.O. Box 3023, 120 Ontario Street

Brighton, Ontario K0K 1H0

T: 613.475.4704

F: 613.475.0829

Michael J. Knell, Managing Partner

PUBLISHERS OF

HGO This Week

Home Goods Online.ca

© 2018

Windsor Bay Communications Inc.

All rights reserved.

Windsor Bay Communications does not accept any responsibility or liability for any mistakes or misprints herein, regardless of whether such errors are the result of negligence, accident or any other cause whatsoever. Reproduction, in whole or in part, of this magazine is strictly forbidden without the prior written permission of the publisher.

AFFILIATE MEMBER





ZUCORA
HOME

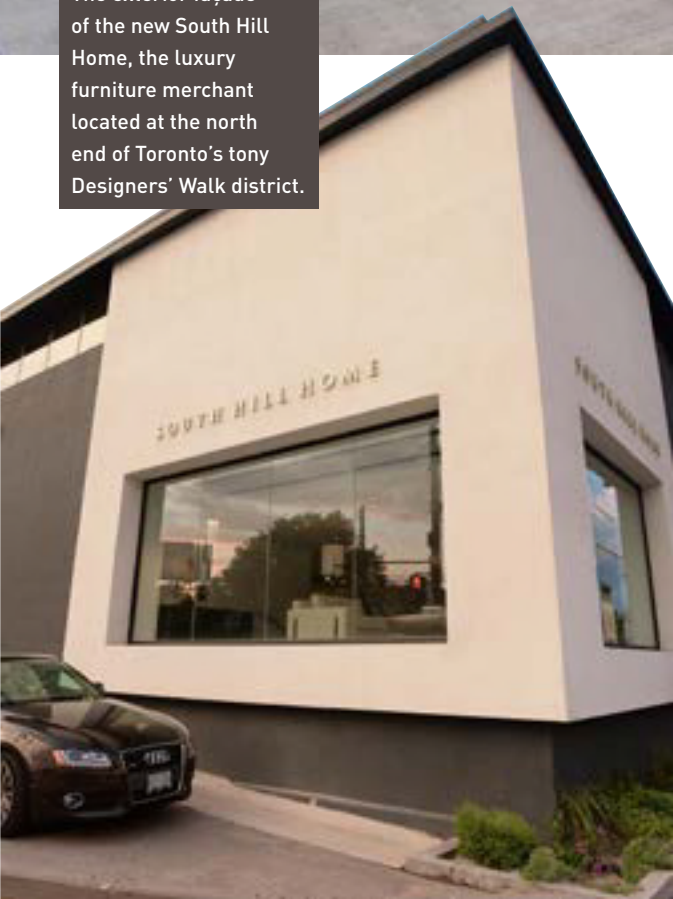
Service is at our core.

With a legacy rooted in an industry-wide reputation for creating exceptional customer experiences, we've become Canada's largest provider of home furnishing protection programs. Our plans and products deliver financial success for national, regional and independent home furnishing retailers. **Let us help you.**



The exterior façade of the new South Hill Home, the luxury furniture merchant located at the north end of Toronto's tony Designers' Walk district.

Accessories are a big part of South Hill's overall business.



SOUTH HILL's *new home*

Moving into a new space right next store to its original location in Toronto's design district has given this high-end purveyor more room to strut its classically modern stuff.

BY MICHAEL J. KNELL



South Hill curates the product on the floor from global sources, finding its assortment in the U.S., Britain, France, Italy and other exotic locations, including Canada.

MOST FURNITURE RETAILERS merchandise their floors. But not the principals of South Hill Home. They prefer curated. Indeed, the company's new home on the corner of Dupont Street and Davenport Road – at the top of one of Toronto's toniest design districts – simply sparkles with a combination of classic ideas and modern elements that reinforces its burgeoning reputation as one of the city's leading purveyors of high-end, luxury furniture and furnishings.

Established in 2004, South Hill Home is lead by a team of three: Sandra De Luca, Nella De Luca and Paul Harper.

According to the retailer's web site (www.SouthHillHome.com), Harper manages all the creative elements from product sourcing to showroom displays. A 25-year veteran of Canada's design community, he worked at

Gluckstein Design and Joan Eiley – a high-end furniture and accessory trade showroom that specialised in serving the design community until its founder retired about a decade ago – before launching South Hill Home.

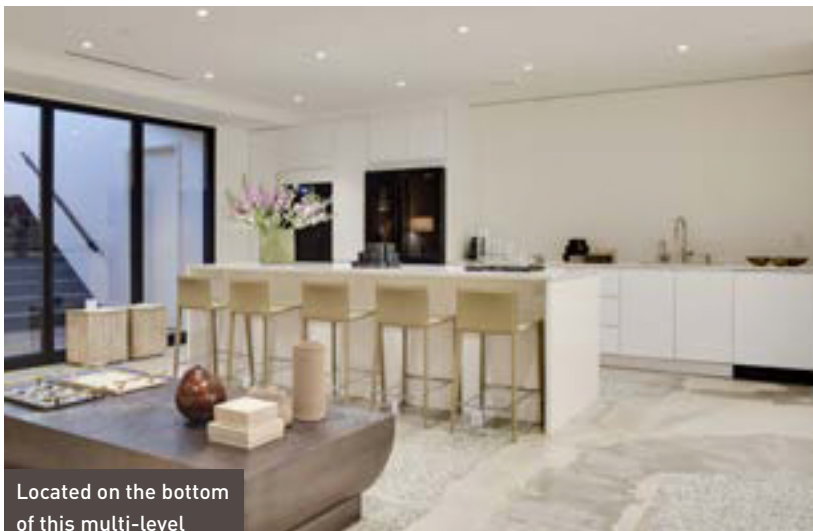
Nella De Luca is the operations and logistics manager while the third principal, Sandra De Luca, focuses works with design firms and purchasing agents on contract and special projects.

Three times larger – although next door to – its original showroom, the new multi-level South Hill Home covers about 13,000 square feet of floor space.

According to Richard Bertrand, director of marketing, the need for additional space was driven by the company's growth. "We have a greater number of collections, therefore, a greater need for the space to curate them," he explains. "We also need to enhance the shopper experience, conveying the luxury culture of all our highly coveted collections." ▶



A lot of South Hill's upholstery assortment is from Powell & Bonnell – the Toronto-based designer and custom furniture maker.



Located on the bottom of this multi-level building, South Hill's new store features a coffee bar where customers can be refreshed when working with a staff member.

South Hill's niche goes beyond being simply a purveyor of high-end furniture to the interior design and architectural community. "We are committed to carrying uniquely designed and impeccably crafted pieces that combine classic ideas and modern elements," is how Bertrand describes their merchandising philosophy. "It's about timeless design and contemporary elegance. At South Hill Home, we strive to bring to Toronto world-renowned and unique home furnishings that

simply have not been available in the Greater Toronto Area until now."

Product is sourced from around the world: the United States, France, Italy and the United Kingdom are all represented on the floor as the company focuses on three categories: lighting, accessories and furniture (with an emphasis on dining, home office, living room, occasional and bedroom, but not mattresses).

The buyers shop the major designer-focused trade shows held in New York; Chicago (Neo-Con); Paris (Maison et Objet); Milan, Los Angeles and London. They also frequent the High Point Market in North Carolina as well trade events in Toronto such as the Interior Design Show and the Canadian Furniture Show.

Currently, about 35% of South Hill's floor space is taken up by Canadian resources. In addition to Matthew McCormick, the Vancouver-based producer of custom lighting, South Hill features furniture from Powell & Bonnell, the Toronto-based designer and fabricator of contemporary upholstery and case goods. In fact, South Hill is its only Canadian retailer. ►

DISCOVER THE EXTRAORDINARY

*On the horizon awaits our spectacular collection of furnishings
and alluring objects for every home and lifestyle.*



JANUARY 27 - 31, 2019
Save the Date at LasVegasMarket.com



LAS VEGAS
MARKET™

“We are committed to carrying uniquely designed and impeccably crafted pieces that combine classic ideas and modern elements. It’s about timeless design and contemporary elegance.”



South Hill believes in product that incorporates classic ideas with modern elements.

Beyond the design community, Bertrand describes South Hill’s target customer as an affluent design enthusiast. “Due to our price points, we cater to a population with a higher than average household income,” he says.

He adds they work very hard at customer retention, starting with ‘white glove’ customer service. “We try making them feel at ease with their decision to buy or not,” Bertrand says, adding honesty is also very important. “Our knowledge and passion for interior design allows us to help our customers find the perfect pieces.” Even if, that perfect piece is somewhere other than South Hill Home.

“We also believe in the strength and quality behind each piece of furniture we carry and the designers who create them.”

However, moving into the new digs has prompted more people to just walk into the store. “Compared to our previous location, our walk-in has tripled,” Bertrand reports.

In addition to print advertising, South Hill is active on social media – primarily Instagram (@south_hill_home), where they now have more than 25,000 followers.

Most furniture industry insiders agree: the high-end has the industry’s highest growth potential as the economy begins to shake-off the damage done by the 2008 financial crisis. If this holds true, the industry will be hearing a lot more from South Hill Home in the not-too-distant future. **HGO**

MICHAEL J. KNELL is the publisher and editor of Home Goods Online and all of its platforms. He has observed, researched and written about Canada’s furniture and mattress industry for the past three decades. He can be reached at mknell@homegoodsonline.ca

PROTECT·A·BED®

Every Mattress Needs Protection®

We provide a wide assortment of sleep necessities, backed by the strategy and expertise that will help you sell more.

**NOT HITTING YOUR
SALES GOALS?
IT'S TIME
TO SWITCH**

TO THE LEADING TOP-OF-BED PROGRAM

**CREATE
EXCITEMENT
IN YOUR STORE**

Through marketing, displays and strategic development, we help our retailers infuse top-of-bed with excitement and energy.



www.protectabedcanada.com/resellers
866-297-8836 | info@protectabed.com

sierrasleep®

— BY ASHLEY —

wake up *Refreshed.*



WE TOOK A DIFFERENT ANGLE ON OUR MATTRESSES

The fastest growing mattress line.

SHIPS ON
YOUR ASHLEY
TRUCK

OMNI-CHANNEL
MARKETING
SOLUTIONS

PHENOMENAL
MATTRESS
VALUES



The recipients of the 2018 *Retail Sales Professional Awards* are seen here with Brad Geddes (centre), president and CEO of Zucora Home, the program's Presenting Sponsor at this year's Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala. Seen here from left to right are: Terry Harder of Innovative Sleep Solutions in Surrey, British Columbia – Pacific Region; Randy Shanks of Daley's BrandSource Home Furnishings in Fredericton, New Brunswick – Atlantic Region; Marisa Deluca of La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries in Etobicoke, Ontario – Central Region; and, Brian Palethorpe of Perfect Home Furniture, Calgary, Alberta – Western Region.

WE FOUND CANADA'S BEST RETAIL FURNITURE SALES PEOPLE

INTRO BY MICHAEL J. KNELL • PROFILES BY ASHLEY NEWPORT

FOR THE SECOND consecutive year, *Home Goods Online* – in collaboration with Zucora Home – organised the *Retail Sales Professional Awards*, whose goal to seek out and celebrate the best sales people and sales managers working on furniture, mattress and/or major appliance stores across this country. The quality of the response received from retailers as well as their vendor partners was staggering and truly encouraging. The amount of raw talent at work on retail floors from Victoria and to St. John's continues to be truly impressive.

When we published our call to nominate, Brad Geddes, president and chief executive officer of Zucora Home, the London-based added value resource and Presenting Sponsor of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* (RSPA), pointed out they really do control the industry's fate.



"These men and woman are our industry's first point of contact with the customer. They literally control what the customer buys and why – yet we don't, as an industry, recognise and celebrate their contributions," he said, adding, "The RSPA will celebrate the outstanding achievement of sales professionals throughout Canada's home furnishings industry. In addition to sales success, the RSPAs are driven by peer-recognised achievement for delivering customer excellence by going 'above and beyond'."

Geddes also noted the sheer number of nominations received for the 2018 RSPA Awards program was double that received last year. "With the significant increase in the number of nominees from across Canada, I'm sure it was very difficult for the independent panel to make their selections," he said. "It's great to see that our industry is well represented and in such good hands on the sales floor." ►

“The common trait shared among the winners is they take the time to know all about the products and services they are selling; they get to know their customer by asking great questions to close gaps in information; and, they learn how these products are important to their customer and their family to creating their home environment.”

Nominees had to meet the following requirements, at minimum:

- He or she must be actively employed as a sales associate or manager in the retail of home furnishing products (furniture; appliances; electronics; bedding and related products) in Canada;
- He or she must have a minimum of three years of direct sales experience with consumers;
- He or she must consistently meet or exceed performance goals as confirmed by the candidate's employer;
- He or she must demonstrate a customer-focused approach with supported documentation;
- He or she must have a record of mentoring and assisting other sales professionals as recognised by their peers; and,
- He or she must be aware of the nomination and be willing to be considered for nomination, and if selected, be available to attend the Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala event to be held in Toronto just prior to the Canadian Furniture Show (transportation and accommodation to be provided).

This year, we condensed the number of regions from which the recipients would be selected: the Pacific Regional (basically, British Columbia); the Western Region (including Alberta, Saskatchewan, Manitoba, The Yukon, Northwest Territories and Nunavut); the Central Regional (Ontario and Quebec); and, the Atlantic Region (including Nova Scotia, New Brunswick, Prince Edward Island and Newfoundland & Labrador).

From these, one national award recipient was chosen.

The 2018 RSPA winners will be introduced more fully on the pages that follow, but congratulations are warranted once again to: Randy Shanks of Daley's BrandSource Home Furnishings in Fredericton, New Brunswick – Atlantic Region; Marisa Deluca of La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries in Etobicoke, Ontario – Central Region; Brian Palethorpe of Perfect Home Furniture, Calgary, Alberta – Western Region; and, Terry Harder of Innovative Sleep Solutions in Surrey, British Columbia – Pacific Region.

Marisa Deluca was also named Canada's Retail Sales Professional of the Year for 2018.

Each is also profiled by HGO contributing editor Ashley Newport on the pages that follow. The photos were taken by Bruce Gibson of Toronto's Bruce Gibson Photography and are courtesy of the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance.

Each recipient was also interviewed during this year's CFS for HGO's new YouTube channel. You can meet the by going to: www.youtube.com/channel/UCM.

This year's judging panel included: Mark Geddes, senior director of sales for Zucora Home; Corrie-Ann Knell, HGO's director of sales and marketing; and, Pat Kelly, then assistant vice president of home furnishings for Cantrex Nationwide. Pat has since retired.

The recipients of the RSPA Awards received an all-expense paid trip (including airfare, accommodation and meals) to Toronto where they were presented to the industry during this year's Canadian Home Furnishings Awards gala. They were also invited to attend the Canadian Furniture Show, which opened the following morning at the International Centre.

Pat Kelly was unequivocal in his praise for this year's award recipients.

“We were very pleased with the results of the RSPA awards for 2018, momentum is gathering for what we consider the most important part of any retail organisation: front line sales staff,” he said. “We had a terrific increase in the number of submissions and like last year I was so very impressed with the quality of the submissions. The respect and admiration that supported the nominees in the submissions was even greater this year. Some were in a sales management position performing both roles as a sales consultant and manager.

“This leadership involvement on the sales floor is critical to mentoring and showing by example how important customer service is today,” Kelly continued. “We always talk of change in business and the pace of change in today's world. One constant however is the importance of a sales consultant's relationship with the customer. These candidates were recognised for their commitment and expertise in keeping up with the pace of change while maintaining the human connection and emotional attachment that consumers still and will always look for when purchasing home furnishings. As complex as this relationship has become with new technologies entering the marketplace daily we all know and understand that a direct connection with a knowledgeable dedicated sales person can strengthen and build bricks and mortar retail. As word spreads on the recognition for these very talented and dedicated winners we are looking forward to a remarkable 2019 event.”

Zucora's Mark Geddes agreed.

“There was unanimous agreement among the members of the judging panel for the 2018 *Retail Sales Professional Award* that the standard of the nominees was impressive and certainly made our job difficult. It was evident that each of the individuals share a fearless drive to succeed, persevere ►

in a demanding industry, and excel at working with their customers to find the right product or service just for them,” he noted.

“The common trait shared among the winners is they take the time to know all about the products and services they are selling; they get to know their customer by asking great questions to close gaps in information; and, they learn how these products are important to their customer and their family to creating their home environment,” he continued, adding these are traits common to all sales professionals.

“I appreciate the opportunity to be a member of the judging panel and thank each of the sales professionals from

across Canada that we had the opportunity to meet through this process,” Geddes said. “It is a great reminder that no matter how much we automate this is still a business where human interaction ranks highly.”

The RSP Awards program is also supported by the Canadian Home Furnishings Alliance (CHFA) as well as by the organisers of the Canadian Furniture Show (CFS). It also maintains a web site at www.RSPAwards.com.

The call for entries for the 2019 *Retail Sales Professional Awards* will be made next January by *Home Goods Online*, which extends its congratulations to the winning class of 2018. Our industry’s future is indeed safe in their hands.

A LETTER FROM THE PRESENTING SPONSOR

HONOURING THE CREATION OF CUSTOMERS

“The purpose of a business is to create a customer.”



HONOURING THOSE WHO create customers for this country’s furniture and home furnishings industry just seems the natural thing to do and probably explains why twice as many nominations were received for the second annual *Retail Sales Professional*

Awards, which were presented not long ago.

Not only have the number of candidates increase, but the professionalism and quality of individuals who were nominated by their managers and industry peers made it even more challenging for the judging panel to select this year’s recipients.

Our industry is entirely dependent on the thousands of professional sales associates across Canada whose personal success (and income) is dependent on their ability to quickly form relationships, understand customer needs, identify potential solutions and finalise a transaction – all while continuing to remain positive, supportive and appreciative of their customer’s business.

A professional sales associate’s life is not an easy one. The pressure to meet sales goals, remaining optimistic during long periods of inactivity and overcoming temporary set-backs (for example, when a transaction is unable to be completed) means creating a new customer is all that much sweeter of an experience!

Selling home furnishings is not for the faint-of-heart.

When you dig into the background of RSP Award nominees, you discover professionals who are passionate about what they do, believe in helping others and are driven to create success. In many cases, nominees have been doing this important work for decades but always remain open to learning how to improve.

The *Retail Sales Professional Awards* is our industry-wide opportunity to recognise the significant value that these key individuals provide for all of us. With the exemplary support of our communications sponsor, *Home Goods Online*, recipients of the RSP Awards are highlighted and celebrated for the work they do. When you read their profiles you will immediately understand why these individuals were selected for special recognition.

With the support of two of our leading industry organisations – the Canadian Home Furnishings Association and the Canadian Furniture Show – together with our esteemed panel of judges, we are able to highlight and celebrate professional sales associates who make it all happen.

As the Presenting Sponsor, Zurcora Home is proud to have played a small role in recognising these industry professionals who inspire us. Their ability to create and serve customers on a daily basis provides us all with the business success that we’re able to enjoy.

Bradford ‘Brad’ Geddes

*President and Chief Executive Officer
Zurcora Inc.*

RANDY SHANKS DOESN'T NEED TO CONQUER THE WORLD

THE OUTGOING SALES MANAGER FOR DALEY'S BrandSource Home Furnishings – a single unit operation in Fredericton, New Brunswick – Randy Shanks fell in love with the industry after accepting a part-time job at the store 30 years ago and realising he was quite good at the job. For that reason alone, it's easy to see why he was a shoe-in to receive the *Retail Sales Professional (RSP) Award*.

The standard bearer for Atlantic Canada, Shanks was one of four recipients selected during the second annual 2018 RSP Awards program, which recognises the achievements of experienced sales professionals who are leaders when it comes to delivering exceptional customer sales and service.

Shanks wasn't expecting any kind of award. "No, I wasn't expecting it," he says. "I don't expect awards, I don't think that drives me."

Shanks was nominated by Randall McKay, who has owned the store – part of the BrandSource banner operated by Mega Group – since 1988. "Randy excels in his field. He puts his customers needs first and makes sure they get exactly what they need," he says, adding, "He is motivated first and foremost by what his customers need, this in return, gives him a loyal fan base of customers that only want to buy from him and nobody else."

"The customers are appreciative of his attention to detail," McKay continues. "He puts a lot of effort into every sale and no sale is too small. He is also a great employee with the store's best interest at heart. He is truly a selling machine."

McKay's praise make sense, especially when considering they have worked together for three decades.

"I started here in '88 or '89," Shanks recalls. "We [McKay and I] grew up in the same community and we've known each other forever. I started at the store part-time and just wanted part-time work, just to make a little extra money. I hadn't worked in furniture before, but I did work in sales."

The part-time gig turned into a full-time passion. "I got good at it and decided to stay. That, and meeting different people and doing different things all the time. There are different problems, different solutions, people moving in from different places and hearing their stories," he says.

For Shanks, hearing those stories is one of the most rewarding parts of his job. "One man just came in from Niagara Falls, and he just said he wants to retire here. He said I was his first friend in the area," he remembers. "The stories you collect is the neat thing. You have to be a little bit of a

people person, and more often than not, I am. You got to be at least somewhat of an extrovert, you don't have to sing and dance, but you have to be interested in what other people are doing in their lives. People like to talk about themselves."

One of his most memorable experiences stemmed from a natural disaster. "We just went through a flood and it took ten weeks to get the store back together and we lost about the third of the square footage in our warehouse," he says, before adding others in the community lost so much more and needed help replacing basic home goods.

"We got together with a lot of mattress companies, and we donated some mattresses to local charities, making something good out of something bad," he says. "We ended up donating some mattresses to people who don't have insurance. You can understand what those people feel like. It was the worst flood since the 70s and lots of people were affected."

Shanks likes the close-knit relationships Daley's team members (there are about 12 of them) have formed over the years – both with customers and with each other. "We've had the same staff for a long time, so it's a family thing. They can get on your nerves like your kids or wife would, but everyone is good to each other," he says. "There's not a lot of turnover. I like the flexibility and the tight family thing, and people caring about each other. We get a lot of repeat customers and that's fun. Most of the time, you get past your friction. It's a friendly place to work."

Shanks' hobbies are simple. "Church, family, baseball, hockey," he says, adding he's coached both baseball and hockey. "It's a small city with about 80,000 people, so that's all we ever did for excitement. Now it's dogs, my wife and my grand dogs. We're waiting for the kids to get past that and get on with grandkids," he jokes.

Shanks has no plans to leave Daley's (www.Daley'sBrandSource.ca). "I'll be here until I retire, I like what I'm doing and I'm happy. I don't necessarily run the store here, but when people aren't here I do, and it's nice to make some decisions on your own. We've had to expand and grow to keep up with the demand. BrandSource is a big name, but we're just one store. There's just one Daley's."

In other words, Shanks doesn't think he'll branch out anytime soon. "It would be too much hassle to start my own store," he says. "I'll stay right here, thanks! I don't need to conquer the world."



FOR BRIAN PALETHORPE SALES GIVES A NEW ADVENTURE EVERY DAY

BRIAN PALETHORPE, GENERAL MANAGER OF the two-unit, Calgary-based Perfect Home Furniture is a 20-year industry veteran who has carried on his family's legacy and helped build a successful operation that constantly asks him to find new solutions for the customers he's happy to serve.

For that reason, it's easy to see why he was selected as this year's recipient of the *Retail Sales Professional (RSP) Award* for Western Canada.

The award recognises the achievements of experienced sales professionals who are leaders at delivering exceptional customer sales and service.

Furniture runs in his blood. "I've been in the furniture business my entire life; my family built furniture. They used to own a furniture factory called Palethorpe and Dowling and it was based in Vancouver, B.C.," he said, adding he started working in the family business in 1998.

"I stayed with the family business until my parents retired and closed down the factory in 2005. I moved to Perfect Home Furniture in 2006 and I've been selling in the store ever since."

Shauna Schlamp, a manufacturer's sales representative with the Calgary-based Westridge Group, nominated Palethorpe because of his passion for the industry.

"Brian loves what he does. His passion for his profession is evident. He is enthusiastic with a positive attitude," she says, adding, "In addition to his years at Perfect Home, Brian brings a lifetime of experience and expertise to his profession. Born into the industry, Brian's depth of knowledge and proficiency is a valuable asset to the retail customer experience and to his role in leading and mentoring the sales team. He leads by example. He has earned the respect of his team. Brian brings his skill set to the floor when serving customers."

Palethorpe admits he was surprised to learn he'd been nominated.

"I found out in February or March when Shauna called to let me know," he says. "It's exciting. It's humbling to be honoured by your peers. I wasn't expecting it at all. I honestly didn't even know there was an award for it, so it was a nice surprise."

One of the biggest highlights of his career was opening a new store – an exhilarating sign of success in a challenging industry. "We opened a 20,000 square foot store in Airdrie, Alberta in May of 2017," he says.

While Palethorpe isn't outside of his store very often, he has a few non-furniture related interests. "I'm not outside of my store very much, but I play lots of golf and spend time with my kids. They tell me they're interested in the industry, but they're very young, all under 10. They come into the store. My wife works with the store too, so everyone comes to the store."

For many who thrive in sales, the key to success is a love of people, a desire to help and build relationships with clients who long for a personal touch. The other key is a willingness to face challenges.

"[There's] something new every day," he says. "There's a new challenge, finding new projects or finding a solution for a new customer. It's always changing, you're doing the same thing every day, but it's different. It keeps it fresh. I enjoy working with customers, I enjoy everything about the industry."

In terms of that personal touch, Palethorpe has helped people who were truly in need. "A couple of years ago we had someone come in to the store who

had lost their house to a fire, and they were completely overwhelmed. We were able to work with them over time to rebuild everything. It was satisfying to see we could alleviate all of their stress."

One of the best things about Perfect Home (www.PerfectHomeFurniture.com), which currently employs 25 people, is its newness and potential for growth. "We're a young and growing company. We're independent, we're beholden to nobody so it's an exciting time to bring new people on board and watch it grow," he says.

Customers gravitate towards independent stores like Perfect Home, giving his team an advantage. "Consumers love independent operations, it's not challenging to compete with the big stores," he believes. "It comes down to customer care and customer experience. You're not trying to follow a corporation's guidelines, you've got a dedicated staff that cares and is personable with your clients."

Palethorpe sees his operation expanding even further. "The goal is continue growing our company and adding stores to the mix. We have just two stores at present, but you know what, we're not limited by anything, so as we continue to watch the market change, we'll continue to develop our strategies."

But regardless of what happens, he says he'll never leave the industry. "I'll stay in furniture for sure."



PACIFIC REGION:

TERRY HARDER SAYS THE JOB
IS TOUGH, BUT WORTH IT

WHEN TERRY HARDER TALKS HIS TIME IN THE business, he's refreshingly honest about how a life in sales is fraught with both challenges and rewards. While he's unflinchingly honest about the ups and downs, he's also clearly dedicated to his craft.

For that alone, it's easy to see why he was named the 2018 *Retail Sales Professional (RSP) Award* recipient for the Pacific Region.

Along with partner David Temlett, Harder is co-owner of Innovative Sleep Solutions, a single-unit mattress specialist in Surrey, British Columbia.

Harder had no idea the honour was coming. "I guess it was about two months prior to the awards ceremony, when I was told. I was very thankful, I was very surprised and honoured. I didn't expect to win an award."

Harder's adventures in furniture retailing began at The Brick in 1992. Not long after that, he joined Sleep Country where he met Temlett.

"We've owned this store for five years, I worked for Sleep Country for 16½ years before that," he says, adding sales works for him because he loves his customers. "I'm a big people person and I love the competition that's part of retail. I enjoy meeting a new person every day of my life that I've never met before. It's definitely challenging, but it's a good challenge."

Harder's hardworking approach prompted Scott McEachern, a sales representative for Zucora Home, to nominate him. "Terry wants everyone to have a wonderful night's sleep. He over qualifies everyone that shows interest in a new mattress. He helps out with deliveries, unloading of product and is always thinking of new ways to better himself and the business," McEachern says.

Harder has been rewarded for his work more than once. "One of the huge highlights was being *Salesperson of the Year* for Sleep Country Canada in 2002 and from there, being promoted to a manager at Sleep Country was a highlight, as well as opening my own business five years ago."

When asked why he started something new in a challenging retail landscape, Harder said it

felt right. "I just felt that we had enough experience between me and my business partner, and I had a golden opportunity to do it with zero investment. When I left Sleep Country, I worked for another company for one year. I was tired of the corporate mantra, so it was an easy transition."

He also had the good fortune to be given a wealth of mer-

chandise to sell. "Two gentlemen owned the store [we ended up purchasing] for one year, and they'd purchased it from a husband and wife team who had the store for 25 years. Me and my partner helped them sell the merchandise off and we took over the lease that had just been signed. He owed us \$4,000 and he said, 'I'm not going to pay you, I'm going to leave you the merchandise.' It was worth \$28,000 and we sold it for \$60,000. We're very lucky that we didn't need any money."

Harder and Temlett do almost everything for their store (www.InnovativeSleep.ca), which specialises in mattresses and carries a few other items such as adjustable bases and the *CaBedza*, a line of locally-made cabinet beds.

"We do our own deliveries to keep our costs down. It keeps the overhead down and it's great. Money saved, no debts, so we have hopefully a bright future in the business."

While Harder loves his work, it comes with challenges – particularly personal ones arising from a heavy workload (he typically works every weekend). "I've worked 12 to 13 hours, sometimes every

day. It's been stressful on relationships, I've gone through marital breakups," he says, adding sometimes he'll work in the store until 6pm and then do deliveries until 9pm.

Despite the demands, Harder manages to carve out time for other interests. "I'm a big hockey fan, so that's a big passion of mine. I try to go for walks on the ocean. Sometimes, when I get a chance, I love a weekend getaway where I can just relax."

Harder says the personal connections make his work worthwhile. "There's lots of interactions. An 85-year-old man who had been shopping at a competitor told me that he met his wife at a school dance when he was 17-years-old and now they've been married something like 60 years and it was obvious how much he loved her. She was in a wheelchair, and I had something much better for him, so it culminated in a large sale. It was touching, the story about him and his wife," he says.

"It makes me realise I'm doing the right thing in my life. I try to be excited about who I might meet today and what stories they might tell me. The stories can warm my heart."

When the time is right, he'll consider expanding. "We're pursuing a second location in the right area; so a lot of things need to be right."

What's his advice for the salesperson who wants to make it as far as he has? "Seek to understand rather than be understood."



CARE ABOUT THE PRODUCT, CANADA'S 2018 RSP HONOUREE SAYS

WHEN MARISA DECUCA, A SALES CONSULTANT at La-Z-Boy Furniture Galleries store located in the Toronto suburb of Etobicoke, sits down to talk to *Home Goods Online* about being selected for a very special award, she expresses surprise at being honoured, mentioning that it's the first time something of the sort has happened in her 38 years in the industry.

In addition to receiving the *Retail Sales Professional Award* for the Central Region – which includes both Ontario and Quebec – the jury also selected her as Canada's *Retail Sales Professional of the Year* for 2018.

Deluca was one of just four recipients in the second annual edition of the *Retail Sales Professional Awards* (RSP Award), whose presenting sponsor is Zucora Home, the added-value goods and services specialist based in London, Ontario. The award recognises the outstanding achievements and accomplishments of experienced sales professionals who are also leaders when it comes to delivering sales and exceptional customer service.

To be selected, a sales person working on a retail floors selling furniture, mattresses and/or major appliances must be nominated by either their manager or their peers before its reviewed by a independent jury appointed by *Home Goods Online* is collaboration with the sponsors.

Like other 2018 honorees, Deluca has been working in the industry for quite some time. However, she wasn't born into the world of furniture. She fell into it somewhat serendipitously and has, much to satisfaction of her colleagues, managers and customers decided to make it her career.

"Originally it wasn't my idea [to get into the industry]," Deluca told HGO during a video interview taped during the Canadian Furniture Show, adding that her love of people and the products themselves inspired her to stay. "It was my partner's – who ended up being my husband – idea. We were surrounded by people who were in the industry, so we ended up opening a furniture store. Once I started doing that, I realised this is exactly where I should be doing because I love dealing with people and furniture makes me happy. I love doing room settings and it just seems I feel good in that space."

Deluca's colleagues seem delighted she embraced the industry. "Marisa may be scheduled a five-day week, but she is always at working helping ensure her sales get delivered perfectly," Jeff Gold, vice president of sales for La-Z-Boy. "She has an incredible memory for customers. Being tops

in sales volume usually means the fabric protection sales would suffer. Marisa closed Magi (a brand offered by Zucora Home) at 94%."

And even though she has a proven track record and, it appears, great results, she still wasn't expecting or anticipating any kind of award. For that reason, the nomination and eventual selection came as a pleasant surprise.

"It's a huge honour for me," Deluca said. "I know I've been selling furniture and have been in this industry for a long time. I've never had anything like this ever happen to me so of course I'm very grateful and thankful. I think it's great and again, it's a huge honour."

Deluca says while it's hard to say how or if being named the RSP Award for both the Central Region and Canada will change anything, she sees it as a sign she's on the right path. "I guess it reinforces my beliefs and how I love this business. It will just make me more aware of how nice and how big this business is. There are so many avenues that you can get into versus just selling. I think it just reinforces that out-



look for me."

Deluca hopes other people receive the same honour going forward, as the show of appreciation is meaningful. "I think people should nominate people from their programs, stores and businesses because it just reinforces someone who loves doing this job, how great it is and being honoured is always a good thing."

As for her own future, Deluca is happy where she is and plans to excel in the store she's called home for so many years. "At this point, my career ambitions are to just keep doing what I'm doing and getting better everyday at what I do and just keep selling the furniture. I love it."

For the up and coming salesperson, Deluca has some simple advice: genuinely care about your product. "The advice I would give another sales professional to be more successful [would be] if you love the product, if you learn about the product, if you know the background of the product and understand it, that's going to be your biggest support in making better sales." **HGO**



A dimly lit bedroom scene. On the right, a bed is covered with a white sheet and a white pillow. To the left of the bed is a white nightstand. On the nightstand, there is a white lamp, a book, and a small rectangular object. The floor is covered with a light-colored rug. The overall lighting is soft and blue-toned.

***YOU NEVER HAVE THE
SAME SLEEP TWICE.***

Everything you eat, feel and do in a day affects how you sleep that night.
With every move you make, Serta® responds to your changing comfort needs.

Visit SleepResponsively.ca to learn how you can care for your sleep.



Always Comfortable.™



Brad Geddes, president and chief executive officer of Zucora Home.



Jeannine Ghaleb, president and chief operating officer of Cantrex Nationwide.



Marc de Grave, vice president of sales (Canada) for Protect-A-Bed.

A great time for our industry

Six furniture industry leaders agreed to talk on camera in our first-ever round table. Several themes emerged, the most important being that now is a great time to be part of the Canadian industry and the need for independent retailers to adapt to a changing consumer reality – a task for which they may be better suited than their national chain competitors.

BY MICHAEL J. KNELL





Benoit Simard, president and chief executive officer of Mega Group.



Pierre Richard, president and chief executive officer of both the Canadian Furniture Show and the Quebec Furniture Manufacturers Association.



Mark Wiltshire, president of global sales for Palliser Furniture.



FOR THE FIRST TIME IN OUR 12-year, *Home Goods Online* has established its own YouTube channel. It's our plan to bring together words and pictures to give our readership a fuller understanding of what's happening in Canada's furniture, mattress and major appliance industries at all points in the supply chain from manufacturing and distribution to retail.

One of our first projects was an industry round-table which we held during the Canadian Furniture Show this past May. We managed to persuade several of the industry's leading lights to take time away from the show floor to talk about issues of interest and we are grateful for their insight. Participating in our first round-table were:

- Brad Geddes, president and chief executive officer of Zucora Home, the added-value specialist based in London, Ontario;
- Jeannine Ghaleb, president and chief operating officer of Cantrex Nationwide, the fee-for-service buying and marketing group headquartered in Montreal;
- Marc de Grave, vice president of sales (Canada) for Protect-A-Bed, the Chicago-based sleep accessory provider;
- Benoit Simard, president and chief executive officer of Mega Group, the member owned buying group based in Saskatoon;

- Pierre Richard, president and chief executive officer of both the Canadian Furniture Show and its operator, the Quebec Furniture Manufacturers Association, whose offices can be found in Montreal; and,
- Mark Wiltshire, president of global sales for the Winnipeg-based Palliser Furniture, this country's largest furniture manufacturer and resource.

What follows is a written, sometimes fuller version of the video podcast that can be found on our YouTube channel ([click here to access the file](#)). At times, we edited for clarity, so this might not follow the spoken word exactly. Each participant gave thoughtful answers to four critical questions addressing the state of the market for furniture and furnishings; the importance of the Canadian Furniture Show; the demise of Sears Canada; and, the prospects for furniture retailing.

HGO What's happening in the Canadian market right now that you see as exciting and innovative?

BRAD GEDDES: What a great time it is to be in the Canadian home furnishing market. There is so much change happening in consumers' homes – it's very much forward fashion and folks are thinking about how to live a different lifestyle. The introduction of new technologies is really creating different home environments, so we can't think of a better time to be part of the industry. ►



JEANNINE GHALEB: Well, what's happening is a lot of change. We are used to it now and we should all embrace the change. I find it very exciting because we're going to answer to a new customer. I look at the possibilities...starting with bedding, the bed-in-a-box. I look at furniture; the custom side of it is very interesting. Because with Sears disappearing – Sears was the biggest place for custom in furniture – now I see all the vendors going this way. I find it very interesting for our independent retailers because they can sell custom furniture. They can change a table, they can change the fabrics, and this is something that online sellers cannot do. I think this very, very exciting for the consumer and exciting for the independent retailer.

MARK DE GRAVE: I think everybody's trying to get a new angle, a new product. In our case, we've gone to the sleep technology side of things. We have a pillow that has eight loud speakers, for example, so that's keeping us fresh, keeping us alive, and I think that's what's happening in this industry...everyone's trying a new angle. The biggest change in my industry, in terms of mattress protection/mattresses is the arrival of the mattress-in-a-box. We know those have been around forever, but right now the arrival of the Caspers of the world has really changed the whole mattress dynamic. There seems to be a little bit of a race to zero as far as I can see. So, now price is becoming a bigger and bigger issue then it was before.

BENOIT SIMARD: The consumer has access to so many different ways of creating a purchase or a shopping experience...many times they don't realise they just got into a buying process. That's created a need for the retailer to offer a value that is completely different than promotion and price. That's something that has to change drastically. The digital business front is really new for retail and definitely for the retailer. This is exciting and this where Mega Group has been making investments.

PIERRE RICHARD: There is a lot happening in this market place and that makes it very exciting. One word defines people in this industry: passion. And passion brings a lot of innovation; an ability to change and adapt and if anybody thinks this industry is stable, they're fooling themselves. We have to adapt to what the consumer is looking for. There's lots of room for people to innovate: in design, in product and adapt to the new realities (such as multi-purpose furniture, etcetera). We also have to adapt how we sell furniture to the consumer. That is changing more rapidly than anyone realises – those who do not change quickly will be left

behind. So, it's a land of opportunity and a very, very exciting time. The Canadian market place is very healthy, our manufacturers are world class and it's a terrific time to be in furniture.

MARK WILTSHIRE: What's exciting and innovative is the use of technology within the stores. We keep hearing terms like extended aisle, a technology that maximises the footprint of your store. It's using an electronic catalogue to maximise sales. I think it's the next place to go for brick and mortar.

HGO How important is the Canadian Furniture Show to the life of the industry as a whole?

BRAD GEDDES: We believe the Canadian Furniture Show is probably one of the most pivotal events of the year for the entire industry in Canada. It brings together manufacturers, it brings together retailers and those that support both of those industries to make sure we continue to grow as an industry across Canada.

JEANNINE GHALEB: This is a Canadian show done for Canadians, so I think it's very important. We have to keep supporting it. Cantrex supports it. If you look at our booth, we are busy from nine o'clock to the end of the day because we connect with our retailers who want to come and see and support our vendors – and that's very important.

MARK DE GRAVE: I think its key. We need the show. If anything, it forces us to be innovative, it forces us to be out in front, it forces us to listen to our market and know where we should take our business and the approaches to use. From marketing ideas to sales ideas to training ideas to product development ideas – they all happen here. So, I think its key to have this show.

BENOIT SIMARD: I've been a supporter of keeping the show for a few years now. I really believe if you don't have much information you are in the dark. When you don't have information, you create information. You fill the gap and create your own reality and then start believing you know your environment when in fact, you're disconnected. The smaller you are – as a supplier or as a retailer – the more potential this has to negatively affect you. So, you can really happy by yourself and lost or you can be part of an industry we support heavily. The absence of a Canadian show would create a major gap in the level of information.

The first [would be the loss of] human contact – the exchange between people. But also, the ability to manage the business according to what's going on in the market. That cannot happen between smaller retailer and smaller supplier outside of this event. If you go to High Point ►

many of our retailers and suppliers – they are too small to really appear. By abandoning this show, we are creating the potential to lose a bit of the culture, a bit of the artistic uniqueness that we have in our design, in our quality standard and in our way of addressing the market – especially on the furniture side, which is really a blend of European and traditional. I don't think you can find what our people are designing in Canada anywhere else.

PIERRE RICHARD: Well, I'm a bit biased. I think the Canadian Furniture Show is essential. But what I think is not really important. What's important is what does the Canadian industry think? We have conducted surveys yearly to monitor this and every year it says this is an essential event. In the last five years I have not heard one single person tell me that we should not have a show. Everybody is unanimous this event is critical for the industry. I think one of the indicators that here, this weekend in Toronto, we have people here from absolutely every single province and territory. We have hundred of exhibitors and thousands of buyers and visitors. It's a healthy event. It has to continue, and it will continue.

MARK WILTSHIRE: We only have one show. We have to make it work. I laugh because everyone pines for the good old days. In the good old days Asia wasn't making furniture, this was all Canadian manufacturers across three or four halls with the odd outside showroom. That was everybody's baseline. But the reality is Asia has taken a liking to making furniture. It has decimated the industry, so we're much smaller. That being said, you need a furniture show in Canada. The assumption is everyone goes to High Point and Las Vegas – that's a big assumption. The 'A' and the 'B' players may but the 'C', 'D' and 'E' players? I'm not talking about the calibre, I'm talking about the size of their stores; the 'mom and pop' stores don't go there. This show is imperative, and so we have to do everything we can to make it worth everybody's while.

HGO The big news this past year of course has been the exit of Sears Canada from the market place. What will be the long-term impact of their departure?

BRAD GEDDES: I think its important to recognise that the departure of organizations like Sears aren't entirely due to the home furnishings industry. That was a part of their business. I think what we also have to recognise is that, regrettably those that haven't learned to adapt to the new way of doing business will also depart the market but what is exciting is there are

new entrants coming in everyday offering new ways, innovative approaches to help consumers find the products they really want.

JEANNINE GHALEB: That is a tricky question. That is a very important question. For the last 3 years, Cantrex has been working very diligently to prepare our independent retailers to take part of the market share in the case that Sears disappears. And why do we think its important to do that? Because the Sears customer is a customer that needs service. The place for them is the independent retailer. It's a place where we really take care of our customer and give them the service. We started preparing even before they went under protection. When we saw their first quarter results, I said they're not going to survive and we need to get our independents ready. We mapped our retailers and did a very focused marketing campaign. The result, we grew 44% in appliances and bedding. It was tremendous and we're still carrying that growth.

However, [most of] our retailers are not in the cities. Where the Sears customer in the city going to go? So, we saw the vendors redistribute their volume to a lot of different national [retailers] but I don't see a total solution in the cities and I don't see the big nationals selling as they used to sell. I think our [Cantrex] retailers are very well positioned to take a big part of that market share. The vendors are coming back to the independent channel and I say please help us, we're going to do it.

We've also focused on outdoor. The outdoor category is growing at Cantrex. Of course, you're going to tell me it didn't start with big volume but to have this kind of growth you have to be focusing on it and we're showing our retailers how important it is. Not only we are showing it, but we are showing them the way to do it at events like our PrimeTime. We ask our outdoor people to come show their product and cook for our retailers. We make it an event and we want them to do that with their customer. We are on the right path and I think we will take a big part of that market share.

MARK DE GRAVE: I think the business will be split among many players. For me, it was a big loss because they were a big customer of ours (Protect-A-Bed). Right now, what I'm hearing is everybody is vying for pole position. A comment was made recently when I was in the States that if Sears there goes down, Best Buy – believe it or not – will be in the best position to acquire that business. In Canada, everybody thought it was going to go to one retailer or another...I think its being split amongst everybody at this point. ►





BENOIT SIMARD: I believe that Sears is just a sign of what's going on. Sears had an inability to really quickly adapt, for all kinds of good reasons, I'm not saying they're wrong, but that it's just what happened. Sears' departure created an opening for our retailers, in the regional markets to really take some space.

But it affected the supplier community because it had a great volume and now this volume is split among many different small and mid-size retailers; some is going into e-commerce; some is going into hardware stores. It's so diluted it's going to be really challenging for our suppliers to capture a good portion of the market. I don't know what exactly the impact of that will be but in categories such as bedding, it's a major issue because they have to reset the platform, so they can reach those customers.

PIERRE RICHARD: You know the reality is that with the departure of Sears people will not be buying less furniture. Furniture will be made by somebody, furniture will be imported by somebody, it will be made in different parts of the country and someone is going to sell it. And if Sears is not there to do their share somebody else is going to occupy that space and, therefore, it's a great opportunity for retailers across the country to innovate and find ways of attracting people to the space that's been left open. It's a great opportunity.

MARK WILTSHIRE: When the big boys go, like Heilig-Meyers (in the U.S.), everybody assumes we all get a piece of it. It doesn't happen that easy and that's the challenge. Initially, many of the people I've been talking to say the appliance business has moved; the mattress business has moved; but we haven't seen the furniture move yet. The ones who have seen their barometer go up are the ones who understand and do custom orders, specialisation. Not all retailers are set up for that. And that's one of things Sears did very well – special orders. So, the ones who do special orders seem to be gaining that Sears customer.

HGO Furniture and mattress sales at retail have been strong for the past couple of years, will this continue? What big trends do you see on the horizon furniture retailers should be aware of?

BRAD GEDDES: In our industry we're often fraught with concerns about where is the industry going in terms of volume of business, etcetera. We take a contrarian view. We think we're at the very beginning of rather explosive growth period that's just on the horizon. If we stop and think for a moment about the millennial cohort which is now becoming a part of

the industry. Over the next 10 to 20 years, we will see the largest number of household formations in the history of mankind, this is an exciting time to a part of this industry.

JEANNINE GHALEB: This industry has to grow, and the trend is to focus on fashion and custom. Accessories are becoming very important. We have a new consumer and the new consumer likes colours. You look at the vendors and they are starting to introduce these colours, looks and styles. I'm very exciting about it but I don't yet see retailers putting out this new product and I want them to. This is what's going to attract the new consumer. I want them [the retailer] to be very well accessorised. If you go our booth, we have a big section about accessories.

At our PrimeTime (event to be held in September), we're going to have a fashion show and have accessories. We need our customer to go and see the store is changing and is up to date. We want them to be on the web, because 89% of Canadians look on the web. So, [the retailer] needs to have the web. If you are not on the web, you are not present. We want them to be on the web and we want the consumer to go there but we also want to drive them to the store.

This is the most important part and I want to focus on it because the online business started with people that designed the business on paper. It is important to gather and analyze data but if you talk to [these online businesses] when they find they have to open a store – a pop-up store or a physical store – their biggest problem is they don't know retail. They don't know how to communicate with the customer. So, they stumble and so their focus in opening a store is convince the customer to go and buy online.

The independent retailer wants our consumer to search online and go to the store because this is where the service is going to be. This is where to build a lifetime customer. And we want them to have this commitment to the consumer and the consumer to feel it so he comes back to the store. Why we want him to come back to the store? Not only to build this relationship but also because we are going to increase sales.

I don't have the crystal ball but when everybody said there would be no more independent retailers, I said this is impossible. We are here, we are stubborn, this is our business and we're going to keep it.

MARC DE GRAVE: In Canada, the growth will continue. I know there has been a little bit of a difference in the market place here versus the States. I was just at the National Bedding Conference where I heard the total unit sale units ►

were up but the ticket was down. There's a little bit of a reversal here, so it's kind of interesting.

In terms of trends, I'm afraid to say there is going to be that race to zero. That whole bed-in-a-box thing has really changed the dynamics, but even those are going to brick-and-mortar now. That's a major shift again from where Casper came out to where we're going now. Again, everybody has a bed in a box but it's going to become more of a practicality. People are going to come in, try a mattress, and walk away with it versus saying they're going to order it online.

We need to stay ahead of the curve. We have to be pro-active, we have to try best practices, we have to see what's working and what's not working. Look at what happened with Eaton's; we go back to Zellers; we go back to Target; we go now to Sears, and you know what? We have to stay ahead of the curve. Online is here to stay. I keep using the word, but retailers have to stay ahead of the curve or else somebody's going to come have their lunch.

BENOIT SIMARD: Baby Boomers are getting to the point where they buy good quality product whenever they can afford to buy something new. Or they go to the cheapest – and the reason for that is they are planning on retiring or they have retired and are worried about their future.

So now we need to address the other market. How do you talk to a millennial? How do you respond to their lifestyle, their dreams? Look at the way millennials dress. It's a mismatch of things, but it's absolutely a co-ordinated, well structured, strategically planned mismatch. It's not a free-for-all. It's not just putting stuff together. It has a lot of trend, beauty and design put into it. And it has nothing to do with what their parents used to do.

So now how do we adapt to that? [How do we] create volume while trying to purpose a uniqueness to these people because they want to be unique in their style. They want to be the one to do this that way. Volume is necessary and purposing uniqueness is very expensive. But [the retailer] needs it to be not too expensive. There is an oxymoron in that and very challenging to face.

What I see now is a global market, a lot of people blending different things in the offer rather than everybody turning brown at the same time, or grey at the same time, or plaid pattern, or floral pattern. Everything is in the air. Everything is there. I see potential for those people in our business who have passion, they're passionate about fabric, they're

passionate about what they offer. They offer uniqueness.

For the smaller retailer, that uniqueness is what they're good at. They allow people to create a look that is unique to them. So when you have a 700 square foot apartment every single piece of furniture you have in it needs to be useful. It doesn't mean it has to be dull. It doesn't mean it needs to be brown or grey. I think the market is going that way and that is absolutely fantastic for the people that are not part of a chain or all the same. It is really coming into something I believe can bring us back as Canadian suppliers and Canadian retailers, back to having something to offer the consumer they cannot order anywhere else.

PIERRE RICHARD: I believe the big trends are a result of the ongoing change in what consumers want and in what the consumers need. We know the millennials are going to be driving sales and their needs are different. We know housing choices are evolving, condos are smaller and smaller, older folks are downsizing. We need to adapt to those new realities. We're seeing more and more, even here at the Canadian Furniture Show, multi-purpose furniture that is adapting to those smaller areas.

One area where I have not seen very much innovation yet – and needs to be addressed – is the aging population. What are the needs of this aging population? They are moving out of their current homes into other homes. They have new needs. They have different needs. I don't think we have really tapped into that well or served that population and it's growing. I say the opportunity for the retailer is to adapt to all of these and respond to the needs and desires that are changing.

MARK WILTSHIRE: Well, if anyone tells you business is strong right now, they're lying – it's soft. Most retailers will agree that it's soft. That being said, this too shall pass, it always does. We've had a nice little run the last couple years and all signs show a buoyant furniture industry. People are starting to understand balance of inventory. Everybody gets all excited about bringing goods over from Asia, but they sometimes forget if they don't plan right, they'll be out of stock or have too much stock. Then they learn that nasty word demerge, which is code for a container you can't unload and have to pay for.

I think there needs to be a balance. Retailers have to find their identity, who they are. If you're a custom order house, then you have to partner with the best who are doing that. If you're a commodity shop, then you can be the best at that. I think we're going to see people get more specialised at what they do. 



BORN TO RUN A FURNITURE STORE

Allison McLellan, the easy-going and passionate sales manager of, and heir to, a New Brunswick furniture retailer is still happy serving customers after finding his retail calling at the tender age of 14.

BY ASHLEY NEWPORT

Allison has become something of a jack-of-all trades within the family's retail operation. Here he is assisting with an appliance repair at a customer's home.

EDITOR'S NOTE: This is the second of a new series of articles devoted to profiling the next generation of leaders in Canada's furniture, mattress and major appliance industry. For the most part, these are men and women under the age of 40 who have chosen to make their fortunes and establish their careers in this our business. For the most part, they are not only heralding change, they're making it and setting new standards for the rest of us to follow.

WHEN THINKING OF FAMILY businesses, people often envision a mom-and-pop shop, a medium-scale retail outfit or an operation whose name ends in "and Sons." Those working outside the furniture world, aren't really aware of how family oriented the industry truly is (in Canada, at least, it's dominated by family owned enterprises at all points in the supply chain from manufacturing and distribution to retail) and how many children happily carry on their parents' – and sometimes even their grandparents' – legacies.

Allison McLellan, the youthful and energetic sales manager at McLellan BrandSource Home Furnishings, is one of those who was seemingly born into his role. But while he's only been working in his family's Woodstock, New Brunswick store full-time for a little over a decade, his journey is even more impressive when you consider he got his start as a sales manager when he was in his first year of high school.

"I've been working full-time for 13 years," McLellan says. "I started working for my parents when I was 18, but I was there part-time all through school. Arguably, I've been there my whole life. [Growing up] you don't go to babysitters, you just go to the store."

McLellan's parents – John and Carol McLellan – have owned the single unit operation since



1980 and continue to manage the business. McLellan's sister is also involved and is currently working as an administrative assistant.

As for how McLellan Home Furnishings ultimately got started, McLellan says his father's journey in the industry began long before the family business was born. ►

"My father was a service tech for Sears," McLellan says. "He was an appliance repairman and he decided that he wanted to work for himself. He was ambitious enough to go out and start selling and serving appliances in 1980. He started with Whirlpool appliances, and he sold those and fixed them."

While the elder McLellans are still actively involved in day-to-day operations, they've been watching their son grow in his role, one that now involves managing people, managing products and seeking out new and on-trend items for the showroom floor.

Under McLellan the younger's watch, the store's product offerings – which used to revolve around appliances almost exclusively – has expanded. It now includes BrandSource's – the primary go-to-market strategy for the Saskatoon-based Mega Group – entire assortment.

"I would say we're about half appliances now, just based on the fact that we're one of the only sale/service places around now. We sell furniture, bedding, home décor and outdoor furniture as well," he says, adding the company added outdoor furniture about two years ago.

What's most surprising about McLellan's journey is began so early. While many industry veterans bounce from place to place before finding their calling or carving out their own niche, McLellan never strayed far from his parent's store. In fact, even though he's done tours of service and been mentored in other stores, his family's operation has been his main employer since his teen years – and he's been taking on leadership roles since the beginning.

"I started as a sales manager and I started at the age of 14. I would go there every day after school and help salespeople meet their goals," McLellan says, confirming he was indeed managing people when he was just a year out of elementary school.

His role with the company has, of course, grown over the years. "I'm still a sales manager, but now I look after human resources, advertising, merchandising, the buying and all the store policies. Pretty much everything except accounting," he says, adding he tries to maintain a slightly more hands-off leadership style.

"I have my salespeople who help me out quite a bit and I try to help people make their own decisions. I don't micromanage. I guide people as best as I can, I let them learn."

McLellan's store is, like the town it's located in, modest in size. One of about 140 or so BrandSource bannered stores in Canada, it currently employs 10 people and occupies about 17,200 square feet of space, including the warehouse. ▶



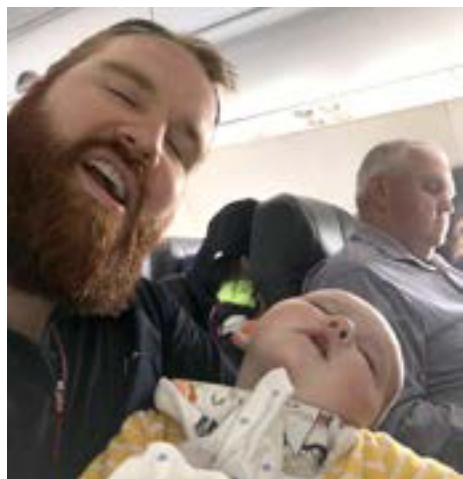
Allison McLellan (left) and his father, John, outside the front entrance to their store in Woodstock, New Brunswick.



Woodstock, New Brunswick is the very definition of rural Canada. Here, Allison is taking a refrigerator by boat to a home on an island on nearby Skiff Lake.

Right: Allison McLellan says working in the family business doesn't mean he's chained to the store. Here, he's about to take his sons Spencer, 7, and Clifford, seven months, out for a family outing in their Jeep.

Below: Three generations of McLellans are seen here flying to Toronto for the Canadian Furniture Show, the only industry event they regularly attend.



While some might assume it's simply convenient to take on the role in a family business, those that have understand working closely with parents and siblings has its challenges (especially when one occupies a demanding position in an retail segment that's always faced more than its fair share of hardships). That said, McLellan says his role has also given him the flexibility – and freedom – to enjoy life beyond the showroom floor.

"I think that it's mostly been the flexibility to be your own boss that's been most interesting to me," he says. "I have a love for the industry, I love helping customers find the products that they need and helping them solve problems. I don't think I could work for someone else, I grew up working for myself and working for my parents. It's not in me, I don't think."

If there's one thing that stands out, it's his enthusiasm for activities outside the showroom – and how he isn't afraid to say his job works for him because it allows him the time to enjoy the great outdoors. "I love to spend time and travel with my fiancé, we love to Jeep and fish and snowmobile. We golf, and I love to spend time with the Rotary Club, we do a lot of socials and things like that," he says.

"We live on the lake and do a lot of boating and swimming. We live in rural New Brunswick, so we spend a lot of time outside. I don't see myself living anywhere else, we love to be outside. We live in Canada where it's winter nine months of the year, so you have to make the best of your situation."

McLellan acknowledges working with family – even though gives more flexibility than working for a more traditional employer – can be complicated from time to time. "As long as you get along, it's great to work closely with your family. It makes us a close-knit family, more than most families are. But it's sometimes difficult to influence change when your boss or your employee is your family member.

It can be hard to implement that change too, because you have to see them that weekend, so it has its up and downs."

So, despite those challenges, McLellan sees family involvement in the future. "My fiancé is probably planning on working with me at some point, but she doesn't work directly at the store now," he says.

McLellan also has two children of his own but acknowledges they're not quite ready to make their career ambitions known although his eldest son shows some budding entrepreneurial talent. "They're too young," he says. "My son Spencer is seven-years-old and my younger son, Clifford, is seven months old. Spencer comes in and he helps us out as much as a seven-year-old can help out. He's a little entrepreneur on his own. I try to encourage him to take a different path, it's not easiest to work with your family, but I can see him working here in some capacity."

What McLellan loves most about working in the store and the industry in general is the hunt for new products and seeing his customers fall in love with the pieces they purchase. "My favourite is the buying," he says. "I love negotiating and working with vendors and seeing new product. But I always like going to a customer's home when you do a delivery and see their renovation or their vision coming together. Filling a home with great products is a rewarding part as well."

McLellan's approach has netted some loyal customers. "I would dare say we track at 50% to 70% referrals. We want to treat our customers with respect and value their relationships and the trust they put in us. We try to give the best service, and that keeps people coming back more than anything. We live in a small community and we want to go to the grocery store and see our customers. We'll always have a place in this ever-changing world of retail. There are always people willing to pay for good product and good service." ▶

“I love negotiating and working with vendors and seeing new product. But I always like going to a customer’s home when you do a delivery and see their renovation or their vision coming together. Filling a home with great products is a rewarding part as well.”

His point about there always being a place for traditional retailers is striking in its optimism. While it’s certainly true the industry has faced challenges – a worldwide economic meltdown that launched years of wheeling and dealing and the e-commerce explosion, to name a few – it once felt like pessimism had taken hold, seeping into too many conversations at too many shows and events. Now, it seems like people are hopeful about the furniture retail landscape and they don’t feel they have to drop their prices to drive traffic.

“We have mid-range prices, we’re not the cheapest, but we’re also not the most expensive,” McLellan says. “Our customers are the average Canadian family with two working spouses. We’re right up the middle, but we have both higher and lower-end products.”

In his case, however, a huge driver of that aforementioned traffic might be his focus on building and maintaining connections with members of the community. “My father and I are involved in the local snowmobile club and I went onto the Chamber of Commerce of Woodstock for two years,” he says. “I’m the VP of the Rotary Club and I feel that to be successful in a small community, you need to look after the community and focus on them and look after them.”



Here’s Allison McLellan with his fiancé, Samantha Cully. While it’s possible she will come to work in the store at some point, she’s currently their sales representative for Whirlpool.

McLellan also tends to stay close to home when it comes to choosing products. “I only do the Canadian Furniture Show in Toronto,” he says. “To me, it’s the only show worth going to. I’ve been to the U.S. shows and I don’t enjoy them. I’ve done a few Mega Group meetings in Montreal, but I don’t like going to the U.S.”

While McLellan gets the most out of a made-in-Canada show, he says he’s been more than satisfied with his membership in BrandSource. It should be noted his father, John, served as a member of Mega Group’s board of directors for a number of years.

“BrandSource buys 50% to 60% of my product, so I just need to fill in the gaps with the categories of price points they don’t cover. I’m very happy with BrandSource, I don’t see us changing to anyone else,” he says. “We have the best system going and there’s no other system like it. I would wonder how I would exist without their partnership and support. I think that without them it would be a real struggle to be a true independent today. They handle my advertising, about 80% of it, and I just have to tell them yes or no. It really simplifies my life and makes my job much easier.”

McLellan, a millennial who has grown up with technology, notes his store was an early adopter of digital marketing tools and social media. “I would say we have a strong online presence. We’ve had a web site for 15 years, and we jumped on Facebook, YouTube, Instagram and Pinterest. We got on all of them very early and use them quite religiously. My percentage of advertising dollars is probably about 60% online. Other 35% to 40% is flyers and direct mail, because consumers are expecting that right now. No one is totally online. You need to be on both.”

McLellan also says he’s happy where he is and doesn’t feel the need to move on anytime soon (or ever). “I see myself taking over at some point. I would say I pretty much run the business now, but it’s nice to have my parents around. They have the experience and the knowledge that I can learn from and pull from. I don’t see them transitioning fully away, we’ll always work together in some capacity, but they’ll just work less.”

He’s also happy with just one store. “I’ll stay right here. I like what I’m doing and it’s a viable business. People are always going to need furnishings and appliances for their homes. I’ll stay right where I’m at, and if we expand, I can make all that I need with the store I have. I don’t need to get greedy, there are better things in life than working.” **HGO**

A contributing editor to HGO Merchandiser, ASHLEY NEWPORT is a Toronto-based freelance journalist who writes primarily for trade and business publications. Her specialties include food, hospitality and emerging social/business trends.



The inside entrance to the new Samsung Experience Store at the Eaton Centre in downtown Toronto.

A TECHNOLOGY *playground*

Consumer are wanting to experience their kitchen and laundry technology before buying. Samsung's newest and largest experience store should allow them to do just that.

BY MICHAEL J. KNELL

SAMSUNG ELECTRONICS CANADA (SEC) has opened a 21,000 square foot technology playground in the heart of downtown Toronto, where it places to show off its latest innovations across all its major product categories including major appliances.

The sixth and largest Samsung Experience Store in Canada, it's located on the south-west corner of Yonge and Dundas Streets, within the north-east entrance of the Eaton Centre in heart of downtown Toronto. The company describes it as "the personification of Samsung retail innovation – providing elevated customer experiences via an open-concept, free flowing space, it is a destination for guests to immerse themselves with the brand no matter what they are interested in."

There are two entrances into the store, one at street level for easy access from the bustling ►

Yonge Dundas Square and the other within the shopping centre itself. At entry, visitors walk into a curvaceous two-storey glass pavilion designed to invite discovery. A metal ribbon flows over the exterior and through the entrance canopy, leading visitors to explore the fluid, contemporary and timeless design.

The ground floor features a variety of interactive areas – from an immersive Samsung GearVR virtual reality zone to an interactive *Personalization Zone* where visitors can add flavour to their mobile device accessories. Nearby sloped counters and service desks display the newest Samsung mobile innovations, from the *Galaxy Note8* to a variety of tablets and accessories.

Softly lit swirls sweep across walls and ceilings, encircling a grand curvilinear staircase that leads visitors to the second level, where SEC's television experience zone – featuring *The Frame* – and a full-scale test kitchen can be found. The kitchen will be extensively used for live cooking demonstrations and classes. Indeed, the space aims to inspire visitors to the store to be curious and features modular design elements and furniture that enable Samsung to host specialised events, including design workshops, cooking classes and speaker presentations.

“Our new Samsung Experience Store at CF Toronto Eaton Centre is, simply, unlike any-

thing we've ever launched before in Canada. From the moment our guests join us, they will experience the Samsung *Galaxy Life* connected ecosystem. The dynamic and innovative space will bring our guests closer to the Samsung brand and our latest innovation, enabling them to get closer to what they are passionate about and reach their full potential,” Patricia Heath, SEC vice president of retail excellence said in a press release earlier this year announcing its construction.

She noted the space marks a new era of retail excellence for the company's Canadian operations. The interiors were created by the Toronto-based Quadrangle Architects. “We were thrilled about the potential of this opportunity,” design director George Foussias said. “Our expertise in realising bold retail interiors and technologically-rich environments paired ▶

A cooking demonstration held during the opening celebration for the Samsung Experience Store early this summer.



This softly lit grand curvilinear staircase leads visitors from the entrance to the second level of the new Samsung Experience Store.



A view of the television experience area on the second floor.

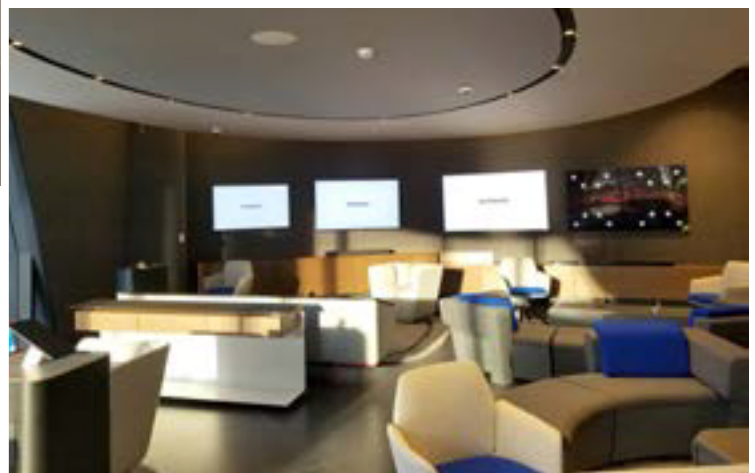
The appliance wall is located on the second floor of the new Samsung Experience Store. Everything works as the company intends to hold cooking classes and other events in the space to show-off their latest technological advances.

with Samsung's dedication to innovation allowed us to create a completely immersive environment: a touchpoint for consumers to access and experience the Samsung ecosystem in a brand-new way."

SEC told *Home Goods Online*, the major appliance presentation will feature all the latest white goods in its assortment, including the *Family Hub* refrigerator and the *FlexWash* laundry pair that were unveiled this past January at CES in Las Vegas. "We're inviting Canadians to see, touch, and feel these new innovations through elevated customer experiences, in a setting unlike anything we've ever done before in Canada," the company said.

This will be more than a display space. "We certainly do expect to sell home appliance product out of this space – and we are," SEC said. "We can confirm that this location at Toronto Eaton Centre has experienced strong traffic and interest from visitors – thanks in part to Samsung being a go-to brand in home appliances for consumers."

The company also believes this active approach to selling appliances will become normal practise. "As the 21st century retail experience and consumer evolves, we continue to hear that Canadians are looking for more from retailers. They want to see, touch, and feel a premium experience where they can not only



purchase product but can engage with a brand. Our new space at the Toronto Eaton Centre delivers that and more."

They also believe the reasons why consumers buy appliances is also changing. "The industry norm is driven primarily by replacement sales, so called distressed purchases," the company said. "With the advent of the connected home, we anticipate consumers will 'want in' to upgrade their appliances. Overall, Samsung is constantly innovating as part of the connected home and discovering new ways to simplify and enrich the lives of Canadians."

That means, they added, Samsung's entire line-up will be connected home enabled by 2020.

Currently, SEC said it has no plans to open another Samsung Experience Store in Canada. Eaton Centre is now one of six in operation. The others are in Sherway Gardens and the Yorkdale Shopping Centre – both in the Greater Toronto Area – as well as in the Metrotown Mall in Burnaby and the Richmond Centre in Richmond, British Columbia; as well as the West Edmonton Mall. **HGO**



clarity is job one

Without clarity, there can be no focus, commitment, urgency or accountability. It's the job of the business owner, leader or manager to provide it – for if he doesn't or can't, no one else in the organisation can.

BY DONALD COOPER

REGARDLESS OF WHAT ANYONE TELLS YOU, AS business owners, leaders and managers, our first job is clarity. Without clarity at every level of our business there can be no clear focus, commitment, urgency or accountability. And clarity begins at the top. If the leaders of the business – regardless of whether that is a manufacturer, a distributor or a retailer – are not clear about the nine things listed below, who else in the organisation could possibly be? Lack of clarity, urgency and accountability are three of the biggest challenges in many businesses today. But it all starts with clarity.

Have each member of your team – yourself included – rate the business, from their perspective and on a scale of one to ten, each of the nine clarities listed below. Note them on a scoresheet of some kind. Collect the completed sheet, then summarise and analyse the results. Is there agreement or are there very different views of the organisation by the people in it? Is there 'clarity'? Or, not so much?

Then, use the 'calculator model' determine your business's total 'clarity score' out of a possible ten.

Here they are, rate each on a scale of one to ten – keeping track of the individual scores to determine a collective answer.

ONE: Clarity about who our target customers are and what life is really like for them. What they value, what they fear and what they hope to become. When buying, using, maintaining or disposing of what we sell, what are they really trying to do? What do they need to know, how do they want to feel and about how much do they expect to pay?

TWO: Clarity about the compelling customer value and experiences we commit to always deliver. Compelling value and experiences will give a clear competitive advantage and

make us the clear 'wise choice' for our target customers. Value and experiences that 'grab' our target customers, clearly differentiate us from our competitors, make us 'famous' – and grow the bottom line.

THREE: Clarity about how and where we will effectively brand, market, promote and sell our compelling value story in a crowded, cynical and competitive market. There's no point being the best if we're also the best kept secret. Every market, including that for furniture, mattresses, electronics and major appliances, is over-served and under-differentiated. That's reality.

FOUR: Clarity about the extraordinary bottom line we commit to generate. A bottom line that gives our investors and other stakeholders a competitive rate of return or better.

FIVE: Clarity about the extraordinary future we commit to create (otherwise known as our vision). How our business must be different and will be different in three to five years. How big must we be? How big do we want to be? How 'good' must we be to be a market leader? How good do we want to be? Are we willing to do the work?

How might our business model have to change? What are the disruptive market-related, technology-related or societal changes coming down the road that could change how we do business, what our customers value or even replace us?

There's huge confusion about what a business vision is, what it isn't and whether it even makes sense to have one. Many businesses waste thousands of dollars to create vague, airy-fairy aspirational *Vision Statements* that are worth nothing. To be effective, a *Vision Statement* should be a clear, specific and measurable, one-page statement of what we commit ▶

to become in three to five years. It will inform, focus and challenge everyone on the team from top to bottom.

SIX: Clarity about how we will get to that extraordinary future. Specifically, what decisions will we commit to make and what action will we commit to take each year (the annual *Mission*) to get to our three to five-year vision?

SEVEN: Clarity about how we will manage more effectively to improve clarity, commitment, urgency, accountability and profitability throughout every part of the business. Clarity about individual and departmental responsibilities. Specifically, for every action we commit to take, what will be done, by whom, by when, measured how and rewarded how? What systems, processes, training and technology do we need to be innovative, cost-effective, customer-centric and profitable?

EIGHT: Clarity about the talent, team and organisational structure needed to make all of this happen. The employment experience and career opportunities we commit to deliver to attract, lead, engage and retain a dedicated top-performing team – and how we will measure performance and deal more effectively with non-performance. The real battle in business today is the battle for talent.

Then, that talented team must work within an organisational structure with clear responsibilities, authority and accountability.

NINE: How we commit to behave along the way. The values, ethics and standards we commit to live by and the culture we commit to create.

Everyone's score card has a possible total of a possible 90 points. To calculate your *Clarity Score* out of a possible ten, total your score for the nine clarities above and then multiply that total by 1111. This will give a *Clarity Score* out of ten. For example: If your total score above is 60, multiply that by 1111 to get a *Clarity Score* of 6.6 out of ten.

The closer the score is to ten, the more clarity there is in the business. The nine individual 'clarity scores' tells what

needs doing, fixing or communicating in the business. They answer questions such as:

- Do we need more clarity at the top and in which of the nine key areas? What action do we commit to take to create this clarity? It must start at the top.
- Is there a need to be more effective and create more consistent communication throughout the business so everyone is 'on the same page'? Specifically, how will we achieve this? more effective communication? How and when will the improvements be measured? Will it be by using this tool again at a set time in the future?

You'll notice throughout the listing of the nine clarities, there is consistent reference to committing and commitments.

Most businesses make the mistake of talking about goals, targets, aims and objectives. They have sales targets, customer satisfaction goals, profit objectives and they aim to be a good employer. I believe we should replace all those wishy-washy words with one powerful word – commitments. We need to stop aiming and start committing.

There's a huge difference between a goal or a target and a commitment. A target is something we hit sometimes and miss other times – and it's okay. It's just a target. A goal is something that we score sometimes and don't score other times – and that's life. At least we tried. But a commitment is something fundamentally different. It feels different, because it is different.

Some folks argue we're just playing with words here but it's more than that. When we change our language, we change our business culture. You can't have engaged, committed and effective staff without clear commitments. So, please, never again talk about goals, targets, aims and objectives in your business. From now on, in every memo, every meeting, every e-mail and every conversation, talk about your clear commitments. You'll be amazed at the difference it will make. We become what we speak.

Be warned, when a business fails to create and communicate this level of clarity, a vacuum of uncertainty emerges. And, as I learned in a high school physics class, because the universe hates a vacuum something must rush in to fill the emptiness that's been created.

What generally fills the vacuum are the fragmented and disparate goals, assumptions, ambitions, egos and power grabs of the others in the organisation as they attempt to deal with – or take advantage of – the uncertainty. The organisation then becomes fragmented, without focus or direction but full of turf wars and drama. Productivity grinds to a halt and there's no accountability. Instead of alignment, we have confusion or even worse, anarchy. The animals are running the zoo. And it will end badly if it's not fixed quickly.

So, have you created a vacuum of uncertainty at the top of your business? Are you unclear or indecisive? If so, use nine clarities to start fixing what needs fixing. Create clarity, then determine what will be done, by whom, by when, measured how. Follow up, reward performance and deal with non-performance. Lack of clarity and failure to deal with non-performance are the other two biggest problems facing businesses of all sizes these days. **HGO**

A regular contributor to Home Goods Online, DONALD COOPER has been both a world-class manufacturer and an award-winning retailer. Now a Toronto-based business speaker and coach, he helps business owners and managers rethink, refocus and re-energise their business to create compelling customer value, clarity of purpose and long-term profitability. For more information, or to subscribe to his free, monthly management e-newsletter, go to www.donaldcooper.com

NOTE: For help in creating a clear *Statement of Purpose*; a three to five-year *Operational Vision* on one piece of paper; an annual *Mission*; and, a specific, detailed step-by-step *Commitment to Implementation* for your business, you can purchase our 34-page, step-by-step *Vision Critical Guide* (as a downloadable PDF), for just \$24 (plus H.S.T., of course) at DonaldCooper.com.

INDUSTRY CALENDAR

September 20 to 23, 2018

INTERIOR DESIGN SHOW VANCOUVER

Vancouver Convention Centre
(West Building)
vancouver.interiordesignshow.com

September 23 to 28, 2018

CASUAL MARKET

International Casual
Furnishings Association
Merchandise Mart
Chicago
casualmarket.com

October 13 to 17, 2018

HIGH POINT MARKET

High Point, NC
highpointmarket.org

December 2 to 5, 2018

SHOWTIME

International Textile
Marketing Assn.
High Point, NC
showtime-market.com

January 3 to 6, 2019

TUPELO FURNITURE MARKET

Tupelo, Mississippi
tupelofurnituremarket.com

January 8 to 11, 2019

CES

Consumer Technology
Association
Las Vegas Convention Center
Las Vegas, NV
ces.tech

January 8 to 15, 2019

ATLANTA INTERNATIONAL GIFT & HOME FURNISHINGS MARKET

America's Mart
Atlanta, GA
americasmart.com

January 14 to 20, 2019

IMM COLOGNE

The International
Interiors Show
Koelnmesse GmbH
Cologne, Germany
imm-cologne.com

January 17 to 20, 2019

INTERIOR DESIGN SHOW

Metro Toronto Convention
Centre North
Toronto
interiordesignshow.com

January 17 to 20, 2019

IIDEX CANADA

Metro Toronto Convention
Centre
Toronto
iidxcanada.com

January 22 to 25, 2019

THE INTERNATIONAL SURFACE EVENT (TISE)

Mandalay Bay Convention
Center
Las Vegas
intlurfaceevent.com

January 27 to 31, 2019

LAS VEGAS MARKET

World Market Center
Las Vegas, NV
lasvegasmarket.com

January 27 to 31, 2019

TORONTO GIFT FAIR

Canadian Gift & Tableware
Assn.
International Centre
Toronto Congress Centre
Mississauga, ON
cangift.org

March 8 to 11, 2019

MALAYSIAN INTERNATIONAL FURNITURE FAIR

Putra World Trade Centre
Kuala Lumpur, Malaysia
miff.com.my

March 13 to 14, 2019

ISPA INDUSTRY CONFERENCE

International Sleep
Products Assn.
Vinoy Renaissance Resort
St. Petersburg, FL
sleepproducts.org



ADVERTISERS' INDEX

Pages 2-3

Phoenix AMD International

41 Butler Court
Bowmanville, ON L1C 4P8
T: 800.661.7313
phoenixamd.com

Page 5

Magniflex

1000 5th St., Suite 220
Miami Beach, FL 33139
T: 905.481.0940
magniflex.com

Page 7

Zucora

552 Clarke Road
London, ON N5V 3K5
T: 800.388.2640
zucora.com

Page 11

Las Vegas Market

475 S. Grand Central Pkwy.
Las Vegas, NV 89106
T: 702.599.9621
lasvegasmarket.com

Page 13

Protect-A-Bed

1500 S. Wolf Road
Wheeling, IL 60090
T: 519.822.4022
protectabed.com

Page 14

Ashley Furniture Industries

1 Ashley Way
Arcadia, WI 54612
T: 403.835.7950

Pages 22-23

Serta Canada

40 Graniteridge Road,
Unit #2
Concord, ON L4K 5M8
T: 800.663.8540
sertacanada.com

Page 40

Home Goods Online

P.O. Box 3023
Brighton, ON K0K 1H0
T: 613.475.4704
homegoodsonline.ca

HomeGoodsOnline.ca

HGO THIS WEEK

THE ONLY *Market intelligence for Canada's home goods retailers and their partners*

Are you in the know?
Are you a member of
the HGO community?
If not...
Sign up to receive
our **FREE** newsletter
HGO this week



"Like" us
on Facebook



Connect with HGO Editor
Michael Knell on LinkedIn

FURNITURE • BEDDING • APPLIANCES • CONSUMER ELECTRONICS • ACCESSORIES
LAMPS & LIGHTING • FLOOR COVERING • RETAIL SERVICES